



# THE HERALD

January 2015

First United Methodist Church

Fairfield, Iowa

Knowing Christ, Sharing His Love, and Helping Others to Know Him



### A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

We know, O Lord, that our times are in your hands. While we live on Earth, enable us to please you in all things. Especially now, as we enter a new year, we pray for strengthened spirits that we may praise you properly by our thoughts, words and deeds. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### COMMITTEES

At the beginning of the year the leadership of the church committees change as people leave positions and new people fill them. We greatly appreciate everyone who has served as leaders this past year and all those who said yes to the call to serve this coming year! Thank you!  
-Pastor Todd & Pastor Jess



Thank you for the Christmas cards, gifts, and prayers during the month of December. We appreciate these expressions of your love and support as we celebrated the coming of the Christ child!  
-FUMC Staff

Thank you for the dinosaur prayer blanket. My arm is OK now.  
-Chase Countryman

Thank you for the prayer blanket. I have enjoyed wrapping up in it, and it makes me feel warm and loved.  
-Aleta Mottet



- Cora Guillermo 1/1
- Amanda Rooney 1/4
- Charlotte Bissig 1/6
- Lois Shields 1/6
- Angie Lamb 1/6
- Sue Wormley 1/6
- Eric Kyle 1/7
- Ann Gookin 1/7
- Madeline Rooney 1/7
- Harry Stever 1/7
- Jennifer Clements 1/7
- Kay Unkrich 1/8
- Tiffani Grove 1/9
- Pat Hurley 1/10
- Katherine Mueller 1/11
- Terri Drobny 1/11
- Carla Bloomquist 1/13
- Mila Sloan 1/13
- Mary Grimes 1/14
- Caleb Huff 1/14
- Robin Wendland 1/14
- Megan Higgins 1/15
- Don Schiedel 1/17
- Cora Whitten 1/17
- Dian Hanson 1/17
- Myron Gookin 1/18
- Jillian Phillips 1/18
- Gerald Horton 1/19
- Sheri Blough Neff 1/19
- Larry Unkrich 1/20
- John Payne 1/21
- Caytlyn Nystrom 1/21
- Joe Stever 1/21
- Jean Zehr 1/21
- Randy Zehr 1/24
- Tom Thompson 1/24
- Ryan Gaines 1/24
- Brett Ferrel 1/24
- Ron Brown 1/24
- Martha Flinspach 1/25
- Maurice Huff 1/25
- Eilene Swartz 1/27
- Brynley Allison 1/27
- Madison Kraemer 1/27

- Katrina Cechini 1/27
- Lois Billingsley 1/29
- Blair Bowman
- Brittan Bowman
- Jeff Small 1/29
- John Koontz 1/30
- Dena Morrissey 1/30

- Jack & Maxine Porter 1/14
- Bob & Pat Centner 1/17
- Kent & Ronda Whitney 1/29
- Don & Lois Billingsley 1/30



### THE STORY BEHIND EPIPHANY

Epiphany is the Christian festival celebrated each year on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Along with Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, it is one of the oldest Christian holy days.

The festival was first celebrated in the Eastern Church (Orthodox) and was adopted in the Western church by the fourth century. Epiphany commemorates the first "showing forth" or manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles, particularly the Magi or Wise Men. The Epiphany story is meant to explain that Christ was not just for the Jews, but for non-Jews (Gentiles) as well, anywhere in the world.

The eve of Epiphany is called Twelfth Night and relates to the arrival of the Wise Men from the East at the birthplace of the Lord in Bethlehem.



**Matthew 6:19-21 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

What does it mean to get ahead in life? In the process of transitioning into ministry I can remember this was one of the questions asked of me. Actually it was worded in a much different way. As I continued to study and prepare to respond to my calling, inevitably the day was drawing closer. My employer at the time shared his vision of the future of his business, and asked me to join him. It was a tempting offer, and it showed me how vulnerable I was as I reconsidered my path. As he elaborated on the future and what he hoped to accomplish, I was pulled to some of my former dreams of what I considered to be a good and prosperous life. Then he left me with a question. He said, "Don't you want to get ahead in life?" Little did my employer know that this was actually the question that pushed me in the other direction to follow my calling.

