

South United Methodist The Challenge

December 2023

Message from Pastor John

Love Came Down

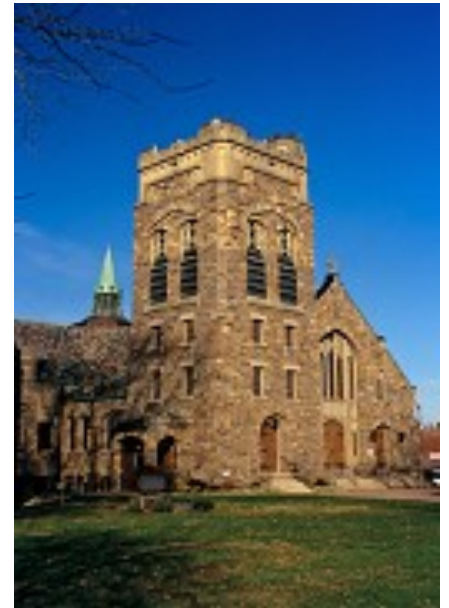
“The Son of Man has come down from heaven...” (John 3:13b)

Dear Friends,

For children, visits with people they don't typically see in their everyday life is one of the most exciting parts of Christmas. When I was a child, my family typically spent Christmas visiting grandparents and loved ones in Michigan. Each year was pretty much identical: seeing our grandparents followed by friends. But one year, we had two special visitors, my uncle and aunt, who flew their tiny single-engine plane from Denver to a small airport in Pontiac, Michigan. What a fun time that was! My uncle had great stories about his younger days with my parents. He took pictures of everyone with his strange box-shaped camera. I'm sure you can remember significant Christmas visits as well.

The Christmas story is filled with accounts of various visits. Gabriel visited first Zechariah and then Mary. He shared unbelievably great news with both. Mary received the wondrous news that she had been divinely chosen to give birth to Jesus, the holy Son of God. (Read Luke 1) After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he and Mary and Joseph received many visitors that represented the entire socio-economic spectrum. Our infant Lord was first seen by poor shepherds, who returned from the visit, “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen...” (Read Luke 2). The Magi must have been well off in order to finance an estimated 900-mile journey that took many months and then to give rare and costly “gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh” to Jesus. (Read Matthew 2)

Of course, if we carefully read the New Testament accounts, we will note the greatest Christmas visitor was Jesus Christ. He who was, and is, God, became human, being born as a baby in Bethlehem. From a divine point of view, the roughly 33-year life of Jesus constituted a visit to humanity. Jesus Christ claimed to be God who had, “come down from heaven...” He came down from heaven as God's ultimate gift of love to all people for all time. He came down to “be lifted up” so that “everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.” (Read John 3) (Cont. on page 2)



Sunday Worship Schedule

- 9:30am Traditional Worship with Chancel Choir and Children's Story Live streamed on Facebook
- 11:30am Contemporary Worship and Children's Story with Wildfire Worship Band



****Next Deadline is Mar. 1st
March. 15, 2024 publication**

Pastor's message continued

What an astounding claim! Jesus is saying that anyone who wants to survive the grave needs to come to him in genuine, sincere, humble, grateful faith. I know no other human who has yet provided another path to eternal security, life after death. Do you?

If you are reading this column, chances are you believe what I have written and are nodding your head with perhaps an "amen" under your breath. But the truth is many people don't know or understand the significance of Jesus' visit to earth. They have yet to receive the love of God made known in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ. Do we love those who have yet to believe enough to share this good news of God's great love? Everyone needs to know, family and friends. So, this Christmas say a prayer for those in your world who don't know Jesus. Then take a deep breath and invite them to join you in worship.

Terry and I wish you all a Christmas celebration, filled with our Savior's love.

Pastor John

HI HO HOLIDAY FAIR

The HI HO HOLIDAY fair was held on November 4th and was very successful! Profits will be added to those the spring Trash & Treasures fair & the order form Easter fair and distributed to worthwhile causes within the church, town, country and around the world.

The future of the TRASH & TREASURES fair is in doubt. As of now, no one has come forward to organize and run it. If you would like this huge tag sale to continue and would be interested in taking over it over, please contact Ginny Hartzog at 860 646-3962 or ginhartz@gmail.com.



