

The Sweet Spirit
Olive Branch United Methodist Church
January 2017



God love you! That is the way I shall conclude my broadcasts, and that is the way I shall begin them today. I want the first word on the air of this New Year to be God. It is God who makes us happy. It is Love which makes old things new. It is you who count the years in terms of God's abiding love. Combining all three we have "God love you," which is but another way of saying "Happy New Year". Archbishop Fulton Sheen

From The Pastor's Pen



Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is my hope that you had a blessed Christmas and New Year. It just does not seem possible that it's time for another year in the service to our Lord.

As we go head-on into this new year I pray that you will find prosperity, good health and love and grace from God. In addition to those blessings I hope also that you will find Olive Branch United Methodist Church to be a place where you can worship, you can share in the love of Christ with our brothers and sisters and be a part of making OBUMC a more vital congregation.

As we endeavor to serve God and to seek his vision for our church, the most important thing that we can do is to bathe our church and our sisters and brothers in Christ in prayer and love. This year will bring exciting new ministry but along with that will be new challenges. In facing those challenges, I ask that you continue to pray for our ministries, as prayer is the most vital element of our worship, our faith, and our successes. 2016 was a great year, although we lost two members whom went to be with the Lord, we also added seven new full members and two associate members. God is truly alive at OBUMC!

Nancy and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support, for your prayers, for your gifts of love, and for a very generous Christmas gift of money. It is our promise to you that we will work harder, will spend more time in prayer for our church and her ministry and be the disciples that Jesus Christ calls us to be.

As we welcome new leadership of the church for the coming year, we ask for your support, your prayers and your involvement with the ministries before us and ahead of us. May God truly bless all of you and shower you with His love mercy and grace, but most of all may you sense his presence in all that you do.

Humbled And Privileged To Be In His service,
Randy

From Bishop Lewis
Happy New Year!
The Bishop's challenge to read the Bible through in 2017

Dear Virginia Annual Conference,

I think you would agree with me that every New Year there are individuals who decide to make a New Year's resolution. I googled "New Year's resolution" to discover that there are several articles written on this popular subject.

All of us have made New Year's resolutions ranging anywhere from losing 10-20 unwanted pounds, starting a new exercise program, paying off our credit cards and giving up a bad habit.

I've always found it interesting that people will go to great lengths to make a New Year's resolution — throwing away food that tempts their cravings, buying expensive exercise equipment with a voice-activated trainer or being the first person to join the gym. Unfortunately, it has been proven that New Year's gym resolutions are normally broken in 90 days, and the gym equipment becomes the new and latest clothes rack in our homes.

I've always wondered when individuals are making resolutions if they ever considered making a "Christian resolution." For example, resolving to pray daily for your church, to become an active agent in inviting people to your church or to increase their participation in a ministry in their local church.

As your new bishop, I would like to challenge you to look at this yearly tradition from another perspective.

Let's make a "Christian resolution" by joining me in reading the Bible together this year:

- Choose your own translation to make this experience engaging and exciting.
- Invite others to join you on this journey.
- Commit to sticking to the outlined plan

Let's become Bible scholars in 2017.

Peace and Blessings,
Bishop Sharma Lewis

Just a Thought

The best encouragement to pray - Rev Joe Mckeever

"O Thou who dost hear prayer, to Thee all men come" (Psalm 65:2). God hears prayers. It's what He does. God delights in answering the prayers of His children. Scripture is consistent on this. The disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." And Jesus said, "When you pray, say 'Our Father....'" (Luke 11:1ff).

Slow down. Do not rush through the "Our Father" (what we call "The Lord's Prayer"). Look how it begins. You are praying to the Father. He is not just yours, of course, but "our" Father. He has quite the large family.

He is the Father. He birthed us. Created us. Knows us.

God is on your side. He is not impartial and definitely not antagonistic. He wants to do well for you, to bless you in every way. Jesus said, "Fear not, little children. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

The concept of God as your Heavenly Father is the personal gift to you and me from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He knew the Father as no one else, and revealed Him to us that way. He frequently spoke of the oneness, the relationship, He had with the Father before time began. (See John 17:5ff.)

A couple of times the Old Testament refers to God as the father of Israel, but nowhere in the Hebrew scriptures does anyone look toward the skies and address God as Father. We learned that from Jesus.

My college chaplain said, "From time to time, someone will say to me, 'I believe in God the Father but I don't believe in Jesus.'" He said, "I always ask them, Who taught you to call God Father? Because it was Jesus."

I've heard that the Koran (Quran; the Islamic scriptures) has 91 names for God, but not one of them is "Father." It was Jesus who taught us to call God Father.

You don't need an invitation or an intermediary to go into the presence of your father. You are His child. He welcomes you. His face lights up when you enter.

And that, as much as anything I know, is the best incentive we have for praying to Him.

There are, after all, so many other incentives.

–We have enough needs to keep us on our knees forever. The world needs the prayers and intercessions of God's children, as it seems forever on the brink of another holocaust, another world war, another genocide, another meltdown.

–The way God has answered my prayers (yours!) in the past is a powerful encouragement to pray to Him today.

Perhaps this is why Philippians 4 tells us "with prayers and thanksgiving let your requests be known to Him."

Thanksgiving requires looking back and seeing what He has done. Those who do not pray are thankless.

