

This Week @ Good Shepherd

11-27-20

What Are You Thankful For?

As I thought about Thanksgiving, I was reminded of what I had to do without this year. Sorry, no extended family gathering with about forty people there. I volunteered to be there having just finished up COVID. But, I couldn't get any of my other relatives to agree to come. So, I couldn't eat my sister's pecan pie, my aunt's noodles, my cousin's favorite salad, etc. It was a Thanksgiving of deprivation!

Then I remembered something I experience a few years ago. I was leading a mission team to Nicaragua in Central America. We were going to be in ministry with a small Methodist church in a suburb of Managua, the nation's capital city. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the western hemisphere just behind Haiti.

Nicaragua had seen not simply decades, but untold centuries of brutality and oppression. In the past few decades there was the Somoza family dictatorship. These "strong men" ruled viciously. They had a favorite place for the dissidents in their society that objected to the Somozas—a pit next to the presidential palace with lions and bears into which troublemakers were thrown.

A Marxist rebel movement developed to fight the Somozas. Eventually they drove the Somozas out of power by force. Then, the new bosses started to look like the old bosses according to the Nicaraguans. The new bosses talked a good line, but failed to deliver.

Another set of rebels developed to fight the first set. Years of bloodshed ensued. I was talking to a couple of guys who were part of the second rebel group. They said to me, "Here in Nicaragua we got to the point that we enjoyed killing each other." That was truly painful to hear.

The suburb we ministered in was basically a long area of shanties that ran near Lake Managua. People lived in sheds made of tin, wood, cardboard, and concrete. We cooked food for about forty to fifty children over a small fire pit. When I gave a plate of food to one of these kids, sometimes the child would pick it up and run home. The child would return in a few minutes with an empty plate.

There was a mother there at the gatherings with a child that clearly had major health problems. She would try to nurse this child. There was barely a response from the child. There was no health care available. Certainly there was none that could meet the child's needs.

There was the joy of worshiping as Christians together. We worshiped in different languages in a "church building," or rather a shed without windows and doors and a makeshift tin roof. The temperature was high. The humidity was higher. Sorry, no air conditioning and no electricity. But, worship together as brothers and sisters in Christ we did.

Yes, I came back with some form of infection or something on my upper body. Of course, I had a doctor to go to when I got back to Oklahoma. He gave me antibiotics and cortisone cream. It went away. But, I'd guess that, if I was Nicaraguan, I might still have it.

Do you have anything to be thankful for? Gratitude is a wonderful blessing. Ingratitude is not good, spiritually and otherwise. Do you have anything to be thankful for this year? Is there a way that you can express your gratitude to God during Thanksgiving and Christmas?

Encouragements

Ways You Can Serve God by Worship Through Good Shepherd

This week Good Shepherd starts a new sermon series for Advent and Christmas entitled "[The Birth of the Savior](#)."

New ***Worship online*** will be available each week at umcgs.org on Sunday morning.

On Sunday, December 6th Good Shepherd will begin offering an additional form of weekly online worship. Our weekly online worship in a modern form will be called “Good Shepherd Worship.” We will add a new online worship service, “**Good Shepherd Classic Worship.**” Both will be available online each week.

Worship In-Person is also available to you each week at 10 a.m. in Good Shepherd’s Christian Life Center. There will be live music at in-person worship. The message in-person will be by Pastor Michael.

Worship Through Your Offerings is a part of the Christian life. Below are listed three ways that worship offerings can be made this week.

1) you can **mail your worship offerings** by check to the church at: 10928 S.W. 15th, Yukon, Ok. 73099. For ease of routing, put “attn: Misha” on the envelope.

2) you can **give your worship offerings electronically** by going to Good Shepherd’s website at umcgs.org. As you scroll down the page, you will see the “Give” button. By clicking the “Give” button, you will be sent to our giving portal operated by ShelbyNext Giving.

Once in the Giving portal, you will see “My Donation.” Under “Fund” is a drop down menu entitled “Choose a Fund.” You can donate to the general fund of the church either through pledged or unpledged choices. The General Fund is the main fund used for the work of ministry through Good Shepherd. Check the “Make this gift recurring” if you wish to set up recurring giving. You will also see “+ Add Donation.” Through “+ Add Donation” you can donate to a number of special ministries.

3) You can give your worship offerings **in-person at one of the offering boxes** at our Sunday in-person worship. The offering boxes are located at the entry and exit.

Ways You Can Celebrate the Christmas Season at Good Shepherd

During Advent and Christmas several events will happen at Good Shepherd. Here is a partial listing:

!!! Note the Change of Date!!!

Celebration of Lights At Good Shepherd

December 6 @ 6 p.m., front lawn

At this outdoor event you are invited to gather together in-person as God’s people to dedicate our church’s outdoor lights and celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season with the lighting of those lights.

Children’s Christmas Program

December 6th in worship

Annually our Children’s Ministry develops a children’s Christmas program to be presented on the first Sunday of December during worship. This year is no different. Our Children’s Ministry will present a Christmas program by video during worship on Sunday, December 6th.