With the approach and passing of each new year, we are confronted with questions causing us to examine our past and current situations. Amidst this examination we are encouraged to make decisions of resolution. Perhaps you might ask a couple of these questions: *What can I do to make my life better? How can I make life better for those around me? Where does God fit into my life? How can I be more committed to God's presence and guidance? What does it mean to get ahead in life?*

In response to my own heart when pondering the question of "getting ahead in life," I was resolved to follow what I knew to be true. God calls us to let go of the temptations and pursuits of this world, and to engage in a relationship with Him. He reminds us, **for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** With the passing of another year I invite you not only to ask the question, but to pursue the treasure that is true and full of hope eternal, **where neither moth nor rust can destroy, and where no one can steal.**

As you begin the New Year I offer you this wisdom from Proverbs, **Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.**

*May you be blessed with the fullness of God's presence.*

*Happy New Year  
Pastor Todd*

### A Note from Pastor Jess

*Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. —Joshua 24:15*

As this new calendar year begins I find myself thinking about a couple of things: spiritual amnesia and covenant renewal. Laurence Hull Stookey, a professor at Wesley Theological Seminary, would often say that we are a people with spiritual amnesia, we forget about all that God has done and promised and covenanted with us. That idea of spiritual amnesia has stuck with me, probably because I forget things on a regular basis and need to be reminded. If you have ever walked into my office you will find an abundance of sticky notes plastered to my desk and notes all over my calendar to serve as reminders for me. I'm just kind of forgetful, but I'm not the only one. It seems like this forgetfulness has been an ongoing problem with people. It happened all the time in the Bible, people forgot about God, God's promises, and our covenant with God. This forgetfulness leads to all kinds of problems. But the amazing thing is that no matter how often we suffer from spiritual amnesia-God does not forget about us nor abandon us. This forgetfulness is remedied by covenant renewal. Again and again the covenant is renewed between God and God's people as we remember God's work among us and God's promise to us. We, as a faith community, renew our covenant with God every time we gather together in worship, reaffirm the Baptismal Covenant and gather at the Lord's Table.

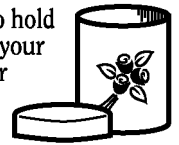
As this New Year begins I hope that you daily choose to serve the Lord and remember God's covenant with the

community of faith. I leave you with a portion of Wesley's Covenant Service: Lord, make me what you will. I put myself fully into your hands: put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and with a willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal. Amen.

Peace and blessings,  
-Pastor Jess

### Make a New Year's Time Capsule

Make a container to hold your treasures and your wishes and goals for the New Year.



*You will need:*

- small storage tin (You may have a cookie-, popcorn- or candy-tin leftover from the holidays. If you don't have a tin, a shoebox will work.)
- goals for the coming year
- permanent markers ■ paper
- glue ■ tape ■ scissors ■ paint
- paintbrush
- little treasures (photos of friends or family, small toys, coins, etc.)

*How to make it:*

- Wash and dry the tin.
- Decorate the tin with the markers or paint. (If the tin already has a design, you can use that one. Or you can decorate pieces of paper and then glue them to the tin's lid and sides.)
- Mark your name and the date on the lid.
- On a piece of paper make a list of goals – things you would like to accomplish during the year. (For example, be a better student, be more helpful around the house, make new friends, etc.)
- On another piece of paper write some of the important things that happened last year. (For example, got a new puppy, went on a fun vacation, learned to ride a bike, etc.)
- Place the list of goals in the tin along with any little treasures you want to include.
- Tape the lid onto the tin.
- Store it in a safe place (for example, your closet, under the bed, etc.)
- Open the tin on the next New Year's Day. Did you accomplish all your goals? Did you remember what was in the tin?



