



Corner of Beaver & Burrowes



From Pastor Paul's Desk.....

A-B NEWSLETTER

• ALBRIGHT-BETHUNE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH •

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Blannie Bowen, Editor; Volume 30, Number 12; December 2023

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Healer of the Soul, and our Everlasting Redeemer. I am filled with excitement about the divine plans that the Lord has in store for us at Albright-Bethune. We have been blessed with a remarkable opportunity to be a bridge in our community, mending souls through the power of the Word and engaging hearts in stewardship and prayer. Together, as a Beloved Community, we can sow the seeds of Jesus Christ, our eternal Hope.

As we enter the sacred season of Advent, we embrace a period of anticipation and preparation for the coming of Christ. Advent symbolizes the four weeks leading up to Christmas, focusing on the themes of hope, love, joy, and peace. It's a time when we reflect on the significance of Christ's birth and await His coming again. Advent invites us to deepen our connection to the divine, to rekindle our faith, and to joyously anticipate the arrival of Emmanuel, God with us.

Continuing on December 4 and concluding on December 18, I will be leading a study of the book, *An Unlikely Advent*, by Rachel Billups every Monday at 6 p.m. on Zoom. This four-week *Advent* study focuses on the experiences of four sets of often overlooked characters in the Nativity story. *An Unlikely Advent* guides readers through the themes of hope, love, joy, and peace by sharing the stories of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Herod, the Magi, and the shepherds. Each set of unexpected characters has something to teach about living faithfully on the journey to Christmas.

Mark your calendars for December 21 at 6 p.m. for a magical movie night featuring *'Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey.'* Join us for an enchanting adventure filled with wonder, music, and the spirit of the holiday season. Bring your loved ones and immerse yourself in this heartwarming tale of hope and rediscovery. We look forward to sharing this special movie night with our Albright-Bethune community!

I pray that each and every one of you experiences a season filled with blessings and joy. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to fellowship with both those who come to Fairbrook and those I encounter in our community. May God's abundant blessings be upon you and guide you throughout this season. Be blessed, **Paul**.

- **WEDDING ANNIVERSARY RECEPTION** – On December 3 after our worship service, we will hold a reception in our fellowship hall to celebrate the wedding anniversary of Pastor Paul and Ariel McReynolds. Please put this event on your calendar and plan to attend. See **Jackie Peagler** if you have any questions or want more information about the reception.
- **ADVENT BOOK STUDY** - Starting on November 27 and concluding on December 18, Pastor Paul will lead a study of the book entitled *An Unlikely Advent* by Rachel Billups each Monday at 6 p.m. This study focuses on the experiences of four sets of often overlooked characters in the Nativity story. Billups guides readers through the themes of hope, love, joy, and peace by sharing the stories of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Herod, the Magi, and the shepherds. You can join the book study on Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81632993161#success>. Please contact Pastor Paul if you want more information about the book study.
- **STUDY DAYS** - Our church will again make our building available to Penn State students to prepare for their final exams. Study days begin on Sunday, December 10, from 4-8 p.m. and Monday-Thursday from 1-8 p.m. We will provide free Wi-Fi and dinner will be available from 7-8 p.m. Please let students know and stop by to wish them well on their exams.
- **GRADUATE** - Congratulations to **Virginia Content**, one of our worshippers, who will graduate from Penn State with her Master of Science degree in Kinesiology on December 16 during the Graduate School Commencement at 4:30 p.m. Please take the time to congratulate Virginia on this major accomplishment. You are also welcome to attend the ceremony.
- **VIETNAM TRIP** - Two of our members recently spent almost three weeks in Vietnam learning about this country's history, culture, and daily life. From October 30-November 19, **Cathy Bowen** and **Carla Roser-Jones** traveled to Vietnam. Their trip began on the world's longest 18½ - hour direct flight from JFK Airport in New York to Singapore. Their journey continued with another flight to Hanoi in Vietnam. For the next three weeks, they experienced an invaluable immersion experience. Be sure to ask Cathy and Carla about their tour.
- **RESEARCH PROJECT** - After **Virginia Content** graduates from Penn State with her M.S. degree on December 16, she will continue her studies in the Ph.D. program in Kinesiology. Virginia has been funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to study non-Hispanic Black women. She must now identify women who to participate in her research. See Virginia if you are interested in participating. You can reach her at vgc5042@psu.edu.
- **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE** - Our Christmas Eve service will be held jointly with Fairbrook UMC at 7 p.m. on December 24. Join us at Fairbrook for a beautiful and joyful tradition of lessons and carols to hear the wondrous good news of great joy in word and song. Also, we will have our regular worship service on that Sunday morning at 11 a.m.
- **T-SHIRTS** – The Bethune Society, our church's Penn State student affiliate group, is selling a t-shirt to help publicize our church. Details and information about the shirt have been finalized and you can now place an order. Thanks to **Zan Dyreson** for leading this effort. Please contact her if you have any questions. You can reach Zan at dyresonzoop@gmail.com.
- **PECAN PIES** – Last month, Albright-Bethune again sold genuine Southern pecan pies that many enjoyed with their Thanksgiving dinner. The 44 pies were baked by B. Evans Kitchen (aka Blannie). Thanks to our members, worshippers, former worshippers, and others who purchased pies. This fundraiser generated over \$1,500 that will be used to support our church's programs and activities.

