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WORSHIP TIMES

8:45am Bible Study Groups

10:00am Worship in the Sanctuary

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From The Pastor's Desk

February 14. The day our minds turn to pink and red hearts, chocolates, and all things "love." How fitting that Ash Wednesday, the day we begin preparing ourselves for the celebration of the greatest acts of love ever shown, falls on February 14 this year. On Ash Wednesday we come together to begin the season of Lent, a time to reflect on our actions and behaviors, and our relationship with God and our relationships with others.

"Lent" originated in the early second-century of the Christian community. It was then primarily a preparation time for Easter – a time for repentance, recommitment, and a time for instructing new believers in the faith to prepare them for baptism. The Season of Lent lasts for 40 days, not counting Sundays, during which, the believer is invited to follow Jesus' example of withdrawal into the "wilderness" for a time of repentance, prayer, and meditation. Just as Jesus fasted in the wilderness. so we are encouraged to fast during this season by the "giving up" of something. Popular things to give up during Lent are chocolate, meat, cigarettes, alcohol, soda, or sugar. While in seminary, I once told a professor I was going to give up writing papers for Lent. She told me to go ahead; suffering was the point. I decided to choose something else for the Lenten fast! In recent years, I have challenged my congregations to give up negative

thinking, worry, complaining, self-criticism, gossip, or criticism of others. I have found these to be much more difficult to give up than chocolate or sugar because most of us practice each of these on a daily basis without even thinking about it or realizing we are doing it. Choosing to give one or more of these things up for the Lenten fast makes us aware of just how much a part of our lives they are. And when you catch yourself having a negative thought, replace it with something positive. If you want to worry or complain, pray. If you want to criticize yourself or others, or spread some gossip, instead find something good about yourself or the other person and then spread uplifting words.

Another trend is not necessarily giving up something, but adjusting your schedule to add something, such as an extra 10 minutes of prayer every day, calling a different person each day just to check on that person, attending a Bible Study, writing and sending a note to a different person each day just to brighten their day. The possibilities are endless.

Lent is a period of time when we reflect on our actions and behaviors, our relationships – with God and with others. But Lent is not a time to be depressed and wallow in our failures. It is the time to free our soul from the burdens by admitting we are sinners and repenting, changing the direction of our life, mending broken relationships with others, and becoming reconciled with God so that we may truly, gloriously celebrate His tremendous love shown to us in His Resurrection on Easter Sunday!

`Even now,' declares the LORD, `return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.` Rend your heart and not your garments.

Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

---Joel 2:12-13

--Pastor Glenda





Our Lending Library is Here for You!!!



Don't forget that Pleasant Grove has its own lending library! If you are looking for a good read...something that will inspire, inform, entertain, or help you along on your walk with the Lord...then we just may have what you need. We are located in the Gathering Room of the Family Life Center. Simply choose your title, take it home, enjoy it, and return it for others. Simple, isn't it? The books await. Let's get reading!!!



The church office has received the following notes of thanks since our last publication of Pleasant News:

Dear Pleasant Grove Family,

Our family wants to thank everyone for all they did for my mom's, Shirley Gelsinger, celebration of life service. Without the co-ordination of so many it would not have been possible, and such a beautiful and uplifting service. Also, thank you for the food provided. The deli trays were perfect and were enjoyed by friends and family after the service. My mom loved her church and her church family. I think (know) she would love knowing the love shown to all of us.

---Ginger Hornbuckle and the Gelsinger Family

Dear Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church,

Thank you so much for my final exams care package! I loved all of the treats and the Starbucks gift card. I am so appreciative of your generosity!

---Love, Erin Holomb

Dear Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church,

Thank you so much for allowing us to use your facility for our annual family Christmas gathering. The facility was wonderful and just what we needed in lieu of our usual venue at Cook's Memorial. We are grateful that your facility was available for us because it's not easy finding a spot large enough for 100+ people so close to Christmas. We had 107 in attendance and except for the non-stop rain, it was a perfect event. Many Thanks!



