



The Oak Notes

December 2022



Pastor's Corner

by Pastor Justin

I'd like to start today by asking you a simple question: Are you ready for Christmas? Normally, when we think about our readiness for Christmas, we point to a number of different things. Do we have our tree up? Are the decorations and the lights hung? Is our Christmas shopping done? Have we sent out our cards? Is everything wrapped and under the tree? Is our house ready for the guests to come over?

But that's not the kind of preparation I'm talking about. When I say, "Are you ready for Christmas?," I'm talking about a deeper, more important kind of spiritual preparation: a readiness of the soul. Just as we prepare for Christmas by putting up decorations, listening to Christmas music, hanging stockings, or buying gifts, Advent asks us, "How are we preparing our souls to receive Jesus Christ anew this year?"

Literally, the term Advent means "coming" or "appearance." It is a season of spiritual preparation and readiness, not only for the coming of Jesus Christ on Christmas morning, but for his ultimate return. We are reminded of the past each Christmas so that it orients us to the promise of the future. It symbolizes the present situation of the church as we wait for the return of Jesus Christ in the last days.

So many times, when we talk about Christmas, we focus on the same old stories. We talk about the stories of Mary and Joseph, the stories of the shepherds and the wise men, the story

of Jesus' birth and angels' songs on that most holy, magnificent night. But the birth of Jesus didn't happen in a vacuum. He came in response to a promise. Christmas really begins with the Old Testament, with the countless promises of the coming Messiah, who breaks into our world on Christmas. Among those promises is Isaiah 9:6: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Each title says something to us about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish. If we really want to understand what Christmas is all about, we need to take a step back and peer into the Old Testament, that we might see the Christmas stories as the fulfillment of God's ancient promises to send his son.

In many ways, we are in a similar situation to the people of Israel at the close of the Old Testament. We are waiting for a promise. Israel was looking and waiting for the coming of the Messiah to bring about all that God had promised. In the same way, we look back upon and await the promise that he will return.

So, I ask you again, "Are you ready for the coming of Jesus Christ into the world this Christmas?" And if not, what steps might you need to take this Christmas season to ready your heart to receive him anew?



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Please note:

Pastor Justin will be on vacation to celebrate Christmas with his family from Monday, Dec. 26 to Sunday, Jan. 1. Our Family Ministry Pastor Amit Dutta (513-658-2867) will be covering pastoral emergencies in his absence. Dave Kalota will be preaching on Sunday, Jan. 1.

Parsonage Update:

At our annual church conference on Nov. 14, those members present unanimously voted to proceed with the sale of the Ebenezer parsonage. This vote authorizes the Board of Trustees to begin the process of listing the property, taking bids, and selling the property.



Years ago, it was popular to speak of “putting Christ back in Christmas.” I guess we didn’t do a good job, because today we often don’t even put Christmas in Christmas! It’s the “holiday season.” We are so anxious to appease everyone, we deny it is a religious celebration. Christmas “success” is measured by our spending! Even churches can get hung up on the production. Because Christmas is on Sunday this year, some churches are not having services, to give staff a break after multiple Christmas Eve services. We are canceling worship because the sound guy can’t make it??

If Christ is missing from Christmas, it is up to us—His Church—to put Him back, to seek Him out, to fill the manger. We can share His love with children who may never hear of it at home. We can help serve meals at Nast Trinity or other facility to show we care because He cares. As a family, we can light an Advent candle, look at the manger scene, or read the story about Jesus’ birth from the Bible. We can spend time with Him and pray.

**On coming to the house,
they saw the child with his
mother Mary, and they
bowed down and wor-
shipped him.**

Matt.2:11a

Let’s make an Advent pledge to spend time alone with Him every day. The time we are busiest, is the time we need His guidance the most. Take a few minutes each day to be quiet with God (how welcome is quiet in the midst of chaos?). Praise Him for His creation and His unlimited love, and thank Him for your blessings, your family, your church family. Confess your sins—not just the specific acts but the things left undone and the people neglected. Ask for His guidance, His strength, His Help, His healing. Lift up our church, Pastor Justin, our congregation, and our community.

Don’t try to work His time into your schedule—work your schedule around Him. If Christmas is truly the time to welcome Jesus into our world, don’t let the world squeeze Him out of your life. With every decoration, party, or gift, ask yourself “How does this glorify the Christ Child?” If it doesn’t honor Him, then cross it off your list. This is His birthday, His celebration. He is God’s gift of hope to the lost world. Happy Advent! Merry Christmas!

Welcome, Beverly!

Advent Readers

In our November newsletter, we reported that a new church secretary had been hired. However, she changed her mind after the printing of the newsletter and before her first day. We are pleased to announce that we have now hired Beverly Boone to be our new secretary. Beverly and her two kids, Avery and Jake, have been coming to Oak Hills since the beginning of October. Beverly is excited to be joining our staff and will be working in the church office Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Her first day was Tuesday, November 22. Please join me in welcoming Beverly to our church family!



