

Agape

Greek for "Love without Limits"

North Olmsted United Methodist Church

Vol. 54 Issue 11

December 2020

Hope for the Future!

"Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'" (Luke 2:9-11)

The familiar Christmas story from Luke 2 invites us to experience it in a new way in this Season of Advent and the approaching time of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the New Year, 2021. To say that there are many reasons why people have been gripped and bound by fear over these past several months would be an understatement. Millions of people have been affected by the devastating affects of COVID-19 with matters of health, employment, and morale. Church and society have been negatively impacted by glaring problems of racism, injustice, and inequality. People are struggling to identify and commit to leaders, organizations, and institutions in which they can build trusting relationships.

And yet, we need not hold on to fear! There is hope for the future through the One who gives us strength to live with hope, peace, joy, and love! We can be encouraged by the "good news" of the angel on the day that Jesus was born to not be afraid or terrified! In the glory of the light of the Lord, the shepherds were reassured and we can be, too, of the great joy of Jesus, the Messiah, the Lord being born for the world! The birth of Jesus gives us the strength to receive and offer life-giving resources that create paths of goodness and righteousness, and wellness of body, mind, and spirit for millions of people!

You, among the church family of North Olmsted UMC, are living and modeling lives of hope now and for the future. It is evident through your prayers, loving care, service, and witness with those connected or desiring to connect in and beyond the local church. You are giving people hope in sharing generously financial gifts that support and advance the ministries, missions, staffing, and operations of the church.

And so, you are encouraged to continue to be faithful in offering hope for beautiful things that are being born and that are yet to be born through the love of God, Jesus Christ, and the lives of people all around you!

Please continue to be faithful with your financial gifts by sending your stewardship contributions to the church office to the attention of Ed Brewster, Financial Secretary. In addition, please note that you will also be given an opportunity to give financially through a special Christmas offering. Details about how to support the special Christmas offering will be communicated to the congregation in early December.

Discussion and planning will take place over the next several weeks with the Finance Committee to conduct a stewardship campaign in the first quarter of 2021 to support the operational ministry of the local church. In the meantime, you are asked to maintain and prayerfully consider increasing your financial giving to the end of 2020 and into 2021. Please contact Ed Brewster, Financial Secretary, to discuss any adjustments with your giving commitments.

North Olmsted UMC is alive and well because of you! Thank you! We have hope in unusual times through the grace of God and the presence of the new-born Christ child to remain faithful people and to respond in courage, trust, and love.

Living and Serving in Hope with You,
Pastor Hoyte



Worship Online with us on Christmas Eve

You will be provided a link prior to December 24 which will allow you to experience Christmas Eve anytime that day or evening with lessons and carols, special music, slideshows of pictures and videos involving members of our church family, candlelight and, of course, the singing of Silent Night!

COVID-19 Reminders

Worship with Us Online!

Live-stream worship on Sundays at 10:30 am

Join us online as we live-stream worship on Sundays at 10:30 am! Visit our [YouTube channel](#) to worship with us. The videos will also be available to view later. For more information and assistance, visit www.noumc.org or our [Facebook page](#).

Visit <http://www.noumc.org/worship-remote-worship-resources/> for bulletins and weekly announcements.

Office Hours

To protect the health and well-being of you and the staff, we will be working from home whenever possible. Please conduct business with the staff by phone or email, when possible. If you leave a voicemail at the church or send an email, a member of the staff will respond. If you need to conduct business in person, please call ahead to be sure someone is in the office to assist you, or contact a staff member and leave a voicemail to make an appointment.

Pastoral Care

Please reach out to Pastor Hoyte by using his cell phone or email address (330-428-1545 or hoytewilhelm@gmail.com) if you have any questions or want to schedule an individual time to talk as he will be working remotely much of the time from the church office consistent with the rest of our support staff.

Pastor Hoyte continues to keep you in his thoughts and prayers. God IS with us!

Stay Connected—We Are Not Alone

If you would like to subscribe to receive weekly e-newsletters, up-to-date email announcements from Pastor Hoyte, and prayer concerns from the congregation, email office@noumc.org.

Financial Contributions to North Olmsted United Methodist Church

Please continue to be faithful with your financial gifts by sending your stewardship contributions to the church office to the attention of the Financial Secretary.

January Agape Deadline

December 15

Email articles and dates for the calendar to office@noumc.org or mail them to the church, attention Megan Howe, by December 15.

