



East Central District

Wholeness for our Clergy, Congregations, and Communities

December 2017 Newsletter

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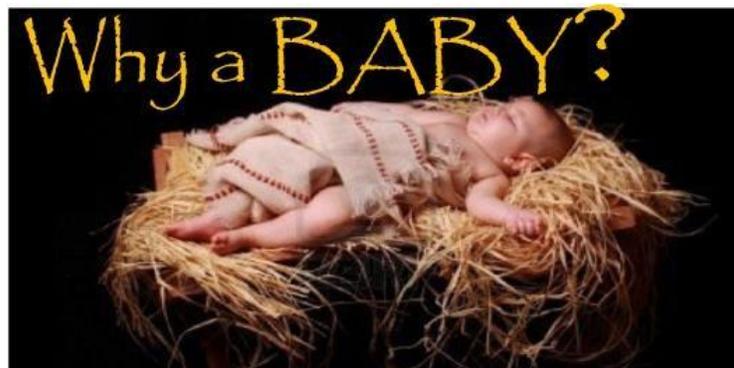
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Dear (Contact First Name),



Do you ever ask yourself, *Why a baby?* Why did God choose to enter into the world as a baby?

During Advent we tend to reduce the incarnation to a cutesy, sentimental, fluffy, sweet little deal. We sing "Away in a Manger" about this baby, with the ridiculous line, "no crying he makes." Who in the world ever heard of a baby that didn't cry, anyway?

The truth is - I know and many of you know from firsthand experience - that, along with being an amazing and wonderful event, having a baby is a threatening experience. Along with all the sentimental, wonderful stuff, the birth of a baby turns our lives upside down. It forces us to rearrange our priorities.

Joseph and Mary certainly could tell us a thing or two about the disruptions caused by the birth of a baby, couldn't they?

Could it be that that's at least part of why God came as a baby?



Unto us a child is born. Unto us has come a God who enters into our experience as a baby - a small, fragile, vulnerable, disruptive, unexpected, threatening baby.

With the vulnerability of the baby comes his claim upon us. Because of her vulnerability, her dependence, her potential, a baby demands a commitment that is unknown in the majority of human encounters. It's a claim that exists not only because babies need us; that claim exists also because somewhere deep within ourselves, we know that we need babies.

Could it be that that's why God came as a baby?

There . . . in that baby . . . "the hopes and fears of all the years," as the song goes - the hopes and fears of all the years are met by a God who comes into our life experience and claims us at the very same point at which we all begin this journey that we call life - as a baby.

Jeanne and I have had two babies, and because of the presence of Kimberly and her older brother Robbie in our lives we have . . .

- laughed more heartily and cried with more anguish,
- been filled with more pride and wrestled with more fear,
- felt more self-confidence and assurance, more self-doubt and insecurity,
- gone to bed with more satisfaction and stayed up at night with more worry in our hearts,
- known joy at its highest peak and sadness in its lowest valley,
- had our priorities challenged and changed and challenged and changed more times than we can count,
- claimed more memories of the past and conjured up more dreams for the future,
- felt more the warmth of affirmation and the discomfort of judgment, celebrated more and cursed more the various realities of life,
- offered more prayers of thanksgiving and prayed more for guidance and strength, than I suspect we ever would have if we had never held those babies in our arms and allowed them to become such intimate parts of our lives.

Why a baby? Why did God decide to come as a baby?

Could it be because God knows that no other relationship so defines love, brings such joy, places such demands, unabashedly calls for such commitment, so blatantly forces us to re-examine our lives and redefine what is really important to us? Could it be because God knows that no other relationship evokes such loyalty and so changes our lives?

