

Pastor's Page...

TAKING HEART IN THE NEW YEAR....

John 16: 31-33

“Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

INSIGHT

In John 16, as Jesus addresses His disciples' fears and the grief and suffering that would come during and after His death, it's noteworthy that nowhere did He suggest they'd be rescued from experiencing fear and pain. As Christ faced death, they'd abandon Him in terror—"leave (Him) all alone" (*John 16:32*) The grief they'd experience from His death was unavoidable-they'd weep and mourn while the world (rejoiced)" (v.20)

Instead of a comfort based on escaping suffering, however, Jesus offered His disciples hope rooted in His resurrection (16:22). They couldn't avoid the pain they'd experience, but because Christ has "overcome the world" (16:33) their suffering would be like that of childbirth—the pain wouldn't be purposeless but would "turn to joy" (v.20)-tremendous joy that "no one will take away" (v.22).

Fear woke me at 3 a.m. on the first day of the new year. The year ahead weighed heavily on me, overwhelming me with dread. Illness in the family had long wearied me, and now thoughts of the future made me afraid. *Will more bad things happen?* I wondered.

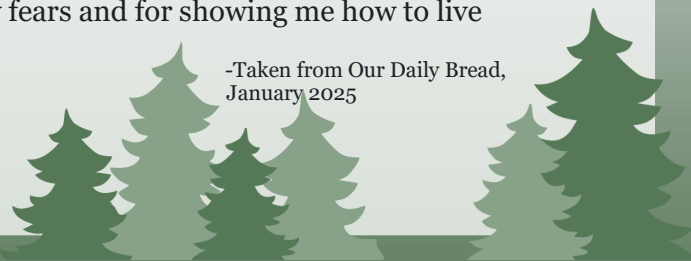
Jesus' disciples understood the fear of bad things happening. Even though their Master had prepared and reassured them the day before He died, they were still afraid. They fled when He was arrested (*Matthew 26:56*), Peter denied Him (*John 18: 15-17, 25-27*), and they went into hiding (*20:19*). Their fear during the upheaval of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, as well as of persecution, led them to act contrary to His command to "take heart" and His promise, "I have overcome the world." (*16:33*).

But Christ's death and resurrection proved His authority and power over life and death. He has the ultimate victory. Even though the sinful state of our world makes suffering a certainty, we can rest in the truth that all things are subject to the authority of our wise and loving God. Jesus' presence is with us (*16: 32-33*), just as it was with His disciples, who later confidently went on to share the gospel to the world. May God's promise that He's in control strengthen our hearts to trust Him in this new year and be courageous even when we don't know what the future will bring. -Karen Huang

What's your response to difficulty, suffering, and trials? What would "taking heart" look like for you?

Prayer: Thank You, Jesus for helping me with my fears and for showing me how to live courageously.

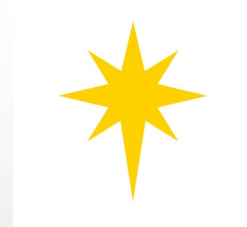
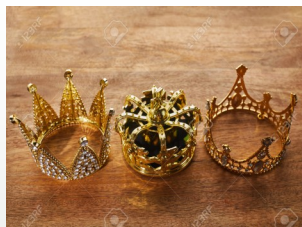
-Taken from Our Daily Bread,
January 2025



EPIPHANY SEASON

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? We have seen His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.” When King Herod heard this he was disturbed... When King Herod had called together all the chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.” Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. Herod sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him.” After the Magi had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the Child was. When the Magi saw the Child with His mother Mary, they bowed down and worshipped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Matthew 2: 1-11

The third season of the church year is Epiphany, which always begins on January sixth and ends on Ash Wednesday (as Lent begins.) The liturgical color of Epiphany is green—a dark forest green. Epiphany celebrates the childhood, youth, baptism and beginning ministry of Jesus. Epiphany begins with the Magi (wise men) gifting the Christ Child with gold, frankincense and myrrh which will be used by Joseph to fund the family’s escape to Egypt when Jesus’ life is threatened by King Herod. The second Sunday of Epiphany we learn of Jesus’ baptism by His cousin John and Jesus receives power from the Holy Spirit. The remaining Sundays are focused on the miracles and parables of Jesus. The last Sunday of Epiphany is Transfiguration Sunday and Scripture recalls Jesus being changed before the eyes of three of His closest disciples preparing Jesus for His last days. Symbols of Epiphany include: live greens (representing growth,) 3 crowns or three gifts (for the Magi) and the Bethlehem star (which guides us to Jesus.)