We would like to thank everyone who helped with the fairs in any capacity. Your donations, participation and support are what made the events so successful and fun!

South United Methodist Church Contact Information

Church Office: (860) 647-9141
Office hours: Mon Wed Fri 9:00a—12:00p
Wed Thurs 5:00p—8:00p
Email address: Office@southumc.com
Web address: Southumc.com
Facebook: facebook.com/southumc.com
Prayer Chain: (860) 337-2793 or prayer@southumc.com
Text Giving: (860) 512-7185 (\$20 SUMC)

Church Staff
Pastor - Rev. John Marshall ext. 14
Director of Music - Earle Bidwell ext. 11
Organists - Christopher Walton & Tatianna Lukyanova
Director of Ministries - Terry Marshall ext.15
Director Next Gen Ministries - J.T. Himmelstein ext. 13
Sextons - Arionna Littlefield & Don Wilby ext. 20
Office Managers—Colleen Olbert & Patti LaForest ext.10
Rev. Richard Thompson (retired)

Education

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

Fall came back in full force! Everyone is busy and things are returning to normal. Classes are thriving, and we are in the process of planning year-end activities. We hope you can join us in some of our many ways to expand your faith in Christ..

- Elementary Sunday school continues to grow! We have had up to 16 children attending our elementary classes Sunday mornings! Grades 4-7 have split into their own class room this year, and are expanding their Bible knowledge through service. They are serving coffee, filling the pantry, packing shoeboxes, helping in the Pre-K class, packaging Congregational Care packages, and much more!
- Cup of Joy returned Monday evenings!
- Social Justice continues between the services on Sundays.
- Our Bible study and Prayer meetings also continue.
- Our nursery is open and we welcome more children! The room has been re-vamped and Michelle and Rachel are ready!
- Youth group continues to meet weekly. This fall was a little damp for a corn maze, but a rake and run was done to help people with some yard work! Youth also helped manage traffic for the Hi Ho Holiday fair, and did their annual parking of cars for the Road race. They will once again be serving us at the annual pancake breakfast!

Our last event for the year is the annual Christmas Pageant and Pancake Breakfast. A time to gather and be with family and friends and see how our children have grown this year. We will once again do the traditional telling of the Christmas story and hear some beautiful Christmas songs. We hope you can join us!

Children are the future of our church. They will carry forth our old traditions and create new ones for all of us to explore. We are giving them a solid foundation through our teachings of Christ.

May you all find peace, health, and happiness throughout the holiday season and in the year to come.

Denise Roman

SUMC Outreach Update

Joy of Community Sharing

We delivered the blessing bag items to MACC this week, and our adopted families will receive their store and grocery gift cards today. Thanks for donating, delivering, and praying for our families this year. Keep the non perishable food coming; we deliver your donations weekly!

Manchester Latino Affairs Council (MLAC)

MLAC collaborates with Concordia Lutheran Church to hold an event annually, celebrating Three Kings Day (January 6th/Epiphany) with the Latino population in town. They provide a meal and gifts to hundreds of local families who may otherwise go without a gift and holiday meal. How can we help? The gifts need to be wrapped and labeled gender and age range. The age ranges will be as follows: 1 to 3, 4 to 6, and 7 to 10 and gift cards for kids ages 11-18. The gift cards can be any where between 10 and 15 dollars. There's a drop box in Reception Hall for your wrapped toy donations. We will collect these gifts and gift cards through the end of the year. There may also be volunteer opportunities as well. We will update as we learn more.

Operation Christmas Child Shoe boxes

Our shoe boxes are making their way to the Dominican Republic this year. Continue to pray for the children who will receive them, and for the impact that learning about the Gospel story will have on their lives.

Youth Group

How to be in the know...



We post all sorts of things to the page: Sermons, Special

Events, Devotionals, etc. It's a great way to spread the Good News that Jesus is our Lord and Savior so if you haven't already done so please like us on Facebook and share each of our posts as they are published! Also, Sunday Service is live streamed on Facebook!!



