

FROM THE BANKS OF THE CURRITUCK SOUND

The E-Mail Newsletter of Sharon United Methodist Church
275 Poplar Branch Road
Poplar Branch, North Carolina 27965
Susan C. Lindblade, Pastor

December 2022

HUGE NEWS FOR SHARON CHURCH!!



On December 1, Sharon Church was selected by The NC Rural Center to be a part of CONNECT, a program offered by the Rural Center's Faith in Rural Communities Initiative, which aims to help churches renew their faithful witness and connect with opportunities to improve the health and prosperity of their communities.

The nine-month CONNECT program will focus on Sharon Church and the greater Aydlett-Poplar Branch community. In turn, Sharon Church commits to creating a team of 6 - 8 church members who will meet monthly with a CONNECT coach who will lead us in developing a strategic plan for increasing our impact outside the walls of the church. At the end of the nine months, we will be eligible for a grant of \$10,000 for the purpose of underwriting the ministry program we develop. Future opportunities will be available for additional grants and growth in ministry.

CONNECT is funded through Duke Endowment, who has given \$ 3.2 million specifically for helping churches like Sharon reach out and make a difference to the people of their communities. Established in 1924 by industrialist and philanthropist James Buchanan Duke, the Endowment is a private foundation that strengthens communities in North and South Carolina by nurturing children, promoting health, educating minds and enriching spirits. Since its founding, it has distributed more than \$3.7 billion in grants. The Endowment shares a name with Duke University and Duke Energy, but all are separate organizations. J. B. Duke held a special affection for the Methodist Church and was quoted to say,

“If I amount to anything in this world, I owe it to my daddy and the Methodist Church.”

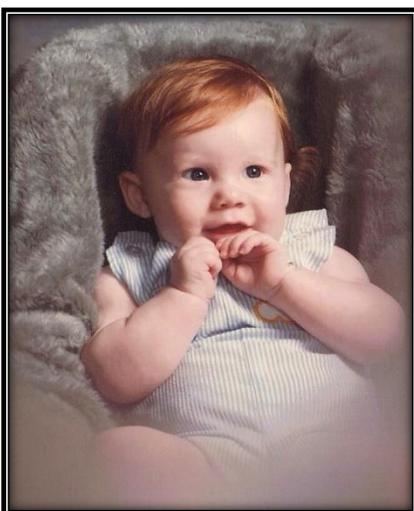
This CONNECT program will give us the space and direction to talk about the real issues facing our community. We may even unearth needs of which we are not aware. It will allow us to address these needs in the name of Jesus. It is a big step in the right direction for Sharon Church as we seek to regain and grow in our place as a community church in lower Currituck County.

Please be in prayer for open hearts and ears for God leading through this process.

PASTOR’S PEN

As I write this, it’s early morning on Saturday, November 26, the morning of Eric A. and Renee’s wedding. Family and friends have converged upon Frederick, Maryland this Thanksgiving weekend. It has been a happy, laughter-filled weekend and in a few hours, we’ll make our way over to a mountain top in Rohrsersville for the ceremony. There will be vows and dances and toasts and laughter and food. Most of all, there will be Eric A. and Renee holding each other’s hands and hearts as they prepare for the future as a new family.

It’s a day to celebrate, a day to thank the One who brought them together. It’s a day to be grateful for the gift of love which makes sense more than anything else at all. It is also a day that has a touch of nostalgia.



Children grow up too fast. It certainly doesn’t seem that way when you are the child, and minutes sometimes feel like hours when you’re in Calculus class or days seem like months when you’re approaching that special date when you can get a driver’s license. When, however, you are a parent, time rushes by no matter how fervently you try to reduce the speed.

