



The Connection

Seeking to Link Person to Person And All to Christ

December, 2017/January, 2018

Christ United Methodist Church
800 Market Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27516
(919) 969-8820; Fax: (919) 967-9924
Pastoral Emergencies:
(919) 969-8820, x202
Office email: office@christmethodist.org

Members of Our Staff

David Goehring, Sr. Pastor; Ext. 207
dgoehring@christmethodist.org

Brent Levy, Assoc. Pastor; Ext. 206;
blevy@christmethodist.org

Suzanne Hultman, Assoc. Pastor
Ext. 224; shultman@christmethodist.org

Nick Jonckowski, Youth Pastor; Ext 204
njonckowski@christmethodist.org

Daniel Pantoja, Latino Ministry Pastor
919-799-1416
dannyps2357@nccumc.org

Dr. Daniel Steinert, Director of Music
919-969-7126;
dsteinert@christmethodist.org

Jordan Holoman, 8:30 Worship Leader
jholoman@christmethodist.org

Justin DeJong, Wellspring Worship
Leader; jdejong@christmethodist.org

Jane Reeb, Director, Children's Ministry
Ext. 205; jreeb@christmethodist.org

Denis Brichford, Business Manager
Ext. 203
dbrichford@christmethodist.org

Deon Roach, Office Manager; Ext. 201
droach@christmethodist.org

Maggie Ivancic, Administrative Asst.
Ext. 200; mivancic@christmethodist.org

Danny Ferguson, Facilities Engineer
Ext. 209
dferguson@christmethodist.org

Debbie Arena, Director of Preschool
919-969-1690;
darena@christmethodist.org

Kelli Hitchman, Duke Divinity Intern
kelli.hitchman@duke.edu

Website:

www.christmethodist.org

The Pastor's Pen

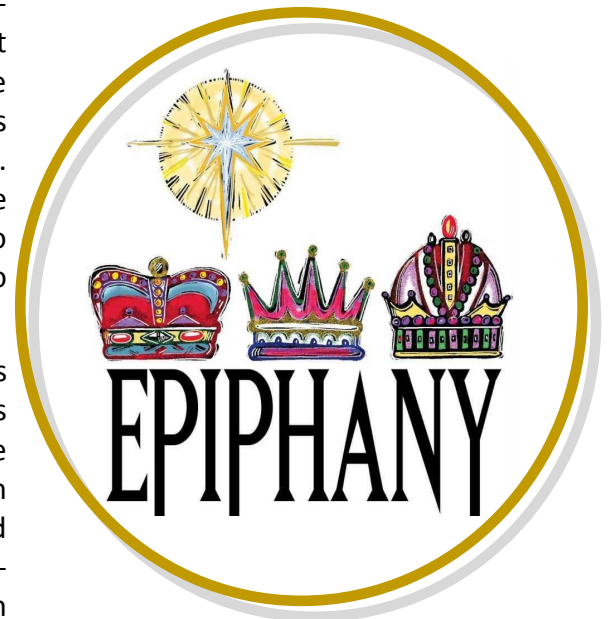
Joyous Christmas and Happy New Year!

Did you know that the season of Christmas actually lasts up to January 6th, 2018? This is because the church's liturgical calendar is different from the secular calendar. The liturgical calendar is made up of six distinct periods or seasons of Christian observances. These seasons do not necessarily occur on the same dates from year to year but are related to the dates of our two most important Christian celebrations: Christmas and Easter. Currently, we are in the season of Advent which begins four Sundays before Christmas. It marks the start of a new year for the church as we prepare for the coming of Christ. Advent is followed by the Christmas Season which lasts 12 days, and it ends on January 6th with Epiphany (sometimes called Twelfth Day or Three Kings Day). Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of the divine nature of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi. Because of the flow of the calendar, we will be celebrating Epiphany on December 31st. Epiphany is a reference to "light" or "a new thought" or "a new way of thinking." Some of the songs of the faith we enjoy during Epiphany are "Rise, Shine, You People," "This Little Light of Mine," "Go Tell it on the Mountain," and "We Three Kings."

I love starting a new year and taking time to both reflect on times past and to look forward. The story of the Magi reminds me that sometimes God asks us to go in a new direction. Why? For our own good and for the good of others! As we venture into 2018, may we have holy boldness to follow Jesus where He goes.

