

The Messenger Monthly

A PUBLICATION OF ANNISTON FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
DECEMBER VOLUME 46 / NUMBER 24

Anniston First United Methodist Church
1400 Noble Street
P.O. Box 1789, Anniston, AL 36202
phone 256/236-5605
fax 256/236-5426
web www.annistonfirst.org
e-mail fumc@annistonfirst.org



The Messenger Monthly is published monthly by Anniston First United Methodist Church



ANGEL FOOD



GROCERIES WITH GRACE



COMMUNITY ENABLER



PAWS

A Giving Church

I hope that all of you had the opportunity to experience God's very real presence during our recent Unity Service on November 22. It was indeed one of those very special days of worship. I believe that everyone present was moved by the power of all of the testimonies shared, as well as the sense that the Holy Spirit was with us in the service.

In particular, I was moved by Dr. John Edwards' testimony. It reminded me of something that Sara, Todd and I noticed when we first visited this church as a young military family in 1975. On that first visit, we felt genuine warmth, real Christian love and a giving spirit. While we were impressed by the spirituality of individual members, we were equally impressed by the way that the congregation as a whole put faith into action. Members seemed to be committed not only to helping their fellow members but to reaching out to their neighbors in the local community and the world.

First Methodist provided a study hall at Glen Addie, provided volunteers for Meals on Wheels, Interfaith Ministries, and Community Enabler, as well as doing outreach through Camp Lee. We heard about the mis-

sion work of Dr. Glen and Lena Eshtruth in Africa as well as that of other missionaries supported by FUMC.

Throughout the years, we have seen this Church support new ministries like the Soup Bowl, PAWS ministry, Habitat for Humanity, and Volunteers in Mission, while continuing to support JSU Wesley Foundation, Birmingham Southern, the Methodist Children's Home, Camp Sumatanga, Disaster Relief and World Service. Today, we have even more opportunities to do God's work with Angel Food Ministry, Groceries with Grace, Meals of Mercy, Knitting for Peace and many more.

Often it may seem that our stewardship emphasis only focuses on commitment of our financial resources. However, our call to Christian stewardship involves much more. It extends equally to a commitment of our prayers, presence, time and talents.

Our Church remains a giving church and today it provides even greater opportunities for us to give beyond ourselves, to share with others, and to be Christ's disciplines in the world. If you want to give, there are plenty of ways to do it. Won't you commit your prayers, presence, time and talents and be a part of a Giving Church?
..... written by Mickey Starling



We at First United Methodist Church are truly blessed with dedicated, capable staff members who help our clergy meet the daily needs of the congregation and community.

The Staff Parish Relations Committee encourages you to thank our staff for their great support during this joyous season. Please make a point of saying thank you, sending a card, and making a love offering to them. If you wish to make a donation, please designate it for Staff Christmas Offering.

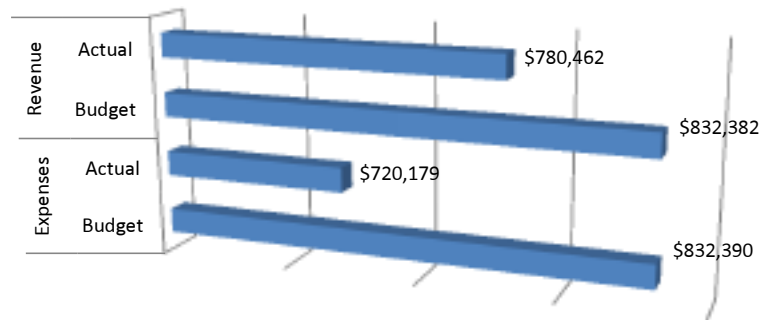
- God bless us everyone.