“It seems like only yesterday” is one of the countless phrases so often used that they all but lose their

meaning. Today, however, that phrase has deep meaning for me. It really does seem like only yesterday when he was carrying a backpack bigger than himself every morning as we drove him to the LJ Bell School in Rockingham. Or when he would build elaborate machines on his bedroom floor out of LEGO's. Or when he made ramps for his bicycle. Or when he learned the difficult truth about the Tooth Fairy but kept putting teeth under his pillow anyway. Or when we would sit with old fashioned equipment in front of a TV long before anyone had heard of flat screens and play countless games of Mario Brothers. Or when he was confirmed in the Christian faith. When he drove out the driveway for the first time with a brand new driver's license hot off the DMV press in his wallet. Or when we'd make the 150 mile round trip to Greenville to support him at every home game when he was the East Carolina men's basketball manager, just as we had for every t-ball through Little League and high school games. Or when I watched him following his daddy's car out the Newport parsonage driveway behind the wheel of a U-Haul with his beloved Jeep in tow as he moved to Gettysburg to begin his career as a Civil War historian. Or when we were invited to come to Gettysburg "because there is someone I want you to meet." I could go on and on, you know – and mentally today that is exactly what I'll be doing. But the point is clear. It really does seem like yesterday.

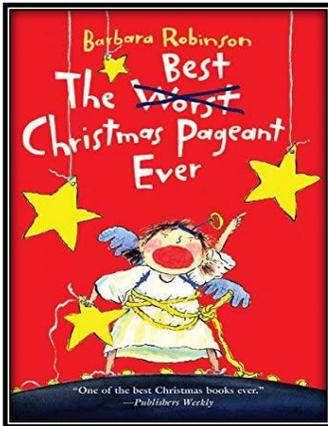
In my understandable nostalgia just now, I can still hear a voice that had not changed yet. I can still hear his giggles when I would make up stories every night about Ooh Giababa, a cunning pirate who sailed the Caribbean in his ship, the Cutty Sark, along with his faithful parrot, Pink Floyd, and mischievous ship's mice named John, Paul, George and Ringo. I can still see him stretched out beside our dog, Hamilton, both sound asleep next to the tree hoping to catch Santa. I can still hear his sleepy whispers, "I love you, Mom."

He's grown into a fine man now, and his Daddy and I are so proud of him. But when his dear friend, Ben Sims administers the vows and he turns to kiss the lovely young woman at his side, in my heart I will still be watching my little boy. And silently I will be whispering back to him what I did all those years ago when he was small: "I love you, Boo."

Pastor Susan



THE ESCAPE BOOK CLUB - TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6 at 1:30 p.m.



There are numerous Christmas books, plays and movies that all try to get at the essence of Christmas. On December 6, our Escape Book Club will tackle a classic, ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*** by Barbara Robinson. We invite you to join us for this meeting sure to be filled with the laughter as well as the miraculous. **PLEASE NOTE THE TIME AND LOCATION CHANGE:** We'll meet at **1:30 p.m.** in the **Fellowship Hall** and ZOOM will be offered for those who cannot make it to the meeting.

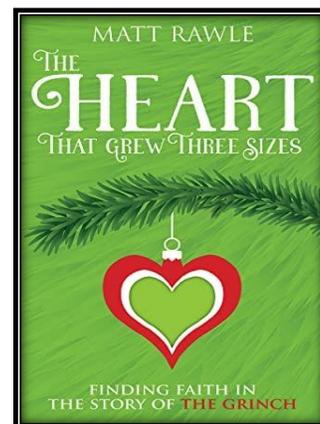
The book club will take a break during the month of January while Susan is away. However, we will resume on Tuesday, February 21 for our next meeting with our first book of the new year, ***Traveling Mercies*** by Anne Lamont. After years of alcohol and drug abuse, she found a safe haven in a Presbyterian Church in Marin, CA called St. Andrew's. She said, "When I was at the end of my rope, the people of St. Andrew's tied a knot for me and helped me hold on." This spiritual memoir is filled with heartfelt stories and one-liners such as "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." Her candor and strong sense of storytelling will draw as many tears as it does laughs and her books are must reads for any Christian seeking to grow in the way of compassion and discipleship.

Books may be secured from the Conference Library or Susan will have 6 copies available for purchase beginning on Sunday, February 5.

ADVENT BOOK STUDY - TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 3:00 p.m.

Whether you've read the original Dr. Seuss ***How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*** as a bedtime story, watched the long running TV special, or hit the theatre for one of the movie adaptations, you know how this story never seems to leave our imagination. Maybe the word GRINCH makes you think about that person you just saw at Thanksgiving who never seems to be in the Christmas spirit. Maybe it makes you think about the commercialism of Christmas. Or maybe it makes you think about yourself.

