

The Heart Of the Matter



Dear Southport UMC,

There's something magical about finding an envelope in your mailbox with handwriting you recognize, especially this time of year. Whether it's a glossy family Christmas card featuring matching sweaters, a letter from your aunt recounting every detail of her summer garden, or a card covered in glitter that ends up everywhere—it's always a joy to receive. The tradition of sending Christmas letters dates back to the early 19th century, when Sir Henry Cole in England popularized the first Christmas cards. Over time, it evolved into a cherished way to reconnect with loved ones and share the story of the year gone by.

As your new senior pastor, I must confess: I've never been so excited to share a season like this one! This is my first Advent and Christmas with you all, and I can't wait to celebrate together. Like a well-written Christmas letter, Advent invites us to slow down, remember the story of our beginnings, and rediscover the hope, love, joy, and peace found in Christ.

The word Advent means "arrival" or "coming." It's a season of anticipation and preparation, leading us to celebrate Christ's first coming in Bethlehem while also looking forward to his promised return. It's a time for us as a church to pause and reconnect with the heart of the gospel—the good news of God's great love, revealed to us in Jesus, fully human and fully divine.

This year, our Advent series, The Christmas Letters: Celebrating Advent with Those Who Told the Story First, will focus on some of the earliest "letters" ever written about the miracle of Christ's birth. Romans, 1 John, Philippians, and Colossians aren't just ancient writings; they're the church's first attempts to articulate the wonder of the Incarnation—how God became one of us. These texts serve as invitations to remember, reflect, and rejoice.

Just as we cherish the letters and cards we receive from loved ones today, the Epistles invite us to celebrate the mystery of the Word made flesh. As we read these holy words together, we'll discover anew how Christ's coming offers us hope for salvation, love incarnate, joy in humility, and peace through Christ's divinity.

So, as you're busy this December writing your cards or maybe even penning a Christmas letter of your own, take time to sit with these ancient letters, too. Let them inspire you to share the story of Christ with someone in your life who needs to hear it this year.

And of course, the season wouldn't be complete without our Christmas Eve worship. Join us as we gather in the glow of candlelight to celebrate the ultimate Christmas letter—the Word of God, made flesh, dwelling among us. Together, we'll hear once more the timeless story from Luke 2 and reflect on God's incredible gift of downward mobility, coming to us in the humblest of ways.

From my family to yours, may this Advent season fill your hearts with warmth, your homes with joy, and your lives with the good news of Christ's love. I can't wait to see you in worship each week as we journey through this meaningful season together.

Merry Christmas!

Rev. William G. Nickrand

CHRISTMAS

EVE WORSHIP

FAMILY SERVICE

You Are Invited!

TRADITIONAL SERVICE

5 P.M.

CONTEMPORARY SERVICE

11 P.M.

8 P.M.

Soup & Study

The Christmas Letters

Soup + Study

Soup @ 6:00pm

Study @ 7:00 pm

Nov 26th, Dec 3^d, 10th, & 17th

OPERATION TRANSFORMATION

Every year we help with utility bills, make rent payments, provide gas cards, and much, much more. We can do this because of your support through our Pastor Benevolent and Pastor's Ministry Funds. **Operation Transformation** helps build these funds every year during Advent Season.

Please purchase a poinsettia picture in memory or in honor of a loved one, and know that in doing so, you will be showing God's love to someone else with your financial gift too. Envelopes are available in the Gathering Place.

Operation Christmas Transformation

☐ I would like to make a donation of _____ for Operation Christmas Transformation.

☐ I would like to recognize the following person (people) with a poinsettia picture.

In Honor of: _____

In Memory of: _____

From: _____ Phone: _____

(Please print clearly)



IT'S JUBILEE CHRISTMAS TIME!

On Saturday, December 7th we celebrate Jubilee Christmas 2024. We are hosting 16 families from Homecroft Elementary who have been selected by the school staff and would not have a Christmas without assistance. This includes 40 children, from ages 4 months through 17 years. Each child receives 2 toys or gifts which they did not expect and yet hoped they might receive. Many will have new coats for winter, hats and gloves and personal clothing items. Families will receive additional home care needs and a gift card to buy food for the holidays or whenever needed. A very special gift for each child has been prepared by the Book Pillows of Hope ministry and each book pillow is designed specifically for the child who receives it.