- 2009 Staff:
- Rev. Hal Noble
 - Rev. Brandon Harris
 - Louise Ballenger
 - Stacy Booth
 - Teddy Caldwell
 - Laura Fuller
 - Kevin McDade
 - Kathy Murphy
 - William Murray
 - The Nursery Staff
 - Joe Ragland
 - Laura Reaves
 - Colleen Roberts
 - Jim Roberts
 - Sandra Spillman
 - Diane Wood

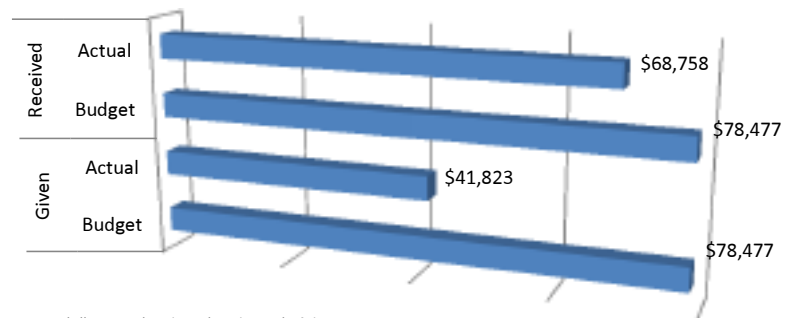
Financial Stewardship - November



Financial Stewardship - Year-to-date



Missions Report - Year-to-date*



*Some missions dollars are distributed at the end of the year

Year-End Contribution Rules

As you plan your giving for December and January, the following guidelines may be helpful in determining your tax liability. This is for informational purposes only and is not offered as tax advice. As with all tax questions, consult with your accountant or tax attorney. Unless otherwise noted, the chart below applies regardless of the date on your check or contribution envelope.

	Counts in 2009	Counts in 2010
Dropped in the offering plate on Dec. 27, 2009	✓	
Dropped in the offering plate on Jan. 3, 2010		✓
Mailed with a postmark on or before Dec. 31, 2009	✓	
Mailed with a postmark on or After Jan. 2 (Jan 1 is a postal holiday), 2010		✓
Brought to the church office dated with a current date or a date in the past.	Counts in the year the donation is dropped off.	
Brought to the church office with a future date (postdated)	Counts in the year the donation is dated.	

He Does Not Forsake His Faithful Ones

The Vespers Psalm for Sunday Nearest to November 16
He Does Not Forsake His Faithful Ones

Sunday, November 15th began with the following Vespers Psalm:

*Our steps are directed by the Lord; he strengthens those in whose way he delights.
If they stumble, they shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds them by the hand.
I have been young and now I am old, but never have I seen the righteous forsaken,
or their children begging bread.
The righteous are always generous in their lending, and their children shall be a blessing.
Turn from evil, and do good, and dwell in the land for ever.
For the Lord loves justice; he does not forsake his faithful ones.
They shall be kept safe for ever, but the offspring of the wicked shall be destroyed.
The righteous shall possess the land and dwell in it for ever.
The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and their tongue speaks what is right.
The law of their God is in their heart, and their footsteps shall not falter.*

The Refrain

*It is better to rely on the Lord than to put any trust in flesh.
It is better to rely on the Lord than to put any trust in rulers.*

(from: The Divine Hours - Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime by Phyllis Tickle)

From 6:00pm Sunday the 15th, to the worship hour of Sunday the 22nd, I was dedicated to prayer and fasting for AFUMC, the people and churches of this region and our Conference. I confess I did not begin this time of spiritual discipline willingly, nevertheless, I set out what I believe God was calling me to do. By Thursday of that week, the “noise” in my mind was subsiding and I was more able to focus on the readings and prayers of the Office of Hours. The week became shorter and the previous thoughts of “how am I going to do this” changed to, “I need to

find a way for this to continue.” Therefore, my first focus is upon prayer and fasting, each Thursday. From 6:00am till 6:00pm the Chapel will be open. The Office of Hours will be available in the Chapel Narthex as a guide throughout the day. The next focus is upon our being the Body of Christ for downtown Anniston. Beginning Wednesday, January 6th and every Wednesday following, the Chapel will be open from Noon until 1:00 p.m. A service of Holy Communion will begin at 12:15pm.

... continued on page 5



**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24
SANCTUARY 5:00 PM**

What an evening of great joy as we anticipate the arrival of Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus! Holy Communion is served at this candlelight service and a variety of music will be presented 30 minutes prior to the service with more music during our worship.

Church Health Team Continues to Work

Listening Sessions Provided Needed Input

As you recall, the Church Health Team (CHT) has been actively seeking to incorporate ideas and suggestions from members of all three services to enable each worshipper to gain a greater degree of spiritual inspiration from worship. This endeavor, which began in May, 2009, with the survey that indicated our worship area needed attention, led to the five October listening sessions. The results are in! These findings indicate that we are already doing many things effectively, and some just need “tweaking.”

