The only thing that counts is Faith working through Love. Galatians 5:6

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Last month I began a series of articles on the distinctive Wesleyan contributions to understanding the nature and mission of the church. I wrote about the Wesleyan conviction that God’s salvation (saving love) is meant for all people.

The second distinctive aspect is the saving love (salvation) of God is transformative. Wesley gave this description about the scope of God’s saving love:

By salvation I mean, not barely (according to the vulgar notion) deliverance from hell, or going to heaven; but present deliverance from sin, restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy and truth.

For Wesley, salvation is more than a matter of our elevator ride at the time of our death. In fact, Wesley referred to this as a vulgar notion. Instead, Wesley encouraged us to consider full salvation; present deliverance from sin and the renewal of our souls after the image of God. (Genesis 1:27)

Wesley understood sin as a power greater than humanity. Therefore resisting sin is more than just having enough will power. Like Paul, Wesley understood all of creation to be subjected to sin. Creation is freed from sin by the saving love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. This salvation frees us from the captivity of sin. We sometimes call this Christian freedom.

While in sin’s captivity, our souls become unhealthy and do not fully reveal the image of God. The saving love of God works to the restore our souls to “original righteousness”. Think of a garden and the conditions needed to have a successful one: good soil, space to grow, water, sunlight and proper pruning. When we are freed from the present power of sin, our souls are transformed and we can be the images of God in whom we are created. We refer to this as the New Creation.

To that end, God’s saving love transforms us into a community of witness, a community of worship and a community of discipleship. This leads to the final distinctive aspect of Wesleyan ecclesiology:

God’s salvation creates community.

May we all experience the saving love of God that transforms us.

Christ’s Servant,

Rev. Joseph A Johnson
The tradition continues. Once again, in the narthex, you’ll find the straggly old Christmas Tree adorned with paper ornaments bearing the names of children who really, really need a Christmas gift. This year we are purchasing gifts for children of the Lord’s Lambs Ministry in Pembroke and Iglesia Jesus El Buen Pastor Bethany UMC in Chicago.

FUMC offers this wonderful opportunity to touch the life of a child in need by providing a Christmas gift. You will also be asked to bring a tube of toothpaste and a bar of soap with each gift as well as other personal care items for the people of Pembroke.

Remember that our youth will shop for you. Consider a donation of $40 (or more**) per child. What a great way to avoid the crowds.

*Our Youth will not only shop for your gift, they’ll giftwrap it, too!*

The usual instructions are by the tree. But if you have questions, please contact Carolyn Heiney at cheiney@att.net.

RETURN YOUR GIFTS BY OR BEFORE the 10:30 SERVICE ON DECEMBER 10. And just imagine the smile your gift will bring.

THE CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS TREE

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*ShopWithScrip* FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFT CARDS & BENEFIT FIRST CHURCH

If you haven’t taken advantage of our FUMC *ShopWithScrip* cards, pick up a form in the narthex on December 3 and December 10. Take a look at the variety of merchants from whom you can purchase a gift card. This is an easy way to do some of your Christmas shopping while benefitting our church. Questions? Contact Sue Pinkowski at spinkowski@hotmail.com. [*formerly known as Manna*]
In this beautifully minimalist book, Trevor Hudson focuses on one biblical word of wonder each day of Advent. Pausing for a few moments to read Hudson's meditations on the word for the day will guide readers to a deeper understanding of Advent. Hudson also briefly explores the lives and thoughts of 4 significant characters in the Christmas story, encouraging readers to immerse themselves in the dramatic story. His simple approach provides a doable daily practice and gently leads readers to discover how they can open their hearts and lives more generously to God. This is a daily devotional. The price is $7 for the book. Don't miss this Study.

