



## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FOREST HILLS CHURCH

### ***From the Pastor's Perspective*** **Do Good Feel Good Christmas**

*"The people walking in darkness have seen a great Light.  
On those living in a patch-dark land, Light has dawned."  
-Isaiah 9:2*

With the shortening of daylight, the creeping in of the cold, the spread of COVID-19, and the isolation of keeping distance, it is easy to turn into a Scrooge for Christmas. We can't gather with family and friends as we might like, and our worship during this special time of year is going to be remote. It makes us want to say grumpily, "Bah-humbug!"

Well, actually, I DO want to call us to be a Scrooge this Christmas! Now, it's not quite what you may think. I'm talking about being like Scrooge AFTER the events told in Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Scrooge did start out crabby, negative, selfish and bitter. But a probing look at himself (into the boardroom of his soul) and the effects of his negativity revealed that he was stuck in his sin and was facing imminent death and doom. Opening his soul to Christmas, however, brought him a transforming second chance.

Christmas is about transforming second chances! Jesus came born as a baby in Bethlehem to bring conversion of our souls and transformation to our lives. After Christmas, Scrooge became a man filled with joy and blessing. That's what Christmas does for us, too! We need to celebrate Christmas like a Scrooge-like Ebenezer Scrooge after his Christmas experience.

Scrooge went from feeling bitter to feeling good. Scrooge went from only doing selfish things to lavishly doing good. And this is what Jesus does for us! No matter how frustrated we may feel, Christmas is still real! Christmas is still about transformation! Jesus still brings in joy, hope, faith, and love no matter what our spirits feel about the season this year!

### **Monthly Church Events**

<b>Dec 2</b>	6:00 pm - Wednesday Night Programing for all ages 6:00 pm - Sanctified Rehearsal
<b>Dec 3</b>	12:00 pm - Sarah Circle 6:30 pm - Grow Group
<b>Dec 4</b>	7:00 am - Grow Group
<b>Dec 5</b>	9:00 am - United Methodist Men
<b>Dec 6</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> 8:30 am - Grow Group - ZOOM 10:00 am - Online Worship 5:30 pm - St Andrew Shelter
<b>Dec 7</b>	8:00 am - Monday Morning Men 5:30 pm - St Andrew Shelter
<b>Dec 9</b>	6:00 pm - Wednesday Night Programing for all ages 6:00 pm - Sanctified Rehearsal
<b>Dec 10</b>	5:30 pm - St Andrew Shelter 6:30 pm - Grow Group 5:30 pm - St Andrew Shelter
<b>Dec 11</b>	7:00 am - Grow Group 5:30 pm - St Andrew Shelter
<b>Dec 13</b>	8:30 am - Grow Group - ZOOM 10:00 am - Online Worship
<b>Dec 14</b>	8:00 am - Monday Morning Men
<b>Dec 16</b>	6:00 pm - Wednesday Night Programing for all ages 6:00 pm - Sanctified Rehearsal
<b>Dec 17</b>	4:00 pm - Caroling & Bag Pick up 6:30 pm - AMT Meeting
<b>Dec 18</b>	7:00 am - Grow Group 2:00 pm - Unload Food Truck
<b>Dec 19</b>	6:00 am - Set up Community Care 8:00 am - Community Care

## Pastor's Perspective Cont.

Christmas is still about feeling good because we have Jesus with us, and Christmas is still about doing good because we pass on the good that Jesus has done for us.

Our message series as we count down to Christmas, therefore, is, "Be a Scrooge: Do Good, Feel Good Christmas!" We're focusing on feeling good about Christmas not because of the sentiment, but because we have Jesus with us. We're also pushing away from just wanting to feel good, and pushing towards doing good. We can still celebrate Christmas the best way ever: by finding creative ways to do good and then going and doing them! How can you spread cheer to lift people's despondent spirits? How can you connect in different ways to help others feel supported and remembered? How can you spend your money differently to bring blessing?