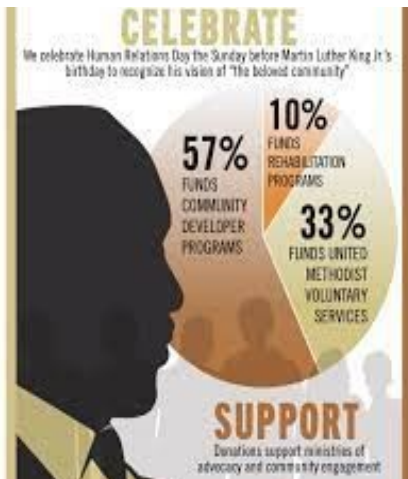
Matthew’s gospel emphasizes gentile (non-Jewish) inclusion into God’s redemptive story. The Magi (who may have been members of the Persian royal court)—come to worship Jesus. Matthew leads his readers to the good news that God’s redemption is for all people and Jesus’ followers are called to “make disciples of all nations.”

In 1868, Phillips Brooks wrote the lyrics to the beloved carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem” after visiting Bethlehem. Brooks, was so moved by his experience standing close to the spot where Jesus was born at the Church of the Nativity, that he felt he could hear other voices telling each other of the “wonderful night” of the savior’s birth. Brook’s church organist put his words to music. The song spoke stillness and peace into the aftermath of the Civil War turmoil. “O little town of Bethlehem/ How still we see thee lie/The hopes and fears of all the years/ Are met in thee tonight.”

Matthew wrote of our Savior’s birth in Bethlehem. When the “Magi from the east” followed the star to Bethlehem “They were overjoyed” to find Jesus.

Today, as we celebrate the season of Epiphany, we too need the glorious news of our Savior’s birth. As the hymn reminds us, Jesus came to cast out our sin and enter in” and “be born in us.” In Jesus, we find peace.

Special Offering Sundays



SLFUMC and BUMC have chosen to participate in 6 special offerings in the upcoming year. The first Special Sunday will be on **January 19th**. The focus for this Special Sunday is Human Relations Day. Human Relations Day is always celebrated the Sunday before the observance of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Human Relations Day supports community developers, United Methodist voluntary service, and youth offender rehabilitation programs.

Liturgists Needed

Would you like to try out being a leader in worship? We would love to have you! If you are nervous about speaking in front of the congregation we try very hard to alleviate any stress by sending out bulletins ahead by email so you have plenty of time to read over what you will be presenting in church on Sunday morning. There will also be a marked bulletin with any reading provided before Sunday morning. If you would be interested, please let the office or Pastor Billie Lou know.



BAPTISM OF THE LORD SUNDAY

Sunday, January 12th, 2025 baptisms for any age will be offered in both services (9:30 & 11.) Please contact Pastor Billie Lou directly if you or someone in your family would like to be baptized, or if you would like to reaffirm your baptism (Methodists don't re-baptize, but we do reaffirm.)

IT IS BRUNCH TIME!

We are starting our Winter Brunch potluck on January 12th after church service. There is a sign up sheet in the gathering area.



SMALL GROUP HOME BIBLE STUDY

We will be starting a small group home bible study in January. If you are interested in hosting a group in your home or are interested in attending home study, there is a sign up sheet in the gathering area. Each study group will consist of no more than eight participants per home. Our goal is to have multiple study group locations each week. If you have any questions, please contact Ryan Randall.



I'd like to thank everyone who furnished refreshments for the Cantata. There was wonderful fellowship following the program and having delicious treats to go with it was such a blessing. Thank you for helping make this event so lovely!

Angel Tree Thank You

A big thank you goes out to everyone who helped make the Angel Tree Mission a success this Christmas season. Whether you chose to donate items to individuals, or delivered the gifts to the area nursing homes and shut ins, your time, thoughtfulness and commitment is appreciated.



Coffee Hour Sign Up

The new sign up sheets for 2025 are on the table in the narthex. If you are able, please sign up for coffee hour. If we want to continue to enjoy our fellowship time, we need people to get involved with these events. If everyone does just a little, it will make it easier for all of us.

