"Christmas is Questionable" is a 7 week preaching series through which I am encouraging you to deeply engage the Biblical narrative of the Incarnation with new eyes. You are being encouraged to look at the story with the eyes of a questioner. The eyes of one on a quest seeking the truth of what it all means, without tradition, nostalgia, or blind faith. In fact, my prayer is that your eyes see more richly the beauty that is Christmas by pursuing the questions...

To accompany our preaching series, these three issues of the Marion Methodist will offer three Questions Christmas answers. Today #2: Why Christmas at all?

"Who? "What? "When? "Where" "Why" are the five "Ws" every journalist is to answer prior to publishing a story. These are the gold standard for understanding an event of today, yesterday and tomorrow. It seems in the few days before Christmas, in a year when we have in worship and study sought to fortify our understanding of the story of Christmas, this is a useful exercise to apply to what we know about Christmas.

Let's not make it hard. The "who" of Christmas is always Jesus. The "what" is the Incarnation of God, that is, God being "born as the child of a virgin." The "when" is the day history changed from BC (before Christ) to AD (Anna Domino or the year of our Lord Jesus Christ). The "where" is the tiny country of Israel in a nondescript town of Bethlehem.

Just about everyone – Christian and non-Christian - can answer the who, what, when and where of the Christmas story. Even without being told the tale or sang the songs of Jesus being born as God come to life in the year we number zero in Bethlehem. The "why" of Christmas seems a bit more difficult for people to name.

"Why Christmas at all?" is the main question Christmas answers.

Let's not make it hard. Let's not complicate God beyond his word to us. The true meaning of Christmas is love. John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this incredible act of love. Love is "why" Christmas!

The real Christmas story is the story of God becoming a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. Why did God do such a thing? Because He loves us! Why was Christmas necessary? Because we needed a Savior! Why does God love us so much? Because He is love itself (1 John 4:8). Why do we celebrate Christmas each year? Out of gratitude for what God did for us, we remember His birth by giving each other gifts, worshipping Him, and being especially conscious of the poor and less fortunate. Love is "why" Christmas!

The true meaning of Christmas is love. God loved His own and provided a way—the only Way—for us to spend eternity with Him. He gave His only Son to take our punishment for our sins. He paid the price in full, and we are free from condemnation when we accept that free gift of love. “But God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Love is “why” Christmas!

That's not so questionable!

Pastor Mike
Marion Methodist is Praying for:

Prayer is a powerful way of caring for each other in our Marion Methodist family. There are several avenues open to everyone – the prayer cards on Sunday morning and the prayer request link in the weekly email, are two that are used most often.

During this Holy season of Advent, pray for the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and give us a spirit of waiting and preparation for the birth of the Holy Child, the promised Messiah, who has come to save us from our sins.

TV Broadcast

Marion Methodist worship services are typically rebroadcast on Mediacom or ImOn Channel 4 at 7:00 PM on Monday evenings. There is a multweek delay between when a sermon is preached and when it airs on TV.

December 22

Worship at 8:15 & 10:15 AM

December 24

Christmas Eve Services
2:00, 4:00, and 6:00 PM
Carols and Candlelight

Thank You

I want to thank all the men that came to my house to help me out of bed each morning since September 8. It was very much appreciated especially by Peg since she was unable to use her left arm to help me out of bed because of a fall. All of the men were very helpful and kind which made a world of difference. The good Lord blessed us the last couple of months with all of the kindness and help. Thanksgiving Day was the first morning that Peg was able to get me out of bed without any help. It was a day to really be thankful.

John & Peg Slusher

Gift Card Giving

Part of our Advent tradition at Marion Methodist has included donating gift cards from Hy-Vee and Walmart to provide assistance to people in our church family and community throughout the year. The cards can be used to purchase food, clothing items, household items, or gas to get to work, look for work and go to appointments.

As you are doing your shopping in the next month, please consider purchasing a gift card or two, for any amount you choose, from one of these businesses. Place them in the offering plate any Sunday this month, or drop them off at the downtown church office. Your generosity will bless people in many ways throughout the year who are struggling to make ends meet.

Adult Classes:
Come for a midweek boost. Check out classes at www.marionmethodist.org

Nursery:
Offered in the Nursery

Meal Schedule:

12/18 - Dairy Queen
12/25 - NO MEAL

Wednesday Night at Marion Methodist is every Wednesday. From 5:45 pm to 6:15 pm we have a Meal (Free Will Offering) and from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm we have activities for all ages.

Pathfinders Worship & Outreach (Preschool - 5th Grade): Focuses on praise and worship for kids. Children will also learn how they can make a difference for the people in our community.

4:12 Youth Group: Junior High Worship 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm (Sanctuary). High School Worship 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm (Sanctuary).

