

# The Lamplighter

Emmanuel United Methodist Church

January 2014



Pastor Daniel Mejia

*"I turn to God and give thanks for whatever gifts I am able to appreciate: perhaps just the breath in my lungs or how dearly God loves me.... What I manage to be grateful for may be very small, but that little glimpse may be enough to open the door to gratitude. The more grateful I feel, the more that interior abundance naturally wants to overflow into acts of generosity. Because God is so generous to me, I want to be generous to others."*

**Margaret Bullitt-Jonas**

I don't know what you got for Christmas but I really hope you got what you wanted; but then again, you might be at that point in your life when you have it all, you don't need anything or want anything. Maybe for you the true excitement of Christmas is in the giving of gifts and not in the receiving. As for me, I can honestly tell you that I fluctuate, I go back and forth. I love giving gifts and seeing the reactions of people when I give them the perfect gift but I enjoy receiving thoughtful gifts that show love and care for me. I'm

also of the mind that many times the best gifts are not the ones that you can buy. For example, for a parent with little kids, I bet you they would trade a new Mini iPad for a full night of sleep. Or an elderly shut-in would trade her daily delicious gourmet dinner at the retirement home for a 30 minute visit by her children she hasn't seen in months.

Good gifts come in all sizes and forms and not all can be purchased. This year for instance, I received the most wonderful gift in my wife Michelle. She has become the highlight of my year and life. I look forward to many years together with her as we share our lives and ministry together.

As we look at our Scriptures, the narrative of the "Magi" in Matthew chapter 2 is all about this group of non-Jewish men from the Far East who came bearing gifts for Jesus. There are many layers to this story, but today I want to go back to the gifts they brought for Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Expensive gifts worthy of a king. The gifts symbolize royalty, authority, and the maximum respect for Jesus who is the Son of God. Not much is told of how Jesus and his parents used those gifts. We don't know if they used them to start a college fund for Jesus or if they were invested wisely in the stock market. BUT what it can be said about this story is that the Magi were affected and transformed in their encounter

with Jesus. In fact, it is safe to say that as much as the Magi gave gifts to Jesus, Jesus gave them back the gift of Abundant Life in Him.



20th Century Methodist Missionary E. Stanley Jones was told by a certain psychologist that the three things people most want in life are: **significance, security, and to be loved.** E Stanley Jones goes on to say, "Jesus is the door to all three. Jesus turns senseless situations into value. A new sense of dignity and direction comes into life with Him." So, my prayer for 2014 is that together we will find in Jesus the gifts of **significance in life, security in all circumstances, and to know that we are deeply loved by Jesus.**

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Daniel Mejia

## It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas

By Ben Sloan

*(Former Assistant Pastor Ben Sloan expresses interesting observations in this article, received too late for the December issue.)*

Signs of Christmas have begun appearing all over Managua. No, it hasn't been snowing. It stays pretty steadily in the 90's, but I can tell that Christmas is coming because the mascot of the most popular fried chicken chain is now wearing a Santa Claus hat. I know that Christmas is on its way because Pepsi billboards tell me that I will enjoy Christmas more with a refreshing beverage by my side. The commercialization of Christmas is nothing new for me, but what makes it so surprising in Nicaragua is that Christmas is not as heavily celebrated here. I've asked my Nicaraguan friends why a holiday that isn't celebrated gets so much publicity in the advertisements. They respond that there are two Nicaraguas. Wealthy Nicaraguans celebrate Christmas with presents, lights, and good food, but the majority of Nicaraguans lack the income to participate in an increasingly expensive

holiday.

This leads to an almost jarring contrast. It feels like summer, but there are snowflakes on the billboards. We're surrounded by images of luxurious gift-giving, but the majority of people are just scraping by. The happy, young, white faces in advertisements don't match the dark, weathered faces all around me.

Growing up, when I heard talk of "third world countries," the focus was almost always on how we can pull them up to enjoy the same type of life we have. I do believe that there are things like clean water and access to education that all countries should have. The desire to be a part of the effort to build justice and peace is the reason I'm here, but being here also makes me hope that the advertisers don't get their way. I hope Christmas is never widely celebrated in Nicaragua like it is depicted in the billboards.

