

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

November 2022

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS:

Thanksgiving is around the corner, and time to “count our blessings.” Either we believe we have been “blessed” with family, friends, health, community, even prosperity – and give thanks for the gifts we have received, or we struggle to feel blessed because of some real or imagined hardship. The dictionary defines blessing as “a favor or gift bestowed by God, thereby bringing happiness.” We tend to equate happiness with blessings; and if we are not happy, we must not be blessed.

As people of faith, we are to give thanks in all things. But what has God given us in this year of earthly turmoil? Are our blessings dependent on the happenings of each day? And what about the orphan or the widow so often referred to in scripture? Does God bless some and not others? There are the nagging questions of blessings relative to whom... How does my happiness relate/compare/translate/affect the happiness of others? God's plan of love should be sufficient for everyone. But do we feel that, believe that?

In his book, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Church*, Rob Bell writes:

“For Jesus everything is upside down. The best and greatest and most important are the ones who humble themselves, set their needs and desires apart and selflessly serve others. So what is a group of people living this way called? That’s the CHURCH. It is not ultimately about the church; it’s about the people God wants to bless through the church. When the church loses sight of this, it loses its heart. We reclaim the church as a blessing machine not only because that is what Jesus intended from the beginning, but also because serving people is the only way their perceptions of church are ever going to change.”

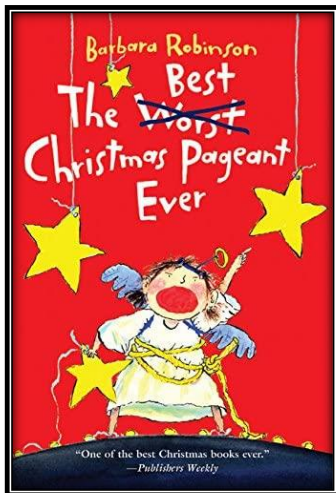
When serving others grace appears, and grace is the cornerstone of our blessings. We discover what the people we serve have to offer us. We see the goodness of a

more simple life. We see how faith is lived out in people who have little else to depend on. We watch people depending on each other rather than “stuff” to make them happy. We see the ways that our lives affect others both near to us and in faraway places. We see how much we have to learn. In getting outside ourselves, we gain a new perspective. We are humbled. We are changed. And because we are outside ourselves, sharing our lives through God’s grace, we are blessed.

Sharing is the hallmark of blessings. Joy, more than happiness, is the fruit of God’s grace and the source of our blessings. I am blessed not only in what I receive, but in what I give, and beyond that, in God’s presence in all circumstances. Serving one another, blesses us, fills our emptiness, heals our hurts, and connects us to each other. So, in this season of thanksgiving, we are called to go beyond simply counting our blessings. Give thanks for God’s grace, and be a blessing!

Love, Pastor Susan

THE ESCAPE BOOK CLUB



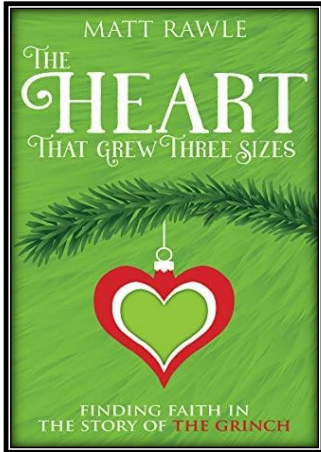
We start the month of November with an all-time classic, ***Tuesdays with Morrie*** by Mitch Albom and end 2022 with the hilarious Christmas classic ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*** by Barbara Robinson on Tuesday, December 6.

We’ll be taking the month of January off (while Pastor Susan is in Florida) and will resume our meetings on Tuesday, February 21 at 1:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Our book will be ***Living Somewhere Between Estrogen and Death*** by Barbara Johnson. She reveals her hilarious anti-aging remedies in this lighthearted and encouraging book on the joys and concerns of growing older. From savoring the “here and now” to preparing for our glorious future in heaven, this book is a wise and witty guide to the joys and challenges of aging gleefully.

Please let Susan know if you will need a book.

LOOKING AHEAD - ADVENT BIBLE STUDY - begins December 6

We don't know why the Grinch hated Christmas. We just know he did. In this new Advent study, Matt Rawle explores the faith themes in this Christmas classic, ***How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*** including how did the Grinch's heart grow three sizes come Christmas morning? How did Christmas save the Grinch? Could it be that the very thing we think we hate is the one thing that changes our lives?