Saturday, December 9: Parents’ Day Out from 3:00-6:00 pm

Want some adult time this December? Need to get some kid-free shopping done?? The Member Growth & Care committee is here to help! Your children (infants – 5th graders) are invited to First Church for an afternoon of fun and games. NO CHARGE for the parents -- just a promise you will enjoy your afternoon! Drinks will be provided for the older children, but please bring your child's "nut-free" snack or bottles as needed. Registration is limited to 20 children, so REGISTER TODAY (or no later than December 3) with Chris Squier at squierc@gmail.com or 630-279-3375.

Sunday, December 10: Advent Musical Worship Service at 10:30 am followed by Brunch

A Stellar Sunday at First Church to Prepare for Christmas: The Advent Musical Worship will feature selections by Lauridsen, Handel, and Pietro Yon along with our traditional lessons and carols. Lyric Opera of Chicago soprano Kaileen Miller will highlight the program, along with choral and handbell selections from the FUMC choirs. Following this joyful service, please join in fellowship with our church family for a delicious Brunch Buffet. A suggested donation of $6 per adult and $4 per child would be greatly appreciated. The Fellowship Team welcomes you to share this wonderful meal as together we celebrate the season of Advent. Advance sign up is not required and all are welcome – neighbors, friends and family, too.

Monday, December 18: First Church hosts Grace Café

Help create and serve a special holiday meal to our community guests. See Page 8. Sign up at Fellowship Table in Wesley Hall.

Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24

Sunday Morning Worship at 10:30 am. Adult Advent Class at 9:30 am, NO Church School, Child Care provided. Family Christmas Service at 5:00 pm. Child Care provided. Candlelight Service with Communion at 9:00 pm
The First Church library committee encourages you to use the church web site to find books you want to read for the holidays. You can access the library catalog from our church web site: umcelmhurst.org. Choose “Grow” then “Church Library.” After you click on “Church Library” you will see the library web page.

If you choose “Subject Catalog” you can find books in certain categories. When you click on a catalog, it will appear on your computer in a separate tab of your browser or, depending on your browser and its settings, in an Adobe Acrobat tab. For example, here is the “Christmas” subject.
Next First Library Book Discussion is on January 21
Get your copy today!

The Book of Unknown Americans
by Cristina Henriquez

When fifteen-year-old Maribel Rivera sustains a terrible injury, the Riveras leave behind a comfortable life in Mexico and risk everything to come to the United States so that Maribel can have the care she needs. This book is a stunning novel of hopes and dreams, guilt and love—a book that offers a resonant new definition of what it means to be American. This was a book discussion at the Elmhurst Public Library so there are many copies available in the “Book Discussion” section of the library. Colleen Sherburne will lead our discussion on January 21.

Small Groups at First Church

- The Meals Ministry meets for cooking sessions in the church kitchen as needed for delivery to those who have experienced a loss, illness, hospitalization, or birth of a child. Contact Kelley Hook if you would like more information or to join for the next cooking day.

- The Film Group meets on the first Tuesday of the month ($5 senior rates all day at both York and Marcus Theaters) with an optional "discussion group" offered after the film at a nearby restaurant. The next movie date is TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5. Contact Chris Squier or Jan Reese if you would like to come along.

- Dinner and the Arts meets periodically to attend a local music, drama, or art event, followed by dinner out. Mary Hallman is the contact. Look for more information on forthcoming events.
Church School News

Thanks to the generosity of our First Church children, families, and teachers, the church school classes donated six shoe boxes full of school supplies, toiletries and toys to children in need around the globe through Operation Christmas Child. We will be notified where our boxes end up and we will pass the information on to the congregation.

CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT

All children are invited to participate in the re-telling of the Christmas story during the 5:00 Family Service. All who would like to be involved should be at church in Room 102 at 4:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve to get costumes and instructions. Contact Lisa Rogers for more info at education@umcelmhurst.org.

TRUNKFULS of TREATS!

Our First Church children were out in full force and costume on October 29 and collected more than $500 for Heifer International. Thanks to all who handed out change to the kids as they trunk or treated around our parking lot. Well done!!!
Youth Group News

Youth Breakfast Ministry
December 16

Come join our youth in this wonderful ministry as we serve our Clothing Center guests a warm breakfast. Kitchen is open from 8:30 to 11:00 am on the third Saturday of the month (October through April).

