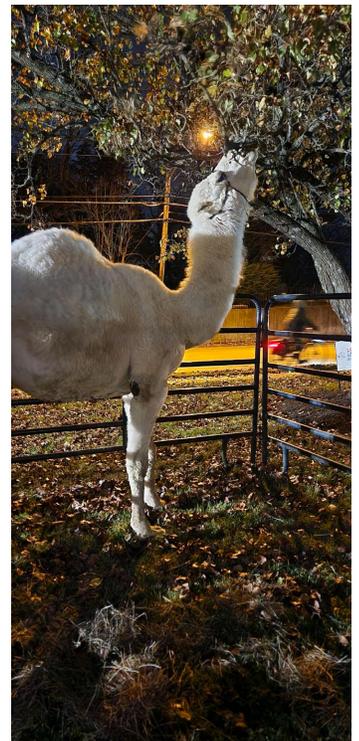




GOOD NEWS! December, 2023

Live Nativity, November 25, 2023



We were blessed to be able to present our Live Nativity again this year on the night of the Mt. Washington Holiday Walk. The local community is so appreciative! We estimate that we had approximately 300 people who stopped by to experience the Christmas story and visit with our animals. Many thanks to all our volunteers, and to Jim Cagle for his wonderful leadership!

Spreading Christmas

I can't sleep on Christmas Eve night. Even now. Regardless of my age and maturity, I toss and turn and check the clock.

My two faithful pooches, close by in their own comfy dog beds, wake. Disturbed from their sleep by noise and lights, they raise an eyelid, see that it's me and return to their dreams.

When I was little, being the youngest of four, I was probably more excited than my elder siblings. Well, actually, I am positive that I was more excited about Christmas morning than they were. Early, early, early, I would sneak out into the living room in the dark and feel the stockings, hanging from the fireplace, to see if Santa had been there and filled them up.

In the toe was something round, an orange, and little lumpy things, nuts in the shell. Some other stuff to be discovered was filling the stocking the rest of the way up. Good. Looking under the tree, I could see dimly lit packages, many more than had been there when I checked before bedtime. Also, good. We were all ready for Christmas morning.

And if I was up, shouldn't everyone else be up too? No, sadly, no. My Mom, wishing for more sleep for her and Dad each year, had come up with a genius plan. In my room, with the light on, behind the closed door, quietly, I had a project.



With construction paper, markers, scissors, stickers, I was happily at work. My project? To make everyone in the family their own personalized Christmas card. And all the more cards if Grandparents or Uncles were with us that year. I couldn't wake anyone up until all the cards were done and delivered to each bedroom door, held on with tape.

After my oldest brother passed away, thirteen years ago, we found in his things one of those cards. It brings tears to my eyes, that one of those poorly written, strangely cut out, stickered creations was put aside and saved. That's love, don't you think? Given in love, kept in love, found and saved again, in remembrance.

It means a great deal to me to be able to share this memory. The hope of Christmas morning, the peace of a happy life, the joy of work to be done for others, the love that we feel for family.

And, back to the present day, it means a great deal to me that I can see us, as the church family of Mt. Washington Baptist Church, in a good and loving place. I have heard so many wonderful memories, and witnessed a strong and living faith among you.

Is it your first Christmas here? Or has it been every Christmas since the church began? Either way, you are making memories that should be shared. Of Christmas traditions, of children excited by the possibilities ahead, of seeing the Advent candle lighting on Advent Sundays, of hearing the beautiful cantatas, and of sharing the candlelight on Christmas Eve.

And I have a project for you. Not paper and markers and tape, but another thing entirely. I encourage you to share both memories of MWBC and your living faith, with your family and friends. Tell everyone that the Hope of the World is now born. That his peace can fill the heart of each one of us. That there is joy in working and living for the Christ Child. And that this church is loving, caring, and ready to move into God's future.