*And all that . . . all that . . . is what God wants to happen
when that baby named Jesus . . . Emmanuel
. . . God with us . . . is born into our lives.*

Grace and Peace,



Bob Bushong
District Superintendent
East Central District

In the District

Annual ECD Called to Serve

February 3, 2018 - First UMC, Oviedo

**SAVE THE DATE - February 3, 2018
Called to Serve
First UMC, Oviedo 8am - 1pm**

Mark your calendars now and make plans to attend the Annual East Central District Called to Serve Event. This is a day for everyone in the local church: clergy & laity. We are excited to announce the **Rev. Michael Beck**, Senior Pastor Wildwood UMC will be our Keynote Speaker.



"Awakening from Apostolic Amnesia"

Luke10: 1-9

We will have several different workshops with something that is sure to interest you. Details and registration will be available soon.

Fall Clergy Meeting Rescheduled!

Tuesday, January 30, 2018 - Asbury UMC, Maitland

The Fall Clergy meeting has been rescheduled! January 30 is the new date for the meeting that was cancelled in September due to Hurricane Irma. We are asking everyone who is planning on attending to register, even if you had registered for the September meeting.



Rev. Jason Micheli, Executive Pastor at Aldersgate UMC in Alexandria, VA will join us for our time together and share his experiences after being diagnosed with a rare form of bone Cancer. He is also the author of *Cancer is Funny: Keeping Faith in Stage-Serious Chemo*.

[Click HERE](#) to register.

All Full-time clergy serving in the local church are expected to attend. Please make this time together a priority in your schedule. If you absolutely cannot make it due to a previous commitment, please call Dr. Bob Bushong to request to be excused.

Lay Servant Ministries News

Dear Lay Servants,

We pray this finds you well. What a year. Our ministry enjoyed exciting training events.

To our teachers, our District Staff, and you, our dedicated Lay Servants; we send you our heartfelt appreciation. Best wishes for a happy Christmas and the promise of a wonderful New Year.

Blessed to serve alongside you,
Lynn & Jim



A Message from Kim & Melanie Lee, District Lay Leaders



The Greatest Gift: Caring for a Soul

At Christmas time, our hearts yearn to share the love that poured down from heaven the night the angels heralded the birth of our Savior. Family caregivers reflect that kind of love every day, not just at Christmas. In our own family, Kim and I are witnessing a parallel unveiling of the love of Jesus by two women caring for their ailing mothers. Kathryn (Kim's sister) and Jaynean (Kim's cousin) are living examples of

Christ-filled, faithful daughters, and their stories inspire us.

Kathryn lives with her family in Minneapolis near her mother, Elizabeth. For many years now, Elizabeth has been suffering from declining health and mental agility. Kathryn manages the miscellany of her mother's daily life, from paying bills to arranging doctor appointments. Her greatest gift to her mother, however, is her loving care of her mom's soul.

Kathryn knows her mother and understands what will bring her joy. Recently, Elizabeth has been in a severe decline, scarcely eating, refusing oxygen, and generally tuning out the world. When Elizabeth seemed excited about seeing Christmas lights, Kathryn jumped into action. She bundled her mom up against the Minnesota cold and wheeled her around the neighborhood to see two huge pines covered in twinkling lights. Elizabeth beamed, which made all the effort worthwhile.

Meanwhile, in North Carolina, Jaynean found her mother, DeLois, on the floor of her home in early November. She had fallen and broken her hip. DeLois has been in the hospital since then, with Jaynean by her side for much of the time. At 94, DeLois's healing has been a slow and painful process, with many hard and scary days. Jaynean, in the same way as Kathryn, has cared for her mom's soul with thoughtful and loving acts of kindness. Most recently, Jaynean brought De a plateful of homemade comfort food to the hospital, creamed eggs on toast with hot coffee, served on gold-trimmed family china with a harvest napkin, just the touches her mom would cherish.

Keep watch for similar stories of inspirational love. They are all around us. In them, we believe, lie the true peace and joy of Christmas.

Loving the Laity,
Melanie and Kim Lee

Send your Lay Action stories to: melaniebushlee@gmail.com

Church and Pastor Annual Profiles

Church Profile - reviewed and updated annually.