<b>Dec 20</b>	10:00 am - Online Worship 1:00 pm - Caroling and Bag drop off
<b>Dec 21</b>	8:00am -Monday Morning Men
<b>Dev 23</b>	No Wed Programing
<b>Dec 24</b>	Christmas Eve Virtual Service Office Closed at Noon
<b>Dec 25</b>	Christmas Day Special Video
<b>Dec 27</b>	10:00 am - Online Worship
<b>Dec 30</b>	No Wednesday Night Programing

The world wasn't different after Scrooge woke up, but he was different. He now saw people and opportunities that before he had missed. He helped where before he had walked past. He gave generously where before he kept all for himself. We can't change the sunlight, or the cold, or COVID-19. But when we let Christmas change us, we can bring light, warmth, and healing in new and creative ways.

Let's end this "bah-humbug" year of 2020 well! Let's be Scrooge this Christmas and spread to all a truly "Merry Christmas!"

Pastor David



## Christmas Offering



This year our Special Christmas Offering will go to Feed My Starving Children Forest Lake Mobile Food Pack. We were unable to do this for 2020, but we are planning on hosting a Mobile Pack in April of next year.

We usually have many volunteers, but we seek to pay for the cost of the food that we pack. Our goal is to raise \$725!

## Youth Group

Last week, we had Bethel University come and speak with our youth and confirmation students. It was an amazing night. The college students shared the importance of shining a light on a dark world. The Forest Hills students were great, they had insightful answers and really got to know the college students. One of the Bethel students said she was amazed at how quickly our students just included them into their group.



This week we are off for Thanksgiving. Next week, we will start back up with a new series called "Reel Christmas." This series uses classic Christmas films to highlight truths from scripture about Christmas. The series aim is for students to apply God's truth to their own perceptions of the meaning of Christmas.

Week 1 - A Christmas Story-Galatians 4:4-6, Luke 11:11-13

Week 2 - Home Alone-Matthew 1:1-18

Week 3 - Christmas Vacation- Luke 2:17-19, Philippians 2:6-7, 1 Peter 2:9-10

This series will be done via Zoom, parents and students watch for an email with the link. Class will begin at 6pm. Please note the time change. Just because we are virtual doesn't mean we should stop inviting our friends to youth group. This past month we had three new students attend, we want to keep that momentum going. Please forward out the Zoom link and password to your friends.

Though we are not having class in-person there are lots of ways to still serve our community. Watch for information coming this Advent season on ways to help.

Cassi Betker - Director of Youth Ministries

## Remaining Faithful

As we head into the holiday season, it's always a good time to stop and reflect on the past year. When I selected the Stewardship theme (1 Thessalonians 2:8), I didn't know what the year had in store. This has been a uniquely challenging time. Financially, we started the year with a generous surplus. This means people have been generously supporting the ministry of Forest Hills Church and leaders have been spending responsibly. But by early spring, things shifted as we learned to quickly adapt to the pandemic.

We've been learning to worship and connect using virtual means, like online videos. We've continued to connect with the community through events like Trunk or Treat and Summer Bash. We've continued to serve through Community Care. We continue to delight in sharing our lives (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

Throughout the early months our giving remained steady, but in recent months it has been slipping. I know as the pandemic lingers, and worsens, the economic impacts are growing. As you reflect on this past year, as you count your blessings and give thanks, I ask that you consider Malachi 3. During times of trial, the Lord requests that we trust in Him, that we be known as part of the faithful remnant.

This is a time that we need to remain faithful and push further. Your continued generous support allows us to bring a message of hope to the community around us. As you give thanks, give generously.

Let's continue to delight in sharing the gospel and our lives as we head into 2021. Thank you.

Teresa Gruber



## Kids Christmas

We find ourselves once again in the midst of shutdowns and increased COVID-19 precautions. It looks as though this Christmas season has become something none of us would have imagined a year ago. As has been demonstrated nation-wide, distance learning has largely been a failure. Kids, especially in elementary and below, need face-to-face interaction, a personal touch and the camaraderie of classmates in order to thrive. The support of parents at home can help, but many looming challenges remain. In short, a screen cannot replace a human presence.