Here's why: One of the men in our neighborhood has been very welcoming to me and he has shared stories with me about his youth. He grew up during the Somoza dictatorship. As a youth he had friends who worked in banana plantations. They're almost all dead now. The

reason was not the two wars that have happened in living memory. The reason was cancer. As they worked planes flew overhead dousing the crops and the workers with pesticides banned in the U.S. and Costa Rica for their harmful effects on people. Those very same pesticides were sold to Nicaragua because the companies that made the pesticides didn't want to take a hit to their bottom line for producing a dangerous product. The pesticides were used to create higher yield and keep banana prices cheap for American consumers. Similar things still happen today in sweatshops around Managua. I don't say that to shame anyone for eating bananas or buying clothes. I just say it to highlight that everything is bought at a cost and those costs aren't always paid at the cash register, especially in a season of heavy holiday spending.

What then does Christmas mean, both here and in Beltsville? Does it mean looking for deals on gifts paid for by the sweat and blood of people in economically poorer countries? Or does it mean celebrating the birth of our savior by working for the concrete liberation of suffering people living now? I'm proud to claim that I come from Emmanuel UMC. I'm proud to know that before I ever came to work in Nicaragua, Emmanuel has been supporting the organizations like Cows in Women's Hands that make a substantial difference in the lives of people here. To me that is the most faithful expression of gratitude we can offer in this holy season.



## Widow's Group Meets the First Thursday of Each Month

The newly forming widow's group will be meeting the first Thursday of the month at 1 pm in the Fellowship Hall. The first meeting was held on November 7, 2013 with nine widows present.

The purpose of the group is to support one another and discuss issues and problems confronted as widows and sharing ideas for handling these. The group is unstructured and no work is expected of anyone. All widows are welcome to attend and need not be members of Emmanuel. If you have friends or neighbors who are widows please let them know about the group.

For further information, call me at 301-937-1114 or send e-mail to [nursenewell@verizon.net](mailto:nursenewell@verizon.net).

*Hazel Newell*  
Facilitator



### Angel Tree Project

By Becky Cavallo

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the Angel Tree gifts.

The caregivers who picked up the gifts were grateful to all of you for your love and generosity.

The presents were wrapped beautifully and reflected your good wishes.

You made this Christmas memorable for these children!



## Faithful Readers Book Group

On Saturday, January 18th, 2014 the book "Girl Meets God" by Lauren F. Winner will be discussed.

In *GIRL MEETS GOD*, this appealingly honest young woman takes us through a year in her search for a religious identity. Despite her conversion, she finds that her world is still shaped by her Jewish experiences. Even as she rejoices in the holy days of the Christian calendar, she mourns the Jewish rituals she still holds dear. Attempting to reconcile the two sides of her religious self, Winner applies the lessons of Judaism to the teachings of the New Testament, hosts a Christian Seder, and struggles to fit her Orthodox friends into her new religious life.



We have great questions ready and this book seems particularly popular online with book groups. Looks like the group picked a good read at our last meeting to start the new year!

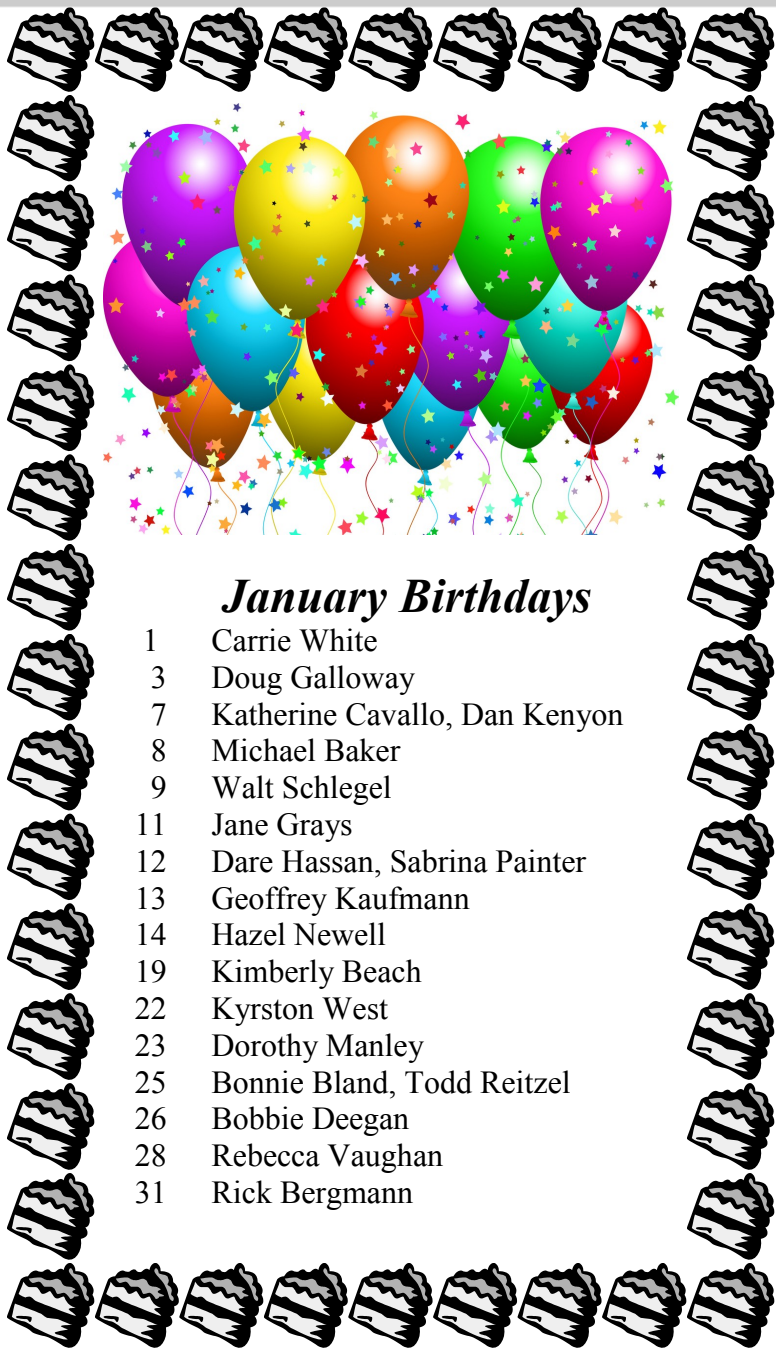
## United Methodist Women (UMW) to Meet January 25