For me, following Jesus requires me to yield my will to God's will. This is an everyday negotiation. I invite you to be present here in worship on January 7th for Baptism of the Lord Sunday. We will remember this important milestone in Jesus' life, which affirmed his identity as God's beloved Son and marked the beginning of his ministry. On this Sunday—the first Sunday of 2018—we will also receive Holy Communion and remember our baptism. These two sacraments of the church will help us adjust ourselves to God's will and mark a wonderful way of readying ourselves and our families for a New Year.

*Peace and Love,
Pastor David*



Preparing for Advent at CUMC



2017
ANGEL TREE

Many families are still in need of Christmas gifts this year. Please choose a tag from the tree and return the gift, wrapped & with the tag in place, by Sun., December 17.

Look Again . . . and Be Grateful!

Our pastors chose *Look Again* as the theme for our Advent sermon series at Christ UMC, and that's exactly what Forest Hills Church in Charlotte asked its congregation to do, too. In what is vaguely reminiscent of the classic holiday film *It's a Wonderful Life*, a man wakes up gift wrapped from head to toe, alongside a gift wrapped wife. His two gift-wrapped children walk into the bedroom and what follows is a series of subtle reminders of the gifts average Americans take for granted, including food and transportation. It ends with the phrase: **"This Christmas may you**

be grateful for all the gifts around you." Take one minute and 45 seconds to *Look Again* at this video . . . and give God thanks for the blessings we sometimes miss in the busyness of this season. Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSxPWpLPN7A>.



Kelli's Korner



It is not over, this birthing. There are always newer skies into which God can throw stars. When we begin to think that we can predict the Advent of

God, that we can box the Christ in a stable in Bethlehem, that's just the time that God will be born in a place we can't imagine and won't believe. Those who wait for God watch with their hearts and not their eyes, listening, always listening for angel words. - Ann Weems

Whenever I think of Advent and the Christmas Season, I find my thoughts continually drifting back to Mary. The Blessed Mary, the Virgin Mary, Saint Mary, Mary the mother of Jesus: however it is that you think of her, I hope you think of her often and with deep fondness! It is Mary who teaches us about waiting, about hoping, and about the Advent of God. Mary experienced an Advent of nine months! The stretching of skin, the movement of the Incarnate Word inside of her, the anticipation of her baby's arrival, perhaps even fear about what that baby truly meant—I imagine those were all sensations Mary experienced during her Advent season. So, too, our Advent season requires us to stretch out our hope, to feel the movement of the Spirit inside of us, to anticipate the Reign of God, and yes, perhaps even to be made uncomfortable about what a God who dwells among us truly expects.

This Advent we are invited to *look again*. However, we are also invited to do the stretching, anticipating, and hoping that comes along with the work of birthing. God is always birthing light out of the darkest places, places that require us to look again with our hearts and not just our eyes. Stay alert, my beloveds. Be prepared for God to birth new hope, new love, new joy, and new peace among us this Advent season.

*Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit,
that in your light we may see light, in your truth, find wisdom,
and in your will, discover your peace, through Jesus Christ our Hope. Amen.*

