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## Help Needed for MHU Students

**Greetings from the Chaplain's Office at Mars Hill University.** Some of our students are unable to return home for the Christmas break, either because of not having a home or would be returning to an unsafe housing situation. Services we would normally be able to provide for students are almost non-existent, due to COVID-19. We're asking local churches and their congregations if they can provide a safe place for these students to stay during the break. If you have a spare cottage, apartment, or an extra bedroom which could house a student during this difficult time, please call me (336-469-9048) or email me (ahoots@mhu.edu) If you call, and I don't answer, please leave a voice-mail!

— Andrew Hoots, MHU Assistant Chaplain

## Make Your Own!

Time to make your own Advent wreaths! All are invited to make their own Advent wreath and then, on the four Sundays of Advent, we will begin together our virtual Sunday Morning Prayer services by lighting our Advent candles and praying the Advent prayers.

Susan Sherard has written beautiful Advent prayers for our liturgy this year. Greenery and Advent candle supplies will be available in the hallway of the church between November 24 and December 3, or you can locate and buy your own greenery and wreath supplies. Traditionally, the supplies needed for an Advent wreath are three blue candles, one pink candle and a large white Christ candle for the center. The candles are surrounded by snips of evergreen trees and bushes of any type.



## Music Makers Needed!

The ECHS virtual service on Sunday, Dec. 27, will be a service of Christmas Lessons and Carols. We hope to have about eight to ten musicians play festive Christmas music and hymns instead of the usual liturgy. We also need four readers for the four lessons. Please inform Dick and me if you are willing and able to play Christmas music on Dec. 27.

Thanks, David McNair

### ZOOM MINISTRY SCHEDULE- DECEMBER 2020 to JAN 3 2021

DATE:	Dec 6 2020	Dec 13 2020	Dec 20 2020	Dec 27 2020	Jan 3 2021
FIRST READER	Lynda Miller	Colleen Boll	Jan Mallindine	Gail Kase	Peggy Wilson
SECOND READER	Mark Holland	Claire Gillespie	Peggy Barnes	Ed Caskey	Kent Self
PRAYER LEADER	Claire Gillespie	Jim Haaga	Pam McNally	Ingrid Diederer	Peggy Barnes
PRELUDE MUSICIAN	To Be Determined	Rebecca Sharp	To Be Determined	To Be Determined	To Be Determined
MUSIC AFTER THE REFLECTION	The Haagas	Debra Alexander	Jan Mallindine	Mark Holland	The Haagas
VESTRY REP	Lynda Miller	Debra Alexander	Loraine Hilty	Dick Jordan	Nancy Larkin

## The One-Column December Calendar

Every Tuesday ~ Evening Prayer via Zoom 7:00pm

Every Wednesday ~ Centering Prayer via Zoom: 10:00am

Every Thursday ~ Evening Prayer via Zoom: 7:00pm

Every Sunday ~ Morning Prayer via Zoom: 10:30am

Other:

6 ~ The Second Sunday of Advent (guest preacher,  
Linda Brown)

9 ~ Outreach Committee meeting via Zoom at 1:00pm

10 ~ Finance Committee meeting via Zoom at 9:30am

13 ~ The Third Sunday of Advent

15 ~ Vestry meeting via Zoom at 5:00pm

16 ~ Black Jesus Book Group via Zoom at 6:30pm

17 ~ Black Jesus Book Group via Zoom at 10:00am

20 ~ The Fourth Sunday of Advent

21 ~ The first day of winter

24 ~ Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve service(s) location and time(s) TBA

25 ~ Merry Christmas!

Christmas Day service info TBA

29 ~ Special Evening Prayer service TBA

31 ~ Special Evening Prayer service TBA

## Terrific News for La Esperanza Ministry

Dogwood Health Trust has approved a Racial Equity Community Grant of \$15,000.00 to assist in funding La Esperanza Outreach Operating Support.

