Dear Friends,

The “March to the Manger” is always a special part of this season, as we bring our Offerings - monetary and children’s toys - to the manger. Each year I find myself moved as I watch adults and children bring their offering forward. Last year on “March to the Manger” Sunday, the offering was $18,289. In comparison, the offering was $23,373 on Sunday this year. To date, with giving added to Sunday’s offering from people who knew they would not be present on “March” Sunday, gave ahead of time, which gives us a total of $26,373, plus several bags of toys to go to needy children! We will still have offerings to come in from those who have not given yet. With what may be given over the next few weeks and Christmas Eve, (All of our Christmas Eve offering goes to missions as well,) we could very well reach the $30,000 mark! This is important because all of this goes to help others in a wide variety of groups and organizations. None of the giving is used for the current expenses of the Church. Truly this is what Christmas is all about - giving to others! There will be many helped because of YOUR giving.

REMINDERS: I want to remind you that this Sunday we will have our “Lessons and Carols” services at 8:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. These services are not just for our church but are a community-wide sharing of “lessons” and music of the Christmas season. It is always a tremendous celebration of Christmas. With that being said, I want to remind you that there will be a lot of “guests” here on Sunday and we need to do all we can to make their time with us as welcome as possible. So, when you see a face you do not know or people that you know are our guests, do all you can to make their time with us a warm experience. It would be a good idea to arrive early to make sure you have a place to park, as well as to welcome our guests. We will have our final “Vespers” this week, at 5:00 p.m., with Bob Weiss providing the music on trombone, accompanied by Anita Hutton. This will be followed by a “soup supper” in the Fellowship Hall. Christmas Eve will be a busy Sunday as we will have our two services in the morning at 8:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. In the evening, we will have our Christmas Eve Candlelight Services at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. I hope you will make every effort to attend these services and invite your friends and neighbors, especially those who aren’t attending Church anywhere. These services and gatherings are truly a time to experience and share the joy of Christmas.

On a lighter note, I mentioned in my message last Sunday that I had never seen a John the Baptist Christmas greeting card. Well, someone (I won’t mention who(?), but she plays the organ) put together a “John the Baptist” greeting card on her computer and placed it in my mailbox here at the Church. It is even a card I can use crayons and color if I choose. Computers are wonderful, aren’t they! Now, I have to “scrap” the “no John the Baptist greeting card” comment from my sermon because I have “seen” one now. Oh, well…….

See you Sunday,

Alan
In Sympathy: Sympathy to John & Karol Phelps, and family on the death of his nephew, Steven Harris Phelps, who passed away on November 29, 2017 in Dallas, TX.

Health Concerns:
Bill Crippen is in Manor Court Bounce Back.
Sue Hall is in Manor Court Bounce Back.
Quincy Scott is in Memorial Medical Center in Springfield.

Final Advent Music Vespers: The final Music Vespers program for the season is Sunday, December 17, at 5:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary, featuring Anita Hutton, piano and Robert Weiss, trombone.

Final Advent Soup Supper: Join us for the final Advent Soup Supper on Sunday, December 17, in Fellowship Hall at 5:30 p.m. following the Vespers service. Sponsors are Grateful Hearts and the Renew Class.

YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIAL REPORT
AS OF NOVEMBER 31, 2017

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<th>GENERAL FUND</th>
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Disciples for Sunday, December 17, 2017
Outside Greeters: Joyce & Mike Vancil
Van Drivers: Don Bryant, Jr., Dan Anderson III
Welcome Center: 8:15 Judy Dillingar; 10:45 Barb Kimmel
Coffee Hosts: 8:15 Jan & Gary Austin, Jan & Dick Verduin; 10:45 Elaine Crain
December Nametags: Sheila Crippen
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15 • 5:00 P.M.
Families in Progress continue the Christmas tradition! In honor and memory of Normagene Warner, retired pastor Bill Warner’s beloved wife.
At 5:00 p.m. we will load the bus and set out for our shut-in destinations. Afterwards, we will have dinner together at IV’s.
Please RSVP for the family, so we have a head count. We hope you can join us!

TIME TO DONATE YOUR PLASTIC BAGS
Learn How You Can Help the Carbondale Mat Makers - The next meeting of the Carbondale Mat Makers will be January 9, 2018, 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon at St. Andrews Episcopal. Anyone interested in meeting during the break to prepare bags for crocheting, please call Laura Depolo at 618-967-8986. We welcome newcomers!
We’ll meet here at FUMC in Room 207. Please bring a pair of sharp scissors!
ONCE AGAIN WE NEED MORE PLASTIC BAGS FOR MAT MAKING.
WE CAN ONLY USE THE GROCERY OR WAL-MART TYPE BAGS.
Thank you to everyone for the tremendous help and support in 2017!!!

GOOD DEEDS MANGER
• Pick up a “Good Deeds Manger” and bag of straw in the Atrium.
• Place the manger in a prominent place in your home.
• Each evening, gather the family together around the manger.
• Each family member will share what good deeds they have done during the day.
• For each good deed, a piece of straw is placed in the manger.
• On Christmas day, you will have prepared a soft bed of straw for the baby Jesus.

SUNDAY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Children’s Opportunities
Sundays at 9:30 a.m. Children’s Sunday School - (K - 5th grade) uses Deep Blue from Cokesbury. The morning begins with music at 9:30 a.m. in Room 415.
Sundays at 10:45 a.m. Children’s Church - (K - 5th grade). All children are invited to Children’s Church following the Children’s Time at the 10:45 a.m. worship service.

Children’s Church - December - A Time Is Coming
Bible Verse: “The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous descendant from David’s line, and he will rule as a wise king.” (Jeremiah 23:5)

Youth Opportunities, 8:30 a.m.
Faith development through Bible lessons, emphasizing a relationship with God through Jesus.

Middle School meets in Room 410 and uses On the Go.

High School Class meets in Room 409 and uses a variety of materials connecting the lessons of the Bible with issues relevant to today’s youth.

Adult Opportunities, 9:30 a.m.
Renew - December 17 is Final Week of Advent Study, Awaiting the Already (An Advent Journey Through the Gospels) by Magrey R. deVega, continues. Renew is a group of women seeking deeper meaning in their lives through Bible study, reflection, and prayer. They meet at 9:30 a.m. in Room 402. Women of all ages are welcome.

The Investors Class - December 17 is Final Week of Advent Study, Awaiting the Already (An Advent Journey Through the Gospels) by Magrey R. deVega, continues. Investors is an intergenerational class for all adults. They meet at 9:30 a.m. in Room 404 (the Chapel). Everyone welcome!

The Electives Class - December 17 is Final Week Advent Study, Awaiting the Already (An Advent Journey Through the Gospels) by Magrey R. deVega, continues. Pastor Alan leads the discussion in the Heritage Room.

Small Group Opportunities
The Daniel Plan meets in Room 402 at 9:00 a.m. on most Tuesdays. Check the church calendar. Everyone welcome.

Grateful Hearts meets on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m., Room 308.

Youth Group is on break until the beginning of 2018. They meet at 6:00 p.m. weekly on Wednesdays in Room 409 and Fellowship Hall.

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