Special Worship Experiences in December

Christmas Cantata
Dec. 17 at 9:45 & 11:00 am

The Longest Night Service
Dec. 20 Meal at 5:30 pm
Service at 7:00 pm

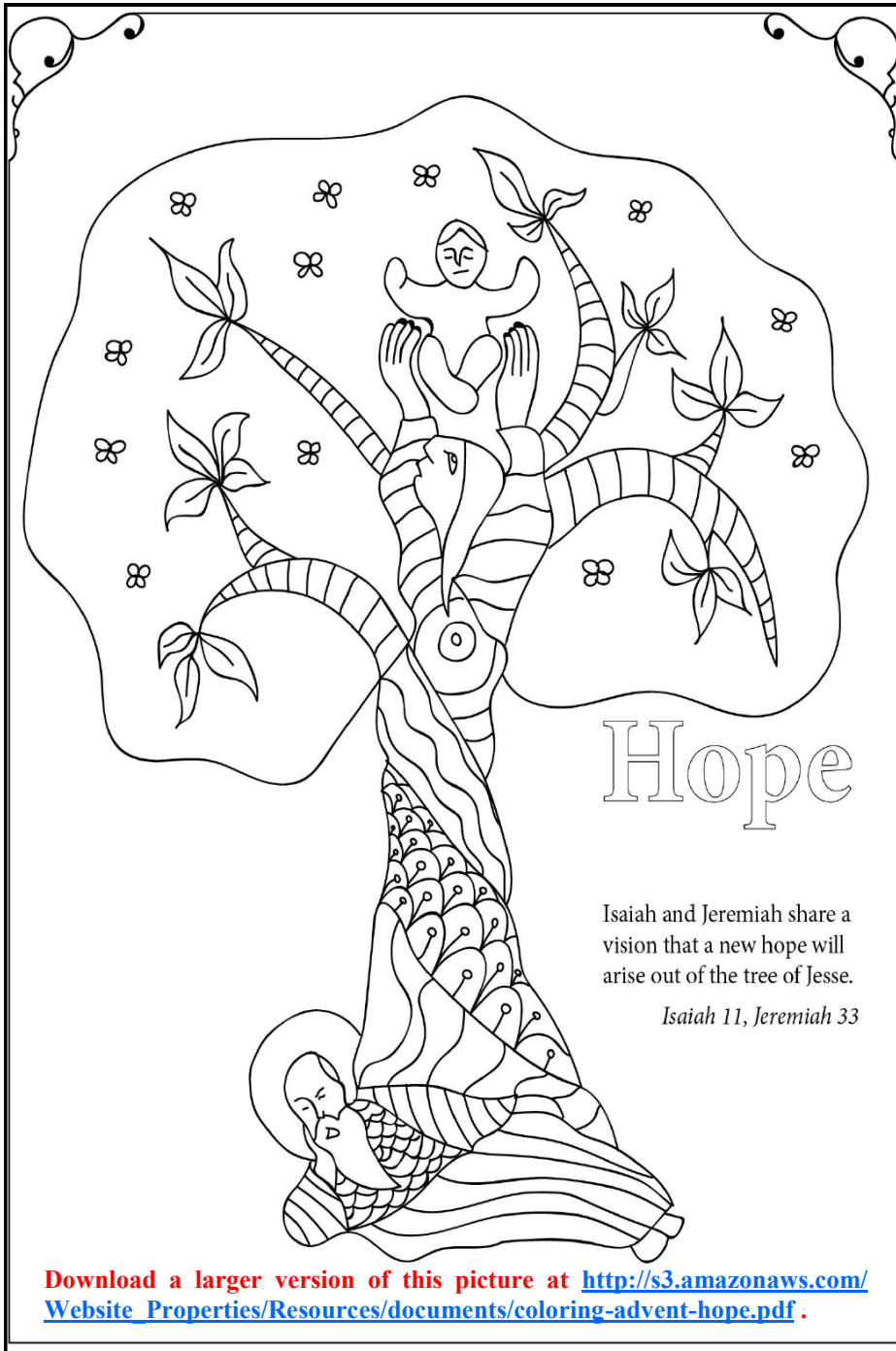
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 24 at 10:00 am

Christmas Eve Services
Dec. 24 at 3, 5, 7, & 9 pm

December 31 Worship
8:30, 9:45, 11:00, & 6:30

The church office will closed from Dec. 25-January 1. However, Business Manager Denis Brichford will be available to assist members on Dec. 28 & Dec. 29 from 10 am—2 pm.

A Creative Approach to Advent



Hope

Isaiah and Jeremiah share a vision that a new hope will arise out of the tree of Jesse.

Isaiah 11, Jeremiah 33

Download a larger version of this picture at <http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website-Properties/Resources/documents/coloring-advent-hope.pdf>.

Coloring Advent: It's Not Just for Kids!

Approach your advent devotional time in a new and creative way this season! Check out [Coloring Advent: An Adult Coloring Book for the Journey to Bethlehem](#). It offers a unique way to approach your devotional time—a coloring page for each day of Advent! United Methodist Communications has made four of these devotions available at no cost here: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/coloring-advent-creative-devotions-for-christmas>. A sample devotion is copied below with the coloring page at left. Grab some colored pencils and enrich your Advent journey today!

