When God Comes Down

“If only you would tear open the heavens and come down!” Isaiah 64:11

The season of Advent begins Sunday, November 30. This Advent we are focusing on the times in life When God Comes Down. Our source is Rev. Jim Harnish’s Advent study by the same name. In the introduction, Rev. Harnish writes, “Advent is the season in which we watch, wait, and prepare to bear witness to the coming of the true light of God’s presence in Jesus Christ. Through worship, Scripture, and prayer, we train our eyes to see what the world never sees so that in the hubbub of the holidays, we are prepared to celebrate a ‘holy day’—the day when God came down among us in human flesh.” p 5.

This December we will slow down and hear from the Prophets, from Joseph and Mary, from Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the Innkeeper. We will hear how in moments of desperation, confusion, busy-ness, and trying to do the “right” thing, God comes to His children, and in coming God brings hope, promise, joy, light, and salvation. The season of Advent is a time to prepare our hearts to receive the gift of Christ anew into our lives. We slow down and listen to the moments in history when God breaks in and offers His love and grace.

I invite you to join us in worship this month to experience the presence of God as we open our lives to the in-breaking of God’s Spirit and love. We will have special music, readings with the lighting of the Advent wreath, and testimonies of how God’s promises have been fulfilled in people’s lives. Our schedule this month is:

November 30, First Sunday of Advent
Waiting Isaiah 64:1-3 & Luke 1:5-80

December 7, Second Sunday of Advent
Faithful Matthew 1:18-25

December 14, Third Sunday in Advent
Meeting Luke 1:26-38

December 21, Fourth Sunday in Advent
No Vacancy Luke 2:1-7

December 24, Christmas Eve 9:30 pm Worship
God Came Down Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20

During Advent we are also meeting in small groups to read and study together When God Comes Down. We have groups meeting on Sunday mornings at 9:30 am, Monday evenings at 7:00 pm, Tuesday afternoons at 2:00 pm, and evenings at 7:00 pm, and Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm. Call the church office to sign up. Books are $7.00 and can be purchased in the church office.

Join with your church family this Advent season to prepare for the coming of Christ and to experience the joy of praising God for promises kept and lives transformed. See you Sunday!
Pastor Amy
Discipleship Pathway Offerings for December

When God Comes Down

5 Week Advent Study

Multiple Groups begin meeting the week of November 30
Sunday morning, Monday evening, Tuesday afternoon,
Tuesday evening, Wednesday evening

Cost: $7.00

The Case for Christmas

Independent Study for Advent

Cost: $3.00

For all classes: childcare, transportation, and scholarships are available if needed.
Registration forms are at the Connection Center, or you can call or email the church office to register.
Living Generously

I want to thank everyone for your participation in October in the “Living Generously” series. Our time spent together in the small group gatherings and in worship experiences allowed each of us a chance to refocus on Christian values and the biblical model of generous living.

I am happy to report that our Commitment Sunday results demonstrate that many have begun to chart a course for their own journey of generosity. Of those who made a pledge of their financial commitments for 2015, 34% reflected an increase over this year. These numbers, along with the support of many who give regularly but choose not to pledge, show a projected income increase of approximately $11,000 for 2015.

This year we have faced some unforeseen circumstances which have resulted in our finances being very tight. However, you have been very faithful and gradually we are recovering.

The Stewardship and Finance Committee will be preparing the 2015 budget in December. With your continuing generosity, every ministry, program, and item in that budget will be fully supported. Hallelujah! God is good!!

Roger Thompson

for the Stewardship and Finance Committee
Present: Bev Stuck, Lowell Martin, Frank Montgomery, Ricki Wenger, Pastor Amy Covington, Chris Covington, Roger Thompson, Nancy Thompson

Pastor Amy shared devotions and communion with the members in the chapel before the meeting.