More Youth Group Activities in December

DECEMBER 3   SHOP & WRAP from 11:30am - 3:00pm
Lunch will be served before we head out to shop for gifts for the Church Giving Tree. When we get back to church, we’ll wrap all off our gifts and enjoy some holiday treats together.

December 10   HOLIDAY PARTY & COOKIE EXCHANGE from 4 - 6:30pm
Come celebrate Christmas with the Youth Group. We will play games, do a service project, have a devotion, and, OF COURSE, eat pizza. Bring 3 dozen cookies to share and we’ll do an exchange. Friends are welcome!

Sleep Out Saturday 2017 BRAVOS. The following youth and adults braved the cold and rain on November 4 and spent the night on our church lawn while raising awareness of the homeless in DuPage County: Bella and Lily Bjerkan, Alex Jannusch, Carly Laurx, Callie and Pete Meyer, Emma and Lisa Rogers, Jack, Maggie, Tommy and Shannon Schroeder, Katrina Smith, Maya and Sidney Valdez, Claire and Grace Vincent.

Extra thanks to chaperones-- Pete Meyer(13th year-WOW) and Shannon Schroeder (7th year); Deborah Meyers for her soup; Colleen Sherburne for chili and brownies and for serving us breakfast. One huge shout-out to our supportive congregation for attending the Sleep Out Saturday cook- out. Through this event, our youth raised more than $900 which will provide 27 nights of room and board for an individual in the Bridge Communities program. And . . . it is not too late to donate: please visit the following link to make a donation through our youth group https://www.bridgecommunities.org/group60
A Grace-filled evening is coming!

For the past 11 years, churches throughout Elmhurst have held "Grace Cafes" twice a month to serve dinner to anyone in our community who may be hungry or lonely. First Church's only opportunity to serve Grace Café this year will be on Monday December 18th, and we are planning a special holiday menu for our guests. Once again we ask for your help as we welcome more than 100 of our neighbors for a hot meal and warm fellowship.

Sign up sheets to help provide ingredients, cook, set up, greet, serve, and clean up are by the Fellowship Table in Wesley Hall, and we invite all ages to participate. For this special meal we are asking not only for food items, but also for monetary donations so that we may shop for some of the necessary ingredients in quantities larger than we would ask anyone to provide.

Please consider joining us on December 18th and thank you, in advance, for helping us offer this meaningful service to our community. Questions? Contact Kelley Hook at khhook1@gmail.com.

PADS "Adopt an Apartment" Project is Complete!

The furniture and household items gathered and donated by First Church and Bethel UCC have been delivered! Everything was taken to Wheaton on October 30. The movers were met by PADS Staff who were very grateful for the items. The staff said, "Everything brought is exactly what we needed." They also said that a family was moving into an apartment the next day and two more were to move in during the week of November 6. Our delivery came at the perfect time.

While the project took longer than anticipated, we helped achieve the final outcome: people went "from a pad on the floor to a key in the door!" -- and in time for the holidays! Thanks to everyone!!

--The Missions Committee
Prayer List

Recent Concerns ~ Doug Peters, Sr. (Doug Peters’ father); Stephen Mathias (Jason Mathias’s father); Fredrick Rickleff who mourns the death of his wife Doris on November 13; Mary Enockson (aunt of Jane Cooke) who passed away near the end of October.

Matt Johnson; Mae Aubert (Chris Squier’s aunt); Martha Gracik (Jennifer Grisola’s grandmother); Eliz Krafcky; Rick Stanley; Terri O’Neill’s father; Debbi Foster (Jamie Falconer’s friends); Doug Hotchkis, Bob Lawson (Marlene Stratton’s friend); Rachael (daughter of Kathy Hansen’s friend’s) Darlene Gee; Tony Sekera; Maria (Mike Capra’s sister); John Thompson (Dave Cooke’s friend); Marie Amidei (Ann Gills’ friend’s) and her family; Russell and Karen Whiles (Susan Boyd’s cousin and his wife); Madeleine Rodriguez (Amy Strauss’ daughter); Kim Rudakas, the family of Norma Linneweh.