Join Pastor Susan and Jeanne Murray for a 4-week Advent study on Tuesdays at 3:00 p.m. beginning December 6. We will be reading ***The Heart That Grew Three Sizes: Finding Faith in the Story of the Grinch*** by Matt Rawle. There are 3 copies of the book at the Conference library if you want to borrow one or you may purchase one from Pastor Susan.

We invite you to join us and bring a friend this Advent season as we look at a familiar classic through the lens of faith and see how Christ speaks to us through our culture.

CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP

On Tuesday, November 21, our Caregivers Support Group will treat ourselves to lunch out at the Currituck BBQ in Coinjock at 1:00 p.m. for a time to visit with our group friends.

COMMUNITY MEAL - WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9 at 5:30 p.m.

Our monthly Community Meal has been a great success in bringing Sharon members together with friends from the community on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. **This month's menu will be Pulled Pork Sandwiches, Cole Slaw, Baked Beans and desserts.**

In December, we'll have a Chili Cook-Off, so dust off your favorite Chili recipe and join us!

If you'd like to contribute in any way, contact Jeanne Murray at 252-423- 0851 or jeannemurray@gmail.com.



THE SHARON SPOTLIGHT



This month's Sharon Spotlight features an interview with our oldest member, Ellie Ball. Gracious and bright are two words which come to mind in describing Miss Ellie, who lives with her daughter and son-in-law, Barbara and Bob Gadkowski in Poplar Branch. A "little bird" had told Pastor Susan of Miss Ellie's love for chocolate shakes from the Sonic, so armed with a 4-pack Sonic drink carrier of shakes, Barbara, Bob, Miss Ellie and Pastor Susan had a delightful 103rd birthday visit. In between shake sips, Ellie was glad to answer questions Pastor Susan had prepared for the Spotlight.

This lifelong Methodist and granddaughter of a Methodist pastor was born in Brooklyn, NY, but grew up in Pittsburgh, PA. When asked what she recalls about growing up in Pittsburgh, she remembered carefree childhood days passing the time playing jump rope (her favorite) in a smoky steel mill town. Of course, this goes back to the days when Pittsburgh was a major steel manufacturing city with billowing smoke stacks. A scholarship offered through The Methodist Church where her mother was employed, along with odd jobs Ellie worked, allowed her to attend the University of Pittsburgh where she studied to be a teacher.

Miss Ellie talked much about the pivotal events in her life such as The Great Depression and World War II. She recalled the way neighbors helped neighbors during the Depression, how one had to be creative to make things stretch, and though meals were often repetitive and meager, she was grateful she never remembered feeling hungry. Her husband served as a Captain in the Army Air Corps in France and recalled how the celebration of Victory in Europe Day was a mixture of profound relief and joy for the homecoming of loved ones after years of being away, and the tears in remembering those who had given their all for the cause of freedom.

She attributes her love for reading to opening up a view and understanding of the world she would never have acquired otherwise and her talent with a paint brush could be marked as similar to impressionistic art. And one thing is for sure, Miss Ellie's humble spirit and winning smile always leaves you feeling better than when you arrived.

So, what advise does Ellie Ball offer those of us of the younger generation? "Love your neighbor as yourself," she says. "Don't worry about material things and hold close to your trust in God in all things." Truly words to live by!!

MONTHLY FOOD PANTRY “FILL A BAG DAY”

In an effort to support those in our community who struggle to stretch their food budget each month, our Outreach Committee is now offering a monthly food “Fill A Bag Day.” Our October event brought five families (18 individuals) to the church where the head of the household was able to select canned goods, donated bread, vegetables and other food items to help with their meal planning. They were able to receive toiletries as well. All items were from our food pantry which the Sharon Church members so generously support.



Before Thanksgiving, we will offer another “Fill A Bag Day” with Thanksgiving in mind. If you would like to share an item like Stove Top Stuffing, Canned Sweet Potatoes or even a frozen Pumpkin Pie. We will purchase a Turkey Breast and other items from our Pantry budget to fill a complete Thanksgiving meal box. More details will be shared during worship in the days ahead.

Thank you, Sharon Church, for your generous spirit and regard for making a difference in the lives of others.

LOOKING AHEAD

New Mission, Study and Fellowship Opportunities in 2023

The new year will mark new avenues to grow together as a congregation and to minister in new and significant ways. Beginning in February, Sharon Church will initiate three new ministries:

- 1) Prayer and Card Ministry to meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays to lift up prayers on behalf of others as well as communicate and encourage folks with a card.
- 2) Enjoy fellowship with your fellow Sharon Church members each 3rd Sunday at “Grill and Chill” in a local restaurant following worship.
- 3) Pastor Susan will be reaching out to Young Adults in our church and community to organize a Young Adult Fellowship and Study Class.

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