



**Sycamore**  
United Methodist Church  
Growing Disciples Who Make A Difference

# Sycamore News



The Newsletter of Sycamore United Methodist Church | December 2011



**The Live Nativity** is Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 6pm-8pm. Invite your friends, neighbors, co-workers and family to join us in remembering the holy night when Jesus was born through this reenactment of the nativity. Plus, we have a night of festivities planned that includes Christmas music, ornament making, and dinner for the crowd.

We need volunteers for 1 hour shifts to play roles in the Nativity (9 roles per shift). Children can participate as angels or shepherds. Also, we need volunteers to bring chili, cornbread, cookies, and brownies. The Evangelism Committee will provide hot chocolate and tea. *Please use your green sheets or call Nancy to sign up and make sure you specify what you plan to do for this event.*

## Sycamore United Methodist Church

9710 Old Stage Road  
Prince George, VA 23875  
sycamoreumc.com

Office Phone: 804. 541.1181

Rev. Bert Cloud, Pastor  
Mobile: 804.347.9567 | [pastorbert@sycamoreumc.com](mailto:pastorbert@sycamoreumc.com)  
[notesalongtheway.com](http://notesalongtheway.com)

### Worship Services:

Sunday 8:45 AM---Traditional  
Sunday 11:15 AM--- Contemporary

### Sunday School:

10:15 am

## Advent and Christmas Schedule

12/7, 14, 21 – 7 pm – Advent study

12/12 – 6 – 8 pm Live Nativity

12/18 – 8: 45 am – Christmas Cantata  
8 pm Sycamore will also host a free movie night showing The Nativity.

12/20 – 7:00 pm Sycamore Christmas Extravaganza of Children

12/21 – 6 pm We'll have a special service of prayer, communion, and hope for those who grieve or are living with illness or loss.

12/24 – 7:00 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

12/25 – 10:00 am Come celebrate our first "come as you are Christmas" with a special service of bluegrass music and Christmas stories.

**Join us and bring a friend or two.**

**Free Gift!** Please pick up your free gift but please 're-gift' it by giving it away to someone you would like to invite to Sycamore and to a relationship with God. Gift packets are located at the front door where you picked up your bulletin and on the hallway mission table. Packets include a New Testament, a bookmark card about Sycamore, a schedule of our Advent/Christmas events, and a card where you can jot down a personal note. All of this is wrapped up in a convenient door hanger bag that you can leave with someone if they are not at home. Go, spread the good news this Christmas.



## Angel Tree

The angel tree is for 6 children in Prince George that go to school at North. It is one family that consists of brothers, sisters, and cousins.

Please take time to pick up something on the tree in the narthex and have it back to us wrapped or unwrapped with the tag attached to the present **by 12/14** so we can get it to the family.

Also, if you would like to pick up items for the stockings and bring them, check out the \$1 section of the store: candy, card games, toy cars, etc. If you are unable to get out and pick something but would like to help, please contact Sarah Williams (458-7794) with what you are willing to give.

Thank you for your generosity!



**Hands raised in thanks to God and in contact with our building as participants bless our church expansion in a special service on November 27<sup>th</sup>.**

## Growing As Disciples...

**Advent Study continues on Wednesdays before Christmas.** Join Pastor Bert for this 4 week experience with The Journey based on the book by pastor and best selling author Adam Hamilton. This is a “drop-in class”, so you don’t have to attend the earlier sessions to participate. Using historical information, archaeological data, and a personal look at some of the stories surrounding the birth, the most amazing moment in history will become more real and heart-felt as you walk

along this road. We will gather every Wednesday night in Advent at 7pm.

### **An Advent Prayer**

by Pamela C. Hawkins

May God’s Gracious Presence

wrap around and protect you.

May the promise of the holy Christ child  
forever rest in the curve of your life.

May the sweet, fearless song of the Holy Spirit  
sing you to sleep

and waken you in Advent dawns.

May you, and those you love and serve,

expect the good news, Immanuel, God-With-Us.

Amen.

*Pam C. Hawkins, author of Behold!, shares additional reflections for the season on this years Advent blog from Upper Room Books. Visit these reflections at [upperroomadventstudy.wordpress.com](http://upperroomadventstudy.wordpress.com).*

### **The Meaning of the Christmas Wreath**

by Holly Gerth



Every Christmas wreath is more than just a

decoration...it’s a special reminder of Jesus, the reason for our celebration.

The circle of a Christmas wreath is a never-ending ring, a reminder of eternal love from our Lord and King.

