

Pleasant News

Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church

In This Issue - December 2020

- Pg 1 Inspiration Point
- Pg 3 December at the Grove
- Pg 4 From the Pastor's Desk
- Pg 7 Something New...
Lending Library
- Pg 8 Did You Know
- Pg 9 Recipe Box
- Pg 10 Country Ham Dinner
- Pg 11 Just For Giggles
- Pg 12 Memorials/Honors
- Pg 13 A Wish For
For The New Year
- Pg 14 Recommended Reading

Worship Times:

9:00am Traditional
(Online – Website)

10:00am Blended Service
(Family Life Center)

Pleasant Grove United Methodist
Church

P.O. Box 681900
1915 Oakdale Road Charlotte,
NC 28216
704-392-2387
www.pleasantgrovecharlotte.com

Inspiration Point

"Put on the garment of Praise for the spirit of heaviness, lift up your voice and sing! Pray in the Spirit and the Understanding, come glorify the King!" It is easy to become depressed during these times, what with the COVID 19 virus keeping us restricted in our movements and even isolated from our loved ones! Fear seems to dominate with most everyone! Then with all the election rhetoric and confusion about that, topped off with not being able to go to church and worship God as we always have done in the past! I have heard several of you talk about being depressed lately.

Have you ever watched the Nature films on TV, where a bunch of lions attack a herd of wildebeasts? They will encircle the herd and chase them until one of the weaker ones falls back by itself. Then they attack that one and bring it down! Well, the Bible tells us about Satan going about like a roaring lion, seeking those whom he may devour! He loves to get a Christian isolated by themselves and begin his attack! He begins by filling their minds with self-doubt, and then by implanting fear into them. That is what is happening during these times when we are afraid to come together to worship God! Our Spirit life begins to weaken, and soon we stop reading our Bibles. Next we begin to confess the wrong things, and as you know, faith comes by hearing the Word of God! After confessing the wrong things and hearing it, we soon begin to believe it. The next step is to begin to act upon these wrong things. Temptations are not a sin, but when we begin to act on these things, we are committing sin. Now, the enemy brings condemnation upon us, and the Bible says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who walk in the Spirit!" By this time, we have lost our victory, and are becoming depressed! What can we do about that?

Are you ready for this? Satan cannot make you sin! That is unless you are not a Christian, then you can become demon possessed. That means the demon possesses your mind and can drive you to do sinful things! But while a Christian can be tempted by a demon, he cannot make you do anything!

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God gave you a will to choose whom you will serve! You can choose not to give in to the demonic temptations! You can choose whether you want to allow him to hang around you and make temptation after temptation come your way! But you must know who you are in Christ! You can rebuke him and command he be silent, and you can command him to leave, all in the mighty name of Jesus Christ! Many people have read horoscopes, witchcraft books, or other forms of occult books and such around in your house. There are demons attached to those things and they have the right to hang out in your home as long as you have those things. Throw them out! Some movies, TV shows and such have demonic scenes in them. Throw them out or do not watch them! Begin to play Worship and Praise to God music in the background in your house! They hate that and won't stay around long. Get back to your Bible reading and quote the Scriptures out loud! Confess the Scriptures over your troubles and over your life and health! Soon you will have built up your faith to the point that you can believe and trust God to take care of you! While Jesus has paid the price for you to be free, there are things you must do to cause it to happen in your life! Read, Confess, Worship, Praise, these we have to do to stay free and keep our joy! And Joy is the fruit we get when we walk in the peace that comes from being in right standing with God!

Please do those things you are being taught to do to avoid the virus, but do not let yourself become isolated and shut off from like-minded believers! Join a prayer group, or a Bible Study group! Call your Christian brothers and sisters on the phone! Talk about Jesus! Share what God is doing in your life and listen while they share about their lives! Pray for one another! Pray for us! We are praying for you!

Brother Phil

What Do You Say When Asked...

Why do we celebrate Christmas on December 25?

