Dear Friends,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of humanity. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. With these words John, the beloved disciple, introduced the birth of Jesus to his readers.

Augustine would later describe Jesus’ birth in these words:

Man’s maker was made man that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother’s breast; that the Bread might hunger, the Fountain thirst, the Light sleep, the Way be tired on its journey; that Truth might be accused of the false witnesses; the Teacher be beaten with whips, the Foundation be suspended on wood; that Strength might grow weak; that the Healer might be wounded, that Life might die.

Jesus became a human child and in so doing descended so far that in the process that he made us more understandable to God. We understand God better because of Jesus but God also understands us better. Jesus understands being human. The writer of Hebrews tells us, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. [4:15]

In December we rehearse, retell, and relive the story of God reaching into life in a whole new way. We usually describe God as all powerful—all those “omnipotent” type words. But Jesus leads us toward an understanding of a God on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the sick, those on the edge of life and society. Jesus chose to be born into poverty. He spent his infancy as a refugee. He lived under a harsh regime, was unjustly accused, and died as a prisoner. This is not what we expect of God but maybe we have a skewed mental picture of God.

Think about the people to whom Jesus related: a Roman soldier who cared for his dying servant and had the faith to seek healing, a tax collector who had a changed heart and gave his wealth to the poor, a Samaritan (a member of a down-trodden ethnic group) who stopped to help a man beaten and robbed by thieves, a woman living in shame who had the faith to reach out to touch his robe, sisters who mourned the death of their brother. Read the accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus spoke about the wrong of those who looked down on other sinners or a dutyful brother angered by his prodigal brother, those in power who ignored the poor. Jesus’ birth and life threw the ways of the world of balance.

Advent and Christmas give us a new opportunity to know God through Jesus Christ. If we want to know a God who cares about the all that has been created—the good and the bad, this is a God who we can know. This is a God I want to know. This is God that we can worship—a God I want to worship. This is a God that wants to know us for who we are and has hopes for us to become our best true selves in Him.

Blessings,

Pastor James

www.petoskeyumc.org
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Send copy and correspondence to:

Melissa Joneson
Petoskey United Methodist Church
1804 East Mitchell Road
Petoskey, MI 49770
(231) 347-2733
info@petoskeyumc.org

### Deadlines

Bulletin ~ Tuesdays at Noon
Belltower ~ 20th of each month

### Mailing Requirements

Due to postal regulations, we are charged $.68 whenever the Belltower is mailed to an incorrect address (UAA - Undeliverable As Addressed). This includes anyone who has placed their mail on hold or is having mail forwarded. The post office will not forward third class mail. **If a newsletter is returned to us, as undeliverable, we will place your future mailings on hold until you contact us at (231) 347-2733.**

If you are leaving the area for a period of time, please notify us, so that we can deliver all mail to you during your absence. This will help us to not incur the expense of returned mail. Please be aware that dates must be accurate. If we do not have the date for your return to and from a winter address on file, please help us out by calling or sending this information.

If you do not wish to receive this mailing in the future, please contact the church office at (231) 347-2733 to be removed from the mailing list.

### Thanks

THANK YOU ~ THANK YOU
JOIN US FOR
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
Tuesday, December 24th
5:30 PM & 7:30 PM

Children’s Sunday School
During worship after Children’s Time
K - 5th Graders, Room 4
There is no Sunday School on Communion Sundays

December

Sunday, Dec. 8, 3-5 p.m.
Help with the St. Nicholas party for the younger kids. We’ll start with lunch and then have a visit from church father St. Nicholas.

Save the Dates
Exam cram for high schoolers (middle schoolers are also welcome) – Tuesday, Jan. 21 from 3:00-10:00 and Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 22 & 23 from 12:00-10:00 at EEC. There will be quiet study, peer tutoring, food, and movies – bring friends.
There will be a special Wednesday night dinner on December 18th—we will celebrate Christmas together! We had a great time at our Thanksgiving meal—thank you to all who helped. Please put this special date on your calendar now and plan to be present with us even if you are not a regular (and maybe you will like it so well, you will decide to make it a habit!). There is a special sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the lobby to donate items for this dinner. (Please still bring a dish to pass.) Call Dean Smith (231) 881-3422 to offer your help in preparation and/or clean-up that day. This is the last Wednesday night dinner until January 8th.