Sermons are also accessible on YouTube. Click on YouTube from our website—it is in the upper right hand corner. The choose videos.



Follow us on Instagram!! @southumc_ct This also can be accessed from our website!

Youth

The Youth will be heading to Camp Monadnock in Jaffrey, NH, for this year's Winter Retreat on January 26-28! Spots are limited for this event, so get them while you can! The cost per Youth is \$110, which is a big discount due to the INCREDIBLE fundraising efforts of our Youth/ Church Family with parking for the Fair & Road Race as well as the Rake & Run. Great job, guys! The Youth had a great fall with many highlights, but none may be as big as joining a couple college students at the UConn Dairy Bar! We were blessed to see Nathan and Aidan mid-semester and bring some fun their way. The Youth are pretty good at that!



Young Adult

Our College Care Packages have been sent all over the country with hope and encouragement for our students! Please be praying for these students as they end the Fall Semester, and give them a warm welcome as they return home!

The Young Adult Christmas Party will be 12/22 from 6:30-8:30 pm @ the LaForest household! Be on the lookout for more information coming your way for this special event, and NEW once a month opportunities in 2024! Contact JT if you're interested in attending and want to learn more: 623-670-2612

Young Adult Christmas Party

December 22 –
from 6:30 – 8:30pm
At the LaForest household!
More info to come about this Special Event
Also NEW once a month opportunities in 2024
Contact JT 623-670-2612





**Sunday School
Christmas Pageant
Sunday Dec. 17th
ONE 10am Service**

**ALL-Church Pancake
Breakfast to
Follow in Cooper Hall**



2023 Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, 12/24/23

ONE 10am Service

**6pm - Family Service with Children's Story
and Wildfire Worship Band**

**10pm - Candlelight Service with Holy Communion
and Chancel Choir (This service will be Livestreamed)**

All Holiday Services will be held in the Sanctuary

Happenings!

YOUTH WINTER SCHEDULE

12/3 YG	12/10 Xmas Party	12/17 Pancake Breakfast
12/24 & 31 No YG	1/7 YG	1/14 YG
1/21 YG	1/26-28 Winter Retreat	2/4 YG

Cup of Joy ~ For Women

Monday 6:30pm - 7:30pm

In The Café - All Are Welcome

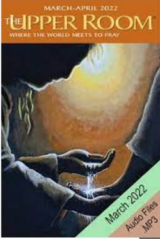
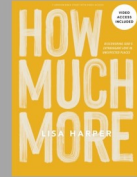
New Study starting Jan 8th

Books with Video Access \$25

Contact Patti

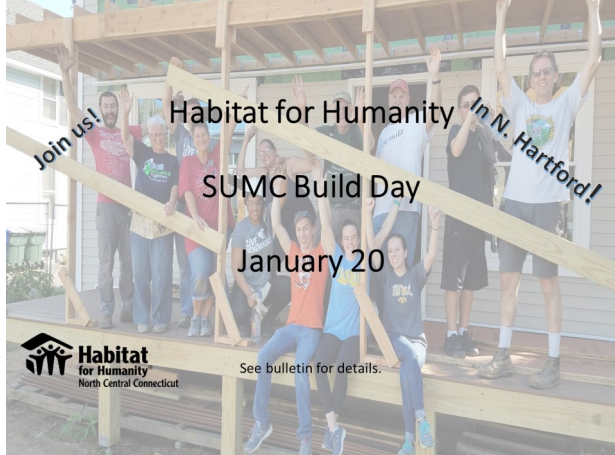
To order a book by 12/22

PattiLF@aol.com




Study Opportunity
The Upper Room Study

- Wednesdays at 7:30am
- SUMC Reception Hall
- Everyone is welcome
- Call Bill McGugan for details
860-380-0700



Join us!
Habitat for Humanity
In N. Hartford!
SUMC Build Day
January 20

See bulletin for details.



Pancake Breakfast



Don't miss the SUMC Youth sponsored Pancake Breakfast

Following our one 10am service on 12/17/23.
Everyone is invited

suggested donation \$8/person \$25 cap/family any money raised beyond expenses will go towards the Youth Mission Fund