---Denise Vead, Family Representative The Paul and Eunice Thompson Family

Dear Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church,

Greetings! Happy New Year! I just wanted to say hello and thank you for your support of Oakdale Elementary. I also wanted to take a moment to let you know that some of our families reached out to say thank you for your thoughtful gifts during Thanksgiving and Christmas. It definitely has been a blessing to our families, and we really appreciate you!

---Shonise Kennedy, MSW School Social Worker, Oakdale Elementary



After School Care Post

Welcome 2024!!! We had so much fun during Winter break! We played with some of the things we don't normally get to bring out when we are here for just an afternoon (which means we had lots of things to pick up and put away!). We played in the gym almost every day. One day we had glow sticks, and the kids had an absolute blast!

A special thanks to Jeannie Upton and Diana Graham for all the crafts they have been doing with the children. We had Christmas trees, wreaths, and stockings. Now we are working on snowmen and snowflakes and we're preparing for Valentine's crafts.

We wish everyone a wonderful 2024 filled with good health, happy times, and lots of love! Stay safe!

---submitted by Sherrie Cannon and The After School Care Staff





Congratulations to Lindsay!!!



The Pleasant Grove family offers our heartfelt congratulations to Lindsay Wright, our former Financial Secretary. She recently was pinned and has now graduated from Nursing School. She has accepted a position at Novant Health, where she will be working in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Lindsay will be such a Godsend to the babies she cares for and will be such a comfort to the families of those precious babies. Just as we were fortunate to have Lindsay with us at Pleasant Grove, those who have needs of the Neonatal ICU will be fortunate to have Lindsay with them. Her gentle spirit,

kindheartedness, positive attitude, and strong faith will guide her as she cares for others. Lindsay continues to stay in touch with Angela in the church office, to assist her on items that come up, and we are grateful for her assistance "behind the scenes" even as she moves forward with her new career.





The Giving Spirit at Pleasant Grove Continues

The church family at Pleasant Grove closed out 2023 in our usual generous manner...and 2024 promises to continue in the same spirit as we help others and serve the Lord with gladness! Here's a summary of what's been going on around our sweet church in the past few months.

Our church's partnership with Oakdale Elementary school has been a blessing, not only for the children and their families, but for the members of our church as well. During the month of August, we collected school uniforms to help stock the school's uniform closet and provided individual personal hygiene kits to be used throughout the school year.

Our church's spirit of giving continued through November and December as we participated in several mission and service activities. During the month of November, our church provided ten \$100 Food Lion gift cards for Oakdale school families that had been identified as food insecure, helping provide these families with a nice Thanksgiving meal. We also participated in Operation Christmas Child once again, providing shoebox gifts for children around the globe.

The Genesis Class put together gifts for our shut-ins and had a good visit with them. It is always gratifying to spend time with these special church members! The class also put together a Christmas gift basket for the very special son of one of their members. Circle #6 spent one evening cleaning the church sanctuary and it sure looked great afterwards!! This has now become an annual service project for them! During the month of December, our church provided ten Food Lion gift cards in the amount of \$100 each to families at Oakdale School to help with additional food costs for their children while they were home during the Christmas break. The Disciples Class visited and delivered gifts to shut-ins and enjoyed wonderful fellowship time with them. The class also sponsored a family at Paw Creek Elementary and purchased clothing items, toys, and a food gift card for a family with two young boys. The class members enjoyed wrapping the gifts and delivering them to the school before Christmas break. A Christmas tree was also donated to a family whose house had burned. They also visited Northlake House and had a "Christmas party," delivering gifts and goodies to the residents there. And then our entire church family filled several boxes with food (363 pounds of food!) to help the hungry through our Reverse Advent Calendar event, benefitting the food pantry at Huntersville UMC.

Currently, we are collecting winter items for Roof Above. The items we are collecting are winter hats and gloves, men's crew socks, hand and foot warmers, chapstick, and cough drops. These are items that are much needed by the men's shelter as these cold winter months are hard on our homeless population. The collection bins for these items are located in our sanctuary.





