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WORSHIP TIMES

8:45am Bible Study Groups

10:00am Worship in the Sanctuary

CONTACT US

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From The Pastor's Desk

It's that time of year again. Christmas music is on the radio; some stations began playing it before Thanksgiving and some as early as the first of November. Christmas trees and lights are, and have been, popping up everywhere. It's a time when life gets really busy. The calendar fills up. We are continually on the go. There's decorating, baking, and cooking to be done. There are presents to buy and wrap. And in the midst of it all, we Christians start the season we call "Advent" — a time of **WAITING.**

Don't confuse the Season of Advent with the Season of Christmas. It's **NOT** Christmas yet, regardless of what the rest of the world tells you. Christmas is a season of 12 days, **BEGINNING** December 25th, and lasts for 12 days through January 5th. Then we celebrate "Epiphany" – the day the Wise Men visited the Christ Child – on January 6th.

The Season of Advent is the 4 weeks **BEFORE**December 25th. The word "Advent" means
"coming," and it is a time of waiting for the coming
of the Christ. During this time, we prepare
ourselves for His arrival, and not just as a baby in a
manger, but also when He comes again in final
victory, and as He comes to us each day.

We aren't really good at waiting, are we? We don't like waiting. We don't like waiting in lines, at traffic lights, in doctor's offices, or anywhere else, and we really don't like waiting for Christmas. It seems we just can't wait, so the decorating, the music, and the social events come earlier and earlier each year.

In an area I once served, there is an Episcopal Church that still observes the Season of Advent in the traditional way of not decorating for Christmas until Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve, the Nativity Scene goes in their yard as well as other Christmas decorations for the Christmas Season, but not before. And they stay up the entire Christmas Season, coming down on January 6th.

I am not saying we should not decorate before Christmas Eve. Personally, I feel if you don't do it before then, what's the point? But if we skip over Advent and get on with Christmas, we miss out on preparing ourselves for all the "comings" of Christ.

For many years purple, being the color of royalty and also the color of repentance, was used for Advent. In more recent years, blue, the color of hope, has increasingly been used as the color of Advent. The four Sundays of Advent represent Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Our hope is in God, and in His son Jesus Christ. Christian hope is not wishful thinking as in we hope the weather is nice, or we hope the Panthers win a football game! But Christian hope is a sure and certain thing that God is always with us, no matter what happens. He is the one through whom God has promised to save and redeem his people. Our peace is found in God and in His son, Jesus Christ. Peace is not an absence of conflict, but a calm and quietness in our soul in the midst of the turmoil and chaos around us. Our joy is in God and in His son Jesus Christ. Joy is different from happiness. Happiness depends upon external circumstances being favorable, however joy, real joy, comes from knowing the hope, peace, and love of Jesus Christ. Like hope and peace, joy is a gift from God. It overtakes us and fills us when we remember what God has done and what He has promised to do. And lastly, Jesus shows us God's perfect love. He is God's perfect love in human form. Those who believe in Him and live in Him, live in love. Love transforms and perfects all things. It never ends.

We will begin the Advent Season with a special "Hanging of the Greens" service on the first Sunday of Advent, December 3rd, as a part of our normal 10:00 morning worship service. During this service, we will talk about why we decorate our homes with greenery during this season. Please plan to attend this most meaningful service.

I hope you have a wonderful, meaningful, and blessed Advent.

Merry Christmas, - Pastor Glenda



THE FOLLOWING GIFTS WERE MADE TO THE CHURCH IN MEMORY OF:

IN MEMORY Of:

Kathy and Randy Bannister

Kathy Alexander Nadine Williams Tom and Julia Grey

Nancy Cater

Nadine Williams

Joan Bowers

Nadine Williams Tom and Julia Grey

Chase Crump

Nadine Williams

Betty Donaldson

Nadine Williams

Kay Merrill

Nadine Williams Tom and Julia Grey

Hank Mace

Nadine Williams

Remembering Our Friends

With the holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas right around the corner, you are no doubt getting your greeting cards ready to send to those you remember fondly. You are also probably planning to visit with some folks who have been special to you over the years. You might even be getting some small tokens and gifts together just to lift someone's holiday spirit! As you do, please remember the following church members with a card, a small gift, or a visit. Being remembered is such a life-changing thing! You can obtain a list of addresses from Anji, in the church office. Thanks for being the hands and feet of Jesus in this most thoughtful way!!!