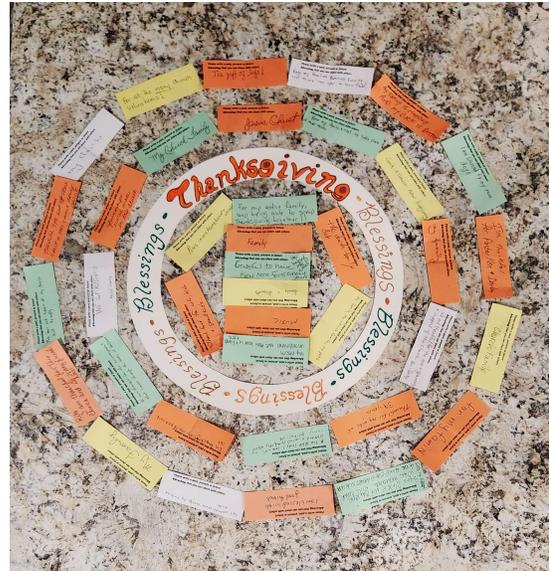
I thank you for the privilege of sharing this story, for the joy of being your interim pastor, and for being able to share the love of that wonderful baby with our community.

Much peace, and a Merry Christmas to all.

Pastor Karen Johnson, Interim Pastor

November Highlights: Thanksgiving Blessings

Those who attended our **Thanksgiving Luncheon** on November 19 were asked to jot down the blessings they were most thankful for. Pastor Karen then arranged the various blessing cards into these lovely displays:



Weekly Schedule

Sundays

9:00 a.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal
10:00 a.m. Worship Service & Children's Church
(in-person and streaming live on Facebook)

Wednesdays

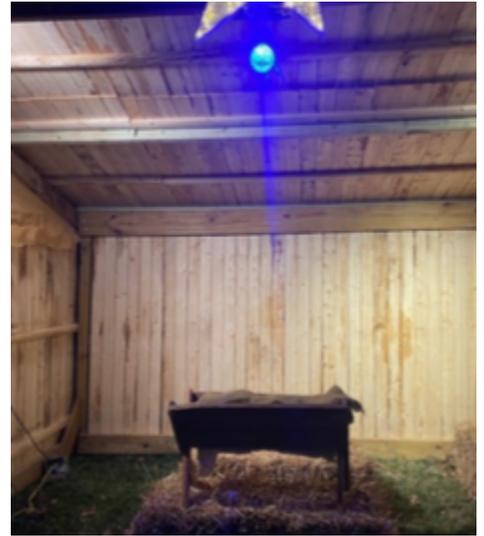
6:00 p.m. Virtual Bible Study & Prayer Meeting
(streaming live on Facebook)

Coming Up in December . . .

- * **Everyday ABC Conversation: Tuesday, December 5** – You're invited to the next American Baptist Churches Everyday ABC Conversation event, "Post-Pandemic Impact on Ministry and Stewardship," at 3:00 p.m. ET. Join presenters Dr. Campbell B. Singleton III and Rev. Stacy Emerson as they talk about specific ways lives were impacted by the pandemic and the church's response, reflecting on how ministry has changed and how times of struggle impact how we view stewardship, mission, and ministry. To register for this online discussion, visit abc-usa.org.
- * **Children's Christmas Party: Sunday, December 10** – The Board of Christian Education will be hosting a Christmas party for kids during the morning worship service, from 10-11 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Bring your kids, grandkids, etc., for this fun event featuring crafts, snacks, stories, and prizes!
- * **Choir Cantata: Sunday, December 17** – Our Chancel Choir, under the direction of Rev. Jim Cagle, will present the cantata *Night of the Father's Love*, by Pepper Choplin, during our morning worship service.
- * **Christmas Eve Services: Sunday, December 24** – Celebrate the birth of our Savior with us at our morning worship service at 10:00 a.m. and our special Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7:00 p.m.

