



Lithopolis United Methodist Church

Inviting people to be in relationship with Jesus and each other so that lives and communities are changed



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Of Life and Light

By Charles Martindell

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."
(John 1:5)

It's been a couple of months already but I keep thinking about the amazing experience we shared this past Christmas Eve. Three services with candlelight, carols, and the miraculous story of the birth of our Savior. About 600 people gathered throughout the evening for a 6 p.m. Contemporary Worship, an 8 p.m. Traditional Worship and our 11 p.m. Traditional Communion Worship. As each of the services concluded, the Sanctuary lights were lowered and we passed the candle light, beginning at the Christ Candle of the Advent Wreath, from one to another as we joined in singing "Silent Night". It's always one of the most beautiful worship moments of the whole year. And as we participate, we provide for each other a visible representation of what the church is all about. Passing the light of Christ that brings the gift of life to each other and to the whole world.

What you'll find inside:

- **Different Kind of Christmas Giving Total**
- **Confirmation 2020**
- **Partnering with Navigators**
- **2019 Year in Review**
- **2020 Budget**



Were you blessed on Christmas Eve, even as we offered our heart-felt worship to God? I was. And as this edition of the newsletter shares about some of the ways we at Lithopolis United Methodist live out our mission from God, we can celebrate today that the passing of the light of Christ continues to share the gift of life in special moments of worship as well as in active ways that are truly helping more and more people know that the love of God through Jesus Christ is real! I thank God for the many ways your church is "inviting people to relationship with Jesus and each other so lives and communities are changed." That's our mission and it's happening near and far. Keep reading our Spring Newsletter to find out more.



Different Kind of Christmas – Final Giving Total

By Charles Martindell

Look what you've done LUMC! Look what God is doing through us as we respond to the goodness of the Lord by being generous and grateful for our blessings.

Over the weeks of Advent and Christmas, **over \$22,500** was raised as we celebrated God's gift of Jesus Christ by reaching out in partnership with three vital serving groups that are making a difference in the world today.

Henderson Settlement in Frakes, KY



We plan to return to the beautiful hills of south-central Kentucky this summer and participate in the building of a new home for one of the families of that region who are currently living without a home of their own. Meanwhile, Jim Knight of Henderson Settlement responded to our recent gift with a personal note to our Mission leaders. Jim writes:

"I wanted to send a personal email to express our sincere thanks for your having included Henderson Settlement in your 2019 Christmas offering distribution. Your gift has arrived during the most challenging period of the year (January, February, and March)." Our connection to Henderson Settlement continues to deepen as we have partnered with them to help with housing needs, emergency food assistance, and most recently their commitment to supporting education and literacy for children and youth.

Watoto Read in the Darfur region of Sudan (Africa)

Claudine Leary was with us in December and shared about Watoto Read's efforts to change lives through literacy and education among refugee children.

Claudine's personal story connects to this amazing ministry as she too lived as a refugee in her childhood. It was through the supportive service and kindness of people of faith, that she received her own education and survived the hardships of war and the horrors of genocide.

Claudine shares with us of how our gift will provide much needed benches and new classroom construction. These gifts are also employing refugees as they help build what is required to provide this much needed education. Claudine wants us to know how our gifts are helping: "We are restoring hope for the adults while equipping the children for the bright future."



The Sue Stebelton Wagnall's Memorial Children's Library in Lithopolis, Ohio.



We've heard from Tami Morehart, Library Director and Betsy Kotwis, Children's Programming Director about how our partnership is making a difference. Here's what they want us to know: "a new part time person [has been employed] to help with storytimes and homeschool programs. Now the storytimes have been expanded to 3 times a week (up from 2 times). Additional home-school programs are going to be offered in the Fall." Tami also wrote: "This donation will allow us to do so many more things that we previously did not have the funds to support. Rest assured, the monies will be spent on encouraging children to routinely come to the library and grow their love of reading."

Different Kind of Christmas – continued from page 2.

The mission of LUMC is about changing lives and communities as people are invited to relationships with Jesus and each other. Our Different Kind of Christmas partnerships are among the ways we live this out and trust God to be changing lives near and far- including ours!

Inspiration and Generosity

By Charles Martindell

As a church, we regularly pray for Mark and Megan Smith and their family. Mark grew up at LUMC and along with Megan, has served since his college years at Miami (Ohio) University with the Navigators campus ministries. Navigators is a disciple-making missional ministry and their purpose is: "To know Christ, make him known and help others do the same." Most recently, the Smith's led the Navigator ministry at Central Florida University.