It is so important to remember our brothers and sisters in Christ who are lonely, struggling financially, or have incurred hardships. Thank you church family for blessing them and for always giving with a loving and grateful heart!

"When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed." -- Maya Angelou "There's no better exercise for your heart, than reaching down and helping lift someone up." -- Bernard Nelson

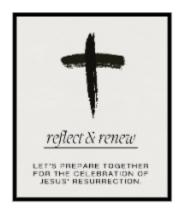
---submitted by Mary Usher





Ash Wednesday at The Grove

The season of Lent begins with an observance of Ash Wednesday on February 14th . The church family, along with any family members, friends, neighbors, and community members are invited to participate in our Ash Wednesday service. We will gather as Christ's body on Ash Wednesday, at 12:15 PM in our chapel. During this service we will worship God, pray together, and receive the ashes, symbolizing our need for repentance and forgiveness. Come join us as we prepare our hearts and minds for the journey to The Cross and ultimately the glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Our Lord!





Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church

Council Meeting December 3, 2023

Call to Order

Buck Green, Council Chair, opened the meeting with prayer at 11:27 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Committee on Trustees

Mr. Green called upon Steve McClure, Chair, to report on the December 1, 2023 meeting of the Committee.

<u>9121 Hutchinson Lane</u>. Mr. McClure reported that the Committee approved recommending to the Council that the Church begin the process to sell the Scout Hut and associated property located at 9121 Hutchinson Lane, Charlotte, North Carolina. The Committee was advised that the property is on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Tax Records at a land and property value of \$158,000.

Mr. McClure reported there are several steps associated with the sale of property, as noted within the <u>Book of Discipline</u> of the United Methodist Church.

First Step: Get a certified appraisal of the property.

Second Step: Request a Charge Conference for approval. (Remind the members that proceeds may only be used for capital improvements to church buildings.)

Third Step: Go before the District Board denoting the Church Location and Building for approval.

Fourth Step: Engage a realtor and/or make the sale.

The Trustees are aware of potential ramifications in selling the property, such as a loss of overflow parking on the property during funerals. The Trustees are hopeful that a mutual agreement between seller and buyer might convey usage of a portion of the land for overflow parking, given its proximity to the church cemetery.

Mr. McClure stated that a portion of the proceeds from the proposed sale of 9121 Hutchinson Lane would be used to replace the non-working HVAC system within the Family Life Center, at a recent estimated cost of \$52,000 for a 20-ton system.

Following discussion, a recommendation to proceed on the sale of 9121 Hutchinson Lane was made, seconded and unanimously approved.

<u>Security Cameras</u>. Mr. McClure reported that the security camera system is fully functional, with four cameras monitoring the parking lot. The system, which Mr. McClure described as user-friendly, is maintained in the Administrative Building, remains on at all times, and stores up to two months of surveillance footage. Prominent signage denoting that the cameras are in usage soon will be posted on the church property. Mr. Green inquired if the parking lot team could be suspended now that the camera system is in place, suggesting instead that one person be assigned to watch the monitors on Sunday mornings.

Following discussion, a recommendation was made to suspend the Sunday-morning parking-lot team and to redirect those members, on a weekly basis, to monitor the camera screens during the Sunday School and Worship times. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

<u>Disposal of Van</u>. Mr. McClure stated that during its meeting, the Trustees also discussed disposal of the church van, proposing that it be sold due to safety concerns. Primary usage of the van is for the Summer Camp program. He further stated that the church currently does not have the available funds to purchase another van and associated insurance.

Pastor Bennett shared that a parent, who has children in the CDC and After-School/Summer Camp programs, had approached her during the CDC Thanksgiving luncheon, asking if the parents of children in the programs could become involved with and/or possibly spearhead fundraising activities to purchase another van. Mr. Brown advised that he would be glad to reach out to that parent and discuss the matter. Until that conversation has taken place, the Council felt it wise to table discussions regarding alternative transportation considerations.