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**“Hanging of the Greens”**

PUMC has a fun filled tradition. We celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season in our own special way as we share in a meaningful service of worship, followed by a soup dinner and then all go out into the church to decorate it with the glorious greens and colorful balls and lights of Christmas. We call this the “Hanging of the Greens.”

**Sunday after worship, December 1st.**

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**All Church Christmas Dinner**

There will be a special Wednesday night dinner on December 18th—we will celebrate Christmas together! We had a great time at our Thanksgiving meal—thank you to all who helped. Please put this special date on your calendar now and plan to be present with us even if you are not a regular (and maybe you will like it so well, you will decide to make it a habit!). There is a special sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the lobby to donate items for this dinner. (Please still bring a dish to pass.) Call Dean Smith (231) 881-3422 to offer your help in preparation and/or clean-up that day. This is the last Wednesday night dinner until January 8th.

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**Wednesday Night Dinners**

We are asking church members to form teams of 4-6 people who will prepare and clean up a meal. Volunteers should sign up for a date with the assigned menu on the sign up sheet located on the bulletin board. Be sure to pick up the recipe, grocery list and complete instructions from the church office at least one week prior to the night for which you sign up.

- Chili & Corn Bread                  December 4
- Meatloaf & Veggies                December 11
- Christmas Meal                    December 18
- **No dinner on December 25th & January 1st**

(We will resume our regular dinners on January 8th.)

As done in the past, everyone attending each weekly dinner is asked to bring a side dish or dessert to pass. Come and enjoy a delicious and healthy dinner and fellowship!
Annual Women’s Christmas Luncheon

LADIES! YOU ARE INVITED TO SHARE IN A MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Wednesday, December 18, 2019 at noon, in the warm and festively decorated fellowship hall.

A scrumptious luncheon will be prepared by Chef Dean Smith especially for the women of our church who wish to share in a sweet and spiritual program celebrating, The Greatest Gift of all.

Invite your mother, daughter and best friend to Join you. RSVP by Friday, December 13th.

It will soon be time to shop for the Women’s Resource Center Adopt-a-Family ministry. Please keep these guidelines in mind as you do your shopping, and thanks for your generosity from year to year:

- Ornament tags will be on tables in the lobby and ready to be picked up starting Sunday, Nov. 3.
- Please label your gifts – tape the tag to the outside.
- We give gift cards for gas and groceries, so cash donations are welcome.
- Sometimes all of the tags don’t get taken, so we shop to cover what’s left. Cash donations help to cover these costs and ensure the ministry doesn’t run a deficit.
- Please deliver your gifts by the due date. Late gifts create a bind with planning and delivery.
- Please bring your wrapped & labeled gifts by Sunday, Dec. 8.

THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS AND HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES HAVE CHRISTMAS GIFTS.
Celebration Garden

The Celebration Garden has started its necessary winter rest phase. Looking back, our committee has been very thankful for the volunteer’s who have aided in the maintenance of the garden over the past months.

Our revised Celebration Garden packet is ready for you to pick up near the East entrance of the church.

Questions? Contact me at 347-9717 or email: mrich1300@yahoo.com.

Meredith Richter
Celebration Garden Chairperson

Winter Book Club 2020

Looking for a good book to read this winter? Read one or read them all-on YOUR own time. The books will be available to review and purchase in the church office. Kindle versions are also available. Following are the selections:

**The Same Sky: A Novel** by Amanda Eyre Ward. A wrenching, honest, painstakingly researched novel that puts a human face to the story of undocumented youth desperately seeking their dreams in America.

