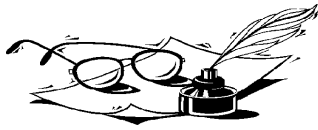




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A-B NEWSLETTER

• ALBRIGHT-BETHUNE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH •

Rev., Dr. Paul C. Amara, Pastor

Email: pamara@susumc.org; Cell Phone: (585) 797-4466

Church Phone: 237-4404; Email: albrightbethuneumc206@gmail.com

Church Website: www.albrightbethuneumc.org

Blannie Bowen, Editor; Volume 26, Number 12, December 2019

From the Pastor's Desk

In order to get to Christmas, we begin our journey with Advent. You may have experienced many advent seasons in your life, but what does the **Advent Season** really mean to you?

Advent is derived from the Latin word Adventus which means arrival, appearance or coming. Advent symbolizes an arrival of a notable person or event. It is the period in the Christian church year which leads us into Christmas festivities. The four candles of Advent represent the four weeks before Christmas. One candle is lit every Sunday for the four weeks before Christmas.

Traditions surrounding Advent and the colors of the candles have changed with different cultures that have adopted this ancient practice. Advent candle color was never too important in ancient culture. With the change of times and traditions, this has become important to some people and cultures.

First candle: Purple represents Hope! Second candle: Purple represents Faith! Third candle: Pink represents Joy! Fourth candle: Purple represents Peace! The Christ candle is white and placed in the center of the wreath. This means that we should allow Christ to be the center of our lives.

The wreath signifies continuous life and symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life we find in Christ.

The celebration of advent originated from European tradition that has found its imprint into the American and other cultures. It was a household traditional preparation for Christmas. It was and it continues to be the season of waiting and the season of expectation. The waiting for the second coming or appearance of our Lord.

Scripture tells us that the disciples watched the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven. "When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven." Luke 24:50-51.

This year's first Sunday of advent is on December 1. We will gather for worship and begin the waiting period for the announcement of the birthday of our Lord. As we gather in our worship space, we start to focus on Christ and not on ourselves because Christmas is not our birthday but the birthday of our Lord.

There are so many things that Christ expects us to do during advent. Most of all, Christ expects us to be in waiting. We need to be in waiting with hope, faith, joy and peace. We are people of 'The Christ Family' and we should always endeavor to act like one.

This advent and Christmas season, I encourage you to step up in good faith and trust and assume the mantle of Christ in the world. Be hopeful and trust that God will be on the journey with you. With him, everything is possible!

Every Sunday, as we light a candle, allow that light to shine within you. Allow the Lord to use you as part of the body of our Lord. We have been inspired by the apostle Paul that we are one body with many parts. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:12. The Christ body does not consist of one member but of many. As we enter this season, I invite everyone to come on board the disciple-making process. The more the merrier!

As you prepare for Christmas, Kadie, Charles, Sarah, Paul Jr., Baby Andrew, Baby Jacob and I wish you God's blessings. Enjoy the season and Merry Christmas to you and your loved ones. Shalom! **Pastor Paul**

- **E**DITIONAL - **Sara Roser-Jones** and **Mark Dyreson**, two Albright-Bethune members, wrote an editorial that was published in the November 13 issue of the *Centre Daily Times* in response to letter that a Penn State alumnus sent to a football player about his dreadlocks and the lack of a clean-cut image on campus. Several of this player's teammates posted the letter on social media and the posting ignited various local and national reactions. The opinion piece that Sara and Mark wrote was titled [Hair, race and football at Penn State — A new chapter in an old story](https://www.centredaily.com/opinion/article237253899.html) and it can be found at <https://www.centredaily.com/opinion/article237253899.html>.

- **T**HANKSGIVING DAY PARADE - **Alexandra (Zan) Dyreson** and her Juniata Valley High School band members were selected to march in this year's Thanksgiving Day parade in Philadelphia. Please congratulate her for developing her musical talents. We are proud of your many accomplishments.

- **P**RESENTATION - On November 15, **Mark Dyreson**, **Wally Richardson**, and other speakers delivered an excellent presentation entitled *A Conversation on Sport and Race Relations at Penn State: Reconsidering the Past and Re-imagining the Future*. See Mark or Wally if you want to learn more about their presentation or this topic.