–Knowing there is a God in the universe, knowing that He is a Personal God who knows us individually and cares for each one, and knowing that He has made Himself available to hear prayers and to respond, that should be all the incentive we would ever need to pray throughout the day, every day.

–My love for the Lord is incentive to talk to Him, to listen to Him, and to serve Him.

–My desire to be more like Jesus and to prepare for Heaven drives me to my knees in prayer.

But the best encouragement of all to stop and pray many times a day is knowing that on the other end of the line is One who knows me and loves me anyway, who cares for every detail of my life, from the infinitesimal to infinity, and He welcomes me.

Because it's my Heavenly Father on the throne, I may "boldly approach the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest me when I prayed. And I knew that Thou heardest me always." (John 11:41-42).

Prayer, I like to remind people, is need-driven and faith-powered. Faith simply means I believe God, I believe that He is there and that He hears and cares and will answer.

Let us pray, and let us continue to pray until Jesus comes. Then, the faith shall be sight and we will speak to Him face to face. The mind reels at such thoughts, at such a privilege.

Message from the Council Chair – Jane DiStefano

I hope each of you had a truly blessed Christmas and New Year. Now it is time once again to work on the ministry and operation of the Church. The Church Administrative Council meets every other month on the second Monday at 7:00 PM. The next meeting will be Feb 13th at 7:00 PM. Anyone interested in the business of the church is invited to attend. It is always an open meeting, although voting is limited to committee members.

Remember that this is everyone's church and what is important to you, is important to us.

United Methodist Men

Happy New Year from The United Methodist Men of the Church. We will meet on the 21st to start planning the coming year's events. We will meet at 8:00 AM with breakfast being served. Come join us as we continue to do God's work in our community. The Annual Thank You Dinner sponsored by the UMM is being planned. Watch future editions of the newsletter and the bulletin for a date, time and place. New officers for 2017 are Monty Evans as president, Ray Dyer is our treasurer.

United Methodist Women

In December the UMW met to finalize their year. New officers were elected and all monies were expended (as required by our charter).

The new officers for 2017 are: Chair Person – Vickie Evans; Vice- chair – Jerri Burgess and Nancy Maguire; Treasurer – Alice Johnson; Secretary – Jane DiStefano.

All monies in our treasury were dispensed as follows:

Gasburg Fire Department - \$ 50.00	Central Rescue Squad - \$ 50.00
United Methodist Family Services - \$50.00	Heart Havens - \$50.00
Jackson Field - \$50.00	Society of St Andrews - \$50.00

Two local families received \$100.00 toward their electric bills.

All are reminded to continue reading from our UMW Library.

Outreach

Christmas has come and gone for our friends of Olive Branch who are in need. The members of our church reached, once again, into their hearts to bring the love of Christ's birth to them. A big "THANK YOU!" goes to all. Gifts were delivered and Christmas dinner was delivered to all our friends. The dinners consisted of:

Ham

Rolls

Green bean casserole

Sweet potatoes

Black eyed peas

Homemade Christmas cookies and pies

We thank you for opening your heart to help provide the items listed for a Christmas Dinner for our families. Please keep our families in your prayers and remember that we have been asked to support the least of us.

Please don't forget our Church pantry! Our brothers and sisters in the greater community are suffering and need help. We are blessed that Food Lion is willing to provide us with meats, vegetables, fruits, and baked goods but, it is up to us to fill out the dietary needs of the families we serve. We currently service 12 families with food donations. Help keep our pantry stocked with your donations. I know you will open your hearts. Also, one of our biggest needs is meat. So if you are able, pick up an extra package of meat to help out one of our families. A big "thank you!"

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Celebrating birthdays this month:

**13 – Greg Roller, 15 – Jane DiStefano, 17 – Sara Clary, 21 – William Tatum III,
26 – Meredith Stephenson**

Choir Makes a Joyful Noise

On December 18th, during the worship service, the choir presented a time of singing our joy at the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was an exciting time for us and the church! We thank our distinguished leader and organist, Shirley Everest and our wonderful piano player, Martha Haithcock, for the time they spent putting the presentation together and the time they put up with us as we tried to hit each note properly! Thank you to the members of our church who sat through the presentation. This was a gift from the choir to you. Come join us as we make a joyful noise each Sunday even if you can't carry a note in a bucket. We meet each Wednesday night to practice at 7:00 pm. Let us all come together to praise the Lord in song at our worship services.



12-29-2014

MY NEW YEARS RESOLUTION THIS YEAR IS
TO DO THE THINGS I SHOULD HAVE BEEN
DOING LAST YEAR

Upcoming Events:

Sun January 8th - Second Sunday Luncheon - After Services

Wed. January 11th – United Methodist Women 1:00 PM

Sat January 21st - United Methodist Men 8:00 AM

This is your newsletter. It is meant to be a way to communicate what your church is doing and what all the organizations are doing both in the congregation and the community. I am sending this electronically via email and copies will be made available for those who need a printed copy.

There are many organizations within our church and I hope they would like to have their achievements, plans, and meetings made known to the entire church. It is my hope that they will ask one of their members to drop a short note as to what they doing each month. The line of communication in the church needs to be open and full of what we are doing at Olive Branch to make disciples in our area. If you would like to send us something, please bring it to church or send me an email (revedumc@yahoo.com) and we will see that it gets published. We need all information by the 24th of each month for the following month. Please, let's keep our church informed on what we are doing. See you at church and all our activities!

God bless. Happy New Year to all! Ed DiStefano