

## Pastor's Pen

### Our Source of Strength



Thanksgiving was a wonderful day for our family. The weather was lovely, the table bountiful, and the fellowship meaningful...65 of us. A first cousin from the Netherlands, and his partner, travelled the farthest last week to be present, contributing spanakopita to the ever expanding "traditional spread". Since no food item has been removed from the annual feast list (isn't that in some Thanksgiving bylaws document Lincoln wrote), we will need to select someone to keep the spanakopita coming; or have it shipped from Amsterdam.

Speaking of traditions, the family football game happened, which I survived, we all survived, without injury; a family basketball game on the day after, not so much. I am clearly in hobble mode. Just ahead of Kobe Bryant, I announced my hardcourt retirement; unlike Kobe mine was effective immediately.

Hobbling is not my preferred reality, but it does offer a metaphoric window into a prominent global condition. Terrorism, domestic and abroad, has caused many to hobble (physically, emotionally, spiritually) due to injury and grief, others through fear and existential crisis. Too, it entices nations and people to redirect precious resources and abandon fundamental values, making otherwise stable folks and communities vulnerable and weakened.

Yet, the biggest concern may be how tempting it is in the face of world events to abandon core theological beliefs and faith convictions (theological hobbling). Though it may be more lore than fact that Martin Luther said "Here I stand I can do no other" when pressed to renounce his writings and the faith statements therein, what is actually recorded reveals a man who did indeed stand firm on his beliefs. Hobble he did not.

Reflecting on this temptation, I remembered the wrestling match between Hercules and Antaeus in Greek mythology. Antaeus the giant, son of Poseidon (god of the sea) and Gaea (goddess of the earth), lived in Libya and required everyone who entered the country to wrestle him. He was seemingly invincible; even Hercules with his superior strength struggled, sensing that Antaeus only got stronger every time Hercules threw him to the ground. Eventually Hercules realized that Antaeus gained his strength from his mother, the earth, so rather than try to pin him to the ground, he crushed him with a bear hug in the air.

I can draw several connections between this myth and current storylines but I choose the one about source of strength. The Judeo Christian narrative is one that weaves love of God and love of neighbor into the fabric of covenant life. Followers of Jesus Christ have concrete example of sacrificial love and radical non-violence. Covenant life thrives when the people of faith are in deepest communion with God and right relationship with neighbor; Jesus is faithful in every circumstance by giving himself completely to the will of God.

I would simply raise the caution that we, as a people of the Christian faith, not allow ourselves to be cut off from the source of our strength: God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Having entered the liturgical season of Advent, we are once again immersed in the proclamation that hope is realized and fear cast out through the birth of Jesus. That the sublime gift of God's incarnate love in Christ Jesus offers a peaceable kingdom awaiting our embrace.

As we move through this holy season together, may we exercise our faith by tending to the means of grace that strengthen the body of Christ, may we stand firm in the theology that all people are created by God and loved by God, and may we eagerly return in our hearts to the manger in Bethlehem to behold love incarnate, love divine. Let us fall down on our knees in devotion and commitment to the source of our life and strength, and then may we rise to walk without hobbling in the way that leads to peace.

Peter van Eys

## Up-Coming Events

### Cool Yule

Join us for Cool Yule at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, **December 6**, for a fun night of Christmas favorites. Snack potluck follows, and casual dress is encouraged.

### Children's Christmas Musical

The children (and some youth) of Crieveview have been working long and hard to bring you the highlight of the Christmas season! **Starry Night; Noisy Night**, the children's Christmas musical, tells the story of the birth of Jesus from the perspective of the animals in the stable. If you are ready for a night of joyous music from the mouths of babes (and chickens, sheep, cows, dogs, and cats...) then be sure to see **Starry Night; Noisy Night**, here for one night only on **December 9th**. We are excited to present this Christmas musical and hope you will attend!

### Parents' Night Out Fundraiser

The Youth will host a Parents' Night Out on **December 4** from 6-9 p.m. Drop the kids off for games, crafts, dinner, and a movie while you go out for dinner, shop, or just get some rest. The Youth are asking for a donation to the youth ministry in exchange for this night of childcare. Reservations are required.

### Caroling in Crieve Hall

Join us **December 20** at 4:00 p.m. as we load the "Big Red Bus" and head out into the Crieve Hall neighborhood for caroling. Carolers are invited back to the church for a Chili Supper immediately following. In order to insure space on the bus and an ample amount of chili, please RSVP to Leigh Ann Cate at 615.832.2897 OR [leighanncate@crievewoodumc.org](mailto:leighanncate@crievewoodumc.org) OR Sharon Ferrell at [director@crievewoodumc.org](mailto:director@crievewoodumc.org).



