

A Message From



Pastor Jon

Free Gift

In Palm Beach Gardens, FL we had a Live Nativity Scene made up of students in our youth Ministry. We also had a few sheep and goats. Many people would come by to see the nativity. When I picked up the goats from a farmer he gave me an extra special goat. Before the evening began, one of our goats had a baby. Have you ever seen a newborn goat, they are cuuute. Yes, we put the baby goat and mama goat in the nativity scene and the baby was the big deal. Everyone wanted to see the baby goat. The star attraction was not the plastic baby Jesus but this real live baby goat. That free gift caused the focus to be all wrong for the nativity. We laughed so hard as everyone wanted to see the baby goat!

At Christmas time it is heartwarming to think back to the night that Jesus was born, it has become so romanticized and it feels special. Is it possible that we get so focused on the nativity scene that we stop here and don't go any further? It is amazing that Jesus came down from heaven in a way that we would understand, in human form, as a cuddly baby who would grow into a man.

Thirty three years later the scene was not quite so cuddly, but desperate with Jesus now bearing the sin of the world on his physical body, having been brutalized and made to carry his cross to Golgotha. Hanging on the cross one of the last things He said was Luke 23:34, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. What a powerful gift Jesus gave us to be forgiven of our sin. Ephesians 2:8, For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

What gifts are you giving this Christmas? Who in your world could use forgiveness? Who are you tired of carrying around in your head, aren't you weary? Who have you harmed? Colossians 3:13, Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Go ahead forgive or seek to be forgiven; it is a free and powerful gift. When you give forgiveness you get freedom. Why write about this? Because I have watched over the last few months, the freedom people are receiving as they forgive. They have been set free and I want this for each of you. MFCOG is a church where God is setting people free. The more you give away, the less you have to drag with you into a new year.

In Christ, Pastor Jon

DECEMBER EVENTS

1 st	Thursday	– 6:30 p.m.	WCG Christmas Party
3 rd	Saturday	– 9:00 a.m.	WCG Shopping Trip – Meet here.
4 th	Sunday	– 8:30 a.m.	Visitation Committee Meeting
		– 12:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Dinner Meeting
		– 5:00 p.m.	Christmas Cantata Practice
7 th	Wednesday	– 6:30 p.m.	Pizza & Drink @ YB (\$2.00)
		– 7:00 p.m.	Children Practice in Sanctuary
		– 8:15 p.m.	Adult Bible Study @ YB
		– 8:15 p.m.	Finance Committee Meeting
9 th	Friday	– 10:45 a.m.	Young @ Heart Christmas Lunch
		– 7:00 p.m.	Men's Sunday School Class Party
10 th	Saturday	– 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.	Stamey Christmas Party
11 th	Sunday	– 10:30 a.m.	Children's Christmas Presentation
14 th	Wednesday	– 6:00 p.m.	Cantata Practice in Sanctuary
		– 7:00 p.m.	Kid's Christmas Party- Lower Level
		– 8:15 p.m.	Youth Christmas Party @ Yianni's
		– 8:15 p.m.	Adult Bible Study in Lower Level
17 th	Saturday	– 4:00 p.m.	Board of Trustees Meeting
		– 6:00 p.m.	Cantata Practice in Sanctuary
18 th	Sunday	– 6:00 p.m.	Choir Christmas Party
		– 7:00 p.m.	Christmas Cantata ~ <i>God Speaking</i>
		– 8:15 p.m.	Afterglow following in lower level
21 st	Wednesday	– 6:30 p.m.	Christmas Caroling & Hot Chocolate
24 th	Saturday	– 11:00 a.m.	Community Christmas Eve Dinner
25 th	Sunday	– 10:30 a.m.	Christmas Service & Communion
30 th	Friday	– 6:30 p.m.	Youth Lock-In @ Old Rock School
		– 7:00 p.m.	50 th Anniversary Celebration for Harold & Shirley Young in L. Level
31 st	Saturday	– 5:00 p.m.	Horton Christmas Party

Community Christmas Eve Lunch
Saturday, December 24th from 11:00am - 1:00pm

Please join together in hosting a Christmas Eve Lunch for the community. There is no charge for the meal in our desire to provide a special meal to honor our Lord and Savior. There will be upcoming meetings and sign-up opportunities for volunteers. Please pray about what role that you will play, even if you will be out of town during the holidays.

Please contact John Manis, Rhonda Farris, or Carol Powell for more information.