The Christmas wreath is a sign of welcome, inviting all to enter in...a reminder of Christ’s invitation for all to come to Him.

The middle of a Christmas wreath is a bare and empty space, a reminder of what life would be without Christ’s love and grace.

So each time you see a Christmas wreath hanging from a door, may your heart rejoice in the One that Christmas is truly for!

*Thanks to Betty Lucy for submitting this article.*

## Wow!

By Pastor Bert Cloud

As Nancy and I add the final touches to this month’s newsletter, I am struck by how much we have happening in this short month. Parades, nativity festivals, children’s program, classes, special services and even more will make this a really exciting and very active month.

This can be a bit dangerous, though. Let's be sure to take the time to lighten up, to laugh, to pray, to hope, to play, to reconcile our past and dream for the future, to open ourselves up to the anticipated coming of the very Son of God. "Behold, I bring you good news!" the angels say to us even in the stress and hurry of 21<sup>st</sup> - century central Virginia.

May God richly bless us as we look for his coming.  
Prepare the way for the Lord!

Join in the conversation by visiting Pastor Bert's blog, [notesalongtheway.com](http://notesalongtheway.com). You can also contact Pastor Bert at 804.347.9567, or by email at [pastorbert@sycamoreumc.com](mailto:pastorbert@sycamoreumc.com),

### Worship News

As many have already heard, Quinton Parker has resigned and will leave at the end of the month. Quinton has served as a wonderful musician, choir director, and worship leader, and he has blessed us with his musical talent and gift for teaching. Quinton and Debra have been a wonderful part of our church and we will miss them greatly. Plans are in the works for wishing them farewell and will be announced later.

Sycamore's Worship Committee and Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) are working to recruit new leadership for our music program. We are also working to plan for the future of both services and how we might meet the needs of our church and community. If you have thoughts, hopes, or ideas about the services or the music ministry, please contact Bob Clark or Pastor Bert. Look for more details and additional announcements.

## Making A Difference...

### Sycamore Hosts Training to Make a Difference in the Aftermath of A Disaster (*rescheduled*)

A one-day UMCOR Early Response Team (ERT) certification training course will be held at Sycamore United Methodist Church, 9710 Old Stage Road,

Prince George, 23875 on **Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012 from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m.**

The course will be taught by an authorized UMCOR trainer. Topics at training include the who, what, where, when, and how of disaster response ministry, as well as hands-on experience with specific tasks of early responders. The mission of an Early Response Team is to provide a caring presence in the aftermath of a disaster. Teams work within very specific guidelines to be productive and caring while causing no further harm or being a burden to the affected community.

Registration fee is \$55, which covers the cost of a mandatory background check, class materials, snacks, drinks, and lunch. Payment is due on the day of training. You may register by emailing Becky Paxton at [JamesRiverDistrict@vaumc.org](mailto:JamesRiverDistrict@vaumc.org) or Nancy Chesser at [secretary@sycamoreumc.com](mailto:secretary@sycamoreumc.com). When e-mailing please include all of the following: name, address, home phone number, cell phone number, the name of your home church and district, and t-shirt size.

#### An ERT:

- Is NOT a "first responder;" therefore it does not perform search and rescue, nor does it provide emergency medical treatment
- Responds to a local, state, or regional disaster (usually a natural disaster such as a tornado, earthquake, or hurricane)
- Provides a Christian presence to survivors by helping them through the initial phase of their grief and loss
- Is a mission outreach of UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) and UMVIM (United Methodist Volunteers in Mission). The United Methodist Church has a long history of assisting persons affected by disaster. The ERT ministry helps provide organization, certification, and support at the local level, as well as providing a standard protocol for teams to be prepared and ready to deploy.
- Enters an area after it has been reopened to homeowners. Teams stay only three days.

#### What does an ERT do?

For example, the team can:

- tarp a damaged roof to prevent further damage to a home.
- help a family clean up debris and ruined belongings and move them to the curb
- remove drywall that has been soaked and

mildewed to the point where it can be repaired.

· provides a caring presence in the aftermath of a disaster. However, it does NO "repair" work. That is for later UMVIM or others teams to do.

### **Who can participate?**

Anyone physically capable, male or female, 18 years old and older. There are needs for various types and levels of skills.

Trained persons receive an ERT badge as evidence of training which authorizes them to enter a disaster area and help survivors as part of a team but only after United Methodist leaders in an affected area call for help. (ERTs do not self-deploy.)

### **Bykota**

Sycamore is chartering a MOPS group in 2012. MOPS stands for "mothers of preschoolers" - but don't let that confuse you. MOPS is about meeting the needs of every mom of a child from conception through kindergarten. Whether you're urban, suburban, rural, stay-at-home, working, teen, adoptive, special-needs, single or married, MOPS is for you! Look for more details in the new year.