Hope

A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots. The Lord's spirit will rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of planning & strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11:1-2 CEB

I'd like to say I knew what I was doing, but when I put down the clippers, the little tree in our front yard had lost many of its branches. One of our neighbors asked if I was *trying* to kill it. Quite the opposite. I was hoping to save it.

In the months that followed, I waited. Every day I walked by the tree looking for signs of life. One day, I saw a bit of bright green among the cold, dead browns. A bud of a new branch was forming. In the years that followed, that little tree began to grow taller, wider, and brighter in season.

The prophets used similar imagery to talk about their faith. Things looked bleak. People wondered if they had been cut off from the blessings God had promised them. The prophets offered hope. They knew God was at work just beneath the surface. One day, they said, "a shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse [King David's dad]."

We all go through seasons when things look bleak, yet God is still at work in the world, bringing new life to what we thought was dead. In this season of Advent, we remember the hope we have in Jesus Christ—"nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38 CEB).



The Hill Christmas Party

Sun., Dec. 17 | Youth Bldg.

Caroling 4:00—5:30pm

Christmas Party 5:30—7:00pm

Youth, let's spread some cheer this season! First, we'll go Christmas caroling in Southern Village (Wear your favorite Christmas apparel!), and then we'll head back to church for a celebration! Enjoy food, drinks, a crazy sock white elephant game, singing, and a devotion. The fun wraps up at 7 pm. **Please bring two pairs of socks:** one pair of crazy socks to trade in the game & another pair of warm men's socks to donate at the homeless shelter on Rosemary Street. We Ho! Ho! Hope to see you there! Questions? Contact Pastor Nick (njonckowski@christmethodist.org).

Epiphany Events

THE NINTH ANNUAL

EPIPHANY RING



Christ Church's "Chancel Bells" ring in concert with 10 other handbell choirs!

Ring-a-ling! Hear them ring!!

Come and enjoy Triangle-area Handbell Choirs
ringing together in a festival concert
of the beautiful music of the season!

Guest director: Edmund R. Tompkins

Sunday, January 7, 2018

7:00 pm

Admission is free!

Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Family Life Center
1320 Umstead Road Durham, NC 27712

For more information, call 919-477-0509, ext. 310

Epiphany Party!

KIDS

Sunday December 31, 2017
9:45 am - 10:45 am
Building 105 Room 3
Instead of Sunday School
all kids are
invited to celebrate
The Epiphany
A time for fun and games



Please note: There will be no Sunday School for children on December 24.

A Special Message from the Staff-Parish Relations Committee

The Advent & Christmas seasons are especially busy for our pastors, music leaders, & administrative staff. These people serve with great love and commitment all year, & the pace is even more demanding in December. A longstanding CUMC tradition is to show our appreciation for all of them through a Love Offering at Christmas. We invite you to express your gratitude for the blessings they've given you and your family by contributing to this fund. Please note "Love Offering" on the memo line of your check, which may be placed in the offering plate on December 17 or 24 or mailed to the church office by December 22.

Wishing you a blessed
Advent and Christmas season,

B.J. Thompson, Chair

New Faces @ CUMC



Cookie and Pearl Dixon

- ◆ Cookie prepares delicious meals for our members each week at the Well.
- ◆ Pearl is a student at Chapel Hill High.
- ◆ Live in Hillsborough
- ◆ 919-428-6141
- ◆ mscookie121@yahoo.com

Dr. Chris and Barbara Guest

- ◆ Moved from Greensboro where they operated an urgent care clinic.
- ◆ Live in Southern Village
- ◆ 919-240-5620
- ◆ C: CguestMD@gmail.com
- ◆ B: G8521121@aol.com



SAVE THE DATE

Red Cross Blood Drive at CUMC

Tues., January 16th; 10 am—2:30 pm; Ascension Hall
Contact Caroline Williams - carwilliams3@gmail.com.

Safety, Service, & a Shipwreck!

