

OAK FOREST NEWS

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Pastor's Message:

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "But be alert; I have already told you everything."

Mark 13:23

The above Scripture seems especially appropriate during Advent. Here Jesus instructs the disciples about waiting. The word "Advent" means coming, which means as Christians we find ourselves waiting on the coming of God's reign in the world.

Waiting is an important part of faith. As Mary waited 9 months from the day of announcement of Jesus' birth to the day of his arrival, so the church has waited nearly 2,000 years for the announcement of Christ's return and still we wait.

Jesus' advice for waiting? "Be alert; I have already told you everything."

Recently, I went into a beautifully decorated sanctuary and noticed the nativity. Shepherds, sheep and donkey all seemed to be leaning into an empty manger scene. Clearly, they were waiting with great expectation for the arrival of the holy family and a manger filled with the Christ child.

While their waiting seemed expectant, I thought how different Mary's waiting must have been. Anyone who awaits the birth of a child knows there's much to be done: doctor's appointments, certain changes in diet, rooms to be prepared, gifts and advice to be received. Mary went to Elizabeth to receive encouragement in preparation for the arrival of her Son, our Savior. And Mary might also add, that great pain and sacrifice comes before the arrival of her awaited promise.

I couldn't help but think, then, how are we preparing our lives, our home or our church to remain alert? Jesus seems to think he's already told all we need to know to help us wait alertly. Perhaps Jesus refers here to the great commands of "Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself."

As Methodists we explain Jesus' great command concerning loving God and others through the "General Rules" of the church: do no harm, do good and attend to the ordinances of the church. Clearly, Methodists are practical people. Waiting alertly simply means abstaining from harming others in our words and deeds. Doing good means going out and showing mercy through concrete actions in our community. Attending to the ordinances of the church means, come to church, pray, fast, receive communion and prayerfully read the Scriptures.

Just as Jesus had the utmost confidence that loving God and loving neighbor kept us alert and ready to receive our Savior upon his return, so too John Wesley and countless Methodists since believe that through a life given over to the practices of doing good, doing no harm and attending to the ordinances of the church ordinary folks like us remain alert and become the kind of people God created us to become.

Advent, then, simply calls us to refocus and become alert again. It teaches us to alertly and actively wait for that blessed day when God finally gets what God wants: a new heaven and a new earth. This Advent, then, I pray our waiting is alert and that God further completes that good work which He started in us. Amen.

Pastor Bryan



Administrative Council Meeting Sunday, December 6th at 6:15 p.m.



Come, join the Group going to visit and sing Christmas Carols to our local shut-ins, Saturday, December 12th at 3:00 p.m. Everyone will meet in the church parking lot at 3 p.m. and then car pool to their homes.

A BIG thank you from the Outreach Committee to anyone who helped with Operation Christmas Child by manning our collection center, packing a shoebox or saying a prayer. We collected 278 shoeboxes!



UMW Annual Christmas Luncheon & Christmas Basket packing

Thursday, December 17th 11:30 p.m. at the Hiawassee Chophouse. Then return to church and pack and deliver the Christmas baskets.



Moss Memorial Library is having their Annual Christmas Open House on Thursday, December 17th

Stop by anytime between 11:00 a.m. & 7:30 p.m. for Holiday Cheer and Entertainment by the Blue Ridge Dulcimer Players 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Don't forget to bring your favorite appetizer, dessert, or snack food, with the recipe to share with others.

Christmas Concert & Covered Dish

Sunday, December 20th at 6:00 p.m. Invite your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Bring your favorite dish to share. Then stay for the Joyful Christmas Concert.



Christmas Eve Candlelight & Holy Communion Services Thursday, December 24th 4:00 p.m. & 11:00 p.m.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!	
Haylee Bissonnette	Dec. 1
Fonda Haddad	Dec. 2
Lily Trout	Dec. 2
Kathy Smith	Dec. 3
Amy Bracken	Dec. 6
Valerie Bernhardt	Dec. 11
Pam Storrington	Dec. 14
Patty Stowe	Dec. 16
David Whitfield	Dec. 16
Barry Rogers	Dec. 19
Nikki Baten	Dec. 19
Anthony Wimpey	Dec. 21
Bethany Penland	Dec. 31

Our Outreach ministry delivered 37 Thanksgiving meals to local shut-ins on Thanksgiving Day. Thank you goes out to all of the people who delivered the meals. The meals were a blessing to all who received them.

Parsonage Open House Saturday, December 19th

from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Come and go as you please. Bring only yourself, and enjoy light food and fellowship at Pastor Bryan, Stephanie & Patrick's home.



Come, worship the newborn King!