Planning Meeting Dates:

What: Important Volunteer Meeting for Christmas Eve Lunch
When: Sunday, Nov. 27th, 15 minutes following Candles and Carols
Where: Fellowship Hall

What: Volunteer Check-In for Christmas Eve Lunch
When: Sundays, Dec 4th, Dec 11th, Dec 18th - 15 minutes following morning service
Where: Sanctuary

Tithes & Offerings

OCTOBER TOTALS

Regular Offerings:
\$28,146.12

Actual Budget Expenses:
\$29,816.64

Monthly Budget GOAL:
\$27,263.57

Actual for October:
UNDER: \$ 1,670.52

Budget GOAL
OVER: \$ 882.55

Building Fund Requirement:
\$3,554.66

Building Fund Offerings:
\$2,893.55

Building Fund:
UNDER: \$661.11

Designated Projects:
\$ 1,764.95

TOTAL GIVING:
\$32,804.62

ATTENDANCE

October 30th 164
November 6th 207
November 13th ... 190
November 20st ... 206
November 27th ..TBA

Sunday, October 30th

Regular Offering: \$4,232.55
Building Fund Offering: \$464.00

Sunday, November 6th

Regular Offering: \$11,064.00
Building Fund Offering: \$1,120.00

Sunday, November 13th

Regular Offering: \$3,513.10
Building Fund Offering: \$735.00

Sunday, November 20th

Regular Offering: \$4,238.00
Building Fund Offering: \$380.00

Sunday, November 27th

Regular Offering: TBA
Building Fund Offering: TBA

A Note

From The Pastors

If there is a concern or a need you know of in our church family, please call the church office. Pastor Jon and/or Pastor Kevin would like to pray with you about it.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



- 2.....Steve Bennett
- 7.....Sue Powell
- 8.....Sam Daves
- 10.....Trae Price
- 11.....Carey McDivitt
- 12.....Sheila Clark
- 14.....Priscilla Logan
- 15.....Earl Lovelace
- 18.....Jerry McKinney
- 19.....Scott Lingerfelt
- 27.....Veronica Carufel
- 28.....Allison Houser
- 30.....Ladonna Earwood
- 31.....Dillon Stilwell



ANNIVERSARIES

- 5.....Max & Vonda Mosteller
- 13.....Brandon & Stacy Fender
- 18.....Falls & Sue Price
- 19.....Mike & Wanda Daves
- 22.....Roy & Paula Epley
- 24.....Ned & Priscilla Logan
- 28.....Richard & JoAnn Mangum
- 30.....John & Denise Manis
- 30.....Harold & Shirley Young



DECEMBER

USHERS SCHEDULE

Ministry Schedule Nursery & Greeters

Schedule for Dec. 4th

Sunday Morning: Tom & JoAnna Hester
Wednesday: Carol & Molly Horton
Greeters: Fred & Martha Cooke

Schedule for Dec. 11th

Sunday Morning: Robbin & Sarah Houser
Wednesday: Fran Sentner, Pam Bennett
Greeters: Kay Williams & Jean Powell

Schedule for Dec. 18th

Sunday Morning: April Wyatt & Mary Kate Powell
Wednesday: Velair McKinney & Vonda Mosteller
Greeters: Ray Aikens & Ella Reece

Schedule for Dec. 25th

Sunday Morning: Vickie Price & Veronica Carufel
Wednesday: Connie & Crystal Stilwell
Greeters: Carol Powell & Bruce Stacy

Scott Powell	Rick Ramsey
Roger Rector	Bruce Stacey
Darrin Stilwell	Dillon Stilwell
Dennis Walker	Patrick Welch



Hello, everyone! I hope your Thanksgiving holiday was wonderful and you had lots of good food and family togetherness! You know, today families are not defined as they once were. It's no longer 2 parents and 2.5 children. We have single parents, grandparents raising their grandchildren, stepparents, etc. – but regardless of the titles that any one may have, if you

love each other and want to be together – you're family! The Morganton First Church of God Praise Choir is family! We sing, laugh, cry and pray together every Wednesday night from 6:15 to 7:00. We welcome new members into our family, too. Come join us!

Our Christmas cantata, "God Speaking", will be performed on Sunday, Dec. 18 at 6:00 p.m. A cookie reception will follow. Please make plans to come be with us on our special night. We hope that you will hear "God Speaking" through the music and dramatic readings that will be presented.

A couple of people have asked about going caroling for Christmas. If you would be interested in doing this, or if you have a place, such as a nursing home, that you think would welcome carolers, please let Kathy Turner or I know as soon as possible.

Please keep the music ministry of the church in your prayers and thoughts, especially during the busy holiday season. And as always, please be in prayer for our Church and for ALL the ministries and their leaders.

With a song in my heart, Beth

KidsPlace Events



musical performed by our children!