A Message from the CUMC Safety Council

Dear CUMC Members,

Since December 10th, we have been locking the door near the nursery/preschool rooms during morning and evening worship services. CUMC's newly formed Safety Council, established in the wake of last month's tragedy at a Texas church, has recommended locking all non-essential exterior doors as a prudent way to keep our children, adults, and facilities safer. You may still park in the lower parking lot, but you will need to walk around to the front door or the Ascension Hall door to enter the building. You may want to consider dropping off your family at either of those doors and then parking your car after the drop off. *You may always exit by any door at any time.*

Our Trustees and the church staff have met with CUMC member Bucky Cox, a former FBI agent and an expert on workplace security, who will guide the Safety Committee as it plans for the future safety and security of our church members. Of course, we are mindful to keep the proper balance between being a welcoming place that ministers to souls in need while at the same time keeping our members safe.

In addition to locking the back parking lot door, in the next several weeks we will install inside door locks on classroom doors without them, develop an emergency response protocol for ushers, and meet with Lt. Steve Lehew of the Chapel Hill Police Department concerning best practices. The Safety Council will continue to update the congregation on its work in the coming year.

Peace of Christ,

The CUMC Safety Council: Charlie Hall (Chair), Debbie Arena, Bucky Cox, Jean Elia, Deon Roach, Julie Welge

Road Rally of Service!

MLK Day; Monday, January 15

10 am-Noon

Ascension Hall & Beyond!



Christ Church is taking our service to the streets! We'll start in Ascension Hall, making blessing bags for the homeless. Then, we'll hit the road, delivering the bags to the IFC Homeless Shelter and then moving on to perform acts of kindness at senior citizen communities, grocery stores, and other locations throughout our community. Join the fun as a family, couples, or groups of friends. Kids are welcome. Invite a friend! PLEASE REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT by contacting Deon Roach (919-969-8820, x201; droach@christmethodist.org).

Can't join the Road Rally? You still can help the homeless in our community by donating the items listed at right for our Blessing Bags. Deliver items to Ascension Hall or the church office starting December 18th. Thank you!

Blessing Bag Ingredients:



- ◆ Gallon size Ziploc bags
- ◆ Lip balm
- ◆ Travel size tissue packages
- ◆ Toothbrush
- ◆ Toothpaste
- ◆ Comb
- ◆ Deodorant
- ◆ Nail clippers
- ◆ Travel size lotion
- ◆ Travel size baby wipes
- ◆ Travel size hand sanitizer
- ◆ Band-Aids
- ◆ Trail mix
- ◆ Granola or Cereal Bars
- ◆ Cheese & Crackers or Peanut Butter & Crackers packs
- ◆ Applesauce or Fruit Cups
- ◆ Capri Suns or juice boxes



Save The Date
Vacation Bible School
June 18 -22, 2018

Venture onto an uncharted island where kids survive and thrive.
Anchor kids in the truth that Jesus carries them through life's storms.

Missions & Youth News



Beyond Our Borders

If you have a heart for international missions, then join us in helping children around the world! The children we serve live in favelas, slums, city streets, foster homes, or orphanages. All are poor, and too many are sick or abused. Without the schools and day care centers that we support, these children would get no education and would often be left to wander the streets.

Beyond Our Borders transforms the lives of impoverished children and their families in developing countries. Our projects emphasize meeting the daily needs of children along with Christian teaching.

Nicaragua / Brazil / Ukraine

We cultivate partnerships with Christian leaders in other countries and provide financial support to projects, such as library books and learning materials. At least once a year, we travel to one or more of our supported locations to visit with the children, support the local leaders, or participate in building or remodeling projects.

What You Can Do for the Children

Join Us! Help us with relationship building, event planning, fundraising. **Pray!** We desire that God will lead us to the right opportunities and that we will be wise stewards of His resources. **Travel!** Go with us to visit the children and participate in a work project. **Make a Donation or Buy Coffee!** The coffee that we sell on Sunday mornings is grown and processed by a Christian led company in Nicaragua. All proceeds go to support our projects in Nicaragua.

Everyone is welcome to be part of Beyond Our Borders, and we encourage teenagers to become involved. Watch for upcoming meetings and our fundraising campaign in the spring. If you want to learn more about us, please call Carol Baker (919-929-2457) or Rick McGee (919-442-8339).