These four areas came from the Listening Sessions:

1. We need to prepare ourselves personally ahead of time to have a worshipful experience that is inspiring. This preparedness can take many forms—prayer, accessing Hal’s sermon topics and scripture from the Internet, and making worship a focused priority in our lives. People need to feel a part of the service. Hal and Brandon are already doing this by having the leaders of the church assisting in worship. The CHT will be developing some added helps that will be made available to everyone to assist in preparing for worship.

2. One of our great strengths in worship is music—the Chancel Choir, The Early Bird Choir, the Praise Band, the children’s and youth choirs, the solos in voice and instrument, plus the many musical programs presented to the community. Some concern has been expressed about the services’ including music that is unfamiliar to the worshippers. The CHT anticipates addressing this issue with a multi-faceted effort. Since the music is selected purposefully to contribute to and enhance the message of the day, you can expect to find new venues by which to learn more about the music and why it was selected for the serv-

ice, along with ways to learn the hymns and songs so that no one feels left out when they are sung. Remember, all music was unfamiliar to us at one time.

3. The small groups of Bible study and other classes, circles, men’s club, knitting classes, mission projects, etc., are fertile ground for inspiring meaningful worship. The worship experience and these activities within the church are mutually enhancing spiritual endeavors. Their size and informal atmosphere can provide a good opportunity to invite new members or potential members to come to worship. And worship can often inspire people to become engaged in these small groups. The CHT will be focusing in the future on ways to connect the corporate worship with these small groups and vice versa.

4. More cohesiveness among the three worship services is needed. We have made significant progress in intentional hospitality, although there is always room for improvement. The Unity Service was wonderful in bringing all together and reminds us that although we worship in three distinctive groups, we really are one congregation—one Body of Christ. The CHT is interested in developing new paths of interconnect- edness that brings all three groups into greater harmony for our common purpose of making more disciples of Jesus Christ.

If you have additional comments or ideas, we welcome them. Feel free to contact one of the CHT committee members: Clint McReynolds, Sterling Rait, Becky Ledford, Joyce French, Lee London, Jim Williams, Becky Hollingsworth, Rita Flegel, Jennifer Senter, or Tom Smith.

- *Written by Joyce French*

He Does Not Forsake His Faithful Ones

During this time of prayer, I sought guidance for leadership in worship, stewardship, discipleship and spiritual disciplines. I was reminded over and over again that when I love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, that worship, stewardship, discipleship and spiritual disciplines become expressions of my love for Him. It is out of my personal experience and expressions of devotion that I am better able to provide leadership in these areas. Therefore, I share the following:

1. Worship – Individual and Corporate

- a. Focus on the Glory of God
Transforming power of the Holy Spirit to be both transformed and transforming
 - i. Leadership Round Table recommend to Church Conference in January worship schedule *
 - ii. Church Conference vote on worshipping schedule
 - iii. Lenten focus on God shaping and molding us to be His vessels
 - iv. Easter Sunday celebrate the Resurrected Christ
 - v. Second Sunday of Easter begin new worship schedule inclusive of results of the Church Health Team listening sessions enhancing worship of God

2. Stewardship – Resources and time

- a. Giving in response to God's call to give for the Building of His Kingdom and not building of the Church budget
- b. Debt retirement – pay off quickly. Every dollar that goes toward interest is a dollar that is not going to our mission and ministry
- c. 100% support of our fair share of Conference Mission and Ministry...step of faith for 2009 and goal for 2010 Practice as a church what we ask others to do...tithing as a Church connected to sister United Methodist Churches – a shared mission
- d. Time – provide on-going opportunities for everyone to become involved in mission and ministry – deemphasizing

time spent in meetings and more time focused upon the mission of the Church – making disciples

3. Discipleship – Members and Region

- a. Involves each member being disciples who make disciples
- b. When we become the church's mission, that is when the church grows
 - i. Develop Sunday visitation to guests and Monday evening visitation to inactive members and prospects
- c. Communicate who we are as the Body of Christ and God's call for us as a community of believers in mission and ministry
- d. Focus on further developing small discipleship groups – new Sunday School Classes – Home Bible Studies and Prayer groups – "Sunday School" classes not just on Sunday and at the Church. Provide opportunities for Disciple Bible groups