**The Wesley Challenge 21 Days to a More Authentic Faith** by Chris Folmsbee. With great insight, the author shows how John Wesley’s questions for spiritual growth remain powerfully relevant for 21st-century Christians. You will spend 3 weeks working through 21 questions that engage your physical, spiritual life and your relationship with God and others.

**Without You, There is No Us** by Suki Kim. In 2011, all the universities in North Korea were shut down for an entire year, except at Pyongyang University, where Suki Kim accepted a job. She was journalist posing as both a missionary and a teacher going undercover among the sons of North Korea’s elite. She carefully told them about the world beyond their borders, always aware that the more they knew, the more they risked.

All readers will meet ONE TIME in May for discussion, fellowship and DESSERT. Reserve some reading time on your calendars now and snuggle up with some great books this winter! As an added bonus each book is a selection from UMW’s Reading Program. Read 2 additional selections during the summer and fall to be recognized at UMW’s District Celebration.

HAPPY READING!! Pam Moyer
The Elderberries

The Christmas season is upon us. The Elderberries wish you all a very MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR. It’s hard to believe 2020 is fast approaching. The years seem to go faster and faster.

The Elderberries will be meeting on Friday, December 13, 2019 for their annual Christmas luncheon at the Perry Hotel main dining room at 12 noon.

PLEASE RSVP NO LATER THAN MONDAY, DECEMBER 9. THEY HAVE REQUESTED WE GIVE THEM OUR HEADCOUNT BY THIS DATE. THEY ARE BUSY THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE. PLEASE USE THE INFO BELOW TO RESPOND.

Bev McConnell
Cell: 231-645-5000 (be sure to leave message)
email: bevmac70@sbcglobal.net

The days are moving rapidly toward the end of 2019. We, as Petoskey United Methodist Women look back, can feel fortunate that the projects undertaken have reflected our mission in assisting women, children and youth.

The support that you, our Petoskey United Methodist Church has given, has helped to make this possible. For that we are very thankful.

The Prayer Shawl group will continue to meet through the winter on the second Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the church. Check out the shawls on the display rack in the Narthex. If you would like to take one as a gift for an event in the life of a friend or family member, notify the church office please.

The UMW Readers also continues to meet on the second Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. at American House. New books are added to the shelves in Room 10, the Library, for your reading pleasure and all of them can be used for credit for the UMW Reading Program.

We are looking forward to December 18 and the Annual Christmas Luncheon and program. Watch for additional information ~~~~ we look forward to seeing you there.

Meredith Richter
Communicator
IRA Distributions Made Directly to Petoskey United Methodist Church Qualify under the RMD Rules

Among the variety of ways to contribute to Petoskey United Methodist Church is the option to have your annual Required Minimum Distribution (“RMD”) from your IRA given directly to the church. This results in your distribution generally not being subject to federal or state tax.

In prior years this option has been renewed annually by Congress (which has resulted in maddening uncertainty and confusion) but this provision was extended permanently by Congress as part of the 2015 PATH Act.

The details of this option are as follows: An individual who has reached age 70 1/2 can distribute otherwise taxable traditional and Roth IRA amounts of up to $100,000 directly to certain tax-exempt charities, including Petoskey United Methodist Church. Such qualified charitable distributions are generally federal-income-tax-free to the donor. (Note that the distribution also results in the contribution being non-deductible.) The qualified charitable contribution equal to (or in excess of) an individual’s RMD is considered to satisfy the minimum distribution requirement for that year. We suggest that you consult with your financial planning professional to discuss this option further.

STOCK DONATIONS

Another way to contribute is with stock donations. The procedure for stock donations is as follows:

1. Stock donor contacts donor’s broker and contacts the church treasurer that the donation is coming.

2. Donor’s broker transfers stock to church’s broker then advises the donor the church treasurer that the transfer has been made.

3. Church’s broker has been directed to sell stock immediately and deposit cash into the Petoskey United Methodist Church’s brokerage account. The church’s broker immediately notifies the church treasurer the date of the transaction, the number of share received, the number of shares sold, selling price, sales commission and the net amount received. The church’s broker then sends a direct deposit to the Petoskey United Methodist checking account for the net amount within 5 business days.

