

The a cappella ensemble, Pentatonix, has a Christmas album, *That's Christmas to Me*. Sierra Vocal Arts will be singing the title song in its Christmas concert on Dec. 6. It lists a number of meanings of Christmas, and as I rehearsed the song, I wondered what I would list as being Christmas to me. I limited myself to only three. I guess one could prioritize the whole list, but the first three should be what is most important. What is "Christmas" to you? Is it the decorations in the house; a Christmas tree; the colorful lights and displays on houses and in yards; sending and receiving Christmas cards; gathering of family and friends for meals or parties; religious and/or secular songs of the season; Christmas and holiday stories, videos and TV shows; giving and receiving of presents; the winter chill and glowing fireplace; eggnog, fudge and candies? Stop read-

That's Christmas to me (Editorial)

ing right now and actually list three that mean Christmas to you, before you are influenced by my list.

Here's my list. The music of Christmas, especially the carols, old and new, is top of my list. I was in a choir once that began Christmas songs in August, and I loved it. I also love sending Christmas cards and print out my own cards with themed prose. Being part of a church family in Advent season is the third. Being with all of you each Sunday, with the beauty of the sanctuary, the excitement of the children, to hear the gospel story, sing our favorite carols, share our joys and concerns, and visit with each other during the coffee hour after the service.

I have a Christmas CD by Evie, *Christmas Memories*, that has a

song about a little shepherd boy in a manger creche on the mantle. In the bustle of decorating the house, he got moved further from the manger and the child, and he sings "Move me closer, move me closer, move me closer to the child. Let me see Him, let me take his hand, move me closer to the child." This is Christmas to me, a chance to get closer to Jesus, to his birth, his youth, his teaching, his love and forgiveness. I hope we can all move 'closer' to the child this season and see what he has done for us and can do for us in the coming year.

Paulette McFarlin

Editor of the Christian Messenger and music coordinator.



Mark Your Calendar DECEMBER

- Dec 3 - Clothes Closet
- Dec 6 - SVAE Concert
- Dec 10 - UMW meeting
- Dec 11 - Monache Concert
- Dec 12 - Toys for Tots
- Dec 17 - Community Food Bank
- Dec 20 - Children's Program
- Dec 24 - Christmas Eve



Pastor's Corner

Are you ready for Christmas?

Every year, just before Christmas, it seems I am asked that question. It's a loaded question, but I know what it means. Have you finished your gift shopping? Has everyone in your list been checked off? Have you gotten all the Christmas bins out of the rafters and decorated your Christmas tree and put lights outside (in a perfect world that would be done the day after Thanksgiving)? Have you finished baking the pies and cookies for Christmas day? Have you sent out Christmas cards? And as a pastor, there's more: have you planned out the entire Advent season including the Christmas Eve service?

If you are like me, something always has to give. Cards weren't sent out, or decorations weren't put up outside, or gifts were bought late on Christmas Eve. It's a rush

to do it all. Either it is the thrill of victory that everything was accomplished, or the agony of defeat for the perfectionist that sees that once again I could not do it all.

Are you ready for Christmas? There is still time.

We are still in the season of Advent... of the coming... of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus came, when he was born, Mary and Joseph weren't ready, either. They had nine months to prepare, but they weren't ready! The still took the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem at the last moment, very difficult for a woman ready to give birth any day. They hadn't made reservations at the inn or made plans to stay with a relative. And they certainly weren't prepared for what it meant that Mary's child Jesus would be "*great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end*" (Luke 1:32-33).

So while I think we all enjoy all the sights and sounds of Christmas, the desserts, singing Christmas carols, and seeing the joy of children as they open gifts, we all recognize the only really important thing is that Jesus, the Son of God, came to hu-

mankind. He came humbly, born in a manger, the servant-king come to save us. And he will come again. That is the reason that we are celebrating.