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as read.
2. Treasurer: Lowell reported for Aaron that the finances are going well and we are getting caught up with our Conference tithe. Kids First finances are improving also.
3. Children’s Ministry: Amy reported for Annette, who is on vacation, that we are having about 25 children coming on Sunday. The children prepared bags for the Golden Meadows Thanksgiving service.
4. Evangelism: Ricki reported for the Hospitality Committee that we need more helpers for the Sunday morning coffee and donut service. She said there is a tree in the narthex with names of 30 children for whom we can purchase Christmas gifts. The gifts need to be turned in by Dec. 1. On Dec. 17 there will be decorations for the Wednesday night meal, gift bags and crafts for the children, and Bibles for the adults.
5. Worship: Amy said they are looking at new visuals and liturgical dance possibilities. Worship planning teams for each service will begin in the new year. Mary Witte will begin providing the music and working with the praise team for first service.
6. Hope Chest: Lowell said donations are coming in and sales are going fairly well. Sixteen Christmas Jars have been distributed to collection points around town. They will need names for recipients.
7. Kids First: Bev reported that there were 68 parents in attendance for the first Parents meeting.
8. Trustees: Frank reported that we are looking at installing a drop box for people to put things into the office when it is closed. He said we are waiting for news from FHA regarding the mortgage on the Cross Pointe property.
9. Other business: Amy explained the new leadership structure we are considering. It would be a single board structure consisting of around 13 members and the pastor. It would become the governing body consisting of finance, trustees, staff parish, nominations, lay leader, youth and young adult representatives, treasurer, and leaders of the connect, grow, serve ministries. As the proposal is finalized there will be a presentation to the congregation in the spring. The purpose is to allow members more time to be in ministry rather than in meetings. Mike Pettibone, as the new council chairperson will plan a retreat in January to set goals. Amy said our role is to pray for God’s leading and if this is where God wants us to go.
10. Next meeting is Dec. 16 to approve our 2015 budget.
11. Roger closed the meeting with prayer.
Thank You Notes . . .

Thank you all for your kind words of encouragement and gifts for Pastor Appreciation Month. Your care and prayers mean a lot to us.

Pastor Harold and Joy

Thank you “Double Blessing” teams. What an awesome year it has been. If you would like to join the “Double Blessing” team and be blessed contact Pastor Harold.

A big thank you goes to everyone who helped decorate the church inside and out for the Advent season. Merry Christmas and God Bless!

First United Methodist Church:

I would like to extend a very gracious thank you for all who participated in the Veterans’ Day recognition.

♦ Thank you to Judy Martin for the wonderful music. She went to extra efforts to research, practice, and weave in the Days of Elijah music and video into the service and for playing the medley of military hymns.

♦ Thank you to Annette Gower for the including of the children. She explained the event well and on the appropriate level for them to understand. Thank you Annette.

♦ Thank you to Clint Knaub for the prompting and playing the video. That was a very inspirational addition to our service.

♦ Thank you to Greg Andrews and all the parishioners who made the effort to recognize our Veterans by singing along and for their extra efforts to say “Thanks”.

♦ Especially, thank you to the several Veterans who were present to receive this recognition.

♦ Finally, thank you to the Military Ministry members and others who helped with this program: David & Sandy Collier, Mary Pilkinson and Kris Hawkins.

If you noted a Veteran was unable to attend Sunday, Nov. 9, please call David Collier or Coni Mayer to make sure they are given their certificate of thanks and a free lunch.

Thank you again.

Most sincerely - Coni Mayer

Operation Help

A reminder that toothpaste is needed for Operation Help. A large basket with a sign indicating Operation Help is located at the end of the hall between the Chapel and the Narthex.

As you are making out your Christmas gift lists, please remember our staff at FUMC. They do an awesome job for us! Staff Parish Committee will be collecting money for gifts through December 14. Contributions can be given to any member of the committee below.

Penny Hinsky  Jeff McIntosh
Jon Stevens      LeAnna Noble
Clint Knaub

Happy Holidays!