4. The church treasurer will have online access to the church’s brokerage account. The Financial Secretary will send a confirmation statement to the donor stating the number of shares, date received, dollar value received by the church, and a statement saying “no goods or services were provided to the donor.”

5. The church Financial Secretary will send out an annual statement to the donor which will include a copy of the above confirmation.

6. The church treasurer will ensure that the brokerage account has a zero balance and include that in the monthly financial reports. If there is a balance, the treasurer will direct broker to zero it out and deposit into the church bank account with documentation.
Cards and notes are always welcomed. Contact the church office for addresses.

Long-Term Care & Shut-ins

American House
Miriam Rasmussen

Bay Bluffs
Mary Brubacher

The Villa at the Bay
Mary Jane Dick

Boulder Park Terrace
Gail Liebold, Dean Carper

Independence Village
Louise Yeager
Betty Hayner, Marian Juries
George & Martha Palmateer

Mallard Cove
Betty Doherty

At Home
Jackie Carper
Barb Fannin
Jennifer Osborn
Marijane Ricketts

Friends & Relatives of Church Family
Norma Wirgau (mother of Bob Wirgau)
Dolores & Ron Dawson (friends of John & Nancy Miett)

Active Military Duty
Jed Hutchinson, US Air Force
Son of Sue Hutchinson
Ben Fannin (Doug & Michele Fannin)
Jacob Kuziel (Mitch Kuziel & Deb Munn)
Adam Upleger (Nancy Miett)
Ethan Gulledge, U.S. Navy (Grandson of Bob & Sue Gulledge)

Names can be added or removed to the prayer list by calling Pastor James or Doug Mantha.

Advent small group
There will be three small groups hosted in people’s home for the Advent study “Almost Christmas: A Wesleyan Advent Experience”. Author and pastor Magrey deVega leads a group of authors in exploring how we can make the same commitment to Christ during Advent, and connect our Wesleyan heritage with the traditional Advent themes of Love, Hope, Joy, and Peace. There is also a brief DVD section for each chapter. See James, Doug, or Ed Angove (hosts) for more information.

Save the date
Running six Sundays in January and February from 1:00-2:00 in the youth room, join us (families and youth are invited also) for the DVD series “Faithful and Inclusive – The Bible, Sexuality, and the United Methodist Church”. Faithful and Inclusive allows you to gain an understanding of how United Methodists can be both obedient to God’s Word and fully welcoming to LGBTQ persons in the church. This six-session resource for Sunday schools and small groups has been designed for participants to develop their own perspectives on the Bible’s passages related to homosexuality. See the sign up sheet in the lobby for more information.
Watch Night . . . What is it?

Watch Night is celebrated among communities by congregants’ gathering at their churches on the last evening of the year to attend special services that typically commence between 7 and 10 p.m. and continue through midnight and into the New Year. These services are regarded by participants as a time to reflect upon and give thanks for the departing year and pray for the future, a spiritual way of celebrating a largely secular holiday. Many churches embrace such services as an alternative to the rowdy partying and drinking often associated with New Year’s Eve.

Watch Night began with the Moravians, a small Christian denomination whose roots lie in what is the present-day Czech Republic. The first such service is believed to have been held in 1733 on the estates of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf in Hernhut, Germany.

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, picked it up from the Moravians, incorporating a Watch Night vigil into the practices of his denomination beginning in 1740. Methodist Watch Nights were held once a month and on full moons, with the first such service in the United States reportedly taking place in 1770 at Old St. George’s Church in Philadelphia. These services survive to the present day in that denomination’s worship manuals as “Covenant Renewal Services.”

What was being “watched over” in those earlier services was one’s covenant with God. Those gatherings were a time for congregants to meditate on their state of grace: were they spiritually ready to meet their maker if the call were suddenly to come? As the 13th chapter of Mark instructs, the faithful need to be ever vigilant, because the hour of the Lord’s coming is not known. (Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh.)