For hundreds of years scholars have attempted to solve this puzzle. A few interesting theories point to his birth on the very day we designate. The early Christian leaders, living only a century or two after Jesus, honored the date of March 25, which they set as the vernal equinox – an important day for the farming-based ancients.

As church traditions continued to be established throughout medieval times, people wanted to celebrate the Nativity itself. It stood to reason that such a day would fall nine months after Gabriel made his proclamation, which everyone connected with March 25. They did the math and came up with December 25, which was the winter solstice. Therefore December 25 became the traditional date for celebrating the Christ Mass.

[Excerpts taken from Why the Nativity? By David Jeremiah]

December at The Grove



December is always such an exciting time around our church! And although December 2020 might look a little bit different from other Decembers, we will still be coming together in body or in spirit to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Please note the following schedule and be a part of any or all of our gatherings and activities.

Sunday, November 29th - First Sunday of Advent

9:00 - Online sermon

10:00 - In person worship in the Family Life Center

Sunday, December 6th - Second Sunday of Advent (New sermon series begins)

9:00 - Online sermon

10:00 - In person worship in the Family Life Center

Sunday, December 13th - Third Sunday of Advent

9:00 - Online sermon

10:00 - In person worship in the Family Life Center

Sunday, December 20th - Fourth Sunday of Advent

9:00 - Online sermon

10:00 - In person worship in the Family Life Center

(Reverse Advent Offering Boxes can be brought to the Gathering Room of the FLC)

Thursday, December 24th - Christmas Eve Service in the Family Life Center at 4:00 PM

(Reverse Advent Offering Boxes can be brought to the Gathering Room of the FLC)

Sunday, December 27th - No worship services at Pleasant Grove. Instead, please participate in a virtual Conference- wide worship service offered by the Western North Carolina Conference. Details will be published to the congregation in the weeks leading up to Christmas.



So, as you can see, we still can worship, study, witness, and serve as a Church family, even in this strange and unusual year! We thank God for each and every one of these opportunities! It is a Very Merry Christmas at Pleasant Grove!!!



THE STORY OF SECRET SANTA



In 1971, Larry Stewart was unemployed and broke. He had been a door-to-door salesman until the company he worked for went out of business. Now he was stuck in a small Missouri town with no money and no gas in his car. He hadn't eaten in two days when he entered a small diner one morning and ordered a breakfast he couldn't pay for. When it came time to pay the bill, he pretended he had lost his wallet.

Ted Horner, the owner of the diner, realized what was going on. He walked by the stool where Lee had been sitting and pretended to pick something up off the floor. "Here son," he said, "you must have dropped this." It was a \$20 bill. Larry took it and said "Thanks." He paid his bill, left a tip, pushed his car to the gas station so he could buy gas and leave town.

He knew that no one had dropped the \$20 bill. He knew that the owner had helped him out in a way that wouldn't embarrass him. He said, "Right then I made a promise. I said, 'Lord, if you ever put me in a position to help people, I will do it.'"

A few years later, when he made some money in the cable television industry, he began helping others. It started when he ordered a hamburger at a drive-in. He gave the car-hop \$20 and said, "Keep the change."

She said, "You're kidding."

He said, "No ma'am. Merry Christmas."

Tears filled her eyes and she said, "Sir, you have no idea what this means to me."

This began a custom that Stewart developed over the years of giving away cash to strangers who needed it. Sometimes it's \$100 to someone he sees on the street. Sometimes it's \$1000 to someone who has experienced some kind of tragedy. He gave away more than one million dollars this way, none of it tax-deductible, and always given anonymously.

He was written up in the press as Secret Santa, but no one knew who he was. He revealed his identity when he learned that a tabloid paper was about to publish his name. He was in the midst of fighting a losing battle with cancer; he was pretty sure it would be his last Christmas. He spent the month of December giving away \$100,000 in Missouri, on the streets and in various shelters. He also worked with four newly trained Secret Santas who gave away \$75,000 of their own money.