~ from the Staff Parish Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December Birthdays</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Rich Collier</td>
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<td>2 Payton Boyd</td>
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<td>3 Sawyer Boyd</td>
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<td>4 Phyllis Hite</td>
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<td>5 Barb Minnich</td>
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<td>6 Brooke Noble</td>
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<td>7 Gerald Ulman</td>
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<td>8 Randy Hisner</td>
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<td>9 Nancy Thompson</td>
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<td>10 Cathy Basham</td>
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<td>11 Scott Bassett</td>
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<td>12 Fred Soldner</td>
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<th>December Anniversaries</th>
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<tr>
<td>7 Roger &amp; Jolie Lee</td>
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<td>11 Greg &amp; Ann Andrews</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 James &amp; Nancy Laucks</td>
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<td>16 Doug &amp; Penny Hinsky</td>
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<td>18 Joe &amp; Sarah Heller</td>
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<td>22 Larry &amp; Gerri Jones</td>
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<td>22 Scott &amp; Shelley Porter</td>
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<td>27 Justin &amp; Jessica Grant</td>
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<td>28 David &amp; Tammy Smith</td>
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Your Charitable Contributions:  
7 Things Every Church Member Needs to Know

By Richard Hammar, J.D., LL.M., CPA

1. If I make a contribution in early January 2015, can I claim it on my 2014 taxes? No, charitable contributions must be claimed in the year in which they are delivered.

Example: John is an electrician and donates 10 hours of time to his church's construction project. He cannot deduct the value of his donated labor, but he can deduct the value of materials he purchased in performing the labor.

Example: Several church members go on a short-term mission project to another country. The value of their labor is not deductible, but they can deduct their unreimbursed travel expenses (transportation, meals, lodging) incurred in performing the project.

4. I gave $135 to my church when I registered for a spring retreat. Can I deduct that? No, assuming you received benefits (e.g., lodging, instruction, materials) worth $135 or more. Charitable contributions generally are deductible only to the extent they exceed the value of any premium or benefit received by the donor in return for the contribution.

5. Is there any limit to the amount of my contributions I can deduct on my taxes? Yes, a contribution deduction ordinarily cannot exceed 50 percent of a donor's adjusted gross income (a 30 percent rule applies in some cases). Donors who exceed these limits may be able to "carry over" their excess contribution and deduct it in future years.

6. I designated my contribution to the church benevolence fund. Is it deductible? That depends. "Designated contributions" are those made to a church for a specified purpose. If the purpose is an approved project or program of the church, you can deduct the contribution (if you claim itemized deductions on Schedule A).

If you designate a $100 gift to the church benevolence fund, it is deductible, unless you specify that your contribution be applied to a named individual; then no deduction is allowed.

Contributions to a church or missions agency that designate a particular missionary may be tax-deductible if the church or missions agency exercises full administrative control over the contributions and ensures that they are spent in furtherance of the church's tax-exempt purposes.

7. What kind of records do I need in order to prove I made a contribution?

For individual cash contributions of under $250: You must have a bank record (such as a cancelled check) or a receipt from the church containing the church's name, and the date and amount of each cash contribution.

For individual contributions (cash or property) of $250 or more: You must receive a written receipt from your church that includes the church's name; the date of the cash contribution; the amount of any cash contribution; a description (but not the value) of non-cash contributions; and one of the following: (i) a statement that no goods or services were provided by the church in return for the contribution; (ii) a statement that goods or services that a church provided in return for the contribution consisted entirely of intangible religious benefits; or (iii) a description and good faith estimate of the value of goods or services other than intangible religious benefits that the church provided in return for the contribution.

The church may either provide separate receipts for each single contribution of $250 or more or one acknowledgment to substantiate several single contributions of $250 or more. Separate contributions are not aggregated for purposes of measuring the $250 threshold.

If you've made individual contributions of $250 or more, don't file your federal income tax return until you receive a contribution statement from your church that satisfies these requirements. Otherwise, your contributions may not be deductible. Canceled checks cannot be used to substantiate cash contributions of $250 or more.