Adult Classes: Come for a midweek boost. Check out classes at www.marionmethodist.org

Nursery: Offered in the Nursery
Christmas Cookies

Again this year the United Methodist Women are sponsoring a cookie drive so that we can share some Christmas cheer with the folks who frequent our Marion Food Pantry. This invitation for cookies is for everyone at Marion Methodist who is able to bring a plate (or more) of yummy Christmas cookies to The Center on Sunday morning, December 15. We will pack 150 plates for the pantry and, if there are more, there are plans to share those too. Bring as many as your heart desires—they will be appreciated very much. It is always nice to have some decorated ones for the top of the plate.

Packing will start at 9:15 on Dec. 15, and we invite all helpers.

Read, Listen, Study the Bible on your mobile device

December 1st marked the four hundred millionth download of God’s word through YouVersion. Daily, Pastor Mike and many at Marion Methodist, read, listen to, and study the bible on mobile devices. More than once men or women have read the scripture in the pulpit of the church from YouVersion.

Some of you may love holding a “real book” Bible, so does Pastor Mike and most of us, and there are benefits to both. The YouVersion is free and can be downloaded at https://www.youversion.com/the-bible-app/ (just go to the app store and type in YouVersion) and has new studies added weekly. This is a great way to ingest scripture daily.

BUT WAIT – THERE’S MORE.

We have heard that line more than once in an infomercial we were watching when we should just go to sleep. But in terms of learning the Scripture, there is more.

PARENTS – Check this out as a learning tool for your kids!

YouVersion partnered with OneHope to develop the Bible App for Kids, designing it specifically to engage children with Bible stories on an age-appropriate level. The Bible App for Kids is a free app for Android, Apple, and Kindle devices, available in over 45 languages, and is already installed on over 30 million unique devices all over the world.

By introducing children to 41 of the “big” Bible stories, the Bible App for Kids helps them understand the overall story that the Bible is telling. Kid-friendly navigation helps them find and select whichever story they want, then reads it aloud to them in a friendly narrative style. Throughout each story, fun, interactive animations keep children engaged, and select stories even include games designed to help them learn, understand, and retain important Bible story concepts.

A great way to read, hear and show the Christmas story and many more!

Year-End Donations for 2019

As 2019 closes, our final deposit will be made on Tuesday, December 31st at 10:00AM. For your donation to be included with your 2019 Giving Statement it must be received at the church office by that time. If you have any questions or special circumstances, please contact John Terry at 377-4856.

If a donation is received or postmarked in 2019, it is recorded as a 2019 offering. If the donation is received or postmarked in 2020, then it is recorded as a 2020 offering.

Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of the First United Methodist Church. Everything that we do – all the lives that we impact – everything is possible because of your donations.

Thank you – Your Stewardship Committee
Our Congregation Shares Its Concern & Christian Love...

DEATHS:

BAPTISMS:
December 1: Jasson and Chase Sparks, sons of Sarah Sparks

BIRTHS:
November 23: Eli Sparrow, son of Jared and Lisa Sparrow

WEDDINGS:
December 7: Cyle Clinton and Anna Barrette

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The Marion Methodist newsletter deadline schedule

Articles for our Marion Methodist need to be submitted by due date at 12:00 PM. You may email them to: wldman@marionmethodist.org with newsletter in the subject line. Please send any information or images as an attachment. If you do not have access to a computer, you may call or bring to the office items to be published. We ask that you honor the deadlines listed below:

Date Arrived in Mail  Date Articles Due
12/27  12/18
1/10/2020  1/1/2020
1/24/2020  1/15/2020
2/7/2020  2/29/2020

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The TRANSFORM Campaign continues with great success – because of you! Your consistent giving has resulted in a campaign "puzzle" that is nearly complete – only 3 letters to go. This will allow us to pay off the 2nd third of our loan ahead of schedule and start to reduce the balance of the 3rd and final part of our financing.

With about 6 months left in the TRANSFORM Campaign, we have received over 95% of the amount that was pledged. This is an amazing result and is surely a sign that our new building is meeting all the dreams that we had when this journey began over 15 years ago.

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PANTRY PARTNERS FOR MARION FOOD PANTRY

We help folks in need by supplying items for the Marion Churches Food Pantry. You may bring the following items to church any time during each month. Please put your contributions in the Mission Depot in The Center or the Church Office.

December: Pudding and Gelatin Mixes
January: Macaroni & Cheese
February: Canned Fruit
March: Peanut Butter
April: Macaroni and Cheese
May: Toilet Tissue

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TRANSFORM CAMPAIGN

Update – December 2019

Are you facing challenges you don’t know how to tackle?
Do you and your spouse spend more time fighting than loving?
Are you drowning in debt and don’t know where to turn?

If you answered “yes” to any of these, we invite you to join us in becoming spiritually, emotionally, and financially free!

Join us for 10 weeks and learn how you can change your life in ways you’ve only imagined.

Sign up for FREEDOM at www.MarionFreedom.org

Classes begin in January!