Pastor Bennett stated that during the luncheon, she also was approached by individuals inquiring if the hot dog luncheons would ever be reinstated. Council members discussed the inquiry and agreed that the manpower associated with sponsorship of the hot dog lunches was no longer available due to the reduced membership of the Sunday School classes.

Finance Committee

<u>2024 Budget</u>. Mr. Green called upon Mr. Brown, Chair, to present the church budget for 2024. Mr. Brown distributed copies of the proposed budget, a copy of which is attached to the minutes as part of the record.

Four line-items increased. Other line items either remained the same or were reduced, resulting in an overall proposed decrease of \$99,599 from the 2023 budget.

Subjective discussion ensued regarding non-payment of Conference apportionments and how such non-payment may affect the good standing of Pleasant Grove. The Council also discussed the speculative forecast for the longevity of the church being able to pay its obligations.

Following discussion, the proposed budget for 2024 was approved.

<u>Parsonage Loan Repayment</u>. Mr. Brown stated that in looking for ways to reduce the budget, they suggested liquidating a portion (approximately \$37,000) of the assets in the Edward Jones investment account to repay funds borrowed against the Cemetery Fund to pay for structural repairs made to the church parsonage in May 2017. Making such a move would leave a balance of approximately \$40,000 in the Edward Jones investment account. This would also be viewed as a positive move, in that the repayment to the Cemetery Fund has been a \$400 per month expense that comes from the monthly tithing income.

Following discussion, a motion was made to remove from the Edward Jones investment account the amount owed to the Cemetery Fund and apply those funds to the indebtedness of the loan to the Parsonage Fund. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Other Business

Mr. Green announced that this meeting of the Council would be his final as Chair, with Wayne Therrell assuming Chairmanship, beginning January 2024. The Council thanked Mr. Green for his commitment and thoughtful leadership during his tenure as Chair.

Pastor Bennett announced that at the end of 2023, Todd Holcomb also would step aside in his role as Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was closed in prayer by Pastor Bennett at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Honeycutt
Recording Secretary



Way to Go, Pleasant Grove!!!

During the season of Advent, the beautiful people of Pleasant Grove once again participated in a Reverse Advent Offering. We each took a good sturdy box and filled it with a great assortment of groceries. But that wasn't all that went into the boxes. As we placed the items into our box and read a chapter in the Book of Luke, we also filled that box with our love and prayers for the families that would be served by our offering. During the first week of the New Year, we had a dedicated band of volunteers who delivered our boxes to Huntersville United Methodist Food Pantry. Our thanks go to Jeff McCallum, Steve McClure, and Rick Elliott for making that delivery! All totaled, our boxes provided 363 pounds of food for those in need! According to food pantry standards, this will provide over 302 meals to our neighbors who find themselves in unfortunate circumstances at this time. Thanks so much for being willing to share in the bounty of God's blessings with others. Loving God and loving our neighbors is indeed the message of The Gospel!









Spring Break is Just Around the Corner!!!

At the end of March, the generosity of the Pleasant Grove family will spill across the street to the families of Oakdale Elementary School once again. Many families rely on the breakfasts and lunches that their children receive at school as a mainstay of keeping them well-fed and healthy. During Spring Break, as the children enjoy more than a week's vacation from school, their parents struggle to provide the meals that every child needs and deserves. As these families cope with a food-insecure situation, we find ourselves in the position to be able to provide for their needs. We will be giving \$100 grocery store gift cards to ten families. If you would like to be a part of this helping ministry, you can turn in your donation, in any amount, to the



church office or you can place it in the Sunday morning offering basket. Just be sure to mark your donation for Oakdale School and we will be sure that it is directed in the proper manner. As always, thanks for being the hands and feet of Jesus as we touch Oakdale families with the love and compassion that has been so lavishly poured out upon us!





Happy Valentine's Day!!!

