



Rev. Debra Upton  
Pastor

387 South Broadway Street, Center, Colorado 81125 • Church (719)-754-2243 • E-Mail: [umcofcenter@gmail.com](mailto:umcofcenter@gmail.com)

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

December 7, 2020

## Greetings and Grace and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Thank you to all you who joined our 8:30 am Zoom worship as well as those who joined via Facebook and Zoom, or our 10:30 am morning Zoom and Facebook worship. I appreciate Charleen Schaeffer for being our 8:30 am online liturgist. Thank you all so much for your willingness to serve. What a blessing to see everyone in worship. I do appreciate the kindness and grace of all of those who were present virtually Sunday. I tried to make the church as Christmassy as I could because I know how difficult it is not to be present personally in worship.

I want you to know that I am monitoring case numbers here in our area and I have been in contact with our county health department. Seeing the drop in numbers, I reached out to them. In fact, I just got off the phone with Janet from the Saguache County Health Department and she has assured me that our case level has dropped. Since people in Center are adhering to the protocols of mask wearing, social distancing, and staying away from crowds, she feels it is safe for us to open back up. Please know that we will maintain our protocols we have in place to ensure we are safely gathered. Please know that if you have been around anyone that has been ill or if you feel under the weather, please stay home and join us virtually if you can.

It is my hope that we will be able to have in-person Blue Christmas service on the longest night, December 21, 2020 at 6:30 pm in the Center UMC sanctuary. I would invite you to join us either virtually or in person, especially if you have lost a loved one this year. Another thing very special this year on December 21<sup>st</sup> is that you can witness something that hasn't been seen in nearly 800 years – the “Christmas Star” or “Star of Bethlehem” as it has been called. Two planets haven't appeared this relatively close together from Earth's vantage point since the Middle Ages. Patrick Hartigan, astronomer at Rice University told Forbes “You'd have to go all the way back to before dawn on March 4, 1226, to see a closer alignment between these objects visible in the night sky.” Stargazers in the northern hemisphere should turn their heads and telescopes to the southwest portion of the sky about 45 minutes after sunset to see the planets align December 21. However, reportedly sightings can be seen throughout that entire week. What a Christmas blessing to see the Bethlehem Star reminding us of that first Christmas night in Bethlehem when God came down to earth in a tiny babe named Jesus. What a wonderful reminder that God is with us and has always been and will always be with you.

Tentatively we plan to do Saguache UMC's Christmas Eve candle lighting service virtually and in person with protocols in place December 24<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm followed by Center UMC's service virtually and in person with protocols in place at 7 pm. Please pray that our numbers stay low and that we are able to do this safely.

Last year we started Adopt a Veteran for special gifts for our Homelake Veterans. This year we will have to do it a little differently. We are continuing our tradition of adopting a veteran from Homelake, and we invite you to participate with us! As with anything this year, there is a COVID twist. We have one hundred 10”X8.45” brown gifts bags that we would like to be filled with items that are basic necessities but might be hard for them to get good quality of during these times. Items to include in the bag: *(All items must be non-fragrant and non-gender specific)*: shampoo, deodorant, lotion, chapstick or lip balm, tissues, toothbrush, toothpaste, bar of soap and a Christmas card. You may choose to pick up the brown bags or to use one grocery bag per veteran that we can put into our brown bags for delivery. Your completed bags can be dropped off at Center United Methodist Church no later than December 18, 2020. I already have 60 Adopt a Veteran bags spoken for and would like to have as many people get involved as possible. I want to thank Jolene Robinson, Mary Bloxsom, Lori Sanchez, Janet Myers, Linda Warsh, Hannah Metzger, and Cozette Price for supporting this project. This is a great way to thank our veterans who have been isolated from family and friends and church for the last 8 months. Please contact Hannah at the church through phone message or email, or text Pastor Debbie. This is open to folks from the community and other churches to join.

A special thank you goes to Glynnis Williams, Mary Bloxsom, Sue McClure, Brent Fyock, and Dick and Linda Willson for parading with me to Ms. Isabel Geibel's to celebrate her hundredth birthday. She was so surprised and so

thankful for us thinking of her. She wanted me to thank everyone especially for all the beautiful cards. She loved her floral centerpiece and her delicious cake. She said, "I loved each and every one and I love each and every one of you all. Please stay safe."