4. Spiritual Disciplines

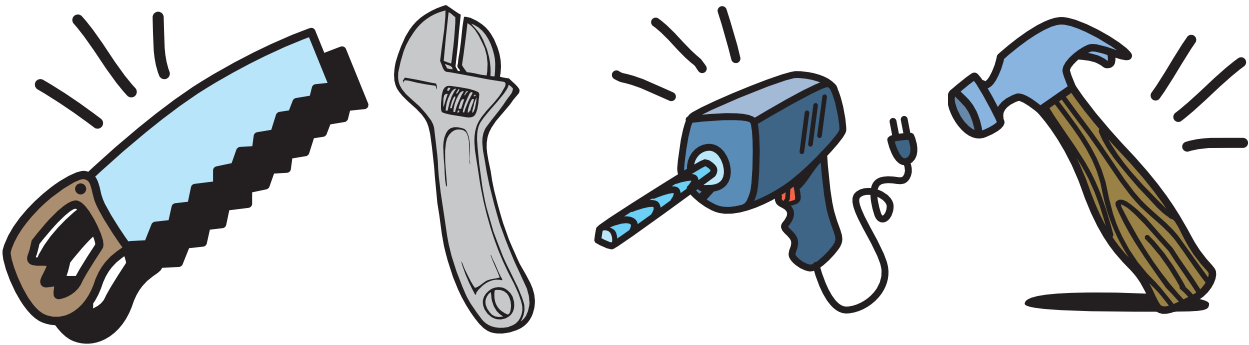
- a. Lead by example
 - i. Focus on a life of devotion, not a daily devotional
 1. Prayer and fasting
 2. Worship individual and corporate
 3. Giving of self to others using gifts, talents and resources
 4. Reading and writing journal and other writings

Thank you for your prayer support during this season of change for myself and for our church. It will take each of us, praying and working together to become God's future church for all of His creation in this region and beyond. **- Hal Noble**

* Result of decreased revenue due to debt service; decrease in membership and worship attendance; will not have associate pastor as of June 1, 2010.



WANTED



The Church is in need of some basic hand tools to be kept on site for minor repairs. Items such as hammers, screwdrivers, wrenches, pliers, small tool box, drill, etc., are needed. If anyone has extras that they care to donate, please bring them to the church office.

Volunteers at work!

Holiday Decorations at The Bridge
Trees were put up by Scott & Cheri Hamilton and Brandon & Jennifer Harris. The Yim family, Sandra Spillman, the Hamilton Kids, the Murray family and others helped too.

The lobby tree was decorated by the Oasis Sunday School class. The Bridge tree was decorated by Cheri Hamilton, Rhonda Smith, Jennifer Murray, Melanie Griffis and Kyra & Ethan Fuller.

The Youth made the alcove arrangements and helped tote the heavy boxes around, so a BIG thanks to them, too!!!

Office Cleaning
Emily Seagle, Yvonne Alt, Lanelle Phillips and Sara Sloan have been going through stacks of old items in church offices and closets. They are doing an excellent job, so when you see them, please thank them for their hard work.

Help Wanted

A church member to coordinate and help prepare meals for Wednesday Night Discipleship

We are in need of someone to take this over beginning in January. If you have enjoyed the meals and the time of fellowship and learning, please consider stepping forward for this important ministry of hospitality.

Commitment would be to Wednesday lunch and/or dinner and would involve coordinating meals, reservations, and overseeing preparations.

Pastor Hal Noble or Brandon Harris would welcome the opportunity to speak with anyone who interested in serving.
(256) 236-5605

AM AHL: a small opera with a big message



Kimberlee Taylor and Caleb LaFollette

Is there life after the production of Amahl and the Night Visitors?

I am so very blessed to be able to work with such talented and giving musicians. I've already received the best Christmas gift by the cast and crew of this magnificent work.

Caleb (Amahl) and I actually began working late July for an hour every week. Caleb has always been a very quick study. I know this from our past years of children's musicals. He not only memorizes his part but everyone else's. He proved this quite often when we would rehearse with the Kings and Mother! The composer, Gian-Carlo Menotti strongly insists that the part of Amahl be played by a boy. I've been fortunate in the three productions I've directed through the years to have had young boys perform the part but NONE as excellent as "K" (Caleb)! Special thanks to his entire family, including "Duke" (the LaFollette's pet dog) who was lovingly named Caleb's understudy, for the at-home direction.