Remember to bring those coupons in: current or newly-expired. The collection box is in the narthex.

### **Evangelism Team**

**The Live Nativity** is Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 6pm-8pm. We need volunteers for 1 hour shifts to play roles in the Nativity (9 roles per shift). Children can participate as angels or shepherds. Also we have a night of festivities planned that includes Christmas music, ornament making, and dinner for the onlookers. We need volunteers to bring chili, cornbread, cookies and brownies. The Evangelism Committee will provide hot chocolate and tea. *Please use your green sheets to sign up and make sure you specify what you plan to do for this event.*

Susan and Lisa would like to thank everyone on the committee for all their hard work in 2011 and can't wait for next year! We are always open to suggestions; please feel free to let us know of any great ideas you may have or if you would like to join us.

### **United Methodist Women (UMW)**

The UMW will not meet in December; instead we will have a Christmas dinner at Mim's in Hopewell, on December 15, 2011. All are invited. If you would like to attend, the cost is \$17.50 for adults. *Please contact Charlotte Seibert by December 8, 2011 to confirm.*

The Brunswick stew was held on November 12 and all the stew was sold. A bake sale was also held during the stew with proceeds to go to Henry Fork. The Prince George Seniors were fed on November 16 and were given a good basket for the holidays. The Prince George Ruritans were also fed on November 10.

During the month of January, the UMW will be feeding the seniors and Burrowsville.

The next meeting for the UMW will be held on **January 3, 2012** at 7:30 p.m. All women are invited!

### **Around the James River District & Virginia Conference**

The **Second Annual Lay Servant Academy and Lay Speaker Training** will be at Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center on **February 24-26, 2012**

Our Purpose: to create a culture of call by engaging, equipping, and empowering people so that they might effectively partner with each other and their pastors to live out God's call as they lead the church in transforming the world as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the assortment of 18 different choices of the familiar courses found at the Lay Servant Academy, we are offering four new features.

- 24 Mini-Courses in a wide range of specialties and interests that are designed to be appetizers for different topics to be explored by the Laity. Taking 5 classes will count this year towards advanced certification. Anyone interested can take one or more courses just for the interest in the topic. Several courses can be explored at the first class and you can

stay for the full course. For a full weekend you can take up to six classes. This format will also allow Friday and Saturday or Saturday and Sunday participation only. Open to anyone interested in one or more topics.

- To encourage participation and be in support of younger families or parents, there will be child care on site for infants and toddlers staffed by nearby local churches. Include the request before January 20th
- There will be fewer speakers and general sessions. The increased time realized will be used by two different music groups playing three times during the weekend. The increased time will also be utilized for District

Meetings during the day rather than the end of a full day of class work.

- The new course "Understanding Men's Ministry" will be offered for the first time in Virginia as an advanced lay speakers course. And as with all our classes, everyone is invited to attend, not just United Methodist Men. The guidance given in this class is easily transferrable to a person in any leadership role. Open to anyone.

This year we will have the high caliber instructors that you have come to expect at the annual training. We also will feature six top staff members from the Conference Office. Also joining us are key staff members and leaders from four national and international organizations. Participating as lecturers and presenters this weekend are also delegates to the Southeastern Jurisdiction and the General Conference.

Lay Servant Academy Director, David Bailey at [dw.bailey@comcast.net](mailto:dw.bailey@comcast.net) or 804-338-3168

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## **2012 LEADERSHIP TRAINING SESSIONS FARMVILLE & JAMES RIVER DISTRICTS**

**January 22, 2012 at VUMAC, 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm.**

All sessions begin promptly at 2:30 in the classrooms. This year's sessions include Staff Parish Relations Committee, Church Finances: Treasurers' Responsibilities and

Statistics, Rethink Church, Transformational Approaches to Ministry with Young People, Spiritual Formation,

\*\*\*\*\* OR \*\*\*\*\*

You have the opportunity to attend any two of the following sessions at our "Idea Expo". The first session will run from 2:30 – 3:45, followed by a 30 minute break, then the sessions will be repeated from 4:15 – 5:30, allowing you to attend a second session after the break.

Conspiracy of Kindness: A Refreshing New Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus, led by the Rev. Robb Almy. Bible Study 101 For Small Groups, led by Mrs. Carol Sanger. "

Online Social Networking and Blogging for Today's Church, led by The Rev. Stan Hargraves.

VIM 101, led by Mr. Glenn Rowley.