Knowing that, we can prepare spiritually for Christmas Day, celebrating the birth of Christ and all that means for us who call ourselves Christians. We can open our Bibles and read Isaiah 7:14, the beginning of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, we can read a devotion (we have devotional booklets in the sanctuary foyer), light a candle (perhaps from an Advent wreath!), and pray, thanking God for His love, his mercy, and His Son. Don't worry, it's not adding on a new thing to your already busy schedule. It is because of these practices that we are given joy and peace and are able to truly enjoy the season, for we are not focusing on the commercialism of the holiday. It is a reminder of who Christmas is all about – Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was, and is, and shall be forevermore.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor James



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Go to our Website to see if anything new has been added.

www.portervillefirstunitedmethodistchurch.com

Keep in touch

Call the office, make an appointment to see the pastor, come to church on Sunday morning at 11 am, or to Sunday school at 9:30 am. Join the choir to rehearse on Wednesdays at 7 pm. Work with the ladies in the craft class on Wednesday mornings at 9 am. Volunteer to work once a month at the clothing closet, set-

ting up the clothes onto tables, or come in the evening to help. You could also volunteer to work on the Community Food Bank once a month, setting up tables or disbursing food. Come pray with a small group and the pastor on Tuesdays at 10 am. Send cards of encouragement and appreciation and pray for your church family. We need you.

Wednesday night Bible study schedule for December

Dec. 2 - Joe & Tamara Mitchel
Dec. 9 - Wayne & Ann White
Dec. 16 - Del & Joan Pharis
Dec. 23 - No Bible Study
Dec. 30 - No Bible Study

Special date for Clothes Closet for fall

Due to Thanksgiving falling on the fourth Thursday of November, and Christmas Eve on the fourth Thursday of December, a special date is planned for the last Clothes Closet for this year. Thursday, Dec. 3, from 5 -7 pm will be this special date, with set up on Tuesday, Dec. 1.

In 2016, the closet will continue to be held on the fourth Thursday of each month.

Trustee update

The trustees have been working on the parsonage. They found and fixed a leak in the shower and in the sink drain, a burned out breaker, and are now replacing the drywall they had to cut away. Thanks to Dean for his know how, Linda for cleaning up, Bob for strength and willingness to help and Wayne for not being afraid to get in the shower.



Wayne White in the shower.

The Church in action

Ongoing weekly activities

Sunday

9:30 am - Adult Bible Study
11:00 am - Sunday Worship
11:15 am - Children's Sun. Sch.

Tuesday

10:00 am - Morning Watch

Wednesday

9:00 am - Crafts
6:00 pm - Handbell Choir
7:00 pm - Chancel Choir
7:30 pm - Bible Study

Christmas Bazaar a success!

The many attendees of the bazaar helped the UMW make approximate \$4,300 to this date. The rewards of all those hours the women sewed, crocheted, embroidered, glued and painted are realized when they plan what charities to distribute the funds that were raised. They try to donate the proceeds locally or to Methodist missions. Amounts given to each charity will be the discussion at the next meeting on Thursday, Dec. 10, at 12 noon in the Ken Miller Room. These are the charities they are considering: Family Crisis Center, Helping Hands of Porterville, P.A.D.S. Adult Center, Love, Inc., Boys and Girls Club, Red Bird Mission.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

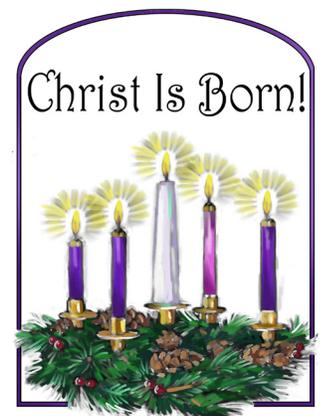
Don't miss the highlight of the Christmas season, the annual Candlelight Christmas Eve Service. It will be Thursday, December 24, 6 pm in the sanctuary. Invite your family and friends to come and take a spiritual journey on Christmas Eve.