The end-of-year Watch Night of 1862 took on special significance attaching to the impending 1 January 1863 enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation, and that night has come to be known as “Freedom’s Eve.” On 22 September 1862, President Lincoln issued his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which stated: “[O]n the first day of January ... all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” Lincoln subsequently issued the Emancipation Proclamation itself on 1 January 1863.

While that proclamation did not end slavery the moment it was issued, it did at least proclaim some slaves free. Knowing that this was going into effect the next day must certainly have influenced the nature of that year’s Watch Night within the African-American and abolitionist communities, adding a second symbolic layer of what was being watched for (the coming of freedom at the stroke of midnight) to the more usual fare (the coming of the Christ at an unspecified future date and therefore the need to maintain a constant personal state of spiritual preparation). Among African-American congregations, that second layer of meaning has since become permanently woven into the fabric of the original, making New Year’s Eve Watch Night services as much now about remembering the end of slavery as it is upon personal reflection on the state of one’s soul. ~ bartleby.com
If your birthday or anniversary is missing from this list, or incorrect, please call the church office so we can update our files 347-2733 or info@petoskeyumc.org

Thomas & Megan Cole  12/01/2001  18 years
Tom & Marti Swiger  12/13/69  50 years
Michael & Elizabeth Durbin  12/14/1991  28 years
Bob & Sue Davis  12/27/1958  61 years
Edward & Karla Stokel  12/29/1992  27 years

2 Margaret VanWagoner, Winfield Sluyter, Sue Herrington, Madylin Smith
3 Emma Montel
6 Sue Gulledge
7 Larry Mann
11 Nick Bullock
14 Donna Snyder
15 Jessica Webster
16 Daniel Wilcox
20 Jack Stolz, Jr.
22 Charlie Huntington
23 Jed Bloch, Angie Kamalii
25 Carol Shanley, Don Weber
26 Susan Luttmann,
27 Carolyn Nelson, Sue Malone
28 Pearl Dally
30 Ayla Keene
31 Roberta Howell, Jeremy Mantha
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The Worship Committee will order poinsettias to honor and remember loved ones. They will be available for $6.50 each. Please place your order by filling out the information below. Payment must accompany this order form. The deadline for ordering is Monday, December 16th.

The Committee would like to decorate the sanctuary with the plants through the Christmas Eve service on December 24th. You may take your poinsettia home after the service.

I would like to order ________ poinsettia plant(s) at $6.50 each.

Given by: __________________________________________

__________________________________________________

Phone: _____________________________________________

Please circle: In Honor of   In Memory of

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Place order form & money in a marked envelope in the offering basket, send by mail, or leave in the office by Dec. 17th.

Thank you!
‘Twas the night before Christmas,
when all thro’ the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads,
And Mama in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter’s nap —
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below;
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and call’d them by name:
"Now! Dasher, now! Dancer, now! Prancer and Vixen,
"On! Comet, on! Cupid, on! Donder and Blitzen;
"To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!
"Now dash away! Dash away!
Dash away all!"
As dry leaves before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys — and St. Nicholas too:
And then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound:
He was dress’d all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnish’d with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys was flung on his back,
And he look’d like a peddler just opening his pack:
His eyes — how they twinkled!
His dimples: how merry,
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face, and a little round belly
That shook when he laugh’d, like a bowl full of jelly:
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laugh’d when I saw him in spite of myself:
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And fill’d all the stockings; then turn’d with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew, like the down of a thistle:
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight —

Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

—Clement Clark Moore
Worship Service
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Sunday service broadcast at 11:00 a.m. each Sunday on 1270 AM and 102.3 FM

Children’s Worship is available.
Professional-staffed nursery is available.

Special Offerings for December
December 8th, UMCOR
December 24th, Christmas Eve Offering
Manna for December
Tuna Fish & Canned Meats

We exist to seek and nurture lifelong followers and servants of Jesus Christ.