Kimberlee Taylor (Mother) experienced new "heights" of glorious sound in this role and created lots of "goose-bumps" and crying on the part of the audience. I love it when a plan comes together!!!

The Kings and Page were such a regal, yet humorous, quartet. A few JSU professors had lumps in their throats as they heard their students' brilliant vocal and theatrical performance. It just continues to prove the awesome power of the Word in Song.

The dancers under the direction of Lynne Burgess were fun to watch and made me want to take lessons again! The chorus of shepherds and villagers are my family of Chancel Choir members with whom I work week after week sharing the joy of serving Christ through song. I thank them for adding to their already hectic Christmas music schedule one more opportunity for our church family and community to experience this Holy Season.

Is there life after the production of Amahl and the Night Visitors? Yes....It has reminded me in a deeper, sweeter way of the Hope who has a name.....Jesus.

*Serving Christ with You...
Kathy Murphy
Director of Music Ministries*



Paige Jones, Jean Flanders, and Becky Brown



*Ellen Hardy, Korie Burgess,
Kyra Fuller, and Claire Craig*

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas

Becky Hollingsworth says the Chrismon trees were done in record time, thanks to all the willing workers! She thanks Nancy Grace, Jim Gray, Vera Jordan, Robert Jackson, Jerry Leake, Anna Dowler, Linda and Dave Dostie, Susan Cook, Katie Collins, John White, Donna Bankson, Linda Smith, Robin Cooper, Rosemary Hollingsworth and Everette Studdard for their decorating talents! In fact, we all need to thank them as we enjoy the trees' beauty throughout the holiday season!



Rosemary Hollingsworth helped decorate the tree in the Sanctuary Narthex.



Jim Gray and Dave Dostie placed the ornaments on the Chapel tree.



Donna Bankson, Anna Dowler and Susan Cook worked together on the Chapel tree.

Family Advent Festival • The Gift of Christmas



Each group worked together and performed "The Little Drummer Boy."



Garth Saunders was in charge of Advent wreaths.

Celebrating and Honoring Others

BUILDING FUND

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, given by Les and Marjorie Pair, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas C. Pope, Jr.

In honor of Rev. Hal Noble and Rev. Woodfin Grove, given by the Family of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman.

In memory of Mr. Larry Sylvester, given by Mannon and Donna Bankson, Sandy Wingo, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Pope, Larry and Linda Harvey, David and Margaret Copeland, Dr. and Mrs. John A. Edwards, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Terry Preston, Jim and Jana Tyson.

In memory of Mrs. Bonnie Jackson, Mr. Bruce Merrell, and Mr. Larry Sylvester, given by Arthur and Patsy Young.

In memory of Mr. John Comer, given by Jim and Jana Tyson.

In honor of Rev. and Mrs. Woodfin Grove, given by Jim and Jana Tyson.

In honor of Joe and Margaret Conyers, given by Jim and Jana Tyson.

In memory of Mrs. Bonnie Jackson and Bruce Merrell, given by David and Margaret Copeland.

GENERAL BUDGET FUND

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, given by Jay Pumroy and Lori Brown-James, and John and Dowdy Miller.

In honor of Rev. and Mrs. Woodfin Grove, given by Vernon and Shirley Thompson.

In memory of Mrs. Bonnie Jackson, given by Joan and Irvin Rentz.

MUSIC FUND

In honor of Mrs. Kathy Murphy and Mr. Jim Roberts, given by the Family of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman.

In memory of Mr. Bruce Merrell, given by Dr. and Mrs. John A. Edwards, Jr., Mr. Tom Coleman, Yvonne Alt.

In memory of Mrs. Bonnie Jackson, given by Lowery Sunday School Class.

MEMORIAL FUND

In memory of Mr. Weyman Eugene Callaway, given by Stanley Woodall, Susan Dominick.

In memory of Mrs. Bonnie Jackson, given by Kathy F. Lane, Vernon and Shirley Thompson.