Before he started this role as a Secret Santa, Stewart says, "I had not found my purpose. Part of my daily prayer was, 'Lord lift me up and let me be a better witness to you and for you and somehow reach more people.' I had no idea this is what He had in mind."

(This was adapted from an article in USA Today)

May we all seek out ways to bless others and may our prayer be like Larry Stewart's prayer: "Lord lift me up and let me be a better witness to you and for you and somehow reach more people."

Merry Christmas – Pastor Byron

New Sermon Series for December



Beginning December 6th, Pastor Byron will be offering a new sermon series to the Family at Pleasant Grove! The series is titled “Turning Christmas Upside Down!” We will be exploring together how we might take a different approach to Christmas...One that turns our celebration of the season upside down—and by doing so, sets everything right side up! Each week we will be focused on the same scripture passage, Luke 2:8-20 (The Christmas Story). Please plan to join together with your church family for these messages, either online at 9:00 or in person at 10:00, each Sunday morning.



Men's Fellowship Breakfast
Every Tuesday at 7:30am
Circle G Restaurant
4818 Rozzelles Ferry Rd,
Charlotte



Men's Luncheon

Every Thursday at 11:30am
Stockyard Grill
4925 Rozzelles Ferry Rd, Charlotte

All men are invited to join for fellowship & good food!

Christmas Plans for Backpack Buddies



Once again this year, Pleasant Grove will be helping our Backpack Buddies families with grocery store gift cards for the Christmas break. The two weeks away from school can pose a real problem for families that rely on the meals that their students receive at school. During this break, we will pause our distribution of backpacks and will instead offer our families a different way to fill in this gap. Currently we are serving nine families for a total of 17 students. With their final pick up of food for 2020, we will also give the parents a Food Lion gift card. These gift

cards will help to supply a nice holiday meal for each family or will help a family stock up on the basics needed to carry them into the New Year. We typically find ourselves able to give each family a \$65 gift card. If you would like to contribute to this effort, please have your donation into the church office by Monday, December 14th. Donations of any amount are certainly appreciated! You can contribute a partial amount towards a gift card, or you can really get your Santa on and sponsor one of our families in total. It isn't about the amount that you can give, it is simply about your willing heart and your generous spirit! Thank you for loving God and for loving your neighbor! Merry, Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas from the Church Office!!!



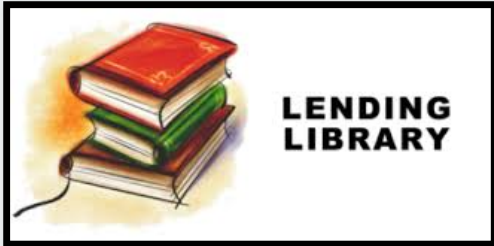
The church office will be closed beginning Thursday, December 24th and continuing through Friday, January 1st. We hope that you will be able to spend time with those you love and enjoy the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

If you want to make sure that your offering/financial gift is credited for 2020, please make sure to have it in to the church office before December 30th. A deposit will be made by noon of that day. Your gifts can be mailed to the church, or you can place it in our black mailbox located at the parking lot entrance on the Oakdale Road side of our campus.

**We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Year's!
We look forward to serving with you in 2021!**

**With Love to Pleasant Grove,
Byron, Colin, Lindsay and Kay**

Something New is Coming to Pleasant Grove!



During the next couple of weeks, you will begin to see something new at our sweet church and we hope that everyone will take advantage of it. We are launching a new Lending Library in our Family Life Center. Very soon you will see a collection of books begin to grow in the rolling shelves in our Gathering Room. The books will be grouped by category:

Bibles, group resources, personal study and spiritual formation, daily devotions, historical fiction, fiction, non-fiction, biographies, etc. There will be a sign denoting the different categories and each book will be marked to coincide with its category. Our lending library is free to use and we really do hope that many of you will put it to use. There is only one rule...Take what you want, return it for others! Pretty simple, right?