**Congratulations** to Rebecca Sharp and all those who worked to write this grant and, most of all, for their leadership of this beautiful ministry!

Peace, David

## Key Box Alert

**PLEASE BE AWARE:** There have been reports about carelessness with the key and its box. Either the numbers were not changed — thus allowing anyone to come along and get the key — or the key was left in the door. And there were even reports of the key missing altogether from the box! Be careful about the key: As soon as you unlock the door to the church, immediately remove the key and return it to its box. And then scramble the numbers of the combination. Thanks!

## **Christmas Eve Services: 3:30p.m. and 5:00p.m.**

The ECHS Re-gathering Team and the Vestry have approved a safety protocol plan that will allow us to offer two outdoor services in the parking lot at ECHS on Christmas Eve. **The Christmas Eve services will be at 3:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.** The following safety protocols and procedures will be required for all church service participants:

1. Service participants are asked to review and agree to the EHCS COVID-19 Safety Covenant (*see page 5*) prior to attending a Christmas Eve service at ECHS.
2. **Service participants are required to make reservations for the Christmas Eve service.** Although participants will be permitted to make a service time preference, there is no guarantee that all preferences will be granted. Reservations will be on a first come, first serve basis.
3. **Thirty-five reservations will be accepted for each of the two services.** Service reservations will be accepted by email beginning on a publicized date (not yet determined) and participants will receive a reservation confirmation.
4. **Each family "pod" will be assigned a parking space** where participants may either remain in their car or sit in provided chairs within their assigned parking space.
5. Participants will be required to remain in their assigned parking space "pod" for the duration of the service.

6. Liturgical leaders will be on the porch of the church building at the top of the stairs and spaced no less than six feet apart at all times.

7. **Holy Eucharist will be celebrated offering only the bread (no wine).**

David will administer the bread to the participants by walking to each car and dropping the host in the hands of participants. David will wear an N-95 face mask and gloves; and he will use tongs to administer the bread.

8. Participants will be asked to hold out their hands, palms up, and remain still while the host is dropped into their hands.

9. Each service will last approximately thirty to forty minutes.

10. **In the event of inclement weather, a decision will be made on Christmas Eve morning to reschedule the service as a virtual service on Zoom at 5 p.m.**

11. There will be a team of people trained as ushers, monitors, and temperature checkers for both services.

12. **Service participants are invited to bring a candle and matches to the Christmas Eve service.**

The candles may remain lit throughout the service. It is recommended that candles be in containers which can protect the flames from the wind.

13. **Questions or comments** regarding this safety plan may be directed to members of the ECHS Re-gathering Team: Linda Tull, Jim Haaga, Debra Alexander, Pam McNally, Ann Smith, and David McNair.

## ECHS COVID-19 Covenant

By attending any service (indoor or outside) at ECCHS, I promise, with God's help and to the best of my ability, the following:

1. Recognizing the contagiousness of COVID-19, I will evaluate my own risks and benefits of attendance prior to attending any in-person service or gathering.
2. I will not attend if I feel ill.
3. I will not attend if in the fourteen (14) days prior to the event, I have been in contact with anyone known to have COVID-19 or anyone being tested for COVID-19 or anyone in quarantine or isolation for COVID-19.
4. I will wear a mask at least two layers thick, (three layers is best) or an N-95 mask covering my mouth and nose at all times. Scarves, bandanas or gators are not acceptable.
5. I will maintain social distancing as recommended at the time of the event (i.e., six feet, twelve feet, etc.).
6. I will wash my hands frequently using hand sanitizer or soapy water for a minimum of 20 seconds.
7. I will immediately notify ECCHS officials if I become symptomatic, or if I am diagnosed as positive for COVID-19, or if I believe I was at risk of infection when I attended a ECCHS service or gathering.