Children's Christmas Program Dec. 20 during worship



A great way to get into the Christmas Spirit this season is to attend the Annual Children's Christmas Program on Sunday, December 20, 2015, during Worship Service. Start out Christmas Week with a bang and travel back in time with Donkey and Camel as they tell the Christmas Story. Join our friends as they travel in their own footsteps and bring to life the characters in this age old tale of Christmas.

There will be disagreements, laughs, and maybe even some tears along the way in their quest to prove what the "bestest" part of Christmas is. Don't miss out on this wonderful event. Melody Burkhart is directing this event.



December Birthdays

- 4 - Robert Keck
- 5 - Sandi Pike
- 20 - Carly Ladrikan
- 25 - Jack Vinyard
- 26 - Joy Leah Leach
- 29 - Rev. Don Roulsten
- 29 - Ethan Burkhart



New piano in Ken Miller Room

Jim and David Rauber, sons of Melba Rauber, are donating Melba's Steinway grand piano to Sierra Vocal Arts Ensemble, and they will keep it in the Ken Miller Room. The "Snow" grand piano currently in the Ken Miller Room will be moved to the Fellowship Hall. It was donated to the church on January 23, 1983, by Ruth Snow in memory of her husband, Harold Snow.

In 1975, Melba Rauber donated a grand piano which just recently had some work done on it, with SVAE paying for half of the expenses) upon completion of the sanctuary. She was the accompanist for the church for many years, and with Fred Knutson, founded the Sierra Vocal Arts Ensemble. We will have to get used to NOT putting ANYTHING on this piano. Thanks to SVAE for the use of this valued piano.

eNewsletter

Please forward this eNewsletter to anyone that you think might like to receive it, or call the church office and add an email address to our eNewsletter list. If you have an address of someone who used to attend our church, and think they would like a copy, call the church office and supply the address.

This eNewsletter is published the last week of each month. Please send any items you would like to be included for the next issue to: Paulette McFarlin (pmcfarlin@ocsnet.net) or drop off the written information at the church office by the 15th of each month.

Did you know.....

... Dec. 12 is the last day to bring in new unwrapped toys to put into the Toys for Tots box?

... the microwave in the Ken Miller kitchen is kaput? Only about two buttons work now. Does anyone have a microwave that still works, and was thinking of replacing it? You could donate the old one to the kitchen. It's bound to have more than two functioning buttons.

... you can bring in your special angel ornament to hang on the 'Angel' tree? Bring one any Sunday morning and hang it on the tree during the prelude.

Church Humor

A ten-year old, under the tutelage of her grandmother, was becoming quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Then, one day, she floored her grandmother by asking, "Which Virgin was the mother of Jesus? The virgin Mary or the King James Virgin?"

Six-year old Angie, and her four-year old brother, Joel, were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang and talked out loud. Finally, his big sister had had enough. "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church." "Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joel asked. Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two men standing by the door? They're hushers."



A hearty thank you to the Hammelmann's for the greening of the sanctuary, the foyer and the Ken Miller Room. The congregation looks forward to this Advent transformation of our church home.



Sierra Vocal Arts Ensemble will be presenting a Christmas Concert on Sunday, Dec. 6, in the sanctuary at 3 pm. Tickets can be bought at the door, \$20 general, \$15 seniors and students. Myron Lord will be the narrator for *The Christmas Story According to Saint Luke* by Roger Wagner. The Porterville Ringers will accompany the choir along with Ellen Lohneis on the flute for the final number, *Peace, Peace*. As always, refreshments and caroling will follow the performance in the Fellowship Hall.

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If God is your copilot, switch seats!

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Monache High School annual Christmas Concert

Monache Choirs will present a Christmas Concert in the sanctuary on Friday, Dec. 11, at 7 pm. Tickets are \$6. The program, directed by Josh Sutherland, will feature the Concert Choir, Chamber Choir, Men's Choir, Women's Choir and soloists. It is always exciting to see and hear the talent these young men and women possess.