The Men’s Breakfast Group is back at it this year. Carl Hewett and his band of merry tree trimmers are back at it. The Men’s Breakfast Group will oversee the 16th annual Christmas Tree Sale on Saturday, Dec. 7 on the church grounds. Here are details:

**When is the sale?** From 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. or until we run out of trees.

**How can I pre-order a tree?** Log onto MySMPC to place your order.

**How can I help?** Volunteers will trim trees, place trees into tree stands and deliver near the church on request.

**Can I help?** We welcome volunteers to help with picking up the trees from a lot in east Charlotte, sales, handling, tree delivery, cleanup and the return of unsold trees. Everyone is welcome. Stay for an hour or the entire day.

**Can I help?**

**What happens to the proceeds?** The Men’s Breakfast Group uses the funds to maintain the ball field, playground, parking lot lights, stained glass around the Chapel doors, Communion table in the Sanctuary and outdoor lighting, among other uses.

**Other questions?** Carl Hewett at CarlHewett@carolina.rr.com.

**Prices range depending on tree size.**

**Why are extra trees for sale this year?**

**What are the sizes and prices?**

Fraser fir trees are available in 4-5 feet, 5-6 feet, 7-8 feet and 8-9 feet. Larger trees are obtained via special request. Prices range from $35 to $125 depending on tree size.

**Will you help me with the tree?** During the sale, volunteers will trim trees, place trees into tree stands and deliver near the church on request.

**Can I help?** We welcome volunteers to help with picking up the trees near the church on request.

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**Other questions?**

**Want to add meaning to your Christmas list? Here’s how**

Carol Palmgren can still remember the puzzled looks.

It was Christmas 10 years ago, and Carol and her husband, Tom, decided to break from tradition and give their boys an unusual gift. “Initially, they didn’t know what to think,” Carol said, still chuckling at the memory.

The gift was a goat. OK, not an actual goat standing in their living room. But the next-best thing: a certificate stating that a goat had been purchased in their honor for a poor family in Haiti.

Carol Palmgren believes that a goat has been purchased in their honor for a poor family in Haiti. It’s safe to assume that Belk and Best Buy won’t carry goats this Christmas as part of their holiday merchandise lineups.

You can only find such an item at the Alternative Gift Market, an SMPC tradition that allows families to give gifts in the form of contributions to worthy causes.

For families like the Palmgrens, the market has become a staple on the Christmas shopping circuit. “We still buy goats,” Carol said.

Starting Sunday, Dec. 8, families can browse display tables outside the Sanctuary and buy gifts through 16 agencies and ministries.

When you make a purchase, you get a card, envelope and small certificate to give to your loved one.

One year, SMPC member Sandi Buchanan told her family, “No gifts, please.” She just wanted them to donate to A Child’s Place and buy a few things at the gift market.

“They said, ‘That’s too easy,’” Sandi recalls. “I know, but it meant something to me. I don’t need a new jacket or scarf.”

A focus this year will be the Children’s Market, where children can buy lower-priced gifts for parents, teachers, friends and relatives.

For $2, children can provide a jar of peanut butter to feed the hungry through Loaves & Fishes.

Sandi gives cards to her seven grandchildren stating that school uniforms have been purchased in their honor for a child in need.

“I’m trying to teach everyone that it’s important to give back,” Sandi said. “This is a great way to do it.”

**FULL-SIZED CHRISTMAS TREE THROUGH SMPC**

Carl Hewett and his band of merry tree trimmers are back at it this year. The Men’s Breakfast Group will oversee the 16th annual Christmas Tree Sale on Saturday, Dec. 7 on the church grounds. Here are details:

**When is the sale?** From 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. or until we run out of trees.

**How can I pre-order a tree?** Log onto MySMPC to place your order. We will have a limited number of extra trees for sale this year.

**What are the sizes and prices?** Frasier fir trees are available in 4-5 feet, 5-6 feet, 7-8 feet and 8-9 feet. Larger trees are obtained via special request. Prices range from $35 to $125 depending on tree size.

**Will you help me with the tree?** During the sale, volunteers will trim trees, place trees into tree stands and deliver near the church on request.