Church Staff: 440-779-6634

Pastor: Hoyte Wilhelm
hoytewilhelm@gmail.com
ext.16
cell: 330-428-1545

Christian Ed.: Wendy Cooper
sundayschool@noumc.org
ext.13

Organist: Marlene Dirksen
marlened959@gmail.com

Admin. Assistant: Megan Howe
office@noumc.org
ext.10

Music Director: Gabriela Martinez
gabrielamarmar@aol.com

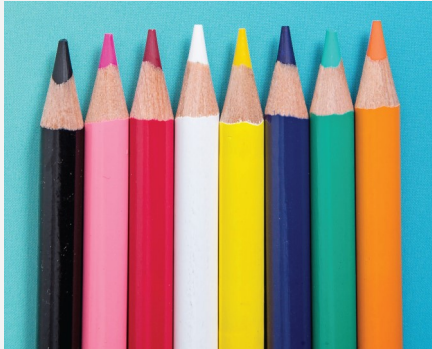
Social Media: Hanna Moore
social@noumc.org

The Season of Advent

Coloring Through Advent

There is no question that our Advent season is going to look really different this year. We will not all be together to celebrate this very special month, but whether worshipping in the sanctuary or from the comfort of our couch, the meaning and purpose of Advent remains the same. Advent is the four week period before Christmas that celebrates the anticipation and coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Each week of Advent has a specific focus that teaches us the true meaning of the season: the coming of Christ.

This year, we will have coloring pages available for you to color, one for each week of Advent and one for Christmas Eve, each representing the weekly focus of Advent: Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Christ. Packets of coloring pages will be available beginning on November 29 and will be available for pick up from a box near the office entrance door. They will also be available in the weekly e-newsletters and announcements for you to print at home. Coloring pages should be completed in the traditional Advent order but can be colored in any way and with any medium. There will be pages for adults and some for kids, too. Coloring pages can be returned to the box at church when completed, and photos of them may be included in our online worship services during the month! This Advent season will look very different. May these coloring pages help you take advantage of this more relaxed Christmas season to focus on Jesus and the wonderful gift that God has given us!



Advent Worship Gets Creative!

As we prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ this Advent season, we need your help! Because of the rising COVID numbers, we will not be able to worship in person, in our church building, throughout the coming Advent/Christmas season. So, we would like to invite you to share worship with us in creative ways! Here are a few ideas:

1. Create your own Advent wreath at home and **Take a Photo** to share in our worship service.
2. Unpack the Nativity scene from your attic or basement and set it up in a prominent place in your home. **Take a Photo** of it to share in our worship services!
3. Do your own "Hanging of the Greens" event in your home, complete with trees, garlands, nativities, and candles. **Take a Photo** to share.
4. Stand in front of your newly decorated tree and **Share a Short Video** of "What Christmas Means to Me this Year". These short video clips will personalize our worship as we "see" the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love of Christ in the Advent season in our church family's faces!
5. And finally...for the Grand Finale!!! Grab a candle, stand in front of your tree, nativity, fireplace, etc. and **Make a Video** of your family sharing the lighting of the candles (much as we do at the church on Christmas Eve). These videos will be put together in a slideshow to be shared at our Christmas Eve service during the singing of *Silent Night*.

If you are interested in participating in any of these events (and I pray you are!), please email Rev. Alice for more details.



Opportunities to Worship

Blue Christmas Worship

Tuesday, December 15, 7 pm, Online

...a gentle, contemplative service for those who are carrying pain or loss during this season of celebration.

This year our Stephen Ministers are sponsoring their seventh annual Blue Christmas service. It will be held online on Tuesday, December 15 at 7pm and will remain available for viewing afterwards at www.noumc.org.

2020 has been a year of challenge. Indeed, just *thinking* about not being with family and friends in person for Christmas has me feeling blue. Each of us has navigated this year with different challenges and concerns. We have experienced loss in many forms: loss of jobs, loss of what's "normal", loss of connections, loss of routine, loss of friends/family through death, loss of health. We carry heavy concerns for the future of our nation. We hear the needs of our communities, and our hearts hurt. We do our best to reach out and support one another, to be the Hands and Feet of Jesus for those in need. And in all of this, we simply miss each other... miss the smiles hidden behind masks... miss the handshakes and the hugs. There is such a need for healing and peace in our world, in our church, and in our hearts.

Into this need comes our Savior, Jesus. His name is Emmanuel, a name that means "God with us". God comes to be present with us today in much the same way that he came to a hurting world years ago... a gentle, humble beginning bursting forth as an unexpected ray of hope. Our service promises to be a gentle, quiet service...filled with peace, hope, prayer, music, and candlelight.