We had a visit with Mark a few weeks ago and learned of his next step in answering Christ's call: a mission assignment in the nation of Croatia.

What's the basis for your willingness to take on this latest assignment that will move you and your family so far from home?

"For me, there's a place in the book of Isaiah that I related to where God spoke to Isaiah about it being 'too small a thing for you' to be sent only to the people of Isaiah's nation. And God then talked about sending Isaiah as 'a light to the nations'. After several years at our most recent assignment in Florida, we felt it was time to begin praying about how we are 'willing to stay where we are and also we are willing to go where God is sending us.'"

Mark and Megan began praying for God to open a door to where they are next to be sent. As Mark describes it, "... in various ways it became clear that eastern Europe was where we are being sent."

What's challenging about this next step for you and your family?

"There are challenges including leaving family to serve so far from home. And as parents we just don't know what it will be like to raise children in a different culture. Challenges also include the unfamiliarity of a new nation and language. We know there will be challenges when we arrive. Some of that will be about how to win the hearts of Croatians and show them that we are there to share God's love as we also learn from them, and to not come across as an expert from a powerful foreign nation."

How is God helping you as you prepare for this huge step?

"We were blown away by the college students we've known. At a time in their lives when many of them are barely getting by, they chose to raise financial support and help us and to partner with us."

As part of a recent sermon about living our purpose and with passion for life, Pastor Alex asked Mark about how he relates to the times when Jesus sent his disciples to serve?

"I'm imagining that the disciples were intimidated when they were sent... we feel similar. After years of campus ministry in the U.S., we know about that and it's familiar. Maybe the disciples expected to always be near Jesus and continue to follow and learn from him rather than to also be sent to do what they saw Jesus do. And now for us, this next mission assignment is leading us into a reliance upon Jesus in a new area of the world, and with a new language and an unfamiliar culture."

Continued on page 4.



Inspiration and Generosity – continued from page 3.

We're excited to continue to pray for Mark and Megan as they embark on this inspirational journey and we rejoice in how God will work in so many lives through all that is shared.

This is also a GENEROSITY OPPORTUNITY for us as a church. We are hoping to raise \$5,000 toward the costs of establishing Mark and Megan and their children in a new ministry in Croatia. We'll keep in touch and hear from Mark when he is home for visits. We can contribute to this amazing ministry by marking special gifts to LUMC "Mark and Megan Smith".

Hello LUMC Family,

We are deeply humbled and honored by your partnering with our ministry through this Lent giving project. As many of you know, I (Mark) grew up at LUMC and Megan and I were married here. We have also served with the Navigators for the last 15 years making disciples on college campuses. This summer we will be transitioning to Zagreb, Croatia.

Croatia, a former Yugoslav country, could best be described as a secularized, post-Catholic nation where the evangelical population makes up less than 0.4% of the population. Our goal is to advance the Gospel of Jesus and make disciples. But beyond that we hope to lay the foundation for a long lasting Croatian Navigator ministry that will one day be a fully functioning member of our worldwide partnership!

In order for our family to relocate and to have the readily available funds to begin building the Croatian Navigators, we are trusting the Lord for \$90,000. We want to thank you in advance to what the Lord will accomplish through this mission and for being our "sending" church!



Your partners to the Nations,
Mark, Megan, Meredith, Ryan, and Luke



Meet Claire Loeffler

My name is Claire Loeffler and I'm a freshman at Bloom-Carroll High School. I've been volunteering at Rock City for three years prior to being offered the position as an assistant. I love working with the kids in Rock City, they're one of the highlights of my week. They have a joy that's extremely contagious and leaves me with a smile. So, thank you all for allowing me to explore the Lord's word with your kids. Thanks, Claire



Confirmation 2020

By Ray Tiell

Since beginning as Youth Coordinator last August, one of my greatest joys has been connecting with the six middle school and three high school students who have committed to participate in confirmation each week. These students are eager to learn and grow in their walk with God, and I'm excited to watch their journeys as they continue to serve their church.