We have started our Advent Study. December 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm via our Zoom link, we will continue our Adam Hamilton's Advent Study *Incarnation*. Please let the church office know if you wish to participate, so we can get you the resources for each week's study.

Remember that access to any worship is posted on our [www.umcofcenter.com](http://www.umcofcenter.com) website, so feel free to go back and watch what you may have missed and forward it to your friends. The Story behind the Songs is on Facebook Live every Wednesday at 1 pm. The bishop's Advent devotion is on Saturday evening on the conference Facebook page at 5 pm and I have posted a link on our Facebook page. Advent devotions on our Facebook page are posted Monday – Friday focusing on our Advent readings which began November 29, 2020. These are meant to develop our acts of piety through prayer, reading scripture, and daily devotions. On Wednesday Adam Hamilton's Advent Study *Incarnation* began December 2<sup>nd</sup> and is open to anyone who wishes to join using our Zoom platform. Please let Hannah or me know so we can get you the book for the study. Remember the Zoom platform can be accessed by a telephone; you don't have to have internet or a computer to participate; you just dial the number. When participating in any of the virtual services or bible studies, we will be using our Zoom platform which allows us to participate via phone or computer. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8678651613?pwd=VlVDejlBRVBjT0tYNXVtUG42QTFNdz09/> is the link that can be clicked on or pasted in your browser. It should take you to our Zoom platform. It should take you to our Zoom platform. If you have the Zoom app, you can go to the app on your phone or your computer and type in Meeting ID: 867 865 1613 and enter the password: 2618860. If you wish to use your phone (cell or landline) without internet call +1 (346) 248-7799 US (Houston) or +1 (669) 900-6833 US (San Jose). Enter the Meeting ID: 867 865 1613 and then the Password: 2618860. You can call me at (504) 261-8860 if you need assistance.

Yoga with Ms. Nancy will resume on Tuesdays and Fridays at 9:30 am.

We continue to be blessed by the generosity of you who continue to support our church through your tithes and offerings. I would also like to encourage you to consider giving above and beyond for the 3% initiative for global giving especially during this time of COVID-19. We have been blessed by riding out the virus with minor consequences although no death is minor. The worldwide service fund, African University, the ministerial educational fund, and so many other funds need our help. I hope you will prayer about it and consider giving. If you are attending in-person worship, the offerings can be left on the pew when you leave and someone will pick them up and Sue will deposit them later. Online donations can be made at [www.umcofcenter.com](http://www.umcofcenter.com) or you can text the amount you wish to give to (719) 628-1830 which will walk you through the secure donation. There is a fee that is charged the church when payments are made online and by text. Both the online and text options are secure and the funds are immediately processed into Center UMC's bank account. Donations still can be mailed to P. O. Box 626, Center, 81125.

We are continuing a special call for donations toward Beaver Creek Youth Camp that is in dire need, especially since camp use is down and fundraisers weren't able to occur due to COVID. Please join us in helping to keep this worthwhile mission alive.

Our Cooking for Our Neighbors has been a blessing. Thank you to our good cooks and volunteers Betty Felmlee, Kitty Bigley-Entz, Janet Myers, and Linda Warsh. Janet's turkey casserole was a big hit along with Kitty's salad, Betty's rolls, and Linda's brownies. We welcome anyone who wishes to join our little group. We know it is a lot of work which is much lighter as we share it together. It is not meant to be a burden but a blessing for everyone involved. It is such a delight to share the love of Christ in this unique way. I'm blessed to pastor such incredibly generous and compassionate folks. If you know of someone who should be on our list for meals, please let us know. If you wish to be removed, please let us know. It is truly an out pouring of God's love.

Please feel free to reach out to me to ask how to share in this unique time, especially with prayer requests and concerns. Our list continues to grow, so I hope you will join us in praying daily for our church, community, and nation. I am available via phone or text at (504) 261-8860. You can always reach me via email [dupton@liff.edu](mailto:dupton@liff.edu) or message me via our Center United Methodist Church Facebook page. Stay safe and remember we are all essential people in the family of God.

Peace and grace for the journey, *Rev. Debria Upton*