In memory of Mr. Larry Sylvester, given by Janelle Sellers Cassidy, Fred Hollis and Janice Hollis, Jennifer Miller, Mr. Tom Coleman, Paul and Nancy Locke, Dianne and Ken Nunnally, Elise and Phillip Sanguinetti, Marshall and Kathy Ridlehoover, Lou and Bobby Kennamer, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Gann, Mr. and Mrs. J. Michael Monroe, The Armtzen Family, Margaret Tucker, Phoenix VIII Association, Inc., Marcella Tucker, Rob and Martha Langford, Duane and Virginia Shomber, Joe and Jerry McGaugh, Wakefield's, Inc., H. D. Whitlow, Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Potts, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Granacher, Mr. and

Mrs. Peter Smerick, Bruce and Ann Nyman, Mr. and Mrs. William T. Howle, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Hudgel, John Dick and Lucia Galloway Dick, Pet and Ann Morgan, Bob and Kelli Sligh, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Edwards, Jr., Vernon and Shirley Thompson, Noble Bank and Trust, N.A., Anita and Julian Jenkins, Mr. and Mrs. John P. Wheeler, Dr. and Mrs. S. Rush Smith, Dr. and Mrs. Dan Fockele, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hamilton, Yvonne Alt.

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, given by Mr. and Mrs. Ken Hoffman, Joe and Bob Propst.

MEMORIAL GENERAL BUDGET FUND

In memory of Mr. Weyman Eugene Callaway, given by Coleman and Ebie Brown, and Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Waldrop, Jr.,

MUSIC FUND

In memory of Mr. Bruce Merrell, given by Rebecca B. Stewart, Mr. David H. Best, Jr.

In memory of Mr. Larry Sylvester, given by Mr. David H. Best, Jr.

In honor of Sara Collins, given by Kathy and Steve Murphy.

In memory of Mrs. Bonnie Jackson and Mr. Bruce Merrell, given by Kathy and Steve Murphy.

ORGAN FUND

In memory of Mrs. Bonnie Jackson, given by Marvin and Catherine Burke.

In memory of Mr. Bruce Merrell, given by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Yim, and The Chancel Choir.

In memory of Mr. George W. Connors, III and Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, given by Marjorie Broadnax.

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, given by Augusta and Scott Andrews, Kathy and Steve Murphy, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Alverson, Jack and Ann Hadder, Parnassus Study Club, Martha S. McNaron, Donald L. Kemp, Anniston Bridge Association, Vernon and Shirley Thompson, Jim and Jana Tyson.

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman and Mr. Larry Sylvester, given by John and Camilla Payne.

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, Mrs. Bonnie Jackson, Mr. Bruce Merrell, Mr. Mickey Stewart, and Mr. Larry Sylvester, given by Judy and Lee London.

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, Mr. Larry Sylvester, and Mr. George W. Connors, III., given by Dr. and Mrs. John Morrow.

In memory of Mrs. Jeanne Coleman, Mr. Larry Sylvester, and Mr. George W. Connors, given by Earlon and Betty McWhorter.

HAL CLEVELAND SCHOLARSHIP

In memory of Mr. Weyman Eugene Callaway and Mrs. Bonnie Jackson, given by Les and Marjorie Pair.

Annisston First United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 1789
Anniston, AL 36202

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The Monthly Messenger
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Making disciples of Christ by being disciples of Christ

Join us for Worship and Fellowship

Sunday School	9:30 Sunday
Worship in the Chapel	8:30 Sunday
Worship in the Bridge	10:30 Sunday
Worship in the Sanctuary	10:30 Sunday
Youth Group	5:00 Sunday

Special Dates:

December 13

O Holy Night, 6:00pm Sanctuary

December 14

Camp Lee Board meeting
Grove Dining Hall, 6:00pm

December 16

Chancel Choir & friends go caroling
Meet at the church at 4:00pm/4:30pm at NHC Place

December 19

Angel Food pick-up day 8:00am in the Bridge

December 20

Youth Christmas Party 5:00pm

December 21-25

The Children's Place closed

December 23-25

Church office closed

DECEMBER 24

**Candlelight Christmas Eve service
in the Sanctuary, 5:00pm**

DECEMBER 25

Merry Christmas

January 1, 2010

Church office closed

January 10, 2010

Youth Choir starts back 4:00pm
Youth Group starts back 5:00pm

January 13, 2010

Children's Choirs start back 4:30pm/5:15pm
Wednesday Night Classes begin

January 17, 2010

Confirmation Class meets
Bridge B102, 5:00pm