## ECCHS Black Jesus Book Group

The December book selection is ***Between The World and Me*** by Ta-Nehisi Coates. The group will meet virtually via Zoom Wednesday, Dec. 16 at 6:30 p.m. and Thursday, Dec. 17 at 10:00 a.m. Participants will need to secure a copy of the book. Hailed by Toni Morrison as "required reading," it is described as *"... a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?"*

## Sharing the Spirit of the Christ Child with Luminaria

The gift of illumination in this dark time of the year is an especially pleasant way to share the Light of Christ—the essence of our Christmas tradition— with neighbors and friends! Luminary (singular) and Luminaries (plural), derived from the Latin word *lumen*—and in Spanish, little lamps are known as “Farolito”.

- A votive candle set into a small, decorative paper bag weighted with sand and placed in a row with others along a walkway, driveway, or rooftop as a holiday decoration.
- A bonfire built in front of each house in a pueblo to celebrate Christmas Eve.
- A vigil fire used in ceremonies, in Native American and Hispanic cultures

*(from the American Heritage © Dictionary, 5th Edition, online at Wordnik)*

In the American Southwest, for example, it is a Christmas tradition handed down from earliest times to light and tend a small fire in order to guide and invite the Spirit to “enter in.” Today, many places—and even universities—sponsor elaborate displays of many thousands of luminaria at Christmas. Of course, there are also elaborate traditions for decorating the “Light of Christ”, for example, in German-speaking and Scandinavian countries.

It’s so easy to make and share Luminaria!

What’s needed: 1) lunch bags (white or brown). 2) dry sand. 3) candles. Typically “votive candles”—with or without the glass—work well. But just about any “short” candle, say 2” to 6”, will burn outdoors just fine. Just to be clear about it, the colder the night, the longer the candle is likely to burn. And once it is set outside and lit, a puff of wind is not likely to cause much harm, beyond the occasional loss of a bag!

HINTS: Begin by putting a couple inches of sand in the bags. Then crease and fold down the top a couple times—say, two inches of the open bag—to help stabilize and keep the candle away from the paper.

Suggestion: take American teenagers, put all the stuff out in front of them, add Christmas cookies and cider, and suggest they get to work!

It’s a great shared family or neighborhood project or even can be used as a fund-raiser (i.e., to make up and sell as a “kit”).

How best to put them out and enjoy?

Collaborate with others, or use your imaginations as a way to surprise your grumpy, gloomy neighbors (maybe just teasing a little here!) This may be the year to begin your own new-old Christmas tradition!

All the best, Deacon Ty





**Thanks to the generosity** of the people of ECHS through David McNair's discretionary fund and individual donations, ECHS underwrote distribution of food to the families of students enrolled in Niños Creadores de Historia when the schools closed March 15.

Each bag contained various staples: Five pounds each of rice and black beans, dried corn to be ground for tortillas, a fortified milk substitute for the children, salt, sugar, and cooking oil. Each student received a bag, with the exception of the family most in need. One mother had been evicted from her home. I want to figure out a way to help her without appearing to favor her. Every family has an exceptional need and I didn't want to set her apart.

What I didn't realize is that she is the only parent with three children in the two grades we serve. For the first time I limited each family to, at most, two bags of commodities. Little did I know she was the one family that would usually get three bags. That mistake won't happen again, and I can hopefully make it up to her the last week of October, when we again give food to the students and pay the staff.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity.  
Yours in Christ's love, Phyllis Manoogian, Deacon





*Big Blue at night,  
dressed in  
Christmas lights.*

*Big Blue in daytime.*



## THE GIFT OF HOSPITALITY

We planted the Blue Spruce 20 feet from the porch.  
He was six feet tall when we adopted him, and has grown.

A lot.

Now that he is too tall for our ladder, we need professional help to put Christmas lights on him.

These days he is over 30 feet tall, so we bought him a baby brother.

Our Blue Spruce is now "Big Blue," and "Little Blue" is just around the corner.

Working on catching up.

Big Blue has become a member of the family, with a soul, and a conscience.