God wants to renew our lives this Christmas season, bringing hope to us in the areas of our deepest need, bringing peace to us in the midst of our darkest confusion. If you, or someone you know, are remembering a loss or going through a season of pain, I invite you to join us this Christmas for a time of comfort and rest.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel... May we journey together.
Blessings, Rev. Alice



Adult Council Opportunities for Fellowship

Christmas Trivia and Game Night on Zoom

Friday, December 4, 6:30 pm

We'll host a game night featuring holiday trivia, a virtual scavenger hunt, and name that tune. We'll laugh and relax! Look for the scavenger hunt on our [Friends of NOUMC Facebook page](#) the week before!



Christmas Fellowship on Zoom

Saturday, December 19, 6:30 pm

Dress up for the holidays and share Christmas memories and your holiday decorations. If you join us, you can pick up cookie and hot chocolate mixes at the church, and the scent of baking cookies and hot chocolate will fill your house with joy. Look for people's posts of holiday decorations on our Facebook page the week before.

Please RSVP for both events to Claudia Taller.

Christian Education

Sunday School Mission Project: Africa University

More Africa University Facts

Thirty-six nations of Africa are represented in the student population. The majority of faculty and administrative staff are Africans. The official language at the university is English, which is also the official language of Zimbabwe. There are thirty-two buildings on the campus with four currently under construction. The 32 buildings include 12 dormitories, 12 senior staff housing units, a chapel, and a state-of-the-art library complex. The four buildings under construction include a student clinic, two housing duplexes for senior staff, and the building for the Institute of Peace, Leadership, and Governance. Approximately 52% of the student body are women. Although the university is United Methodist-related, students are members of various Christian denominations and other religions including traditional African.

This year, we hope you will support the Sunday School Mission Project by helping us raise money to build a new dorm for female students of Africa University! A new dorm will enable women from all over Africa to be housed in a safe place while completing their education. Make checks payable to NOUMC, write Africa University in the memo, and send them to the office, attention Wendy Cooper.

Christmas Flower Sale

Orders due December 7



The youth are accepting orders for **Poinsettias and Christmas Cacti** that will be placed on the altar and photographed and integrated into our virtual Christmas Eve service. Arrangements will be made for you to pick up your flowers early so that you can enjoy them in your home on Christmas. Pick-up dates and times will be posted later when that information is available. Please see the attached order form. Proceeds will benefit this year's Sunday School Africa University Mission Project. *Send the form with your check to the church office, attention Wendy Cooper or email Wendy at sundayschool@noumc.org.*

Online Sunday School

Sunday School students, please join us each week on our [Friends of NOUMC Facebook page](#) as we continue to study God's Word! A video Bible lesson will be posted, and links to activity sheets will be offered in the comments. High School and Young Adults are welcome to click on a weekly devotion with thoughts and questions to ponder. Video lessons and devotions will be posted by Saturday evening each week.

United Methodist Women

Give-Away Meeting

Wednesday, December 2, 10 am

Our final meeting of the year is coming up right away. We will meet on Wednesday, December 2 at 10 am. We don't have as much money to give away this year, but we will do our best to give something to our favorite charities. Thanks for all your support, and we hope we can be busier next year as we all strive for normalcy.

Opportunities to Give



Please choose your gifts by December 1

We still have some Christmas gifts left for purchase for our Adopt-a-Family folks from Oxcart Pantry. We have made a board filled with gift requests similar to what we have set up other years in Fellowship Hall. If you haven't already done so, you are invited to call the church to see if anyone is in the office (please leave a message) and make arrangements to go over and choose your slips that way, or you can email Megan at office@noumc.org to make arrangements. Please choose your gifts from the board by December 1.

Once you have chosen the gifts you want to purchase, you can visit <https://www.amazon.com/registries/custom/13WDOTUD015Z8/guest-view>. This is a list of what Oxcart Pantry has selected from Amazon as possible items to satisfy the requests.

We felt that most of the selections on Amazon were more expensive than what you could purchase on your own, however, so you at that point have two options. If you like the choice Oxcart Pantry made, you can order it on Amazon by clicking the link above and mailing the item from Amazon directly to Oxcart Pantry (choose the option: City of North Olmsted's Gift Registry Address.) The advantage to this option is that you don't have to leave home, and volunteers at Oxcart Pantry will do the wrapping and sorting for you.

Option 2 is that you can purchase your items on your own, wrap them, put the paper slip on the package, and take them to the church at one of the following times, when we will have an Outreach member there to accept them. (Please note: donations for the Hats and Mittens Collection will also be collected at these times.)