PSS
offering help and hope

Baby Bottle Campaign
Raising Funds
Raising Awareness

January 14 – February 4, 2018



Fill a Baby Bottle for PSS!

Pregnancy Support Services of Chapel Hill is an organization CUMC supports through our missions program. PSS is a Christian non-profit offering help & hope to women considering their choices in an unplanned pregnancy and to youth considering choices in developing healthy relationships. Our Baby Bottle fundraising campaign starts **January 14th**, and it is a wonderful opportunity for families (as well as couples and individuals) to assist moms and their babies who are in need. Simply pick up a plastic baby bottle at worship on January 14, fill it with silver change, bills or checks, and return the bottles by **February 4th**. Questions? Contact Sharon Guyer (919-537-8242; auntsharonps84@gmail.com).

Early Bird Summer Youth Trip Registration

\$25 OFF per trip when you register before December 25

This Christmas, give your middle/high school student the gift of giving back! Each of CUMC's summer youth mission trips is designed to provide teens with creative experiences that teach the value of serving others and helps them grow in their relationship with Jesus. Learn more about the middle school trip to Charleston, the high school trip to Virginia Beach, & the Wilderness Trail trip by downloading the 2018 Summer Trip Brochure here: <http://files.constantcontact.com/a348bc1e501/e1207935-88bc-4ba8-901d-27800b7ee274.pdf>.

8th Grade Confirmation Starts January 28

Sundays, 9:30-10:45AM; January 28 - March 25

Confirmation is an exciting journey of faith for our 8th grade students. Each week, they'll learn about the Christian faith, how the Church came to be, & what it means to follow Jesus. Most importantly, they'll come to know what it means to be a child of God & a member of God's Church. At the end of Confirmation, we hope each student will want to say "Yes!" to Christ & growing in relationship with him. Register at: <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07eet4x9a44ad38662&oseq=&c=&ch=>

Winter at The Well . . . & Musical News of Note



The Well Starts January 10th!!!!

Start your New Year with an evening of great food, warm fellowship, & a variety of programs for adults, youth, and children. Each Wednesday, we will gather for a meal at 5:30 pm, and small group classes with different focuses will start at 6:30 pm. Details about classes appear below. Questions? Please contact the office (office@christmethodist.org).

- ▶ **How to Stop the Opioid Crisis** (January 17, 24, 31) —Dr. Joe Mancini, husband of CUMC member Janet Thompson, will offer a 3 week course based on his book *Heroin Death: How to Stop the Opioid Crisis*. Sudden, accidental death from heroin has quadrupled since 1999, and prescriptions for pain medication (often known as narcotics) have quadrupled during this same period. This is not a coincidence. Heroin and narcotic pain pills are chemically very similar. Both are opioids, and together, they now cause more deaths than gun shot wounds in this country and almost as many deaths as motor vehicle accidents. Join us to hear Dr. Mancini explain why we are in this crisis and strategies to stop the epidemic. Order the book on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Heroin-Death-Stop-Opioid-Crisis/dp/0692888594>.
- ▶ **The Blood of Christ & the Holy Spirit** (January 10-March 21)—Join Kathy Parker to explore the themes of blood, covenant, and the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments. This study is particularly timely as we move toward and through Lent, celebrate Easter, and look toward Pentecost. The same class will be offered during the 11:00 am hour on Sundays (January 7-March 18) in the Disciple Room. The class will focus on a combination of scripture study/discussion during class time and a personal daily prayer practice at home. Questions? Contact Kathy Parker at kgpcpe@gmail.com.
- ▶ **Saints of the Faith** (January 10-March 21) - Our Duke Divinity Intern, Kelli Hitchman, will lead a discussion of the lives and work of saints as we learn that what makes us saints of God is not *our* ability to be saintly, but *God's* ability to work through sinners.
- ▶ **Parenting Teenagers** (February 7—March 21) - Parents are invited to gather with Pastor Suzanne Hultman for a time of sharing information, encouragement, and advice as you navigate the unique challenges and blessings of parenting teens.
- ▶ **And for the Kids—It's Game Time!!!** (January 10-March 21) - Kindergarteners through 5th graders will enjoy a time of games and working on mission projects, too.
- ▶ **Chancel Bells and Chancel Choir rehearsals resume January 10.**



Some Notes from Dr. Dan . . .