The UMW will meet on Saturday, January 25, 2014 at 12 noon. We will begin the meeting with a lunch of four different soups made by members of the executive committee. Drinks will be provided by the Hoover circle, which is the hostess circle for the afternoon.

The program which is Prayer and Self Denial will be led by Ernie Kilbourne. There will also be a craft time directed by the SIS circle.

All women (young and old) are invited to come and enjoy the afternoon in the Fellowship Hall.

***DON'T FORGET - 12 NOON - JANUARY 25, 2014***



# Happy Anniversary

## January Anniversaries

- 14 Nancy & Rick Zerbe
- 31 Maxine & Karl Norris

## January Birthdays

- 1 Carrie White
- 3 Doug Galloway
- 7 Katherine Cavallo, Dan Kenyon
- 8 Michael Baker
- 9 Walt Schlegel
- 11 Jane Grays
- 12 Dare Hassan, Sabrina Painter
- 13 Geoffrey Kaufmann
- 14 Hazel Newell
- 19 Kimberly Beach
- 22 Kyrston West
- 23 Dorothy Manley
- 25 Bonnie Bland, Todd Reitzel
- 26 Bobbie Deegan
- 28 Rebecca Vaughan
- 31 Rick Bergmann

## Altar Flowers



The 2014 Altar Flower Chart has been posted in the Narthex. Arrangements are \$30. Please fill out a Flower Request Form when you sign up and leave it in the office mailbox.



# January 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1  <i>HAPPY NEW YEAR!</i>	2	3	4
5 9 & 11:15 am Worship 10:15 am Sunday School	6	7	8 6:30 pm Maranatha Choir	9 7 pm Chancel Choir	10	11 8:30 am Men's Breakfast
12 9 & 11:15 am Worship 10:15 am Sunday School Second Sunday Lunch 1 pm Youth Fellowship	13 6 pm Worship Committee 7 pm Depression/ Bipolar Support Group 7:30 pm Trustee Meeting	14 10 am Prayer Fellowship	15 10 am Susanna Wesley Circle 12 noon Dorcas Circle 6:30 pm Maranatha Choir 7 pm Sisters In Spirit	16 7 pm Chancel Choir	17 11 am Community Place Café	18 10 am Faithful Readers Book Group
19 9 & 11:15 am Worship 10:15 am Sunday School	20 12 Noon Ellen Hoover Circle	21 7 pm ESOL Registration	22 6:30 pm Maranatha Choir	23 7 pm Chancel Choir	24 7 pm Food Prep	25 10 am Food Distribution 12 noon UMW General Meeting
26 9 & 11:15 am Worship 10:15 am Sun- day School 1 pm Youth Fel- lowship	27 7 pm Church Council 7 pm Depression/ Bipolar Support Group	28 10 am Prayer Fellowship  7 pm ESOL	29 6:30 pm Maranatha Choir	30 7 pm Chancel Choir	31	

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