There will also be a donation bin to the side of the shelves. We ask that you only donate new or gently used books. Please do not donate books that you have marked up for your personal use and please do not donate books that are extremely worn or tattered. Also, be aware that every book donated might not end up on the shelves of our Lending Library. We will consider each title, consider its age and relevance, and make sure that the book presents sound instruction, meaningful information, or clean entertainment. Donated books that do not end up on our shelves will be passed on to other organizations.

We look forward to this new offering at Pleasant Grove. We sincerely hope that you will take some time to look through our Lending Library and find something that piques your interest. In this time of limited interaction, a book might be just what you need!!! Happy Reading!



Did You Know???



...that you have a chance to go to Rwanda, Kenya, and India on a mission trip? Well, guess what? You do!!! Throughout this time of restricted travel and mobility, many of us have wondered about what has been going on in the field of missions. Many mission trips have been cancelled and many have gone with a limited number of participants. And many of us have resigned ourselves to the fact that we just don't have the stamina and energy to take on such a strenuous travel and service schedule. Boy...Do we have a surprise for you!!!

Because of the pandemic, and due to the increase in internet usage for meetings, family gatherings, and business dealings, you now have the opportunity to participate in a **Virtual Mission Trip!** This unique travel experience requires no packing and very little preparation. It is open to all, no matter how young or old you may be. It is absolutely safe and will certainly be eye-opening. Through this virtual mission trip to Rwanda, Kenya, and India you will be able to glimpse the kingdom of God with orphaned and vulnerable children lifting themselves out of poverty permanently. So, how does this work?

Simply go to the website of the Western North Carolina Conference. Click on the NEWS tab. Scroll down to the ZOE Empowers virtual mission trip article. There you will find a link to register for this awesome opportunity. It is free to register and you will be given an opportunity to donate toward these efforts. You will also see a link to the ZOE Empowers website to learn more about this life-changing, world-changing organization.

You might be asking, "Just what does this trip look like? How does it work?"

It is a three-day mission trip beginning on Tuesday, December 8th. Each day you will use your computer to travel to far away places from 10:00 – 11:30 AM. On Day One you will visit Rwanda with Epiphane Mujawimana, founder of ZOE Empowers. You will listen in wonder as she describes how this movement grew out of tragedy and how they have seen God working through these efforts. You will be amazed at all that orphaned children are able to do with just a little support. On Wednesday, December 9th, you will explore a Kenyan village with Reegan Kaberia, manager of ZOE Kenya. You will hear directly from the incredible boys and girls in the program. You will also be inspired by the triumph of the human spirit when it is held in God's hands. On the third day, December 10th, you will travel to the exotic location of India and hear from Nani Chintala, manager for ZOE, Vizag, India. How wonderful it will be to see God at work in India's urban slums. It is here that you will learn how your gifts and skills can be used by God to change the world for these precious young people.

So, what do you think? Are you ready to travel around the globe without ever having to leave the comfort of your own home? We sincerely hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity. At a time when it feels like our world is shrinking, it is important to keep a global view of God at work through the efforts of His willing servants. Happy Travels!!!

(The information in this article appeared on the Western North Carolina Conference website on November 5, 2020.)



The Recipe Box



For this month's recipe we thought it might be fun to ask one of our members to share a favorite recipe from years gone by. There are so many wonderful recipes out there, with the accessibility of recipe sharing websites. And yet, there are just some recipes that stick and stay in our minds and memories and simply can't be improved upon. We asked Judy Kearns if there was a favorite recipe that used to show up at family gatherings and that she would love to enjoy right now. We thought she might gravitate toward a recipe from her Nanny, Mrs. Ann Kelly. And she did!!!

The story behind this recipe goes something like this... When Judy was a little girl, she gave Nanny a birthday card with a recipe printed on it. Nanny tried the recipe out, was very pleased with the result, and then appropriately named the recipe, Judy's Sugar Cookies. We don't know if this was the start of a shared love of cooking between grandmother and granddaughter, but it most surely encouraged a relationship that had the kitchen as one of its foundations. Judy shares that they are really good sandwich cookies and that she would love to have one right about now!!!