Betty Allen * Tecil and Sue Curlee * Dwight Henry * Reba Henry

Bonnie Johnson * Donnie & Faye Lemmond * Eloise Lockler * Shirley McClure

Tommy Moore * Lib Primm * Daphine Silvey

Bonnie Stikeleather * Robert Tadlock, Sr. * Harriett Tweed

News from the United Women in Faith

Pleasant Grove recently participated in a United Women in Faith Sunday. On November 19th, members of Circles #3 and #6 helped with the leadership of our worship service. They served as greeters, ushers, readers, and as members of the choir. The mission and purpose of the United Women in Faith was highlighted, along with some of the efforts that our women take part in both around our own campus and around the world. Terri Honeycutt was awarded the Special Mission Recognition Pin for her dedicated and humble service to our church. And Pastor Glenda delivered a "first person" sermon as Deborah. A bake sale was also held on this day. Because of your generous support, it totally sold out, raising more than \$450 dollars for missions. It was great to shine a light on the many women around Pleasant Grove who are a part of what makes us tick!

In December both Circles will enjoy some Christmas joy! Circle #3 will meet on Tuesday, December 12th , at 11:00 AM in the fellowship hall, for a covered dish luncheon. Each attendee is asked to bring a small gift for our fun and fabulous auction. Circle #6 will meet on Tuesday, December 5th , at 5:00 PM in the gathering room of the family life center. Everyone is asked to bring an appetizer to share. We will enjoy our fellowship together as well as a devotional that points us all to Jesus Christ. As always, guests and future members are welcome at each of our gatherings!

---submitted by Jeannie Upton

















Church Council Minutes

As a way of keeping our church family informed and up to date, please find the minutes from the most recent Church Council meeting below.

The Pleasant Grove UMC Church Council met on Sunday, October 22, 2023, immediately following morning worship. The meeting was opened with prayer.

There were two matters that needed Church Council approval prior to the Charge Conference on November 8th . Pastor Glenda Bennett and Staff Parish Chair, Todd Holcomb presented information on the pastor's compensation package. Pastor Glenda next presented the slate of church officers for 2024. Both items were approved.

Following a detailed and excellent report by Rev. Phil Turner, from the committee he has chaired to examine the relationship between the CDC, the church, and the after-school program and summer program, questions were entertained. It appears that the church and its trustees are not protected by the provisions of an LLC or articles of incorporation. In a subsequent conversation between Rev. Turner and Council Chair Buck Green it was agreed that Phil's committee would begin exploring the process of incorporation or obtaining LLC credentials. There are still several issues to be addressed by the Church Council pertaining to these programs and their relationship to the church. The Chairman is most appreciative of the work of Rev. Turner and this committee.

The Chairman next asked for reports from committees. Rick Elliott stated that flags would be placed on the graves of veterans buried in the church cemetery in observance of Veterans Day. Finance Chair, Scott Brown, announced that the Finance Committee would soon meet to finalize the 2024 budget. Julia Gray reminded everyone of the Fifth Sunday Fellowship Lunch the following week. Trustees Chair, Steve McClure, reported that security cameras, monitoring our parking lots, should be installed soon. Appreciation was expressed to the United Women in Faith for supplying the resources to fund this project. Missions and Outreach Coordinator, Sherri Brown, informed the Council that we continue in our Operation Christmas Child effort, we will be supplying grocery store gift cards to ten families in need at Oakdale Elementary School, and that we will be collecting Reverse Advent Boxes once again this year. Todd Holcomb informed everyone about the recent hiring of our new Financial Secretary and Administrative Assistant, Angela Dean.

With no other items needing the attention of the Church Council, the meeting was adjourned with prayer.