On Jubilee Day, Hosts, adult members of the Families and wonderful Helping Hands gather at church for a time of fellowship, refreshments, gift wrapping and surprises.

Thank you for every way you have supported Jubilee with purchases from the tag board and Amazon toy and gift shopping, baking cookies, organizing, sorting and last minute shopping, monetary donations, supporting the Jubilee Team and praying for our Jubilee families.

Jubilee Christmas is an annual event with the promise that a difference has been made for the families and that they have felt God's love because of their experience. Please continue to pray for them and for an improvement in the challenges they face each day.

Sandy Lewis

Kim Distel

Bethany Brock

Karen Kegerreis

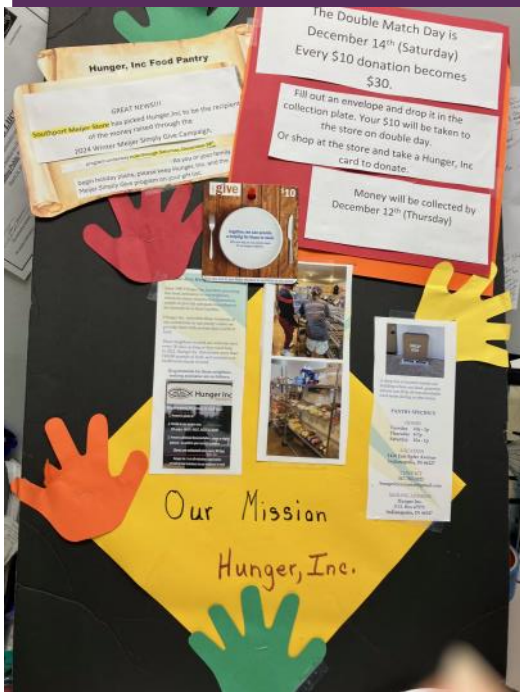
Pam Clough

Jennifer LaMar

Laura Littlepage

Jerrie Snell

Sherry Davis



TRAINING
CROSS

11:45 am—1:45 pm

Join Us!

DECEMBER 8

1st—6th graders & guardians

Food—Faith—Fun

Thank you for your support of Hunger, Inc. Join in the Meijer donation match. Envelopes in the Gathering Place!

CHRISTMAS CAROLLING

Join Phil Sell and others in the Gathering Area on Saturday, December 15th for Christmas Carolling at Crestwood Village 11:30 a.m.



1ST FRIDAY FAMILY NIGHT

COOKIE DECORATING

DECEMBER 6TH AT 6:30

COME JOIN US FOR COOKIE DECORATING AND A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE FROM THE CHRISTMAS BRASS ESSEMBLY

WOMEN'S NEWS

Thanks to all who donated children's socks for the Fletcher Place Christmas Program.

Our **December 10th meeting will be held at 1 pm in the Gathering Area at church.** It will be a joyous time to celebrate Christmas with all the ladies. It will be a **Christmas pitch-in luncheon. Meat and drinks will be provided.** Bring a side dish or dessert to enjoy with others. All women are welcome to attend and get to know the United Women Of Faith Rebekah Circle. Bring a favorite Christmas item to share. (like an ornament, book, passage from the Bible, table decoration, etc)

We always meet the second Tuesday of the month at 1pm at the church, so come start the new year with us in January.

FOOD PANTRY

SUPPORT THE MEIJER CAMPAIGN THROUGH YOUR DONATIONS TO THE HUNGER, Inc. FOOD PANTY

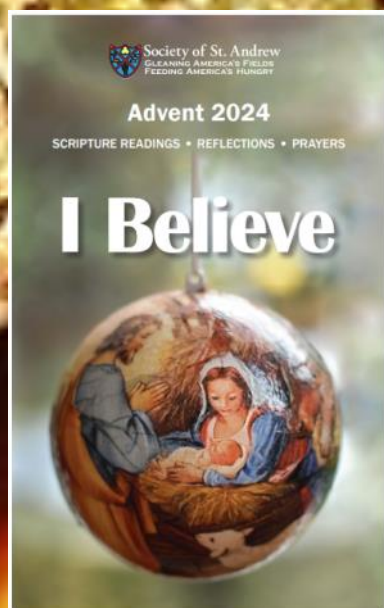
Check out the display at the donation table by the restrooms--- A poster, directions for the envelopes and envelopes to make your donation for the Double Match day on December 14th are available for all. Please donate before the December 14th date for your \$10 to become \$30.