Choir’s Service of Lessons and Carols

Dec. 20 in Classic Worship online

Annually our Good Shepherd Choir presents a Christmas Cantata in December. This year the Choir will continue that tradition with a Service of Carols and Readings during worship on Sunday, December 20th. The Choir is preparing a service of carols and readings by video to be presented that day.

Community Christmas Celebration

December 20, 3:30-5 pm, front lawn

At this outdoor event Good Shepherd will share the joy of Christmas with not only our church family, but also the community during this afternoon celebration.

Christmas Eve Worship

Monday, December 22nd Service of Hope @ 7 p.m. in sanctuary with masks & socially distanced seating

Tuesday, December 23rd Early Christmas Eve @ 7 p.m. in CLC with masks & socially distanced seating

Christmas Eve, December 24

In-person, Inside Dec. 24 @ 3 p.m. in CLC
with masks & socially distanced seating; harpist playing

“Shepherd’s” Service Dec. 24 @ 6 pm
on church’s south lawn, *weather permitting*
fire ring outside; s’mores kits given out, *but* bring your
own skewers; persons in shepherd costumes,
Christmas Eve worship outdoors by the fire ring!

“Look to the Stars” service Dec. 24 @ 8 pm
on church’s south lawn, *weather permitting*
fire ring outside; persons in angel costumes;
astronomy equipment to look at the stars near the pergola
Christmas Eve worship outdoors by the fire ring!

Ways You Can Serve God by Serving Others Through Good Shepherd

**** Good Shepherd’s Angel Tree Ministry** will be reaching out to provide Christmas for 47 children who have a parent who is incarcerated. You are invited to help in this ministry. There are three ways that you can volunteer to help:

- 1) buy a Christmas gift for one of the children,
- 2) make a homemade dessert to be taken to the child’s family,
- 3) volunteer to deliver the gifts and dessert.

**** Good Shepherd’s Red Shield Diner Ministry** regularly provides a meal for the homeless and others who are in need at the Salvation Army homeless shelter. Good Shepherd will provide a meal for about 200 men, women and children on Saturday, December 12th. Due to the pandemic we will not be allowed to enter and serve the meal. There are three ways that you can volunteer to help:

- 1) provide funds for the purchase of supplies and preparation of the meal. One way to do that is through Good Shepherd’s online giving portal. Another is by sending a check designated on the memo line for the Red Shield Diner,
- 2) make a homemade dessert to be taken to the meal,
- 3) help transport the meal to the center.

**** Good Shepherd’s Christmas Stockings for the Homeless.** There is also another way that you can help the homeless at Christmas. Good Shepherd will be providing Christmas stockings filled with goodies as a Christmas gift to 200 homeless persons. These stockings will go to men, women and children. Twenty-five will be for children. This will probably be the only Christmas gift these folks receive. Ways you can help are:

- 1) donate regular sized Christmas stockings,
- 2) donate items to be placed in the stockings,

3) be a stocking stuffer.

An Invitation to You to Help!

You are invited to help make a Christian difference in the world through these Outreach ministries. Please send an email to Jamie Ruston, Good Shepherd's church secretary, at office@umcgs.org. In your email tell Jamie how you would like to help. Jamie will forward your email to the person(s) handling that area. They will be in contact with you about opportunities to help. If you don't do email, you can also simply call the church office at 324-1900 to volunteer.

Ways You Can Draw Closer to God and Others Through Good Shepherd

You are invited to be part of one of these Advent small groups beginning the week of Nov. 29th. The sessions below will be on Zoom.

“Because of Bethlehem: Love is Born, Hope is Here” by Max Lucado – What's the big deal about the baby in the manger? The answer is hope. Christmas begins what we celebrate at Easter. Because of Bethlehem, we have a friend and savior in heaven.

- Sundays at 8:30 a.m. led by Alan Childers
- Mondays at 7:00 p.m. led by Cathy Childers

“Finding Bethlehem in the Midst of Bedlam” by James W. Moore - Christmas or confusion, Bethlehem or bedlam . . . Which will you choose this year? The truth is, we don't have to choose, because Christmas always happens right in the midst of our chaos.

- Sundays at 7:00 p.m. led by Pastor Charlotte Teel

“The Christmas Experience” by Kyle Idleman - Come find yourself in the Christmas story and discover how what happened then changes everything now.

- Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. led by Pastor Michael Burkett

“The Adventure of Jesus” – this is a devotion time focused on the journey of Jesus from birth through adulthood. As we experience the light of God shining brightly through him, we will ponder what this means to us today. Devotional readings come from the book titled, “We Make the Road by Walking” by Brian D. McLaren.

- Mondays at 2:30 p.m. OR Wednesdays at 7 p.m. . . . led by Cathy Childers

How To Become Part of One of These Groups:

To join one of these small groups, click the link below:

<https://forms.ministryforms.net/viewForm.aspx?formId=5adebeb4-5465-454c-9569-f9186f3e1e46>

You can also register by calling Jamie Ruston, our church secretary, at 324-1900. Zoom links and information about the class will be sent to those who join a group.

Do you have anything to be thankful for this Thanksgiving and Christmas season? How has God blessed you?

Michael Burkett, Lead Pastor