FOR GOD
SO LOVED THE
WORLD THAT HE GAVE
HIS ONLY
BEGOTTEN
SON, SO
THAT WHOEVER
BELIEVES IN HIM
SHALL NOT PERISH
BUT HAVE ETERNAL
LIFE.
JOHN 3:16

The volunteers with Pleasant News want to wish each and every member of the Pleasant Grove family a very Happy Valentine's Day! Many people will get caught up in the traditional trappings of this "Hallmark" holiday...cards, flowers, candy, and dinner out. But we are blessed to have fun with those things while we also focus on a much more important aspect of love. We, as followers of Jesus Christ, understand what real love means. We understand the sacrifice made by Jesus to save us from our sins and give us an eternal life in heaven. We understand what it means to pass that love on to our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, and even those that we will never meet. We are given the beautiful opportunity to participate in the miraculous process of taking what God gives us and multiplying it with love for the benefit of others. So, as we approach Valentine's Day 2024, let your mind rest on the incredible gift of love that God has lavished on you...and find a way to share it with someone else!!! Happy Valentine's Day!



The Recipe Box

February brings a time of relaxing and leaving the hurry-scurry of the holidays far behind us. The temperatures will be colder and a good, hot bowl of soup might be just the ticket!

Fiesta Soup is another take on vegetable soup, but easier to prepare. This soup can be frozen... if there are any leftovers! You can also adjust the spice of your soup for those who prefer a bolder heat in their bowl!

Fiesta Soup

1 ½ lbs. of lean ground beef (or 3-4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed)

32 oz. chicken broth

1 large can of kidney beans (40 oz.)

48 oz. salsa (mild/medium/hot...you pick!)

32 oz. bag of frozen mixed vegetables

Shredded cheddar cheese and sour cream for topping, as desired



Brown the ground beef and drain thoroughly. Or, if using cubed chicken, stir fry until cooked through. In a large pot, combine the meat, broth, kidney beans, salsa, and vegetables. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30-40 minutes, covered. Test vegetables for tenderness. Simmer a bit longer if need be. Ladle into bowls and top each with cheese and/or sour cream. Serve with corn chips, cornbread, or the bread of your choice. Bon Appetit!!!

---submitted by Peggy Green

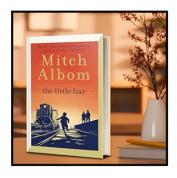




PG Prayer Lunch

The PG Prayer Lunch meets every Thursday at 11:30 a.m. at The Stockyard Restaurant. Everyone...men and women, church members and friends, are welcome to join us. We would love to have you with us for this time of food, fellowship, and prayer as we come together seeking God's power and presence in our lives and in the world around us.

Thursdays - 11:30 AM - The Stockyard



Recommended Reading

Mitch Albom is the author of numerous works of nonfiction and fiction, which have been translated into forty- seven languages and have sold more than forty-one million copies. His most recent book, <u>The Little Liar</u>, is our recommendation to you for the month of February. Inspired by a little-known WWII story, this is a powerful novel about truth and lies set during the Holocaust.

Nico, at eleven years of age, has never told a lie. When the Nazis invade his home in Greece, the boy is found by a German officer, who offers him an opportunity to save his family. Nico's goodness and innocence is used against his tightly knit community. All Nico must do is to persuade his fellow Jewish residents to board trains going "north," where they will be reunited with family, will have homes, and jobs. Unaware that he is selling lies to his own people, Nico reassures passengers on the station platform every day. When the final train leaving his village is loaded, Nico sees his family being herded into a boxcar. It is then that he realizes that he has helped send them, and everyone he knows and loves, to their doom at Auschwitz. He will spend the rest of his life changing names, changing locations, and changing identities, desperate to find a way to forgiveness...for himself and from the people he loves most. Nico escapes with his life...but he never tells the truth again.

In <u>The Little Liar</u>, the human consequences of deception are thoroughly examined as Albom weaves together the stories of Nico, who becomes a pathological liar; his brother, Sebastian, who vows revenge against him at all costs; Fannie, the girl who must choose between them if she survives; and Udo Graf, the Nazi officer who changed each of their lives with his lies. Through the years of World War II, the concentration camps, and the decades that follow, the ramifications of each person's honesty and dishonesty are revealed, bringing them back to where it all started in a surprising and arresting end to the story.