**Can I help?** We welcome volunteers to help with picking up the trees.

**Other questions?** Carl Hewett at CarlHewett@carolina.rr.com.

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Children in poverty tend to know more adults who have been to jail than to college. With few peers to set a positive example, these young people have a hard time learning how to live. This sobering reality was described by Wanda Anderson, who helps families move toward stability through the Project HOPE nonprofit. Children growing up poor just need someone to look up to, whether it’s a friend, neighbor, teacher, pastor or tutor, Wanda told 60 listeners during a presentation hosted by the JOY Social Group.

The need is especially great for young boys. “There are so many things going on that they only respond to the moment,” Wanda said. “They’re not planning. They’re just reacting.” The good news is that Charlotte is home to many nonprofits finding ways to improve lives. Donations are helpful, but Wanda said the best thing we can do is tutor, mentor or volunteer with these agencies.

In her talk, Wanda described getting a phone call last year from a teenage nephew whose father had just been put in jail. Wanda and her family took the child in. They enrolled her nephew at Providence High School. After counselors discovered that he was three years behind in math, they put the child in daily tutoring.

At home, they showed him basic things like how to turn off the TV during homework and how to sit at a table for a meal. The young man graduated from Providence last spring and enrolled in the military, where Wanda hopes he’ll get much-needed structure. “At 17 he hadn’t been taught those things,” Wanda said. “He wasn’t lazy. He just didn’t have the skills. Now, he does.”

New SMPC website keeps you connected

SMPC’s new website offers many tools to help you stay informed. Here’s a look at some of what you’ll find at SMPChome.org.

1. Home page: When you first pull up the site, a rotating slide show spotlights upcoming events and opportunities to get involved.
2. Listen/Watch: Sermon audio and other multimedia features are located here.
3. New Here? Newcomers can learn about the church on a “New Here?” page that answers frequently asked questions.
4. Facebook and social media: At the bottom of the screen, look for links to our Facebook page as well as MySMPC, where you can register for events.

Questions? Contact Matt Garfield, SMPC’s communications director, at matt.garfield@smpchome.org.

Inspired by her time at Weekday School, teacher pursues new career


The list of international cities where Sonja McFaddin has lived would make travel expert Rick Steves jealous. But it was her time in Charlotte – and in particular at the SMPC Weekday School – that may have left the greatest impression on this aspiring teacher. Sonja, now living in Mexico City, is pursuing a degree in child and family development. She was inspired to go into the field by her experience at SMPC, where she taught in the 3-year-olds classroom from 2004-06.

Sonja learned the art of teaching from Cynthia Forwerck, the director of the Weekday School and a mentor to many teachers over the years. “I just really fell in love with the work,” Sonja said. “It was wonderful to listen to the little ones—their comments, their questions, their innocence.”

Sonja appreciated the school’s multicultural environment. Families from places like China, India, Vietnam and Bulgaria find their way to SMPC because of the welcoming atmosphere Cynthia has instilled. “Come share your culture with us,” Cynthia often tells prospective parents.

MILESTONES


Baptism: • Cassidy Emma Buford, daughter of Tim and Janani Buford, Sunday, Oct. 27, 2013.

Passing: • Betty Holcombe Fennell, 81, husband of John Fennell, Saturday, Oct. 5, 2013.

Speaker shared insights on poverty

Ladies Advent Brunch

This cherished tradition brings together women of all ages for music, meditation and brunch. When: Saturday, Nov. 23 at 10 a.m. in Mecklenburg Hall RSVP: Please use MySMPC to register ($10/adults, $7/children)

Thanksgiving service

Pause and give thanks at an evening worship service in the Sanctuary. When: Tuesday, Nov. 26, 7 to 8 p.m.

Trinity Group Cookie Exchange

Bring homemade cookies to share. Men are invited to this year, too! This group is adults in their 20s and 30s. When: Tuesday, Dec. 3 at 7 p.m. at the Bufords’ home, 10115 Buggy Horse Road in Ardrey neighborhood RSVP: JananiBuford@yahoo.com

SMPC youth showed off their sandwich-making skills for Operation Sandwich, a project to feed our neighbors at the Urban Ministry Center in uptown Charlotte.