Our journey began on January 12, as students and leaders visited Short North Church in Columbus. Many of these students have been attending LUMC for as long as they can remember, and this visit to a different United Methodist church gave them space to ask questions about why our church does things the way we do. After fellowshiping over a Chipotle lunch, we headed to the district office and conference center for a tour of the facility and an overview of how the UMC is structured on a local and global level. Many of the students commented on how cool it was to be part of a denomination that was doing so much in the world. One even listed this day, which focused on giving the students a taste of what it would mean to be UMC members at the end of their time in confirmation, as his favorite part of Confirmation so far.

When asked about their favorite lessons and areas of growth, student responses were all over the place. It felt like almost every lesson had been somebody's favorite! A couple listed the lesson on the Trinity, one mentioned a long unplanned conversation we had on heaven, and one even said she enjoyed the church history lesson (the one we leaders worried would be super boring).

The lesson that seemed to resonate most deeply, however, was our study of the Image of God. This surprised me at first, but it probably shouldn't have. After all, the Image of God is what we are all created to be: worshippers of God, ruling over Creation as He created us to do. And that's exactly what confirmation (and all of the Christian life) is all about! We're all on a path to learn and grow and ask questions as we find our place under God, with each other, and over the resources and opportunities we've been given. As a youth leader, there's nothing I can think of that could encourage me more than seeing a group of young people who are hungry to learn what this could mean for their own lives. I'm proud of these students both for pursuing God and for creating loving friendships where the others in the group can do the same.

Alex and Charles have shared in the weekly teaching with me, with Erica Griffith providing much needed help in keeping things from going too crazy. We've all been encouraged by these students and have enjoyed teaching this special group. They will be spending the next few weeks working to plan our Easter Sunrise Service, where they will be officially confirmed as members of the church. We look forward to having them not just as the next generation of leaders, but also as the current generation of members in our fellowship!



Dear Christian Friends,
Thank you so much for the Christmas fruit and candy. It means so much to be remembered. It is very much appreciated.

Blessings to all,
Eleanor Mapes

Dear Lithopolis UMC,
Thank you for allowing BCYA to use your MM facility for the 2019-2020 basketball season.

Sincerely,
BCYA Board

LUMC Volunteers,
Thank you to all who helped provide the meal for Lynne Solt's memorial service. The meal preparation, organizing, clearing, setting up and tearing down was an all-day commitment. So many were involved. It meant so much to all of us to have time to share with family and friends.

Thank you again,
Thane & Wilma Hecox

Ministry Budget Report

In 2019, we gave \$690,356. Here's how our generosity changed lives in 2019:

Mission Support and Outreach:	\$154,786 (32%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Mission contributions to Ministry and Emergency Responses • Different Kind of Christmas outreach (Henderson Settlement, Wagnall's Memorial Children's Library, Watoto Read) • Jessie's World, Good Works, Henderson Settlement • Mission contributions by United Methodist Women Circles • Community Food Pantry Support • Community Dinners • District & Conference Ministries (including Apportionments) 	
Ministry Staff (both Lay & Clergy):	\$327,854 (47%)
Ministry Programs, Reimbursements including Lakeside Conf:	\$33,648 (5%)
Office Expenses:	\$15,235 (2%)
Building & Maintenance:	\$93,585 (14%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church and Parsonage expenses • Utilities, Insurance, and Building (initiatives) Fund 	

Here's how we plan to fund our mission in 2020:

Ministry Staff (Lay & Clergy) Expenses	\$332,161
Building and Maintenance Expenses	\$78,650
Ministries and Program Expenses	\$60,270
Office Expenses	\$17,700
<u>Conference and District Ministries (Apportionments)</u>	<u>\$67,035</u>
2020 Ministry Plan Budget:	\$555,816

Additional 2020 Generosity Opportunities anticipated already. These ministries are not budgeted for, but are those we prayerfully dedicate to God as we live generously all year:

2020 Different Kind of Christmas; Carl's Build 2020; Periodic Serving Opportunities; Henderson Settlement Mission; Mark & Megan Smith Navigator's Missions, etc.

Two final notes. A fully detailed 2020 Budget can be obtained at the Connection Center or Church Office. We are urged to prayerfully consider what it means to trust God and to give generously so that God's mission in us and through us will become real in our lives and in the lives of our community, and in people's lives throughout the world. **To achieve the goal of funding our mission and ministry, we will all need to take a step forward in our giving during 2020.** Thank you to everyone for being part of LUMC as we follow our Lord.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (-Jesus, Matthew 22:37-39)