Judy's Sugar Cookies

Cookie Dough

½ cup shortening
1 cup sugar
1 egg, well beaten
2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
2 tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. salt
2 TBSP. milk
1 tsp. vanilla

Cream shortening and sugar. Stir in the beaten egg. Sift flour, baking powder, and salt together. Add alternately with milk and vanilla. Chill in refrigerator for one hour. Drop from a teaspoon and flatten with bottom of glass covered with a damp cloth. Bake @ 350 degrees for 7 – 9 minutes, or until lightly browned.

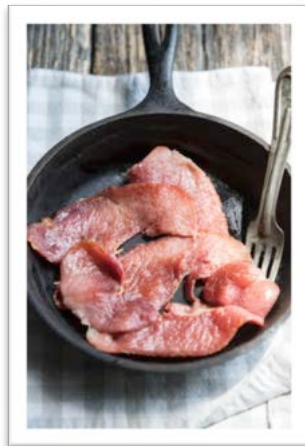
Chocolate Icing

2 cups sugar
1/3 cup cocoa
½ cup evaporated milk
1 stick butter
1 tsp. vanilla

Mix all ingredients except vanilla. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to a boil. Boil for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Beat until creamy. Spread icing on bottom of one cookie and top with another cookie! YUM!!!



Country Ham, Anyone???

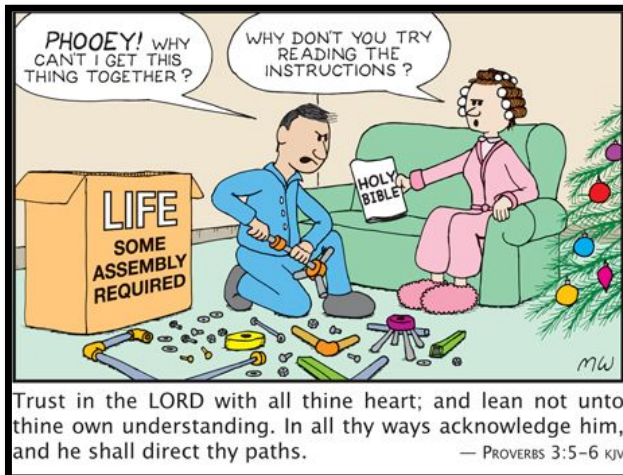


One of the favorite December traditions around Pleasant Grove is our annual Country Ham Dinner sponsored by Circle #6. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions we are not able to host this event in 2020. But, have no fear...you can still have this delicious country ham for your Christmas breakfast! Circle #6 is offering one- pound packs of Alexander's country ham for \$8.00. This delicious ham comes vacuum packed, ready to store in your refrigerator until use around Christmas time, or in your freezer for later use. Can't you just smell your Christmas breakfast now? Sort of gets your mouth to watering, doesn't it? To order your ham please see any member of Circle #6 or call the church office. But don't delay!!! We will only be taking orders through Sunday, December 6th, and plan to have it available for pick up the following week. Proceeds from the sale of this delectable ham will go to support ministries and needs within our church family as well as outreach and mission opportunities both locally and globally. Thanks in advance for your support!



Outreach is a fundamental part of Girl Scouting! Troop#882, which meets on our church campus, recently took the opportunity to fill Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes. After having tons of fun filling these boxes, they turned them into the church to send them on their way to children around the globe. Way to go, Girls! We are in awe of your servant hearts!