Here comes the judge! The verdict is in.....*The Case of the Reluctant Innkeeper* will delight and inspire you with the joyous message of Christmas! The children will be performing this musical, Sunday, December 11, during the morning worship service. Invite friends, family, and neighbors to come and enjoy this Christmas

CHILDREN'S SCHEDULE

November 30, Wed. evening ~ 6:30
(In the sanctuary)

December 7, Wed. evening ~ 6:30
(Dress rehearsal in sanctuary)

December 11, Sunday morning ~ 9:30
(Meet in KidsPlace room to get dressed.)

December 14, Wed. evening ~ 6:00
(Children's Christmas Party)

December 21, Wed. evening ~ NO KIDSPLACE

December 28, Wed. evening ~ NO KIDSPLACE

DECEMBER / JANUARY CHILDREN'S CHURCH SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 4 ~ No Children's Church
11 ~ April Wyatt & Kristen Earwood
18 ~ Donna & Mary Kate Powell
25 ~ No Children's Church

JANUARY 4 ~ No Children's Church
11 ~ Sarah & Robbin Houser
18 ~ Julie & Emily Fender
25 ~ Tom & JoAnna Hester



During Children's Church Sunday, November 13, the children helped filled 24 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, bringing the total to 42 from Children's Church. They also included a letter in the shoeboxes with their address in anticipation of receiving a letter back from some of the recipients. Thanks kids for your participation in this mission project!

Working together for Christ,
Kathy Turner

You Are Invited To Attend
The 50th Wedding Anniversary Celebration
Of Harold & Shirley Young
Friday, December 30th ~ 7:00 p.m.
In the Lower Level




PowerHouse Youth



As many of you know our youth group returned from the State Youth Convention that was held in the Great Wolf Lodge in Concord, NC. God did some amazing things in the hearts of many students during worship, preaching, student led conferences and throughout the weekend. Some were called to the ministry while others made decisions to follow Christ in their lives.

I want to say a special THANK YOU to you as a church body in your giving and support of what your part was in this trip. Many of you made financial contributions, prayed, and were excited for these students. Your kindness and giving goes further than you may know or see for now.

December

1. Wed. 14th Youth Christmas Party at Yianni's in downtown Morganton. Bring with you: A gift in value of \$5 up to \$10. Bring \$\$ for food from Yianni's. We will have a small selection of a menu to choose from.
2. Sun. 18th Church-wide Christmas Cantata. 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
3. Wed. 21st Christmas Caroling ~ Meet at the church at 6:30 p.m. Teams will disperse and go caroling then meet back at the church for goodies and hot chocolate. ☺
4. Sat. 24th Christmas Eve Community Lunch Youth are to be here at 10:30 a.m. to volunteer. Please see Kevin for more Details.
5. Sat. 31st Youth Party @ the Old Rock School in Valdese. Bring your bff's and your other bff's. We will meet at the church at 6:30 p.m. and be back by 11:00 p.m.

Wednesday night *PowerHouse Youth Ministry* services began at 7:00 p.m. - with Sunday school at 9:30 a.m. I look forward to seeing you and your friends at *PowerHouse Youth Ministry!*

Many Blessings, Kevin

Thanks For Everything!

Dear Church Family,

I would like to thank each one of the greatest church family for your prayers for me and my family during the loss of our brother, Ray Smart. The flowers sent to me are very lovely also. Freddie & I love each one of you and thank God that His church is now complete with a Pastor family. Pastor Jon, we love and appreciate you checking on us and praying with us.

Sincerely, Janice Oliver & Family

December 2011 News From Morganton First Church Of God



WCG Christmas Party
Thursday, December 1st at 6:30 p.m.
At Friday Friends Restaurant
Bring a Wrapped Ornament!
Bring non-perishable items &/or blankets to donate to BUCM.

**Lady's Shopping Trip to Blowing Rock
& The Shops on the Parkway**
Saturday, Dec. 3rd ~ Meet here at 9:00 a.m.

Young at Heart Christmas Lunch
At J & S Cafeteria in Hickory
Friday, December 9th ~ 10:45 a.m.
Meet Here at the Church!

Men's Sunday School Class Christmas Party
Friday, December 9th
7:00 p.m. in the Lower Level

Kid's Christmas Musical
Sunday, December 11th
10:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary



Kid's Christmas Party
Wednesday, December 14th ~ 6:00 p.m.



Youth Christmas Party
Wednesday, December 14th at Yianni's
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Praise Choir Christmas Party
Saturday, December 17th
6:00 p.m. in the Lower Level

Christmas Cantata ~ "God Speaking"
Sunday, December 18th ~ 6:00 p.m.
Afterglow Following in the Lower Level



Christmas Caroling & Hot Chocolate
Wednesday, December 21st ~ 6:30 p.m.

Community Christmas Eve Lunch
Saturday, December 24th from 11:00am - 1:00 p.m.



Christmas Worship & Communion Service
Sunday, December 25th – 10:30 a.m.