---submitted by Buck Green



Honoring Our Lay Servants

Congratulations are in order to Mary Usher and Todd Holcomb for receiving the Laity Service Award for 2023. Both were recognized for their unselfish service to Pleasant Grove on November 5th at a District celebration held at University City UMC. These two are the definition of a quiet leader...serving in many ways with a humble and unassuming spirit. May we all thank them for helping make our sweet church a viable extension of God's love.

---submitted by Hazel Sanders

Last Call for Country Ham!!!

Circle #6 of the United Women in Faith is once again selling country ham! These one-pound packages of Alexander's Country Ham are the perfect addition to your Christmas morning breakfast, or just a Wednesday night dinner! Your choice! At \$8 per package, it's an awesome value! The last day to order your ham is Tuesday, December 5th. You can order by calling Karen Dellinger at 704.689.2869 and you can pay for your ham on the day of pick-up. If paying by check, please make your check out to Karen Dellinger. Your ham will be ready for pick-up in the fellowship hall on Sunday, December 10th , before Sunday school, before worship, and after worship. The funds raised from the ham sale will be used for mission and outreach efforts both around our church and beyond. Thanks for supporting us as we seek to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world today!



---submitted by Karen Dellinger and the Members of Circle #6

Christmas Office Hours

Please note that our church office will be closed beginning Monday, December 25th, through Monday January 1st, as our church staff enjoys some well-deserved time with family and friends.

Also, if you are planning to make a year-end gift to Pleasant Grove to help offset our 2023 deficit, and you would like to have this donation credited to your 2023 record of giving, your contribution must be in the church office no later than Sunday, December 31st . Thank you for considering this opportunity as we all work together to further the Kingdom of God!



Ending 2023 with Another Fellowship Meal

The church family at Pleasant Grove will gather with one another on Sunday, December 31st , just after our morning worship service for our last fellowship meal of 2023. Plan to join us for what we are calling a "Throwback Luncheon!" The menu for the day will be hot dogs, with homemade chili, Jimmy's slaw, and all the trimmings. We will also have chips and drinks. We are asking everyone to bring their specialty dessert to have as part of the "miracle mile" of PG desserts. Does this all sound familiar to you? It should! We have heard so many folks say that they miss our hot dog lunches that we



thought we would bring it back for a "limited-time engagement" and we know you don't want to miss this! Donations, while not required, will be accepted to help offset the cost of the meal. So come join us as we enjoy great food, warm fellowship, and a chance to close out the year together...with hot dog!!!

Blessing Children Around the Globe

During our Sunday church service on November 19th, Pastor Glenda prayed over the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes, dedicating these boxes to the will and work of the Lord. The boxes were dropped off at Mountain Island Community Church later that afternoon. Our church family packed and provided sixty-eight shoeboxes filled with toys, school supplies, and



hygiene items. Many of the children who are the recipients of these boxes live in poverty or war-torn countries and often suffer from sickness and hunger. How exciting for these young boys and girls, who have so little, to open their boxes filled with goodies knowing that someone cares! And what a blessing it is to be able to demonstrate and share God's love and the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the world to those in need in such a tangible way. Thank you!!

---submitted by Mary Usher













Our gym is open to the church family and community for indoor walking on Monday and Wednesday mornings between the hours of 9:00 and 11:00. It will never be too hot, too cold, or too wet to walk in our gym! So, you have no excuses! Everyone is welcome to come enjoy the fellowship and movement as we all work toward better health together!

Blessing Others at the Holidays

For the past several years, our church has provided grocery store gift cards during the holidays to families at Oakdale Elementary School who have been identified as food insecure. Many families cannot afford food items for a nice Thanksgiving meal, and so these cards have assisted in supplying that need. They can also be used to stock up on additional food items for their pantry, as well. This year, the generosity of our church members helped provide Food Lion gift cards in the amount of \$100 each to ten families. Thank you for showing love to these families, and for those who are less fortunate.