Advent is quickly approaching. If you would like to read and/or light candles during one of the Sundays in Advent (November 27, December 4, 11, and 18) or on Christmas Eve, please see Pastor Justin or sign up at this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050445AAAF29A5FE3-advent2>.

We would also like to invite you to join us in helping decorate the church for the Christmas season after worship on Sunday, November 27.

2023 Faith-Based Financial Plan

by Pastor Justin

I hope you share my excitement about the many worthwhile ministries taking place at Oak Hills. One significant factor in the fruitfulness of these ministries is your continued faithfulness to fund them through your generous financial support. Money itself is a lifeless thing, but when put to use by dedicated disciples who seek to do great things for God, great things can and will happen. You will find here a narrative version of our 2023 faith-based financial plan (the budget as approved at the Nov. 14 board meeting), which shows how your gifts will go to support the work of God at Oak Hills in the next year. If you would like a line-item version of the budget, it is available in the office on request. I look forward to seeing what God will do through us in 2023!

Total Estimated 2023 Operating Expenses: \$228,076

1) Team 1: Radical Hospitality: \$6,900

1 John 4:7-8 says, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." Love is the supreme virtue of the Christian life. We exist to love our neighbors as ourselves. The radical hospitality team focuses on loving the people of our community the way God loves them. This portion of the budget supports both our Sunday morning hospitality (cookies) and the outreach we do into the community, including Sissy's Pantry, community dinners, advertising, and offering gifts of appreciation to show teachers and first responders how much we really care.

2) Team 2: Passionate Worship: \$3,505

Jesus also calls us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). The primary way we love God is through worship. We were created for worship. Our worship services, both in person and online via Facebook and YouTube, help us grow in our love for God. This portion of the budget covers worship services, communion elements, music & licensing, decorations, banners, candles, and technology for media, sound, and streaming.

3) Team 3: Faith-Forming Relationships: \$19,900

A disciple of Jesus Christ continually grows in their love for God and God's people. This happens as we spend time in the word of God and in relationship with others. That begins with our children and youth, and continues on into adulthood. In every phase of life, we learn to love more and more like Jesus. This portion of our faith-based financial plan supports curriculum and supplies for all of our children's, youth, adult Sunday School, and small group ministries. It also supports Jesus and Me (JAM), Vacation Bible School (VBS), our puppet ministry, youth trips and outings, our family outreach events and movie nights.

4) Team 4: Risk-Taking Missions: \$2,000

From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called his disciples to follow him and to fish for people. As we spend time with Jesus, he sends us back out to be involved in his mission in the world. This happens through our risk-taking missions team. While most of our mission endeavors are supported by special donations (Operation Christmas Child, Helping Hands gift cards), we did budget some money to assist with charitable projects with our ministry partners Springmyer and Oakdale Elementary Schools.

5) Pastor and Staff Salary and Benefits: \$115,133

We employ a full-time pastor, two part-time family ministry pastors, and a part-time secretary, and are in the process of finding a part-time nursery worker. This portion of the faith-based financial plan represents their salaries, reimbursable expenses for minis-

try, housing allowance, continuing education, pension, the church's portion of the pastor's health insurance, workers compensation, and payroll taxes.

6) Property and Utilities: \$65,110

Oak Hills UMC owns a church and two old parsonages. We are currently in the process of selling the Ebenezer parsonage and cleaning the Bridgetown house for rent. This portion of the church budget includes our utilities, property taxes, insurance, maintenance, lawn care, landscaping, and snow removal. We budgeted for 6 months of expenses for the Ebenezer house to give us time to sell it. Should we sell it before that time, we will have less expenses in this area that could be used to offset our projected deficit, pay more of our apportionments, or put toward savings.

7) Office, Administration, and Finance: \$13,975

The church office, administration, and finance teams provide the necessary support for our pastor, staff, and ministries of to thrive. This portion of the budget includes regular office expenses including supplies, copies, postage, bulletins, newsletters, equipment, our website, background checks, our annual stewardship campaign, giving envelopes, payroll, and banking charges.

8) Connectional Giving: \$3,553

As United Methodists, we are part of a larger work of Christ through district, conference, national, and global ministries and missions of the church. Through connectional giving, we support the ministries of local, national, and global missions, United Methodist colleges, universities, seminaries, hospitals, and homes, and provide for new church starts and congregational revitalization, among other things. This portion of our budget currently only includes paying 100% of our district apportionments for 2023. We are not currently budgeted to pay any of our conference apportionments (\$20,742) at this time. While we desire to pay all of our apportionments in full, we simply do not have the funds to do so at this time.