After that date until December 28th, all donations will be matched making your \$10 become \$20.

All donations are needed to get the pantry through the 2025 year providing food for our neighbors.

FEED A NEED (FAN)

Our next day to bag food for the 50 meals for our mission to feed the unhoused hungry is **DECEMBER 12th at 1 pm in the Gathering Area at Church.** Our meals go to the TEAR DOWN THE WALLS ministry that distributes these meals downtown on the next Saturday. There are so many in need of food and we can help fill that need. This activity takes about 20 minutes to complete. So come join in the joy of serving.



There are plenty of copies of the Advent 2024 booklet in the Gathering Place! A PDF format is also available. Please contact the office and we can send the link to you!



SEED GRANTS

The What if Dept elimination campaign was a success! We are debt free, SUMC! We are grateful for this blessing from God that would not have been possible without the faithful generosity of the congregation. Thank you.

The whole purpose of this campaign was to release us from the burden of debt, so we could put more resources into the community and world. And we want you to be a part of what's next. That is why we are offering SEED GRANTS.

We will be offering several \$500-\$5,000 grants for 2025. These grants can be for new ministries or for considerable additions to current ministries. We are looking for ideas that will have a positive impact on our community and world in places of the most need. We will also be considering how ideas fit with your spiritual gifts and the overall life of the church. Mostly we will be looking to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and how these new ideas will share Christ's love and God's grace.

So, be praying and thinking of what you might want to do to share Christ's love and grace in the community and world and how the church can help.



"What If" Celebration Thank You!

A great big Thank You to everyone who helped make the November 17th Harvest of Hope Celebration wonderful. What a joyous day!

The service and celebration afterwards truly demonstrated how grateful we are to the Lord for having blessed us with eliminating our debt. Now we can "Dare to Dream."





December 1	Romans 1:1-6	Good News: Hope for Salvation
December 8	Colossians 2:6-15	Fully Divine: Peace through Christ
December 15	Philippians 2:1-11	Fully Human: Joy in Humility
December 22	1 John 1:3-4	Love Incarnate: The Word of Life Revealed
December 24	Luke 2:1-20	God's Downward Mobility



You are invited to a
 Birthday party for Jesus!
 December 24, 2024
 5:00 PM

Southport United
 Methodist Church
 1947 E. Southport Road
 46227



Our activity for November was making boxes for our Operations Christmas Child Shoe boxes. Our students went to the dollar tree and shopped for the items they wanted to put into the boxes. We then worked together and packed 11 shoeboxes to be sent through the Samaritan's purse to an undetermined location. Check back in January to see where our boxes ended up.



LIVE NATIVITY: **Open invitation** to anyone wanting to participate in a live nativity: Will be in between services on **Sunday, December 22.**



The Christmas Letters

Celebrating Advent with Those Who Told The Story First

Join us for our new sermon series beginning
December 1 through December 24!

Christmas Eve Services

5:00

Jesus' Birthday Party
Family Service

8:00

Contemporary Service

11:00

Traditional Service

Let's WORSHIP!

CASUAL SERVICE:

THURSDAY 6:30 P.M.

TRADITIONAL SERVICE:

SUNDAY 9:00 A.M.

CONTEMPORARY SERVICE:

SUNDAY 10:30 A.M.

WORSHIP ONLINE ANYTIME AT
WWW.SUMC.ORG



LEADERSHIP TEAM

Duane Thompson
Karen Decatur
Kathy Campbell
Sherry Davis
Jeff Horne
Pat Hulfachor
Doug Lewis
Travis Miller
Kathy Smith
Margaret Trammell



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SERVICE TIMES

Online

Sunday @ 9:00 a.m.

Sunday

9:00 a.m.-Traditional

10:30 a.m.- Contemporary

Thursday

6:30 p.m.- Casual Service

*Everyone is sharing God's love and grace through Jesus Christ in their everyday, 24 x 7 lives.
So that... we are making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of our community and the world.*