"Just For Giggles"



“The Following Gifts Have Been Made In Memory Or In Honor Of”

IN MEMORY

Gail Moore

Judy and Carson Watts – Family Life Center

Kappy Canfield

David and Lynette Primm
Judy and Carson Watts – Family Life Center
Peggy Pace – Family Life Center

David McCallum

Tom and Julia Grey
Judy and Carson Watts – Family Life Center
Peggy Pace – Family Life Center
Anonymous – Backpack Buddies

Kelly Roberts

David and Lynette Primm
Anonymous – Backpack Buddies

Julia Faulkner

David and Lynette Primm
Judy and Carson Watts – Family Life Center
Peggy Pace – Family Life Center

Sandy Elliott

Rick and Lynda Elliott – Cemetery Fund

Nancy Brown

Judy and Carson Watts – Family Life Center

Bill Watts

Anonymous
Roy and Margaret Parker
Judy and Carson Watts -- Family Life Center

Horace Nixon

Judy and Carson Watts – Family Life Center

Vivian Kiser

David and Lynette Primm
Judy and Carson Watts -- Family Life Center

Judy Maples

Judy and Carson Watts – Family Life Center

Lucia Wilkins

Peggy Pace – Family Life Center

Robert and Ruth Edwards

Disciples Sunday School Class
Anonymous – Backpack Buddies

Troy Wilson

Peggy Pace – Family Life Center

Willie Williams

Nadine Williams – Family Life Center
Roy and Margaret Parker – Family Life Center
Pina Nance – Family Life Center
Tim and Terri Honeycutt – Family Life Center
Don and Jane Adams – Family Life Center
Robert and Coretha Ferrell – Family Life Center
Roger and Patti Beard – Family Life Center
Covenant Sunday School Class – Family Life Center

A Wish for the New Year



Throughout Autumn of 2020 the Monday Night Bible Study Bunch has been working through a study of Philippians 4:4-8. Max Lucado's book Anxious for Nothing provided the backdrop for a real digging in on these precious verses. As we all shared our own insights during these anxious times, we were reminded over and over that no matter what, God is in control and He is still on His throne! And He gives us the blueprint for experiencing His peace, even today. At the close of Lucado's book the following passage really impacted us and we wanted to share it with the family at Pleasant Grove. This is our wish, indeed our prayer, for each of us as we say good-bye to 2020 and welcome a new year!

"Today, I will live today.
Yesterday has passed.
Tomorrow is not yet.
I'm left with today.
So, today, I will live today.
Relive yesterday? No.
I will learn from it.
I will seek mercy for it.
I will take joy in it.
But I won't live in it.
The sun has set on yesterday.
The sun has yet to rise on tomorrow.
Worry about the future? To what gain?
It deserves a glance, nothing more.
I can't change tomorrow until tomorrow.
Today, I will live today.
I will face today's challenges with today's strength.
I will dance today's waltz with today's music.
I will celebrate today's opportunities with today's hope.
Today.



May I laugh, listen, learn, and love. And tomorrow, if it comes, may I do so again.
A new day awaits you, my friend. A new season, in which you will worry less and trust more. A season with reduced fear and enhanced faith. Can you imagine a life in which you are anxious for nothing? God can.
And, with His help, you will experience it."

(Excerpt from Anxious for Nothing by Max Lucado, Harper Collins Publishers, 2017, page 152.)

Recommended Reading

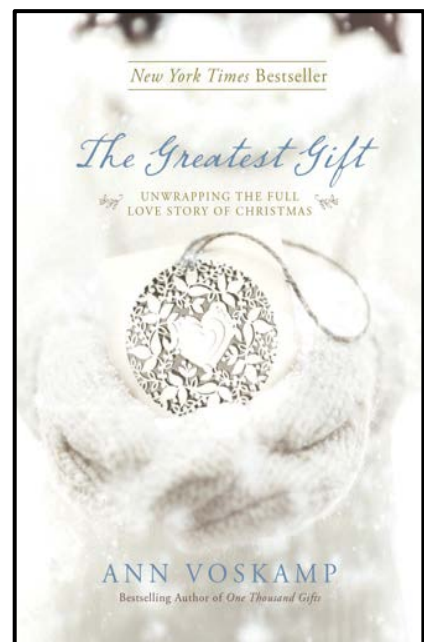


Last month, we extended an invitation to the church family to participate in our Advent Bible study. Now, this month, we would like to encourage each of you to read this book, even if you can't participate in the Bible study. Ann Voskamp's The Greatest Gift: Unwrapping the Full Love Story of Christmas, will do much in the way of centering your heart for Christmas. It is a daily devotional for each day in December, with a scripture passage, a reflection, and then several