These forms are to be reviewed and updated annually by all church SPR Committees and all clergy in the Florida Conference. All church SPR Committees must update online annually and may begin on December 11, 2017. The Church Profile deadline requires it be completed online no later than one week prior to the pastor's DS consultation if they are having one.



Pastor Profile - reviewed and updated annually.

All pastors must update online annually and may begin on December 11, 2017. The Pastor Profile deadline requires it to be completed online no later than one week prior to the DS consultation. All clergy will be required to update all information this year with the transition to the Ezra platform. Though you may not anticipate a move, it is important that both the Pastor Profile and Church Profile be current and up to date at the first appointment-making session of the Cabinet. The reports should be an honest reflection of the pastoral ministry and the profile of the church.

[Click HERE](#) for the detailed instructions for accessing both profiles. Follow the step by step instructions to access the appropriate profile. The final date to update Profiles is January 31, 2018.

2017 Connectional Giving Deadline Information



Apportionment payments for 2017 must be received in the lockbox at Regions Bank or paid on line by Friday, January 12, 2018. This is not a postmarked by date, but is the last day by which monies must be received in the Conference or our bank lockbox to be included in 2017 apportionments receipts. Any payments received after that date will be applied to 2018 apportionments. Any payments received between January 1 and January 12 must be clearly marked as to which year they are to be applied.

[Click HERE](#) to access the Remittance Report on the Conference website.

To be considered a 100% connectional church in the Florida Annual Conference Journal, 100% of 2017 apportionments must be received by January 12, 2018, and all outstanding Ministry Protection and Health and Benefits obligations must be received by December 31, 2017.

Around the Conference

Update of FLUMC response to Hurricane Irma

As you know Hurricane Irma was massive. You can see it in the photo. But that is not the end of the story.

Over the last 60 days there has been an outpouring of relief work by many of you and the people with whom you work. Thank you for what you did in Christ's name all across Florida! We at the Conference have been gearing up for a long-term response. Here are some important facts about the damage and where we are:



- * There have been 2.7 million FEMA registrations. This is the most ever in any one state following a disaster. This represents more than a third of the state's households.
- * There were 254 insurance claims filed by United Methodist Churches in Florida (40% of our churches).

This storm was very big.
But We Are Bigger!

- * UMCOR, our connectional United Methodist Disaster Response organization, just awarded us our first grant for \$1 million to get our Recovery work up and going.
- * With this money, our Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, Pam Garrison, and her team are beginning to hire for the long-term disaster recovery. There will be 5 sites across Florida:

- The Florida Keys
- Naples
- Central Florida
- Tampa Bay area (which will incorporate the ongoing work following Hurricane Hermine)
- Jacksonville Area (which will incorporate the ongoing work following Hurricane Matthew)

- * For the next five years, we anticipate we will be hosting construction volunteer teams of 300 - 400 per month who will help with the rebuilding for uninsured and under-insured homeowners with an additional 100 volunteers per month who will assist in hospitality, meals, housing, etc. This work will start in January.
- * A group organized in the East Central District is coordinating a hospitality response for students and their families immigrating from Puerto Rico since their schools will not be opened this year following Hurricane Maria. [Click HERE](#) to donate online and help our brothers & sisters from Puerto Rico. An UMCOR grant is in the works to aid in this work.
- * We have a goal to supplement the grants that UMCOR will give us by raising an additional 4 to 5 million through individual donations and grants to help local churches and the communities that surround them.

There are many of you who have jumped in to help with getting this effort up and running.

The Bishop has requested that all Florida United Methodist Churches take up a Christmas Eve offering for the Hurricane Irma Relief Fund.

Donate [here](#) to the Florida Conference Hurricane Irma Fund to help churches and the neighborhoods that surround them. [Volunteer](#) to bring yourself or a team to help with the recovery. Together, with God, we are bigger!

#flumcWeAreBigger

#pictureAdvent

How do you #pictureAdvent?

Join Christians around the world as we all celebrate **Advent**, the season when we prepare our hearts, minds and souls for the coming of Christ!