End of Year Offering Report:

The office is currently working on printing out the end of year offering reports. You may pick your report up at the church any Sunday starting January 12th or during office hours. Please contact the office if you have any questions or need to have your report mailed to you.

Treasurer's Report

Church Income - Total

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Difference
January	\$8,958.69	\$6,386.43	\$11,623.50	\$9,356.24	\$9,092.56	\$8,041.67	\$9,792.43	\$5,785.63	-\$4,062.53
February	\$6,447.69	\$6,282.48	\$8,103.14	\$8,264.16	\$8,381.66	\$15,052.39	\$15,406.70	\$16,157.14	\$9,680.02
March	\$12,218.36	\$8,996.71	\$9,043.53	\$6,918.75	\$6,052.10	\$5,981.40	\$8,695.89	\$9,193.88	\$1,152.11
April	\$10,227.62	\$11,601.89	\$11,290.64	\$8,273.57	\$8,434.61	\$9,868.97	\$10,361.89	\$8,385.48	-\$1,191.35
May	\$7,177.69	\$9,471.89	\$8,248.86	\$8,383.22	\$9,745.84	\$8,269.56	\$7,061.22	\$7,176.84	-\$2,231.61
June	\$7,649.86	\$7,556.00	\$8,691.77	\$8,905.87	\$6,378.47	\$8,109.85	\$7,624.28	\$7,087.15	-\$393.79
July	\$9,546.40	\$9,362.56	\$7,346.42	\$7,006.77	\$6,436.16	\$6,593.75	\$9,478.44	\$5,982.36	-\$1,819.88
August	\$6,611.44	\$13,791.48	\$7,958.33	\$7,798.74	\$12,806.32	\$7,357.71	\$6,384.77	\$5,595.03	-\$3,429.13
September	\$8,369.09	\$18,798.33	\$9,435.01	\$7,149.82	\$10,419.43	\$5,773.99	\$6,769.46	\$8,425.46	\$1,549.41
October	\$8,704.16	\$6,996.42	\$8,694.94	\$7,206.64	\$12,655.18	\$9,475.56	\$9,066.73	\$7,500.29	-\$982.57
November	\$8,507.00	\$9,686.99	\$6,956.71	\$7,889.11	\$5,283.61	\$7,102.54	\$7,021.11	\$7,993.65	-\$7,961.52
December	<u>\$8,857.40</u>	<u>\$9,147.59</u>	<u>\$8,901.48</u>	<u>\$8,296.11</u>	<u>\$8,245.75</u>	<u>\$7,754.23</u>	<u>\$14,908.60</u>		-
	\$103,275.40	\$118,078.77	\$106,294.33	\$95,449.00	\$103,931.69	\$99,381.62	\$112,571.52	\$89,282.91	-\$9,690.84
Jan.-March	\$27,624.74	\$21,665.62	\$28,770.17	\$24,539.15	\$23,526.32	\$29,075.46	\$33,895.02	\$31,136.65	
Apr.-June	\$25,055.17	\$28,629.78	\$28,231.27	\$25,562.66	\$24,558.92	\$26,248.38	\$25,047.39	\$22,649.47	
July-Sept.	\$24,526.93	\$41,952.37	\$24,739.76	\$21,955.33	\$29,661.91	\$19,725.45	\$22,632.67	\$20,002.85	
Oct.-Dec.	\$26,068.56	\$25,831.00	\$24,553.13	\$23,391.86	\$26,184.54	\$24,332.33	\$37,765.90	\$23,919.40	