### Celebrate the Season

The Chancel Choir will share a musical gift with us on Sunday, **December 20**, at the traditional service as the choir presents their Christmas cantata, **One Holy Night**. Nursery and Children's Church will be offered. Please plan to attend this special Christmas worship.

## Missions

### 61st Avenue UMC Last Minute Toy Store

The United Methodist Men are once again inviting you to help support the 61st Avenue UMC Last Minute Toy Store. This ministry creates opportunities for low income children and youth in Davidson County to receive age appropriate toys. In 2014, 61st Avenue UMC served over 5,000 children and youth from 1,500 families! New, unwrapped toys and other age-appropriate gifts in the \$10 - \$25 price range are needed for ages newborn to eighteen. Gifts for all ages are helpful, but in the past we have had a special need for items for teenagers and toddlers. Donations will be received in the church narthex until December 13.

### The Contributor Newspaper

*The Contributor* newspaper will look a little different this holiday season. The newspaper will be composed of sheets of wrapping paper designed by the talented vendors themselves. The special wrapping paper editions are available through the month of December. Please support these vendors by purchasing a newspaper.

## Open Table Nashville

Winter is coming and the homeless population in our community need help. This year, CUMC will be gathering items for winter survival kits to be handed out to the homeless. Beginning **November 29<sup>th</sup>**, a Giving Table will be located in the Narthex to receive your donations. You have the opportunity to donate an entire kit or pieces of a kit. Each kit will contain: an emergency blanket; a warm sleeping bag (preferably rated 10° or lower) or warm blankets; a tarp (8 x 10 or larger); hand and foot warmers; warm socks; warm gloves; high protein snacks; and water. Many homeless are pet owners so pet food is also welcome. We will deliver the donated items to Open Table Nashville the week of December 14<sup>th</sup>.

## Caramel Corn

Charlie's homemade caramel corn will be in the narthex on Sunday, **December 20**. Purchase this treat as a Christmas delight or half-time snack for your favorite game. Proceeds from this sale go to youth missions.



## Activities

### Men's Breakfast

#### December 12th

Don't forget the Men's Club breakfast at 8 a.m.; December includes country ham!

Our speaker will be Wade Munday with Tennessee Justice for our Neighbors (JFON) Ministry [<http://www.tnjfon.org/>].

### Wednesday Night Live

Wednesday Night Live begins with dinner at 5:45 pm. Menus for the last two Fall WNL dinners are listed below. The cost is \$8 per adult, \$5 per child 3-8 years old, free for ages 2 and under, and \$25 family max.

**December 2** - Meatloaf, mashed potatoes, black-eyed peas, and green beans

Serving on 12/2 —Searchers Class

**December 9** - Chicken and dressing casserole, green beans, fresh cranberries, rolls, and special desserts

Serving on 12/9 —Young Spirits

#### Program on December 2-

6:15-7:00 p.m.-Preschoolers meet in Room 116 for Art and Bible time.

6:15-7:00 p.m.-School-age children meet in the Choir room upstairs.

6:30-7:00 p.m.-Meditative service, *Called by God*, in the Builders' Classroom.

#### Program on December 9-

6:30 p.m.—The children will present their annual Christmas musical,  
***Starry Night; Noisy Night***

### JOY Club

On Thursday, **December 10**, JOY Club will tour and eat lunch at Shadowbrook, an English Tudor mansion in Joelton. Reservations are required. Please bring \$4 for the van.

# Children's Corner

## Nursery Schedule:

	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Shift</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Shift</u>
December 6	Christy and Kellyanne Shaw	Sheryl Roos and Bekah Cates
December 13	Kim Boyce and Adele White	Kim and Glynnis Boyce
December 20	Bob and Mary Bryan	Chris and Joe Carter

## Child Care Center

The last bag of rubber mulch made it to the toddler playground thanks to the effort of some of our volunteers this past Sunday morning. Our preschool children have been busy spreading the mulch using bare hands, dump trucks, buckets, and shovels. It may not be the most efficient method, but it is certainly great fun if you are under the age of 5.

### STAFF

We welcome Betty Hunter as our new assistant teacher in the two year-old room and are excited to have some of our summer teachers and Connor Boyce joining us during their Christmas breaks. **We are still in need of permanent afternoon teachers to work the 2:00 to 6:00 afternoon shift starting in January. Please consider and share the need with anyone you know who might be interested.**

### WISH LIST

OLD towels, beach towels or bath towels. (We are on an aggressive toy washing campaign, and we need the towels to spread the toys out for drying.)

## Other Items

### Gather and Grow – 2016

Thanks to all who have submitted Commitment Cards for 2016! We are blessed to have such faithful financial support of the mission and ministry of Crieewood UMC. **Gather and Grow** is our theme for living into what God has in mind for this congregation. If you have not yet sent in a Commitment Card, I hope you will prayerfully consider doing so. We are blessed to be a blessing.