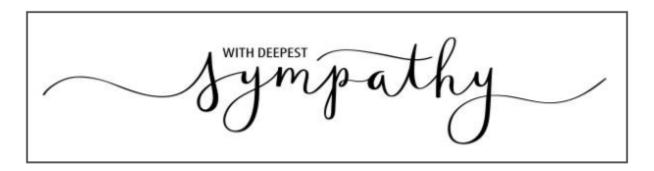


We will also endeavor to pass on our blessings during the month of December. We will be helping ten families with grocery store gift cards to be used over the Christmas break. Hopefully, we can all be a part of this effort as we consider the many ways that we have been blessed and feel the call to share those blessings with others! If your heart is softened by the unfortunate circumstances that some find themselves in, you can mark your donation, of any amount, for Oakdale School, and it will become the love of Christ in action!

The following quote, attributed to Saint Augustine, seems quite appropriate at this time...

What does love look like?
It has the hands to help others.
It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy.
It has eyes to see misery and want.
It has the ears to hear these sighs and sorrows of man.
This is what love looks like.

---submitted by Mary Usher



The church family extends our deepest sympathies to:

Jane Adams, Lib Primm, and Jimmy Puckett on the recent passing of their sister, MaryAnn Todd.



Pleasant Grove CDC Family Thanksgiving Feast

The Child Development Center held our first ever "CDC Grove Family Thanksgiving Feast" on Thursday, November 17th . We invited all families in the center to come and enjoy a Thanksgiving lunch with their child. The art on the walls and some of the centerpiece displays for the tables were made by the children at the Child Development Center. We want to thank Pastor Glenda for coming over to bless our meal, our families, and our school. It was truly a wonderful day, and we are already making plans for next year!









All Aboard the Polar Express!

Our Pleasant Grove CDC is planning a fun and exciting Christmas event for the children. As a way of kicking off this very special day, they would like to provide a ride around our church campus on "The Polar Express." To accomplish this, they are in need of a tractor, a trailer, and a driver for a cruise around our campus. They would love it if the trailer could be decorated as a train or at least with a Christmas theme. This event is scheduled for Monday, December 18th, from 9:30-11:30 in the morning. If you can help them with this request, it would be greatly appreciated...and you know that you would be the one receiving the Christmas blessing!

Please call Teri Conway or Shannon Meadows at the CDC at 704.391.0835 for more information or to volunteer your time and talent.





The Recipe Box

Everybody has at least one or more fabulous cooks who bring us to the family table with mouth-watering dishes. Aunt Helen's home was our family's favorite gathering place for years. Her Orange Cookies at Christmastime were a real treat for us all! Enjoy!

Orange Cookies:

1 cup margarine, softened

1 cup sugar

1 tsp. vanilla

1 tsp. baking soda

¾ cup buttermilk

2 eggs

½ cup raisins

3 cups flour

1 tsp. baking powder

The juice and zest of one orange



Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Prepare mini muffin pans with cooking spray. Do not use paper liners. Mix all ingredients well. Drop about 2 teaspoons of batter into each cup. Bake in a 425 degree oven until brown, about 10 minutes. While baking, prepare the syrup as directed below.

Cookie Syrup

3 cups sugar 1 cup light corn syrup Juice from 4 oranges

Combine the syrup ingredients in a mixing bowl. As the cookies come out of the oven, dip each cookie, while it is still hot, into the syrup, covering the cookie completely. After dipping each in syrup, place on a sheet of BROWN paper to cool and drain. (Aunt Helen said the brown paper was very important to the moisture and tastiness of the cookies!) Store in an airtight container until ready to serve. This recipe makes about 8 dozen cookies.

---submitted by Peggy Green

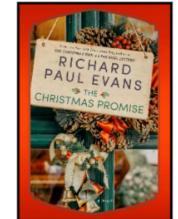
Recommended Reading

Each month throughout the year we attempt to recommend books to you for many different purposes. Sometimes we recommend something that helps you on your faith walk. At other times we might suggest something from history that informs and sheds new light on a familiar topic. And then there are times when we put something in front of you for no other reason than to entertain and delight you! But no matter the purpose behind the recommendation, we typically only give you one title for consideration. For December we are making a departure!