Church Expenses - Total

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
January	\$9,413.14	\$9,933.49	\$6,937.20	\$6,847.14	\$5,300.94	\$5,672.14	\$6,815.47	\$9,848.16
February	\$9,945.67	\$8,675.53	\$11,784.18	\$8,579.46	\$8,340.76	\$8,983.93	\$11,810.54	\$6,477.12
March	\$10,682.33	\$8,187.37	\$8,086.06	\$7,022.71	\$7,022.71	\$8,087.76	\$9,964.43	\$8,041.77
April	\$8,251.29	\$9,684.42	\$1,021.13	\$6,144.54	\$10,021.13	\$11,226.58	\$9,443.53	\$9,576.83
May	\$9,826.01	\$9,402.41	\$8,502.38	\$5,369.51	\$6,165.52	\$8,192.60	\$9,423.74	\$9,408.45
June	\$8,503.50	\$8,846.07	\$8,503.28	\$4,258.94	\$6,426.66	\$7,148.27	\$6,843.56	\$7,480.94
July	\$9,923.06	\$11,017.86	\$11,596.75	\$5,401.23	\$6,870.88	\$11,045.63	\$10,960.13	\$7,802.24
August	\$7,726.12	\$8,538.33	\$8,977.95	\$5,347.04	\$7,263.90	\$4,307.13	\$8,559.68	\$9,024.16
September	\$8,060.25	\$7,746.79	\$8,041.68	\$7,281.03	\$9,013.47	\$10,970.96	\$7,854.21	\$6,876.05
October	\$8,618.92	\$7,716.39	\$8,790.50	\$7,681.64	\$8,107.34	\$7,272.68	\$8,521.67	\$8,482.86
November	\$9,130.13	\$8,405.82	\$8,175.43	\$6,628.92	\$7,127.31	\$8,985.91	\$12,748.80	\$15,955.17
December	<u>\$9,633.63</u>	<u>\$9,411.60</u>	<u>\$7,970.08</u>	<u>\$13,461.61</u>	<u>\$7,458.96</u>	<u>\$8,627.46</u>	<u>\$8,803.73</u>	
	\$109,714.05	\$107,566.08	\$98,386.62	\$84,023.77	\$89,119.58	\$100,521.05	\$111,749.49	\$98,973.75
Jan.-March	\$30,041.14	\$26,796.39	\$26,807.44	\$22,449.31	\$20,664.41	\$22,743.83	\$28,590.44	\$24,367.05
Apr.-June	\$26,580.80	\$27,932.90	\$18,026.79	\$15,772.99	\$22,613.31	\$26,567.45	\$25,710.83	\$26,466.22
July-Sept.	\$25,709.43	\$27,302.98	\$28,616.38	\$18,029.30	\$23,148.25	\$26,323.72	\$27,374.02	\$23,702.45
Oct.-Dec.	\$27,382.68	\$25,533.81	\$24,936.01	\$27,772.17	\$22,693.61	\$24,886.05	\$30,074.20	\$24,438.03

Mark Your Calendars
UPCOMING EVENTS



Friday, January 3— Taking down the greens 5-8 pm

Thursday, January 9—YAHA @ noon

Sunday, January 12 - Baptism of Our Lord Sunday
 Brunch after service

Wednesday, January 15—Carrie Knause Meeting @ 9:30 AM
 @ SLFUMC

Friday, January 17— 5th Quarter 8-11 pm

Sunday, January 19— Human Relations Special Sunday

Tuesday, January 28—Free Community Soup Supper
 @SLFUMC



1. Jackie Cooper
2. Jerry Hurst
- Alyssa McGill Wanless
8. Josh Gulick
21. Linda Bigelow
22. Edith Humm
- Elaine Napieralski
25. Ray Rohn
31. Larry Sensabaugh

Want to get some exercise in, but don't want to be out in the cold...or join a gym???? We may have a solution for you. We are wondering if there would be any interest in making the church available for an open walking time. The set up of the church makes for a wonderful walking path without having to be out in the elements. If there is an interest, we can work out what days and



times would be most beneficial for people and create a schedule that will help our congregation live a healthier 2025. If interested, please contact the office at 989-681-3320 Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9-2 or leave a message on the machine anytime detailing your interest as well as times that would be best for you. If there is an interest, we will share a schedule with the congregation.

(This is something they are considering at SLFUMC, I included it in case anyone at BUMC was interested.)



Ted and Angie Sherwood—Jan 11, 1975



THE METHODIST MESSAGE

“SERVING ONE ANOTHER AND SHARING GOD’S LOVE”

United Methodist Church

125 Third St.

Breckenridge, MI 48615

Billie Lou Gillespie-Brown—Pastor

Office phone: 989-842-3632

9:30 AM worship

“Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.”

**Please notify the church if you wish to be taken off the mailing list.

SECRETARY OFFICE HOURS:

Nancy— Thurs. 8am— 1pm

Email Address:

breckenridgeumc@yahoo.com

**United Methodist Church
125 Third St.
Breckenridge, MI 48615
Return Service Requested**