Total Estimated 2023 Income: \$222,850

Total anticipated income includes \$164,700 from tithes, offerings, and seasonal offerings, \$22,400 from designated giving, \$21,000 in grants from the Ohio River Valley and West Ohio Conference, \$12,000 in rental fees from the Bridgetown house and \$2,750 from room use fees, fundraisers, and Amazon Smile. The \$21,000 in grants includes a grant for youth and family ministry for \$10,000; an outreach grant that includes our pantry ministry, our community dinners, and our ministry with the local schools for \$7,000; and a \$3,000 grant from the conference to cover licensing for movies we show at the local schools.

Any monies received from the sale of the Ebenezer parsonage are not included in this budget. These funds cannot be used to cover the general budget. A portion of those funds will be set aside in reserve. The other funds will be set aside to cover major maintenance and capital expenses which are not included in the general maintenance budget of the church for 2023 and beyond. For this reason, major capital expenses are not included in the budget reflected above. We do, however, anticipate that in 2023, some of the parsonage funds will go to offset the cost of the boiler that is currently on its last leg.

This projected budget results in a **net loss of \$7,226**, but this could be reduced if we sell the Ebenezer parsonage earlier than June, since we budgeted for six months of expenses from the parsonage.

Upcoming Family Ministries

Events:

Jesus' Birthday Party - Sunday, December 18th, starting at 9 AM

What: Birthday party for Jesus with games during Sunday School and more fun activities during JAM time - all kids bring a gift to share with another child in need.

Christmas Candlelight Family Service - December 24th at 5:30 PM

What: Family gathering led by Pastor Justin, and a kids & youth Christmas presentation culminating with a candlelight moment.

"And nations shall come to Your Light, and kings to the brightness of Your Rising."

Isaiah 60:3

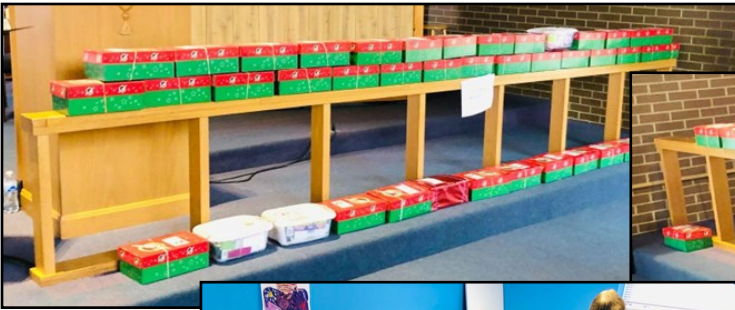
OHUMC Kids & Youth Update:

Sunday school is from 9-10:20am every Sunday. Join us for a Bible-based lesson with crafts and prizes! Ms. Kathy ensures kids learn about the Bible and have something to take home. Then, enjoy JAM (Jesus & Me) in the Sunday school hall during the main worship service. We have fantastic volunteers like Mrs. Kim, Mr. Joe and Mary, and Mr. David & Mrs. Ronda. Puppets also visit the worship service multiple times a month, which is always exciting!

The youth enjoy meeting weekly for group time on Sunday mornings at 9:30 for a fresh coffee bar and breakfast. I Corinthians has been our main jam for the past few weeks - there are so many spiritual and life lessons gleaned from its pages. Please join us if you're a youth aged 12-17! We invite adults and families to join one of our family ministries' events. We'd love to see you there. :)

Below, you will find pictures of all the wonderful volunteers at the Operation Christmas Child Packing Party on Sunday, November 13th! Our church gave over 70 boxes this year, and our kids participated in offering what they had by bringing some forward during the offering time. Thank God! (P.S. We will miss Cindy!)





What a lovely sight it was to have a full house in JAM!

Announcements

- 12/5 – Trustees Meeting, 7 pm
- 12/7 – UMW Lunch, 12 pm
- 12/12 – Finance Meeting 6:30 pm; Board Meeting 7 pm
- 12/16 – Young at Heart, 7 pm
- 12/17 – Sports Card Show, 9am-3pm
- 12/18 – Jesus’ Birthday Party, 9 am
- 12/24 – Christmas Eve Worship, 5:30 pm*
- 12/25 – Christmas Day Worship, 10:30 am
- 12/26 – Church Office Closed: Christmas
- 12/26-1/1 – Pastor Justin Vacation
- 1/2 – Church Office Closed: New Year’s

*Please note: We will only have one Christmas Eve service this year due to a lack of available musicians later.

- Worship – Sunday, 10:30 am
- Zoom Prayer Meeting – Wed 6:00-6:30 pm
- Sissy’s Pantry – Wed 6:30-8:00 pm

Bible Studies

- Sunday School, 9 am
- Women’s Group: Mondays, 10 am
- Return of the Gods: Mondays, 7 pm
- John’s Study: Thursdays, 10:30 am
- TOGA: 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 7 pm @ 5609 Green Acres Ct., Cincy