Ongoing Prayers ~ Tricia DePasquale (Kristy Howland’s sister-in-law); Terse Stamos (Richard Norgaard’s sister); Mary Gaier (Lola Hotchkis’ mother); Jan Reese; Cherie Kupcik (Sandy Terrell’s niece); Doree Kaforski (friend of June Muncy); Tom Mitchell (son of Diane Mitchell); Kathleen Gallagher and Anthony Mcelligott; Sophia Zematis (age 4, friends of the Grisolas); Juanita Daniels (Steve Strauss’ aunt); Marge Farrell (Ed Locke’s aunt); Pat Lind; Eric McMillian (son-in-law of Darlene Van Meir); Erv and Marge Blasius; Philip Williams; Janet H. (friend of Marlene Stratton); Margie Finley (Audrey Klang’s mother); Curle Engdahl; the home-bound; the military; those who are homeless or in shelters; those in nursing homes; and caregivers.
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<td>11:30-12:30pm</td>
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<td>7:30pm 12 Step Group</td>
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<td>2nd Sunday of Advent Advent Musical Service at 10:30 followed by Brunch</td>
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<td>New Year's Eve</td>
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<td>Clothing Center 9-11 am 7-9 pm</td>
<td>Church Office Closed</td>
<td>Clothing Center 9-11 am 7-9 pm</td>
<td>8:30 Youth Breakfast 9-11 am Clothing Center</td>
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2017 Christmas Poinsettias

We are once again taking orders for beautiful red poinsettias to adorn our worship space on Christmas Eve. There are two sizes to choose from.

Orders will be taken beginning November 26th and ending on December 17th

Please consider ordering a plant to be delivered to one of our homebound members. This simple gesture lets them know we care and are thinking about them at this special time of the year. If you would like to donate a plant to this ministry, please put a check mark in the column labeled “Donate Plant to HUGS”. The HUGS team will deliver any plants marked as such. If you would be able to assist HUGS in their deliveries, please check the appropriate line below, and thank you.

Plants being taken home will be available after services on Christmas Eve.

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<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<th>I'll Take Plant Home</th>
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<td>______</td>
<td>Large (7-9 blooms)</td>
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<td>Medium (6-7 blooms)</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
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Total Order $_______

Order Placed by: ____________________________________________

(your name)

This/these flowers are given in memory of ______________________

____________________________________________________________________

This/these flowers are given in honor of ______________________

____________________________________________________________________

____ I will help the HUGS team deliver the plants to the homebound.

I would like to deliver a plant to? ____________________________________

(name)

Checks should be made payable to:

First United Methodist Church of Elmhurst

Please place order, with payment attached, in the offering plate or mail to the church office 
232 S. York Road, Elmhurst, IL 60126

Orders Must be Received in Church Office by Sunday, December 17th
The Clothing Center is open to clients three times a month on the first Thursday of the month from 9-11am and 7-9pm, and on the third Saturday of the month from 9-11am. DONATIONS of clothing, shoes, bedding, books, toys and other household goods may be dropped off from 9-5pm Monday-Friday at the main north door. Tax receipts are available at the drop-off area. Our Youth Breakfast Ministry, coordinated by our middle school and high school youth, provides a free breakfast to Clothing Center clients on the third Saturday of every month from October through April.

The Visitor newsletter is published monthly. Submissions are due to the church office by the 15th of each month via email. admin@umcelmhurst.org

All information for the weekly bulletin is due to the church office by 12 noon on Wednesdays.

The Visitor wants to know your Newsletter Mailing Preference.
Snail Mail?? Email?? Unsubscribe??
Contact Sharon at (630)-834-2440 or admin@umcelmhurst.org