Yet here we are proposing that Christian education from church be done at home on a screen. It is a blessing to have the technology to produce videos, but often too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. So, let me encourage you and provide a few tips to help your kids engage learnings about their faith and not simply zone out in front of another screen.

### 1. Make faith formation a priority.

There is no flowery way to put it. So often in the life of a kid, church is a rung or two below school, sports, and “other” activities. Additional barriers and precautions only serve to justify our laxity. As followers of Christ, we must make a strong stand and commit to staying the course. Read scripture with your kids, pray as a family, and take advantages of the resources we will be offering.

### 2. Complete the activities.

In the coming weeks we will continue to utilize our Trackers of Truth curriculum. Each week we will be presenting a bible story with a short and easy project or activity to complete as a family. Not everything we in every lesson will interest everybody, but I want to encourage you to make the most of it. We are asking everyone to put something together and then share it with us here at church by emailing us a picture or short video of what you have done. We can then include these submissions with the next week’s lesson! This will allow us to see and share with one another even though we are not actually meeting.

### 3. Enjoy Jesus.

This world will pass away, but Jesus remains. He is our hope, the light of the world and our source of joy even in the worst of circumstances. As Paul writes in Romans 8, “I’m convinced that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height, or depth, or any other thing that is created (including a pandemic).” If we as adults can enjoy Jesus, we provide the best lesson our kids could ever learn.

For the King,

Pastor Andrew



## UMW Christmas Party Update

The United Methodist Christmas party has been postponed due to new COVID-19 restrictions. Watch for a celebration this summer as we do Christmas in July!

## Christmas Events at Forest Hills:

### **Countdown to Christmas:** Advent Calendar Scripture readings

You will be receiving a packet by mail that will contain daily scripture reading plan through Advent. These readings will follow along with Pastor David's Monday devotionals. The instructions and supply list is included. Along with that in your packet you will also receive a home Advent wreath, just add the candles. It is our intention that we will do this all together as a church family.

### **Caroling and Christmas Worship Packets:**

On Dec. 17 from 4-6pm we will have a drive through caroling event where you will pick up all of the items you need for Christmas Eve services. Plan to experience this fun drive through event. We also need carolers! Please come dressed warm as this will be socially distanced and outside. Carolers will be singing as people come to pick up their Christmas packets. For those that are unable to attend we will go to your home, carol, and drop off Christmas worship packets on Dec 20th from 1-3pm. We need singers and drivers that day too. Be sure to join in the many ways we are showing our love to those in our congregation.

### **Christmas Eve:** Virtual Candlelight service

There will be a special video on Christmas Eve that you can play at anytime. This will include our traditional candle light service. The candles for this will be in your Christmas Worship packet.

### **Christmas Day** - Special video

We have an exciting video on Christmas Day. The young kids in our church family are putting together a special Christmas pageant video just for you. This is not something you will want to miss.

## Change in Phase for Forest Hills Pandemic Plan

As Lay Leader, I am announcing that Forest Hills church **will change to "Orange" phase as of Sunday, Nov 29.** This means worship will be recorded and available for watching online. Our church will be open as we have always been on Sunday morning, however, virtual viewing is preferred. Youth group, Echo, and Confirmation will not be meeting in-person. Grow groups have been informed and most groups will be offering a virtual option. Community Care will continue with social distancing and masks with delivery to client's vehicle outdoors.

This decision was made following the guidelines of our Phased Pandemic Plan. Check out the Pandemic Plan on our website.

We will continue to monitor the situation. If the governor declares another "shelter at home" order, we are prepared to change our phase to "red".

The website will be updated to reflect this change as of Sunday, Nov 29.

Let us continue to love God and love others in Christian community. Keep calm and carry God!

Your Lay Leader,

Marilee Leonard

## Dec Birthdays

May your special day be blessed and filled with joy! If your birthday isn't listed, please call the office and let us know so we can add you to the list!

Lil Truax 12/3

Matthew Berglund 12/4

Cathy Sanderson 12/8

Noah Bonsell 12/11

Donna Gustafson 12/19

Marilee Leonard 12/3

Lynn Ruter 12/7

Misty Thoen 12/9

Cassi Betker 12/11