He has wonderful ethics.

Big Blue offers shelter from the storm, protection at night, a safe refuge from the resident hawk.

Affordable housing.

He welcomes all comers: the locals, the visitors, travelers.

The migrants.

Large and small, rosey, black, yellow and brown,

Makes no difference.

Big Blue offers his outstretched limbs to all who need to rest and breathe easy.

All those who just need a peaceful place to eat their humble meal,

Congregate with friends.

Wordlessly he invites them,

"Come on over.

Take a load off.

I'm big and I'm strong and will look after you.

It's cool, and green, and dry inside my boughs.

And you can stay as long as you wish."

*Ann Smith 10/24/2020*

## Thank You, Debra!

'Tis time for Holy Spirit to thank one of ours! Debra Carlson has facilitated our Children's Sunday School classes since at least 2000! She has not only taught on a regular basis, but also coordinated the curriculum and supplies that were needed for our children.

Prior to 2000, she met up annually with Mary Jo Sparrow to assist with cleaning, organizing, and prepping for the children's classroom and groups.

But Deb has decided that these good efforts must end — she is stepping down as children's Sunday school leader this January after twenty plus years of involvement with the program.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Deb for her faithful service of offering Christian Education and loads of love to so many of our children for the past twenty or more years!

## Announcing Pillar of Fire

### A novel by Joyce Hollyday

Before moving to Vermont a year and a half ago, Joyce Hollyday was involved in the life of our church as a member of **Mujeres Unidas en Fe** and an occasional preacher. For almost a decade, she was at work on a historical novel, which was recently published. She has dedicated it to **Mujeres Unidas en Fe**. We're pleased to share the following information about it.

In an age of intolerance, compassion can be dangerous. **Pillar of Fire** captures the stunning witness of the medieval mystics known as Beguines. Amid the intrigues of kings and knights, against a panorama of church corruption, Crusader campaigns, and Inquisition trials, these bold women broke all the rules. They offer a model of courageous hope in an era much like our own.

"**Pillar of Fire** is a page-turner filled with history, humor, and beauty." —Lydia Wylie-Kellermann, editor, Geez magazine

"This profound epic tale will move you to tears, incite your righteous anger, and inspire you to create authentic community. Reading it is like taking a deep spiritual journey." —Nancy Rue, author, The Reluctant Prophet Trilogy

"Joyce Hollyday weaves a fabric of adventure that gallops across Europe to Sinai and back. Retelling the gospel story in a feminist key, Pillar of Fire is a compelling mirror for our own times and consciences." —Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, authors, Healing Haunted Histories

More details and ordering information can be found at <https://wipfandstock.com/pillar-of-fire.html>. When you click on "Add to Cart," you'll receive an automatic 20% discount. At checkout, you can use the code PILLAR for an additional 20% off the cover price. **Makes a great Christmas gift!**



## Attic Windows by Anne Porter

I live in a neighborhood  
Of three-story wooden houses  
And in their highest gables  
Right up under the eaves  
Are small odd-shaped windows  
That I never notice  
Till suddenly one evening  
They fill up with light  
And I know that my neighbor's children  
Are home for the holidays

These are the windows  
Of those attic bedrooms  
With rough rafters  
Rooms that are either  
Too hot or too cold  
They may contain a drum-set  
Or an empty birdcage  
Or a broken chair

Even a honeycomb the bees  
Abandoned in the rafters  
They're rooms needed only  
When every child is home

Only on holidays  
And maybe close to midnight  
A light in a triangular  
Or round or fan-shaped window  
Will all at once appear  
Shining above the trees

It gives off a flash of wonder  
Like a child's first word  
Or a singer touching her highest  
Most beautiful note of all.

From Living Things; Steerforth Press L.C.; c. 2006  
(contributed by Kathleen Phillips)  
Thank you, Kathleen, for sending this poem, and  
also for your kind words. —The editor.