A Future With Hope, led by the Rev. and Mrs. Mike Davis.

Fabric Arts as Mission and Ministry, led by Mrs. Joyce Skeens.

Converting a Congregation's Financial Assets into Tomorrow's Dreams: Gifts that transform lives to the glory and honor of God, led by Mr. Deal Tompkins.

Converting Today's Challenges into Tomorrow's Opportunities: A Comprehensive Approach to Fundraising, led by Mr. Deal Tompkins.

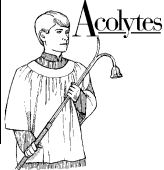
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### **Assembly Center News**

The Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center is now doing business as "Blackstone Conference & Retreat Center". Only the familiar name has changed but all other aspects of VUMAC remain the same.

**The Acorn:** We've named the bookstore/coffee shop! Reaching back to our roots, the acorn was associated with both BFI and BCG and therefore it's just seems right to name this new center "The Acorn". If you're in the area, I hope you'll make the effort to come by in January to spend some time and get acquainted with the books, coffee, snacks, gifts, and our friendly staff.

**Evening at Blackstone:** YES, we are having our Evening at Blackstone again this year. I do hope you'll mark the calendar for **December 11, 2011** and join us for the open house, dinner, entertainment, lodging Sunday night and a home-cooked breakfast in the morning. Featured entertainment includes "Star of Wonder", with the Youth of Crenshaw UMC, and "Crystal Concert", featuring Dean Shostak, followed with a reception and caroling.



**Acolytes Serving in December**

- December 4<sup>th</sup> – Michaela Williams
- December 11<sup>th</sup> – Trae Cloud
- December 18<sup>th</sup> – Danielle Cloud
- December 25<sup>th</sup> – Angelica Martinez

**December Birthdays**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Cindy King
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Carolyn Cregar
- 4<sup>th</sup> Hartley Gross
- 5<sup>th</sup> Aiden England
- 7<sup>th</sup> Danny Stables
- 8<sup>th</sup> Ethel Blankenship
- 9<sup>th</sup> Lane Peade
- 11<sup>th</sup> Alyssa & Gavin Avery
- 15<sup>th</sup> Mary Elder & Tara Muller Jones
- 18<sup>th</sup> Charlotte Garrett
- 19<sup>th</sup> Loretta Moneymaker
- 21<sup>st</sup> Cliff Fine
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Carol Crawford
- 25<sup>th</sup> Mary Jane Murphy
- 26<sup>th</sup> Darron England
- 28<sup>th</sup> Jeremiah Mulkey

**December Anniversaries**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Fred & Barbara Simmons
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Gary & Debbie Baker
- 30<sup>th</sup> Gene & Faith Longfield

**Make Use of Our Prayer List**

Thanks to all who have subscribed to the various ways we communicate at Sycamore. Nancy has been working hard to get it all worked out, but we are still taking new subscriptions and changes. You can do so by using our convenient green sheets on Sunday, or calling Nancy at the church office.

Email Prayer requests need to be sent to: [prayer@sycamoreumc.com](mailto:prayer@sycamoreumc.com).

You can also find a link to submit prayer requests by clicking the "Prayer request link" on our webpage. [sycamoreumc.com](http://sycamoreumc.com). Please do not use the sycamorepg@[yahoo.com](mailto:sycamorepg@yahoo.com) from this point forward.



**Prevent Conflicts!  
Get it On The Calendar**

If you would like to schedule a meeting or other event at the church, please make sure to check the church calendar (bulletin board and online), and call the church secretary, Nancy, to ensure it is put on the calendars.

**Upcoming Events**

- 12/5 – 6:00 pm Practice for Christmas program
- 12/7 – 7:00 pm Advent study (#2)  
7:30 pm UMM
- 12/12 – 6-8 pm Live Nativity @ Sycamore**
- 12/14 – 7:00 pm Advent study (#3)
- 12/15 – 7:00 pm Christmas dinner @ Mim's
- 12/18 – 8:00 pm "The Nativity" movie
- 12/19 – 6:00 pm Practice for Christmas program
- 12/20 – 7:00 pm Children's Christmas Extravaganza**
- 12/21 – 6:00 pm Service of Hope & Remembering  
7:00 pm Advent study (#4)
- 12/24 – 7:00 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve service**
- 12/25 – 10:00 am "Come As You Are" Christmas service** (no Sunday school today)

*Merry Christmas to all!!*

[Remember to e-mail items for the next newsletter to Nancy Chesser at secretary@sycamoreumc.com by Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>.](#)