thought provoking questions for your individual consideration. Each scripture passage leads us through the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Ann points out in the introduction, "It's the way the Gift unwraps: you have Christ's family tree...before you have a Christmas tree. If you don't come to Christmas through Christ's family tree and you come into the Christmas story just at the Christmas tree – this is hard, to understand the meaning of His coming. Because without the genealogy of Christ, the limbs of His past, the branches of His family, the love story of His heart that has been coming for you since before the beginning – how does Christmas and its tree stand? Its roots would be sheared. Its meaning would be stunted. The arresting pause of the miracle would be lost."

Ann also suggests to the reader that each day we will actively wait. In the waiting we will begin to understand that the remaking of everything has already begun. In our reading we will spend time with the Old Testament stories, with each story, each word, pointing to the coming, the incarnation of God. She implores us to be still and go slow and find Him – the exquisite Gift, given for us. God's greatest gift!!!

This just may be a quieter Christmas season for you. What better time than this to become still, slow down and find The Christ in Christmas. We suggest doing this with the help of Ann Voskamp's, The Greatest Gift. You will be glad that you invested your time and your thoughts with this beautifully written book.





REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A WRAPPED BOX.

**ON CHRISTMAS EVE, BRING YOUR BOX TO THE FAMILY LIFE CENTER.
WE WILL TAKE THE BOXES TO THE HUNTERSVILLE UMC FOOD PANTRY.**

DECEMBER 1 - 2 LB. BAG OF SUGAR

DECEMBER 2 - PEANUT BUTTER

DECEMBER 3 - STUFFING MIX

DECEMBER 4 - BOXED POTATOES

DECEMBER 5 - MACARONI AND CHEESE

DECEMBER 6 - CANNED FRUIT

DECEMBER 7 - CANNED TOMATOES

DECEMBER 8 - CANNED TUNA

DECEMBER 9 - CANNED CHICKEN

DECEMBER 10 - JAR OF APPLESAUCE

DECEMBER 11 - CANNED SWEET POTATOES

DECEMBER 12 - CANNED SPINACH OR CABBAGE

DECEMBER 13 - CANNED BEANS

DECEMBER 14 - BOX OF CRACKERS

DECEMBER 15 - PACKAGE OF RICE

DECEMBER 16 - BOX OF OATMEAL

DECEMBER 17 - BOX OF SPAGHETTI NOODLES

DECEMBER 18 - SPAGHETTI SAUCE

DECEMBER 19 - CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

DECEMBER 20 - BEEF BROTH

DECEMBER 21 - CANNED CORN

DECEMBER 22 - CANNED MIXED VEGETABLES

DECEMBER 23 - CANNED CARROTS

DECEMBER 24 - CANNED GREEN BEANS

**EACH DAY READ ONE CHAPTER OF LUKE FROM THE BIBLE (THERE ARE 24 CHAPTERS.)
BY CHRISTMAS EVE, YOU WILL HAVE READ THE ENTIRE LIFE STORY OF JESUS.**

Merry Christmas to All!!!

This Christmas may seem quite different from any other Christmas in our lives. Gatherings could be smaller. Travel might be curtailed. Parties may be postponed to a safer, more comfortable time for all. However, there is much that is not changed about this Christmas season. The blessings of peace and hope are still ours and Jesus Christ, who is the Heart of Christmas, remains as the centerpiece of all our celebrations. These will not be changed by any circumstances within which we find ourselves! In this spirit, the volunteers of Pleasant News would like to wish our entire family at Pleasant Grove a very Merry Christmas! May you find peace, hope, joy, love, and above all, Christ, in each and every day!