I began my 10th year serving as your Music Director as I sang with Chancel Choir members at Carnegie Hall this past summer, and as I plan out the music calendar for 2018, next year holds many memorable musical events, as well. Whether you are filled up by the music in worship each Sunday, sing or ring or play an instrument, or offer your words of encouragement and prayers for this ministry, my goal is for the music here to be a BlesSing to all who hear it. Please invite a friend to enjoy the music of the season and all that 2018 holds at Christ UMC.

- Sun., December 17, 9:45 & 11am—**Musical Matins: Darkness to Light** Cantata
- Sun., January 14, 9:45 & 11am—**Brassissimo! brass quintet and Ready Singers perform**
- Sun., March 25, 9:45 & 11am—**Palm Sunday Cantata**
- Sun., May 27— **Children of the World International Choir** sings in worship. The children will be in the area from May 25-27. Host families are needed. Please contact me if you can help (919-969-7126 or dsteinert@christmethodist.org).

Peace of Christ,
Daniel Steinert, Director of Music

. . . And from Ms. Jane, too!

"If you want to have a vibrant church ministry, then music is an easy win," says a choir director in a recent issue of *Church Times*. The article makes the point that starting a children's choir breathes new life into our churches. The children join the choir, and both they and their parents find deeper faith through the music and choir participation.

Children are the church of today, and we hope and pray that they will be the church of tomorrow. Christ UMC offers many opportunities for children and families to be significantly involved in the life of the church. A logical addition will be a Christ UMC children's choir. **Beginning Wednesday, February 7th, 4:45-5:45 pm, our church's children will have opportunity to be part of a choir.** Rebecca Dyck, Christ Church Preschool music teacher and director of children's choirs at University UMC, will offer weekly rehearsals for elementary-aged children. This choir will provide our children with a meaningful way to offer their service to our church. When children sing in a choir, they learn to work together as a team to make a beautiful
("Children's Choir", cont. on p. 8)



CHRIST CHURCH

United Methodist

800 Market Street

Chapel Hill, NC 27516

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("Children's Choir" from p. 7)

sound. They also learn that they are church leaders, inspiring the whole church to listen, praise and pray.

Furthermore, children who sing in a choir internalize significant theological messages in a unique way, ideas which they present to the congregation. The congregation attends to children's freshness and innocence, and old ideas are given new life when children sing them.

We want every child to have an opportunity to sing. Contact Ms. Jane (jreeb@christmethodist.org) or Rebecca Dyck (rebeccadyck50@gmail.com) for more information. Parents, please plan to attend the first rehearsal with your child; it will be an informational and musical first gathering!

Peace of Christ,

Jane Reeb, Director of Children's Ministries



Sometimes a Family has just gotta Dance!

Family Valentine's Dance
Friday, February 9th
6:30 - 8:30 pm
Ascension Hall

Bring Dad, bring Mom, bring Grandpa, bring Aunt Susie, bring anyone else who has just gotta dance!

There will be sweets and treats, plus all kinds of dancing - from silly to serious! It will be a fun night of sweets, treats, and music!

Our "tiny dancers" (infants & toddlers) are invited to party in the nursery



thank you!

November 20, 2017

To my church family at Christ UMC:

My husband, Phil Pitner, passed away a year ago. This is a letter to you, all of you - the congregation, David, Brent, Daniel, Suzanne, the choir, the staff - to share my deepest gratitude for all that you have done and been for me this past year. You truly have expressed the spirit of Christ to me. You have guided, girded, praised, remembered, laughed, and prayed with me, and I want you to know how incredibly thankful I am. This church community has continually shown me kindness, solace, hope and love, and I know I'm not the only one who has experienced this. Yes, it is hard to hear the glorious music of Christmas and Easter and all the times in between and not hear Phil's beautiful trumpet sound; that was his gift to God. But it's still there, alive in your voices and your singing and your acts of thanks to God for His profound goodness and grace for the gift of this life we live. As we keep being to others what God asks us to be and do, the spirit of Christ Church will only continue to grow as a place that nourishes, because its people cannot help but be the hands and feet of Jesus. Thank you for being that for me.

Blessings and peace, Scottie Pitner