- **BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES** - Congratulations to these individuals who celebrate a special day this month: December 13 – **Rev. Dr. Pamela Ford's** Birthday; December 18 – **Shannon Holliday's** Birthday; December 19 – **Carl Ector's** Birthday; December 21 – **Michael Weaver's** Birthday; December 23 - **Carla Roser Jones' Birthday**; and December 24 – **Ebun Adewumi's** Birthday. Give Blannie your special dates (call/text 814-777-6550 or email blanniebowen@gmail.com) so we can honor you.
- **ONLINE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE CONVERSATION** - On November 12 immediately after our worship service, we had a focus group conversation with some of our online worshippers. The purpose of this conversation was to secure ideas and input about how we can improve the worship experience for our online worshippers. **Jennifer Saunders** facilitated the conversation by Zoom. Lots of valuable insights and information were gathered. See Jennifer if you have any thoughts about our online worship or if you have any questions.
- **ADVENT** - How much do you know about Advent which celebrates Christ's birth 2,023 years ago? Advent is derived from the Latin word *Adventus* which means coming. It begins on Sunday, December 3, and ends at sunset on Christmas Eve. Advent always includes four Sundays. The 1st Sunday marks the start of the Christian year and the final victory. The 2nd and 3rd Sundays represent John the Baptist while the 4th represents events preceding Jesus' birth. Traditional colors include purple which means royalty and is linked to penitence and Mary, Jesus' mother. Blue represents hope and white and gold represent joy and festivity. Christmas Eve is not part of Advent, but is the beginning of Christmas.
- **STRESS REDUCERS** - With the Christmas holidays season approaching, now is a good time to reflect on an issue of **A Christian Perspective** newsletter that offered 7 ways to reduce stress and make your life more enjoyable. **(1)** Allow time everyday for privacy, quiet, and introspection. **(2)** When you face an unpleasant task, do it early in the day. **(3)** Delegate responsibility to capable individuals. **(4)** Take a lunch break to get away from your problems. **(5)** Count to 1,000 (not 10) before doing or saying something to make matters worse. **(6)** Have a forgiving view of events and people because we live in an imperfect world. **(7)** Have an optimistic outlook because most people do the best they can.
- **CHURCH CONFERENCE** - The annual Albright-Bethune Church Conference was held on November 5 at Mount Nittany UMC. Brenda Leigey, our district superintendent, conducted the conference jointly with the leaders of our congregation and the leaders of Mount Nittany, Fairbrook, Park Forest, and St Paul's UMC. See Pastor McReynolds or Jackie Peagler if you have questions about the conference or the business affairs of the church.
- **CHRISTMAS GIVING** – You should now start thinking about making Christ a bigger part of your Christmas celebration. The **Christian Financial Concepts** newsletter recommends that we do some soul searching. This newsletter suggests that you decide the amount you plan to spend on gifts and then contribute 10% to Christ-like causes. For example, use the 10% to support food banks, orphans, and missions that spread the gospel in other nations.
- **UMC SCHOLARSHIPS & LOANS** - United Methodist Church high school seniors and those enrolled in college who are also active in their church and/or in the conference may apply for a Fall 2024 scholarship offered through the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Students must apply online beginning this month at [GBHEM - Scholarships for Further Education](#). Student loans are also available at low interest rates (with a credit worthy co-signer). Please share this information with students who qualify.

- **C**HRISTMAS SYMBOLS - How much do you know about Christmas symbols? Bells were used in ancient Asian cultures to announce happy and sad occasions. The winter plant mistletoe dates to Scandinavia and a myth wherein an evil spirit was forbidden from killing his enemy. Candles were used by Martin Luther who decorated the first Christmas tree. Candy canes are used in the US to symbolize God's solid rock promises. Christmas cards date to ancient Egypt and Rome when they were carved in wood. Poinsettias are native to Mexico and symbolize the Star of Bethlehem. The plant is named for Joel Poinsett, the first US Ambassador to Mexico. Holly and ivy are used to represent the crown Jesus wore when he was crucified. Please remember the history of these symbols as we celebrate the birth of Jesus (From *UM Interpreter Magazine*, November-December 2000, p. 14-15).
- **A**LBRIGHT-BETHUNE COOKS - Our congregation wants to expand its virtual **Albright-Bethune Cooks** program. Pastor Paul will do the filming, editing, and posting -- and teach others how to do it. **Jo Ferrell** created our first episode about her famous sticky buns. Our second episode features **Blannie Bowen** baking his pecan pies. On our 3rd episode, **Carla Roser-Jones** cooks a family favorite pork chop. You can watch these three episodes on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCk6S4u4lDezlcPWHcr50PAg>. If you wish to share one of your dishes, please contact Pastor Paul or Blannie Bowen to discuss your idea.
- **R**ISE BOOK INITIATIVE - A new program has been created to ensure that early childhood educators in Centre County's elementary schools have access to high quality diverse children's books. Reading IS Enlightening or RISE wishes to recognize all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) race, culture (ethnicity, language and class), disability, gender, family structure and religion, as well as social justice issues. RISE is a 5-year initiative that will continue through the 2025-26 school year. You can make a contribution online at https://centrefoundation.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=1588 Also, you can send a check payable to Centre Foundation with Reading IS Enlightening (RISE) Fund in the memo line to: Centre Foundation, 1377 Ridge Master Drive, State College, 16803. If you have questions about RISE, you can send an email to RISEBookInitiative@gmail.com .

Calendar

Dec. 3	Wedding Anniversary Reception for Pastor Paul & Ariel McReynolds
Dec. 3-24	The Season of Advent
Dec. 8	Penn State Classes End
Dec. 10-14	Study Days for Penn State Students, Fellowship Hall
Dec. 12	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
Dec. 16	Penn State Fall Commencement
Dec. 24	Christmas Eve Joint Service at Fairbrook UMC, 7 p.m.
Dec. 25	Christmas Day – Celebrate the Birth of Jesus
January 1	Welcome 2024
January 8	Penn State Classes Begin
January 9	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
January 15	Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
February 13	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
February 14	Ash Wednesday
March 3-9	Penn State Spring Break