

**Ebenezer**  
**Today, Tomorrow and Beyond**  
Monthly Newsletter for Ebenezer United Methodist Church  
1971 E 550 North Road, McLean, IL 61754

Pastor: Carl Johnston - 618.614.0658  
Email: johnstonc58@ymail.com  
Church Phone: 309.874.2304

Website: [www.ebenezerstrong.org](http://www.ebenezerstrong.org)  
Email: [mariann111@frontier.com](mailto:mariann111@frontier.com)  
**January/February Issue 2020**



**Carl's Corner.....**

Dear Church Family,

As we begin this new year of 2020 I want to review and preview some things I have written and some things that add to the past work. These ideas are by Thom Rainer. They come from an article, "How to Turn Around a church." The ideas belong to Mr. Rainer. I am exploring them in my own words.

For a review in past newsletters, I have written about the following ideas. 1. Starting new groups. 2. Create a culture of inviting people to church. 3. Begin a new members class. Expect a new member/refresher class during the season of Lent. February 26, 2020 is Ash Wednesday-the beginning of Lent.

Now the preview. Here are three other ideas to help turn a church around. **"They began a major community ministry."** Turn around churches do ministry outside of the four walls of their building. Next, **"They began to pray for the lost and unchurched by name."** Awkward at first and then it was transformational. Lastly, **"The leaders began to focus less on negative people and circumstances and more on God's possibilities."** On the second Sunday of Advent, I preached about Mary. The whole point of the sermon was, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37

We know that in May of 2020, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church will meet to discuss and decide the direction of the denomination.

Many petitions have been submitted. What exactly will happen is anyone's guess. Yet, I hear in my soul, the words, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

We know that things have changed about church membership, attendance, giving and a host of other factors. Will the church ever be the church we remember? Will we polish our shoes on Saturday night? Will we dress up? Will we be 15 minutes early for church so we can sit in the back pew? Will Wednesday night ever be church night, again? Yet... "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

As we begin 2020, let's put our trust in the God of the Impossible.

Blessings,  
Pastor Carl

### **Ash Wednesday Service**

I am writing this on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December and I am already thinking ahead to ASH WEDNESDAY - the beginning of Lent. On **February 26**, we will meet as a Parish at Ebenezer at 7 p.m. for the imposition of the ashes.

### **Small Church Workshop**

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, our District Superintendent, Jim Barnett, taught a class on the "The Twelve Keys to an Effective Church". I have the slides and will be finding a time to go over that material with each church.

The next "Laity Module #3", is set for **Saturday, February 8, 2020** from **9 a.m. - 3 p.m.** at Pontiac First UMC Fellowship Hall.

## A Year in Review at Ebenezer....2019

**1 New Member**  
**0 Baptisms**  
**1 Death**  
**1 Wedding**

**Ebenezer's current membership is 70 members**

**Average Weekly Attendance 30**

**The Quilting Divas** made 4 quilts for Cunningham Children's Home this year. Since 2014, the ladies have made and donated 17 quilts to Cunningham.

To support our **local missions**, Ebenezer donated the processing for 2 hogs to be divided between the **McLean and Stanford food pantries**. David Dawson provided the hogs.

\$350 was donated to the **Midwest Mission Distribution Center** for Tornado Totes and other disaster needs.

\$600 was given to **Our Conference, Our Kids Campaign**.

\$450 was given to **U.S. Disaster Fund**

\$600 was given to **UMCOR International Disaster Fund**

\$100 was given to **Preachers Aid Society Benefit Fund** to honor Pastor Carl

### **Ebenezer meets the 2019 Five-Star Challenge**

\$600 was given to help support **Missionaries** Larry & Jane Kies and the good work that they are doing at Africa University in Zimbabwe.

**Conference Apportionments** of \$7,236.00 were paid in full.

### **Chime Choir**

Chime Choir is taking a short break in early January. Practice resumes on **Wednesday, January 15, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.**

## January/February's Preaching Plan

**Jan 5** - Epiphany, Matthew 2:1-12  
Sermon Title: "Dream Warning"

**Jan. 12** - Baptism of the Lord (Renewal of Baptism)  
Isaiah 42:1-9, Matthew 3:13-17  
Sermon Title: "To Fulfill All Righteousness"

**Jan. 19** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After the Epiphany, John 1:29-42  
Sermon Title: "Come and See"

**Jan. 26** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Matthew 4:12-23  
Sermon Title: "Come and Follow"

**Feb. 2** - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Matthew 5:1-12  
Sermon Title: "Come and Learn"

**Feb. 9** - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Matthew 5:13-20  
Sermon Title: "Come and Live"

**Feb. 16** - 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Matthew, 5:21-30  
Sermon Title: "I Say To You"

**Feb. 23** - Transfiguration Sunday, Matthew 17:1-9  
Sermon Title: "On the Mountain Top"

### **Ebenezer's Weekly Attendance December 2019**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Children</b>
<b>1</b>	26	0
<b>8</b>	31	0
<b>15</b>	28	1
<b>22</b>	31	0
<b>29</b>	46	0

### **Ebenezer Church Council**

The next meeting for Ebenezer Church Council is **Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m.** Church Council is always open to all who would like to attend.

## Spartan Council

The goal of the Spartan Council is to remove barriers to learning so that all students have the opportunity to achieve success through education.

The Spartan Council will work to support our students through:

1. Meeting the physical needs of students which can stand in the way of academic achievement.
2. Providing more adult mentors for students.
3. Increasing opportunities for parental engagement.

You can sign up to be on the shout-out team that helps with locating/donating items for the physical needs of students or as a community partner which could be local businesses helping donate time and resources.

If interested in being involved with this organization feel free to contact:

Laura O'Donnell ([laura.odonnell@olympia.org](mailto:laura.odonnell@olympia.org)) or  
Samantha Yoder ([samanthayoder.mcc@gmail.com](mailto:samanthayoder.mcc@gmail.com)).

## Local Church Finance Workshops

On Saturday, Feb 29, 2020, Pekin First U.M.C will host a Local Church Finance Workshop. There are two sessions:

9:30 - 11:30 a.m. "Creating a Church Budget"

How do you create your church budget each year? Many church leaders simply look at last year's budget as the guide to next year's budget. There MUST be a better way. There is! In this seminar we'll learn how to BEGIN with our mission, then build a budget in such a way that it feeds that mission. We'll also look into practical stewardship ideas.

1:30 - 3:30 p.m. "Understanding Church Finances"

Reading and understanding financial reports can be difficult for both clergy and laity. It's easy to get lost in all the numbers which leads to frustration and lack of focus. During this seminar you'll learn how to craft concise and efficient reports designed to support the mission of the church. You will also gain new understanding on how/why people give.

Each Workshop is \$10 each or \$20 for both. Register online at [www.pekinfirst.org-Explore-Events](http://www.pekinfirst.org-Explore-Events), then click on the workshop you want to attend or sign up for both.

OR

Send your name, the name of the workshop(s) you wish to attend to: Pekin First UMC to Adm. Assistant, 1315 Court St. Pekin, IL 61554 **DEADLINE: Feb. 21, 2020**

## Class on Islam

Dave Dawson will be offering a class on Islam after **January 20<sup>th</sup>**. We are considering an evening class that will be open to all in the Parish. The class will meet at Ebenezer. Please check your bulletins for date and time information.