Saturday, December 12
Noon - 2 pm

Sunday, December 13
Noon - 2 pm

Wednesday, December 16
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

We realize this is quite confusing, and we apologize, but this has been a confusing year in more ways than one, and we are confident that you will come through as you have every other year to make this a happier Christmas for some of our neighbors who have had an even harder year than we have had.

If you have any questions, please contact Barb Andrews.

Hats and Mittens Collection

Donations can be dropped off during the Adopt-a-Family times listed above

We are collecting hats and mittens for youth and adults again this year. Instead of decorating the Hat and Mitten Tree in Fellowship Hall, the Outreach Committee is asking that hats and mittens be dropped off at the church during the Adopt-a-Family times listed above. Last year the items went to Front Steps (previously called Transitional Housing), Laura's Home, and the North Olmsted Food Pantry.



Support Oxcart Pantry

Penny Sunday is December 20

All money collected for December's Penny Sunday will go to purchase cleaning supplies and laundry detergent for families in need. *Make checks payable to NOUMC and write **December Penny Sunday** in the memo. Send checks to the church office, attention Financial Secretary.*

Church Family News

DECEMBER Birthdays & Anniversaries

2	Sally S.
3	Barbara S.
5	Kelly M.
6	Jan R.
10	John S.
11	Barbara S.
13	Ray P.
15	Floyd A.
16	Phoebe T.
17	Kristi J.
17	Barbara C.
18	Hanna M.
19	Lois D.
22	Mikenzie D.
23	Wayne P.
24	Jean S.
27	Christopher H.
29	Liz L.
29	John W.

18	Megan and Nathan H.
19	Brigid and Shawn D.
29	Anita and James B.
31	Ellie and Jim Y.

Prayer Concerns

First Responders
Victims of natural disasters
Those suffering from mental illness
Those affected by gun violence
Those who are homeless
Stephen Ministers
Care Receivers
Our condolences to the family of Bradley following his passing, lifted by Sally C.
Paul, nephew of John and Charlene V.
Mary, Sue S.'s mother
Jeff, Judy K.'s friend
Kifah, David L's friend
Jeff and Sharon, lifted by Janis J.
Bob, Carole B.'s son
Josh O.
Donald R.
Sheryl, lifted by Sally S.
Danielle, lifted by Alice W.
Scott, brother-in-law of Barb L.
Frank M.
Keith A.
Danielle, lifted by Gwen H.
Gwen H.
Mary Lou L.
Barbara B.
Sterling B.
Bev, lifted by Josh O.
Viola C.
Darlene, friend of Barb A.
Susan W.
Donna, sister of Carol N.

Adrienne, lifted by Tom M.
Bill and Vince, brothers of Reba Y.
Russ, friend of David L.
Andy, Faye W.'s son
Dusty, nephew of Reba Y.
Israel, Sarah's student
Dawn, friend of Susan W.
De Niro and family
Connie C.
Jim, friend of Bill and Marilyn R.
Donna friend of Judy K.
Kevin, friend of Barb and Ron C.
Zack, son of Jennifer G.
Brian R.
Steve, son of Mary Ellen M.
Carol, lifted by the Ray and Jane B.
Selene, lifted by Carole A.
Christopher Y., USAF
Matthew F., USAF
Lt. Col. Bill G., USMC



I would like to express my gratitude for the uplifting cards and communications I received after the unexpected loss of my granddaughter Nicole's husband, Bradley. Bless you all.

Sally Coast



North Olmsted United Methodist Church
4600 Dover Center Road
North Olmsted, Ohio 44070

Agape Newsletter



Our Guiding Principles

- We appreciate and invest in our youth.
- We actively serve our neighbors in the North Olmsted community and the wider world.
- We provide varied opportunities for people to grow in their faith.
- We welcome and nurture a diverse congregation who become extended family.
- We foster lasting personal relationships, which are especially important in a digital world.

*Our Faithful
Journey*



Holiday Free Community Meal Carry-Out Only



Thursday, December 3

4:30 pm - 6 pm

Carry-Out Menu:

**roasted pork, mashed potatoes & gravy,
green beans, fruit, and dessert**

The Free Community Meal is a mission of North Olmsted United Methodist Church with assistance from our friends at St. Richard and St. Clarence Catholic Churches and others in the community. All meals are funded by donations, and the dinners are prepared and served by volunteers. Menus may change because of donated food or food pricing. Additional volunteers are always welcome! If you would like more information, please contact us at 440-779-6634. *We are an accessible facility.*