- **C**HRISTMAS EVE - Our Albright-Bethune Christmas Eve service will be held at our church at 6 p.m. on December 24. Also, we will have our regular worship service on Sunday, December 22. Please plan to attend both services to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

- **M**LK BANQUET - The 45th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., banquet will be held on January 15 at the Bryce Jordan Center beginning at 6 p.m. Our church will again purchase two tables. Please see **Michelle Torregano** if you want to purchase a ticket. You should purchase your tickets soon because the banquet will again be a sell-out. The banquet is conducted by the Forum on Black Affairs (FOBA) faculty and staff organization.

- **P**EANUT BUTTER EXPRESS – During November, our congregation along with Penn State students and the Emmanuel Lutheran Church collected jars of peanut butter for the Annual Terrell Jones Memorial Peanut Butter Drive. During our worship service on December 1, the jars will be counted and Pastor Amara will bless the peanut butter before it is delivered to the Food Bank. Thanks to everyone who donated peanut butter and helped to make the drive a success. Terrell created and led this popular drive before his death in 2014.

- **P**ECAN PIES – Thanks to everyone who bought the genuine Southern pecan pies last month for this annual fund raiser. This year B. Evans Kitchen (aka Blannie) baked 56 pies in time for Thanksgiving. The pies and contributions generated over \$1,100 for our church.
- **B**IRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES - - Congratulations to these individuals who celebrate special days this month: December 7 – **Harriet Nembhard's** Birthday; December 13 – **Rev. Dr. Pamela Ford's** Birthday; December 18 – **Shannon Holliday's** Birthday; December 19 – **Carl Ector's** Birthday; December 23 - **Carla Roser Jones'** Birthday; December 24 – **Ebun Adewumi's** Birthday; and December 29 – **Ajane' Holliday's** Birthday. Give Blannie your special dates so we can honor you (call 237-5131 or email blanniebowen@gmail.com).
- **A**DVENT - How much do you know about Advent which celebrates Christ's birth 2,019 years ago? Advent is derived from the Latin word *Adventus* which means coming. It begins on Sunday, December 1, 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.
- **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).
- **S**ERVICE WITH MENNONITE CHURCH – On February 16, our church will again worship with and share a meal with the University Mennonite Church during our 20th annual joint service. This year the service will be held at the Mennonite Church on Norma Street near the Ramada Inn. Pastor Paul Amara will preach. This annual service was started in 2000 and is held during Black History Month to promote cross-cultural understanding of two religious traditions. Please plan to attend this worship service and lunch that will feature excellent foods.
- **L**ITURGIST & TEACHERS NEEDED - Please consider playing a more active role in our congregation. Volunteers are sought to be Sunday School teachers and our liturgist during worship. Contact **Carla Roser-Jones** if you are interested in these opportunities. You can reach Carla at (814) 880-9302 if you do not catch her at our worship service.
- **S**TRESS REDUCERS - With the Christmas holidays 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.

- **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 2020 scholarship offered through the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Students must apply online between January 3 - March 5 at <https://www.gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships/scholarships>. Student loans are also available at low interest rates (with a credit worthy co-signer). Funds for these scholarships come from offerings taken on United Methodist Student Day, World Communion Sunday, and Native American Sunday. Please share this information with students who qualify for this support.
- **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.
- **YOUR ITEMS** – Send, email to blanniebowen@gmail.com or give your items to **Blannie** by the **20th** of the month. Send your birthday, awards, church presentations, writings, etc.

Calendar

December 1-24	The Season of Advent
December 3	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
December 13	Penn State Classes End
December 21	Penn State Fall Commencement
December 24	Christmas Eve Service, 6 p.m.
December 25	Christmas – Celebrate the Birth of Jesus
January 1	Welcome 2020
January 7	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
January 13	Penn State Classes Begin
January 15	MLK Birthday and Banquet at the Jordan Center
February 4	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
February 16	Joint Service With University Mennonite Church, Norma Street
February 26	Ash Wednesday
March 3	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
March 7	World Day of Prayer
March 8-14	Penn State Spring Break
March 8	Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 22	UMCOR Sunday (Formerly One Great Hour of Sharing Sunday)
April 7	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
April 10	Good Friday
April 12	Easter Sunday
May 1	Penn State Classes End
May 5	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
May 8-10	Penn State Commencement Exercises
June 2	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
June 7	Peace With Justice Sunday