For non-cash property valued at $500 or more: Other rules apply (see the instructions to IRS Form 8283). If the value is more than $5,000, you must obtain a qualified appraisal of the property and attach an "appraisal summary" (IRS Form 8283) to the tax return on which the contribution is claimed. Some exceptions apply.

For contributions of cars, boats, or planes: If a church sells the donated property without significant use, the donor's contribution deduction is limited to the sales proceeds. In addition, the church must provide the donor, and the IRS, with a written acknowledgement (use IRS Form 1098-C) by the deadline prescribed by law. If the church significantly uses the property, the donor can deduct the market value. However, the church must still provide Form 1098-C to the donor and the IRS. Qualifying appraisal and appraisal summary requirements apply if a deduction exceeds $5,000 (see instructions to Form 8283).

About the Author. Richard Hammar, a graduate of Harvard Law School, is an attorney and certificated public accountant specializing in legal and tax issues for churches and clergy.
Meet The Manager

Hi!
I am Dot Vanhorn, manager of The Hope Chest and a member of the First United Methodist Church. I have 3 children and 8 grandchildren. I retired from Wells Fargo Bank after 34 years of service.
I began to volunteer at The Hope Chest and found this filled a void in my life of working with people and giving back to the community. This is a great feeling and blessing to know you are helping others who are in need or some who just need someone to talk to.

Don’t forget our Christmas Jars... we have over 16 plus jars placed around the county to collect spare change. Help the Hope Chest “Change” someone’s life with your spare Change!

The Hope Chest Will Be Closed
December 24th—December 28th
December 31st—January 4th
Have a Blessed Christmas Season!
CLOSED!!!!!!

December
Wed 24th, Thurs 25th,
Fri 26th & Wed 31st

January 2015
Thurs 1 & Fri 2

Happy Birthday!!!

Jacob Liechty
Eva Snider
Mason Zimmerman
Mya Zimmerman

Children’s Humor

Santa: Knock, knock!
Elf: Who’s there?
Santa: Olive!
Elf: Olive who?
Santa: Olive the other reindeer!

THAT’S A FACT

VCP

(Volunteer Certification Program)

Current connecting update for all. The parents of registered children who attend Kid’s First Child Care Ministries, were at the annual parent meeting on Thursday, November 13. The parents received their New registration forms, New parent’s handbook, and New policies that will now be in place. Kid’s First goal is to provide the best quality child care for the children enrolled. Kid’s First is known to be a caring and loving ministry of the First United Methodist Church. Together we all work daily for Christian based, quality and safe care for all children and families enrolled.

An extended "Thank You" to First Church community who helped provide Child Care for the parents to attend: Terri Boyd, Nancy Thompson, Beverly Stuck, Jeni and Gracie Covington. When working together, it does take a village. Again a SUPER THANK YOU, TO STAFF, HELPERS and 68 AWESOME PARENTS!!

Tana, Got Her ☻ Out...

Making memories is what make holidays a special happening, for each one of us. But as the year ends we celebrate His birth each in our own way. Making cookies as a family, wrapping gifts, decorating one’s home, a Christmas tree, that in some homes finds a special place in the living room and child’s bedroom. Making fond memories are fun and rewarding as we reflect back on what was created. Memories are made each day of the year but it’s the lasting ones we all like to share. Christmas memories might be reading ’Twas the Night Before Christmas, or How The Grinch Stole Christmas. But remember the Nativity and to Keep CHRIST in CHRISTMAS, the best memory that needs to live each and every day of 2015! So with our Good Wishes for a Happy New Year! We all at Kid’s First say "Thank you for allowing us the honor to make memories with your children as we share the days together. Merry Christmas to your families!"

Until the ☃️ comes out again!
What we’re learning…

This month we’ll be learning about… Christmas of course! Our What’s In The Bible curriculum will take us on an adventure from India to Indiana as Buck Denver and friends explore the history and tradition of Christmas! We’ll be exploring the answers to:

Where do we get the word Christmas?
When was Jesus born?
What do Christmas trees have to do with Jesus?
Who is St. Nicholas?
What is Hanukkah?
Who is Emmanuel?
And checking out the Luke 2 Story!

Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?

-Charlie Brown
Our second meeting in November was cancelled due to weather. But, our first meeting of the month was wonderful! We had our first couple come speak to our group, Jamie Moore and her husband Matt Moore the owners of Studio 180 dance studio and Shaka Shack Shack coffee house in Monroe. These 2 shared their powerful testimony with us. It was raw, honest, beautiful and inspiring.
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<th>Sun</th>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8:15 &amp; 10:30-Worship 9:30-S.S., 1-7 pm-Come to the Manger, 2-4 pm-Youth Sorting Christmas Eve Boxes, 5:30-A Disciple’s Path</td>
<td>8:15 &amp; 10:30-Worship 9:30-Sunday School 3 pm-A Disciple’s Path 4 pm-Youth going to Toby Mac Concert</td>
<td>Newsletter Deadline</td>
<td>6:30 pm-Boy Scouts &amp; Cub Scouts 7 pm-Advent Study 7:30 pm-Men’s Basketball at Bellmont Middle School</td>
<td>9-11 am-MOPS 2 pm-Advent Study 5:30 pm-Staff Planning &amp; Goal Setting 7 pm-Advent Study at Thompson’s, 7 pm-A.A.</td>
<td>8:15 &amp; 10:30-Worship 9:30-Sunday School 2-4 pm-Youth Christmas Party “White Elephant” 4 pm-A Disciple’s Path 6 pm-Agape Puppet Show</td>
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<td>5 pm-Hope Chest / Kids First Christmas Celebration</td>
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<td>5-6 pm-Community Meal 6:15 pm-Prayer in Chapel 6:30 pm-Advent Study</td>
<td>5-6 pm-Community Meal 6:15 pm-Prayer in Chapel 6:15 pm-Finance Committee 6:30 pm-Advent Study</td>
<td>6:30 pm-Board of Trustees</td>
<td>5-6 pm-Community Meal 6:15 pm-Prayer in Chapel 6:30 pm-Advent Study</td>
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<td>8:15 &amp; 10:30-Worship 9:30-Sunday School 2-4 pm-Youth Christmas Party “White Elephant” 4 pm-A Disciple’s Path 6 pm-Agape Puppet Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:15 &amp; 10:30-Worship 9:30-Sunday School 2-5 pm-Youth 5:30 pm-A Disciple’s Path</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>25 Christmas Day (Church office closed the rest of the week)</td>
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<td>7 pm-Advent Study at Thompson’s 7 pm-A.A. 8 pm-Men’s Basketball at Bellmont Middle School</td>
<td>7 pm-Advent Study at Thompson’s 7 pm-A.A. 7 pm-Men’s Basketball at Service Complex</td>
<td>Christmas Eve Church office hours - 8 am-12:00 noon 9 pm-Christmas Eve Worship Service</td>
<td>New Year’s Eve Church office hours - 8 am-12:00 noon</td>
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First United Methodist Church
502 W. Monroe Street
Decatur, IN 46733
Phone:
260-724-3158
Web Site:
www.firstumcdecatur.org
Email:
office@firstumcdecatur.org
Senior Pastor:
Amy Covington
Visitation Pastor:
Harold Klinker
Children’s Ministry:
Annette Gower
Youth Director:
Chris Covington
Administrative Assistant:
Janet Fraughner
Music Coordinator:
Judy Martin
Small Group Coordinator:
Mike Snyder
Kid’s First Child Care Director:
Tana Sheets
Hope Chest Manager:
Dot Vanhorn

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world

SPECIAL HOLIDAY EVENTS

Saturday, December 6 & Sunday, December 7 1-7 pm
“Come to the Manger”
Nativity Display in the Family Life Center

Sunday, December 21 6:00 pm
“Three Wise Men and a Baby”
Children’s Puppet Show in the Fellowship Hall

Wednesday, December 24 9:00 pm
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Celebrate and receive the gift of God’s love.
Christmas carols, scripture and candle lighting.