Although <u>The Little Liar</u> is a work of fiction, it is told from the unique perspective of Truth. Truth is the storyteller, and from Truth, we hear some very profound and thought-provoking statements. Below is how we are introduced to Truth:

"You can trust the story you are about to hear. You can trust it because I am telling it to you, and I am the only thing in this world you can trust. Some would say you can trust nature, but I disagree. Nature is fickle; species thrive then flame out. Others suggest you can trust faith. Which Faith? I ask. As for humans? Well. Humans can be trusted only to watch out for themselves. When threatened, they will destroy anything to survive, especially me. But I am the shadow you cannot outrun, the mirror that holds your final reflection. You may duck my gaze for all your days on earth, but let me assure you, I get the last look. I am Truth."

If you have been a fan of Mitch Albom's previous books or if you enjoy historical fiction, then <u>The Little Liar</u> will probably become one of your favorites. It is chocked full of moments that will have you stopping, rereading a paragraph, and then thinking about what you have read later in the day. It is a timeless tale of the harm we inflict with our deceits, and the power of love to inspire forgiveness and in the end, to redeem us. <u>The Little Liar</u> is available from any brick-and-mortar or online bookseller, from the local public library, and from our own Lending Library at Pleasant Grove. We encourage you to pick it up and allow yourself to be transported to another place and another time. Happy Reading!

---submitted by Sherri Brown

Cemetery Clean Up Day

The Pleasant Grove Memorial Park is cared for by a very dedicated and committed group of volunteers...and this is no small task! As a church family, we appreciate the love that these volunteers put into the work that they do. The Cemetery committee wants to let you know of the upcoming clean up day on Saturday, March 16th . At this time all remaining Christmas and Winter seasonal flower arrangements will be disposed of. Please make sure that you take the time to remove any flowers on the graves of your loved ones that you intend to keep before this date. Thanks for your help in this matter as we prepare for, and look forward to, the Spring and Easter seasons.









Our gym is open to the church family and community for indoor walking on Monday and Wednesday mornings between the hours of 9:00 and 11:00. It will never be too hot, too cold, or too wet to walk in our gym! So, you have no excuses! Everyone is welcome to come enjoy the fellowship and movement as we all work toward better health together!

THE FOLLOWING GIFTS WERE MADE TO THE CHURCH:

IN MEMORY

Shirley Gelsinger

Steve and Karen Dellinger Sunset Road Baptist Church Sonlighters The Gabriel Family and Nancy Gabriel Parrish

Mary Ann Todd

Nadine Williams Steve and Maria McClure Disciples Sunday School Class Rickey and Lynda Elliott

Pina Nance

Vivian Houck

Keith Lewis

Winnie and Barbara Clement

IN HONOR

Dianne Cox Law

Steve and Karen Dellinger

Terry Kelly

Ted and Betty Rector

Margaret Parker

Genesis Sunday School Class

Jeannie Upton

Genesis Sunday School Class



Just For Giggles

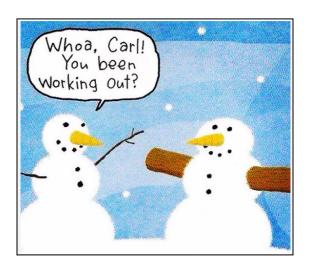


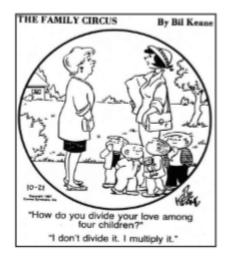














BRACE YOURSELF!
WINTER IS FINALLY COMING.

NO, WAIT...WARM AGAIN.

OK, IT'S COLD; WINTER IS CONOPE..WARM AGAIN. WAIT!
THERE'S SNOW! AAAAAND
IT MELTED.