This year, let's be sure we don't rush through this special season straight to Christmas. Advent is a special time, and LECFamily want to help you make it a special experience for yourself, your family, and your church. Here are a few ways to make this Advent season one to remember:

#pictureAdvent Photo-a-Day

We want to share our Advent celebration with all our friends and family, so we're inviting you to use each day's theme to inspire a daily photo. Post each day with the theme and #pictureAdvent so we can all be inspired together! [Click HERE](#) for more ideas and resources from the LECFamily.

#PICTUREADVENT
PHOTO CHALLENGE

Take a photo each day during Advent & share to your social media platform of choice with #pictureAdvent!

Dec. 3 / Awaken / Mark 13:33-37
 Dec. 4 / Comfort / Isaiah 40:1-4
 Dec. 5 / Plants / Isaiah 40:5-8
 Dec. 6 / Sheep / Isaiah 40:9-11
 Dec. 7 / Faithful / Psalm 85:8-13
 Dec. 8 / Wait / 2 Peter 3:13-15a
 Dec. 9 / Messenger / Mark 1:1-3
 Dec. 10 / Water / Mark 1:4-8
 Dec. 11 / Tree / Isaiah 61:1-4
 Dec. 12 / Garden / Isaiah 61:8-11
 Dec. 13 / Change / Psalm 126
 Dec. 14 / Rejoice / 1 Thess. 5:16-24

Dec. 15 / Light / John 1:6-8
 Dec. 16 / Name / John 1:19-22
 Dec. 17 / Baptism / John 1:23-28
 Dec. 18 / Home / 2 Samuel 7:8-11
 Dec. 19 / Love / Psalm 89:1-4
 Dec. 20 / Blessed / Luke 1:46-48
 Dec. 21 / Generations / Luke 1:49-55
 Dec. 22 / Good News / Rom. 16: 25-27
 Dec. 23 / Promise / Luke 1:26-30
 Dec. 24 / Child / Luke 1:31-38
 Dec. 25 / Holy Family / Luke 2:1-14

Sign up for daily devotions at
WWW.PICTUREADVENT.COM

LECFamily
Rio Texas CONFERENCE
International Discipleship

Register Now: Florida 5-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation Retreat

March 11-16, 2018; Life Enrichment Center at Fruitland Park

Themes: Seeking Sabbath and Sabbath Keeping
Instructors:
 Marjorie Thompson and Rabbi David Horowitz

This 5-Day Retreat is . . .

* For lay and clergy persons of all denominations who hunger for spiritual growth.

* A time to rest, relax, reflect and renew the body, mind, and soul.

* A time for learning new ways to deepen our relationship with God and to live as faithful servant of God's love in the world.

* A time for sharing morning and night prayers, evening Eucharist and silence all of which sets the rhythm of the week.

Seeking Sabbath invites us to find an oasis that provides refreshment for the body, mind and soul. And in **Sabbath Keeping** we discover the wisdom of stillness and rhythms to make it become a reality to be embraced and not become another duty to perform. Having a fresh new vision of what God invites us to do brings us into alignment with His intention for our time of rest.



For more information, log onto: <http://www.flumc.org/fivedayacademy>

For a detailed brochure, [click HERE](#). Registration and payment can be made through the Florida Conference website at: <https://florida-reg.brtaapp.com/2018SF5DayAcademy>

Pastoral Internship for 2018



Are there young adults in your church who want to explore pastoral ministry? If so, please [Click HERE](#) for the Summer Internship Application to give them.

Do you serve a church committed to shaping the next generation of pastoral leaders? If so, please sponsor a Summer Pastoral Intern for 2018!