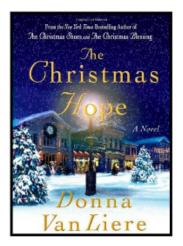
During this Christmas season we are recommending two book titles to you!

The first book is entitled <u>The Christmas Promise</u>, by Richard Paul Evans. Evans is the author of more than thirty-five novels which have all become New York Times bestsellers. You have, most likely, read at least one of his books over the years. <u>The Christmas Promise</u> is another of his heartwarming stories, a story of secrets, heartbreak, forgiveness, and the true meaning of Christmas.

On the night of her graduation from high school, Richelle Bach's Dad gives her and her identical twin sister, Michelle, matching opal necklaces. He tells them that although the opals look alike, the fire inside of them is completely unique, just like his two girls. Indeed, these two sisters couldn't be more different, and they go their separate ways as they move into adulthood. After years apart, and at their father's request, they both come home for Christmas. What happens during that visit home fractures their relationship forever, and Richelle vows never to see or speak with her sister



again. In their father's last days, he asks Richelle to forgive her sister. This turns out to be a deathbed promise that she never could fulfill. Now, alone and broken, working as a pediatric ICU nurse, Richelle has one last dream...she wants to be an author. The plot of her book-in-progress, The Prodigal Daughter, is a story based on her sister's life. (The twist on the treasured parable of The Prodigal Son really gives the reader something to think about as the story unfolds.) It's not until she meets Justin Ek, who harbors his own brand of loss, that a secret promise is brought to light, and Richelle learns that the story she is writing isn't about her sister but is truly about herself.



The second title we are recommending for December is **The Christmas Hope** by Donna VanLiere. She is the author of **The Christmas Shoes** and **The Christmas Blessing**, both treasured holiday classics. In this month's recommendation we find the story of a little girl who needs a home, the couple who takes her in, and a doctor who fulfills a person's last Christmas wish. The Addisons, Patricia and Mark, gave up long ago on the hope of having a truly meaningful Christmas. But this year, Patricia is led to a very special five-year-old girl through her responsibilities as a social worker. Against her better judgment, and against all the rules, she takes Emily into her own home for the Christmas holiday.

Through Emily's presence in their home, and her pointed and innocent questions about heaven, Mark and Patricia learn that there is no sorrow so great that faith cannot help you find your way through. And Christmas can once again be a time of warmth, faith, love, and hope for them. The Christmas Hope is a sweet tale of love in the face of incredible loss and joy when all seems without hope.

Both of these titles are quick, easy reads. They are the perfect books to snuggle up with, along with a mug of hot cocoa, within sight of the twinkling lights on your Christmas tree. You can find these two books, along with a couple of other great books centered around Christmas, in the Lending Library at Pleasant Grove. We do hope that you will borrow them, enjoy them, and be inspired by the sweetness of the stories. Happy Reading...and Merry Christmas!!!



Merry Christmas, Pleasant Grove!!!

The volunteers at Pleasant News want to wish you a very Merry Christmas! We pray that as you gather with those you love...family, neighbors, co-workers, friends, and furry friends...you will once again be overwhelmed with the realization of the incredible gift that God gave us on that first Christmas Day. God sent His Son Jesus, as a baby in a manger, to save us from our sins and to make available to us an eternal life with Him! May each Christmas Carol you sing, each meal you share, each gift you give, each light that twinkles on your tree, serve as a reminder of God's amazing love for you! And may you be so filled with Christmas Joy that you just can't help but share it with others!

Merry Christmas, Pleasant Grove, Merry Christmas!!!



Advent at The Grove

Advent is a time of preparation and waiting. As we prepare our hearts to make room for the Christ Child, we also find ourselves waiting...waiting for the promised Messiah. Because of the unique nature of this time of year, we find that we need the tenderness and sweetness of the season. We desire to worship God, who always provides, even unto our own eternal life. And we yearn to connect with those we love in deep and meaningful ways. During this Advent season, we hope that you will take advantage of the various offerings for worship and connection within the church family. Please note the date and time for each of these opportunities and go ahead and plan to be a part of Advent at The Grove!