Music

The choir cantata for this Advent Season will be presented on Sunday, December 17, during the morning church service. It is a piece titled *Night of the Father's Love: The Awe and Mystery of God with Us* and was composed by Pepper Choplin, a well-known contemporary Christian musician. As with other cantatas, different songs separated by narration make up the piece. The songs follow the biblical sequence of the story of the birth of Christ. Starting with the promise of the Messiah from the Old Testament going through the angels' promises to Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, to the proclamation of the Birth to the shepherds and the visit of the Magi, then ending with the joyous Good News of Christ and the declaration to spread that news, this cantata is a joyous journey that will continue our time through the Advent season. The journey will culminate on Christmas Eve night with our candlelight service as we welcome the Christ Child. The narrations guide us through the songs and add such spiritual encouragement that we need to calm ourselves in the hustle and bustle of this season. The piece will cause each of us to reflect on God's gift of love to us, His Son, and also to remember that Christmas is the beginning but the cross at Easter will be the ultimate reason for the season and His sacrifice and resurrection is the truth of that love. My wish this Christmas is a time of hope, joy, peace and love for each of us as we come before the presence of Him who loves us.



~ Rev. Jim Cagle, Minister of Music

Missions

MWBC Supports Giving



The fall and early winter seasons at MWBC have been marked by generous giving from our congregation. The shoeboxes that our members packed during the month of October for Operation Christmas Child will be winging their way toward their destinations this month. We don't know where they will wind up, but we can thank God for the privilege of blessing children around the world.

We helped thirteen families through our annual Thanksgiving distribution. Each family on our list received a full turkey dinner, with all the trimmings, that they could cook at home. For Christmas, we will again be providing meals for local families, along with the gift of a family game of some type. This distribution will occur on Thursday, December 21. See Jim Cagle if you'd like to contribute financially, with the gift of a family-oriented game, or with your time.

Thanks to all our leaders and volunteers who have supported this outreach to our community!

(Photo credit: Samaritan's Purse, copyright 2014)

A Family in Ministry

Mt. Washington Baptist Church | 2005 Sutton Ave.
PO Box 30437 | Cincinnati, OH 45230

Email: mtwashingtonbaptistchurch@zoomtown.com Phone: 513 231-4445 Fax: 513 231-7380
Pastor Karen Johnson: mwbcpastorkaren@gmail.com Website: www.mwbcare.net

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ABCUSA Names New General Secretary



The Board of General Ministries of American Baptist Churches USA has affirmed the call of the Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain to be the next General Secretary of the denomination. Dr. Jacobs-Strain's term of service will begin on February 1, 2024.

In announcing the call of Dr. Jacobs-Strain, ABCUSA President Jim Wolfe noted that Dr. Jacobs-Strain was the unanimous choice of the search committee. "The committee committed itself to prayer and the discernment of God's will in this process. We believe Dr. Jacobs-Strain is the person that God has chosen to lead our denominational family. She has the academic background, professional and personal skills to lead this diverse family into the mission that God has prepared for us."

Dr. Jacobs-Strain earned her Master of Divinity degree from Drew University's Theological School, where she was honored with the Old Testament Studies Scholar Award, and her Doctor of Ministry from Duke University in 2020. She has held various pastoral roles in New Jersey, and has been invited as a guest preacher/lecturer at several theological institutions. Currently, Dr. Jacobs-Strain holds the position of Executive Director for American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) and is a member of the National Executive Council for American Baptist Churches USA. She is married to Clifton Strain, and together they have three sons. They currently reside in Morristown, NJ. (*Excerpted from abc-usa.org.*)

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Our Staff and Leaders

Rev. Dr. Karen Johnson, Interim Pastor | Rev. Dr. Ken Atchison, Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Jim Cagle, Minister of Music | Jih-Ting Chen, Accompanist
Darby Atchison & Barb Wagner, Administrative Assistants
Todd Racer, Praise Band Leader | Tim Rechel, Tower Bells Director
Tammy Caldwell & Cody Taylor, Day Care Co-Directors
Luke Tiettmeyer, Maintenance