Here are the quick facts for hosting an Intern:

Internship Dates:

Monday, May 28, 2018, through Friday, August 3, 2018

Intern Training Day:

Friday, May 25, 2018 (students and supervising pastors)

Intern Reflection Day:

Monday, August 6, 2018 (students only)

Hours:

30 hours/week as scheduled with supervising pastor

Housing:

Provided in congregant's home, if needed

Salary: \$3,500 (\$1,500 host site, \$1,500 Office of Clergy Excellence, plus an additional \$500 from the Office of Clergy Excellence **IF** the Intern attends both the Orientation and Reflection Days)

[Click HERE](#) for the Summer Intern Program Description.

If interested, please email or mail an intern job description for your church. Contact the Office of Clergy Excellence if you have any questions about the program.

Holly Finley hfinley@flumc.org

Rev. Sara McKinley sara.mckinley@flumc.org

Warren W. Willis Retreats

Warren W. Willis is not just for Summer Camp...although that is an amazing time! Click on any of the following links for information on the wonderful programs you and your church can attend.

[Clergy Kids](#): Jan. 12-14, 2018

[Confirmation Retreat](#):

Feb. 16-18; Mar. 2-4; Mar. 16-18; Oct. 5-7

[College Connection](#): Jan. 26-28, 2018

[Connect](#): Oct. 19-21, 2018; Nov. 9-11, 2018

[Created By God](#): April 20-22, 2018

[DARE to Lead](#): Feb. 16-18, 2018

[Plan Your Own Church Retreat](#): Who doesn't love WWW? Why not plan your own retreat?



Easter Pilgrimage to Italy with Bishop Carter: April 2018



Led by Bishop Carter, travelers will visit Venice, Assisi, Siena, Florence and Rome while studying the Gospel of Mark and the legacy of Peter during April 3-12, 2018.

From Bishop Carter: "We will learn more about the gospel of Mark in Venice and the legacy of Peter; we will read the dialogues of Catherine of Sienna and the meditations of Dante; and we will reflect on the renewing vision given to Francis of Assisi," and more.

For more information, a brochure with a detailed itinerary and online registration, [click HERE](#).

District Calendar of Events

[Click Here for a Printable Calendar](#)

December 2017

December 11: Clergy Retiree Christmas Luncheon - District Parsonage

December 21: dCOM 9:00am-4:00pm Asbury UMC, Maitland (materials due Nov. 30)

December 25: Christmas Day - Conference and District Offices Closed

2018

January 2018

January 12 -13: Candidacy Retreat

January 27: UMW Leadership Training - First UMC, Winger Garden 9:30am - 12:30pm

January 30: Fall Clergy Meeting - Asbury UMC, Maitland

February 2018

February 3: Called to Serve - First UMC, Oviedo

February 22-23: Missio Ecclesia - First UMC, Lakeland

March 2018

March 17: UMW Spring Day Apart - Grace UMC, Lake Mary 9:30am - 2:30pm

April 2018

April 12: Local Church AA Training - Asbury UMC, Maitland

April 26: dCOM 9:00am-4:00pm Asbury UMC, Maitland (materials due March 28)

May 2018

May 17: dCOM 9:00am-4:00pm Asbury UMC, Maitland (materials due April 19)

May 18-20: UMW Assembly - Columbus, Ohio

June 2018

June 7 - 9: Annual Conference - Florida Southern College, Lakeland

July 2018

July 11-15: Mission U - Bethune Cookman University, Daytona Beach

July 13 - 14: Candidacy Retreat

August 2018

August 23: dCOM 9:00am-4:00pm Asbury UMC, Maitland (materials due July 26)

September 2018

September 22 or 29: UMW Mission Study Sampler - Need a Host Church

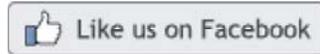
October 2018

October 18: dCOM 9:00am-4:00pm Asbury UMC, Maitland
(materials due Sept 20) LPRs only

October 20: UMW Annual Meeting - First UMC, Oviedo

December 2018

December 20: dCOM 9:00am-4:00pm Asbury UMC, Maitland (materials due Nov. 22)



East Central District, (407) 636-9240, Office Hours: Mon-Thu 9-4, Fri 9-2,
2221 Lee Road, Suite 21, Winter Park, FL 32789

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