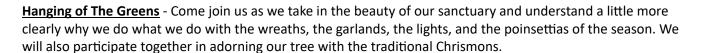
Below is a thumbnail sketch of the Advent schedule followed by an explanation of each service provided by Pastor Glenda. We hope to see you at Pleasant Grove during this beautiful season in the life of the church.

Sunday, December 3rd (First Sunday of Advent)
Sunday School at 8:45 and a special Hanging of The Greens Morning
Worship Service at 10:00 AM

Sunday, December 10th (Second Sunday of Advent)
Sunday School at 8:45 and Morning Worship at 10:00 AM
A Christmas Love Feast at 4:00 PM in the chapel

Sunday, December 17th (Third Sunday of Advent)
Sunday School at 8:45 and Morning Worship at 10:00 AM
A Blue Christmas at 4:00 PM in the chapel

Sunday December 24th (Fourth Sunday of Advent)
Christmas Eve Breakfast Fellowship at 9:00 and Morning Worship at 10:00 AM
Christmas Eve Service at 4:00 PM in the sanctuary



<u>A Christmas Love Feast</u> - The Love Feast is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry and expressing the community, the sharing, and fellowship enjoyed by the early Church. Although its origins in the early church are closely interconnected with the origins of the Lord's Supper for Holy Communion, the two services became quite distinct and should not be confused with each other. While Holy Communion has been practically universal among Christians throughout church history, the Love Feast has appeared only at certain times and among certain denominations.

The modern history of the Love Feast began when Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians in Germany introduced a service of sharing food, prayer, religious conversation, and hymns in 1727. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism first experienced it among the Moravians in Savannah, Georgia ten years later. It quickly became a feature of the Evangelical Revival and a regular part of Methodist society meetings. While Love Feasts became less frequent within Methodism in the years that followed. In recent years the practice is slowly being revived.

Because of the large number of Moravians that settled close to my hometown and remain there today, the Love Feast is a practice I have known about all my life, and I would like to share with you. Our Christmas Love Feast will feature



Moravian Love Feast Buns and Sweetened Coffee (hot chocolate for kids). Volunteers are needed to help serve at this service.

<u>A Blue Christmas Service</u> - This service is for anyone who may experience sadness or grief during the holidays, such as missing a loved one, dealing with a recent death, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with a disease that puts a question mark over the future, or any number of other human situations. During this service of acknowledgement of our sadness, we will light candles for our grief, our memories, and our courage, as well as a candle to remind us that Christ is always in the center of our lives.

<u>Christmas Eve Breakfast Fellowship</u> – Join the church family for a time of fellowship over our favorite breakfast treats, along with a cup of hot coffee or refreshing juice. Everyone is asked to bring something yummy for our table. Beverages will be provided. After we have shared in the warmth of family and the beauty of sharing, we will enter the sanctuary as we worship the Savior of the world!!!

<u>Christmas Eve Service</u> - Please join us for a traditional Christmas Eve Service of Scripture, Carols, and Candlelight...one of the sweetest times we share as a family!

Each of these Advent experiences has been designed with you in mind and in an effort to draw us all closer to the manger...closer to the Savior...closer to the One Who was, and is, and is to come! Make plans to be with your church family as often as you can during this blessed Advent season!





After School Care Post

December Greetings from Pleasant Grove's After School Care Ministry! We do hope that everyone had a happy Thanksgiving! We certainly enjoyed our time together in November. We worked on so many Thanksgiving crafts and have enjoyed having them up in our room and in the hallways. Now it's hard to believe that Christmas is so close! We will be here on campus all day during the students' Winter break. We will have a lot of Christmas-themed projects and crafts for the children to enjoy. Then...we will kick off the New Year!!!



We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! If you find yourself going "over the river" or "through the woods" or anywhere else, we wish you good health and safe travels!

---submitted by Sherrie Cannon and the After School Care Staff



Just for Giggles!