Join us each Tuesday, December 6, 13, 20 and 27 in the Fellowship Hall as we use this Christmas classic to challenge us to discover the Advent season in new and unexpected ways. We will be reading ***The Heart That Grew Three Sizes: Finding Faith in the Story of the Grinch*** by Matt Rawle. No study book is necessary. We'll have a good time together recalling this story this Advent season to bring new understanding to the PEACE, LOVE, HOPE and JOY God brings into our world!



COMMUNITY MEAL - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 5:30 p.m.



Looking for a great time of fellowship or an opportunity to invite a friend to join you at Sharon Church? THE COMMUNITY MEAL is for you!!! Our December gathering will feature a chili cook-off and dessert. Invite your neighbors and let's fill the Fellowship Hall this holiday season for the Community Meal!! Perhaps we can get Jeanne Murray and Phil Kratzer back to lead us in singing some of our favorite carols!!

MONTHLY FOOD PANTRY – FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

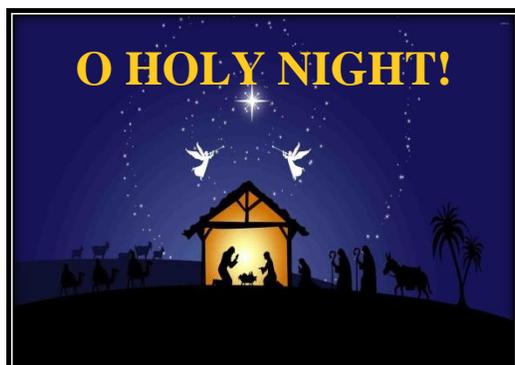
This wonderful new outreach ministry at Sharon Church has discovered a real need in our community ... help to young families with children. Many find their groceries running low around the middle of each month with few places to turn for assistance.

Our pantry is set up to allow families an opportunity to select and bag items offered on the tables just as if they are walking through the grocery store. Recently, we have been stocking our pantry with an abundance of items specifically for young children such as cereal, fruit cups, juices, and diapers. Your generous contributions allow Sharon Church to reach out and make a difference in our community!!



CHRISTMAS CANTATA and PARSONAGE OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, December 11 looks to be a special day to celebrate the joy of the season as well as fellowship with our friends with three special events:



First, our Sharon Church Choir will present **"O Holy Night!"** Cantata featuring festive songs of the season which will walk us to the birth of our Lord and Savior. **"O Holy Night!"** will take place during the 11:00 a.m. Worship Service. This is always a heartwarming time at Sharon Church and a perfect opportunity to invite your family and friends to join you!

Later in the afternoon, Pastors Eric and Susan cordially invite you to the Sharon parsonage (535 Aydlett Road - the brick house next to the Aydlett Post Office) for our **Annual Christmas Open House from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.** Please join us for a time of refreshments and fellowship in the beautiful home you provide for your pastors.

And, following the Open House, we will use the Parsonage as our staging area to go out into Aydlett and Poplar Branch to **Christmas Carol in the Community from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.** Susan will provide the names and addresses of our shut-ins and other friends in the community, and we hope to have a large enough group to divide into several groups in order to carol to as many as possible.



CHRISTMAS IN POPLAR BRANCH



On Christmas Eve at 5:00 p.m., we invite you to "Come as you are" for a special Candlelight/Communion Service. Come and sing some of your favorite Christmas carols, be blessed by heartwarming contemporary music videos of the season, and be a part of our traditional singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight on the church lawn (weather permitting) as the warmth of luminaries line our church property.

This year, we have an amazing opportunity to worship together on Christmas Day as well! We invite you to join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus at 11:00 a.m. in the Sharon Church sanctuary. "Come as you are" and join in singing the great hymns of the season. We especially invite children who may be visiting with grandparents to come and bring a favorite Christmas present with them for a time around the manger with Pastor Susan.

A flyer will be available featuring all of our Advent and Christmas activities for you to share in inviting neighbors, family and friends to join you at Sharon Church. Be thinking of those you can invite and never underestimate the Christ Child's ability to speak to the hearts of those you invite this year!!!



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