



St. Matthew's 25 Challenge

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Jesus said, "When you did it to one of these my brethren, you did it unto me." Matt. 25:40

Volume III

December 2003

Issue 12

Why Blue instead of Purple as the color of Advent? Purple is the color of Lent, a time of penance when we focus on our sins and failures. Advent is a time of Expectation and Hope. Our Hope is founded upon the Love of God in Christ Jesus, which fills us with the Joy of the Spirit and leads to the Peace that surpasses all understanding. Thus we have four blue candles, which are the candles of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace.

What are your spiritual hopes and expectations? What do you expect God to do in your life spiritually? What do you hope for in your personal spiritual growth? God works with hopes and expectations that are consistent with his will. The community of faith must look to God for direction as individuals and as a congregation.

What are your hopes and expectations for St. Matthew's? For centuries the people of God longed for God to send the Messiah to deliver them from those who rules over them. They were under the control of the Assyrians, Persians, Babylonians and the Romans to mention a few. They longed for the glory days of God's rule as in the days of David and Solomon.

It is not very different from our tendency to think about the good old days. Some people look back on their childhood and youth as the good old days. Others consider the early years of their marriage, career or college as their glory days. Most of us consider the glory days or good old days as something in the past.

How many people in our church think the glory days are something in our past rather than something in the future. In reality the Jews wanted the Messiah to come to set up a kingdom greater than that of David and Solomon. How many of us at St. Matthew's want something here better than anything which existed in the past? On the other hand, how many in our congregation

publicly or privately want things to be how they used to be.

In years past, St. Matthew's was filled with children, youth and younger adults because we were reaching out to the people in our community. From the stories I have heard the people were here and the church was thriving in many ways. It appears that St. Matthew's became satisfied with those good times and forgot to continue reaching out to the community and keep growing. Things never stay the same. We are either moving forward or moving backward. One thing that seems to have been constant is St. Matthew's struggle with finances. Maybe we have become satisfied with that as well. I hope not.

Where is our vision for the glory days ahead? That is what Advent is all about. Do we have a glorious vision for the future of St. Matthew's. A year or so ago we officially adopted a vision statement. Our Vision is for God's grace in Christ to transform our lives and Church through exciting, creative ministries that embody St. Matthew's 25 Challenge by faithfully serving the poor, hungry, naked, imprisoned, sick and strangers in our own community, as if ministering to Christ himself, for Jesus said, "*As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me.*" Matthew 25:40

Thank God there are those among us who believe in this vision. But there are also those who just want to get by for now and those who wish we could go back to former days. Our hopes and expectations will determine our future as a church. It is critical for us to take advantage of this Advent season to our Hope for the future. What do we expect God to do through us, his Church, in this community.

*Shalom,
Mike*



Christmas items are out and people are shopping and giving thanks to everyone who gives of their time to work, especially during this very busy time of the year. The Thrift Shop has truly been a blessing to many people. Last month gifts were given to the following: **Emergency Fund, Card Ministry, Church Power Bill** and **UMCOR**

Mary Schneider, Chairperson
Lee Anna Sproul, Co-Chairperson

ONE-BY-ONE:

One-By-One is having a learning year. Our students are fewer, but the Lord knew what He was doing (again). With the addition of Senior Computer Class, I do not think we would have had adequate space. The students are learning and learning well. They think it is "neat" to have all these grandparents in the building with them! There seems to be a very positive side to having intergenerational groups together at the same time. Most probably, this has become a mission within a mission. We just thank the Lord and our volunteers for making wonderful things happen at St. Matthew's.

With the Love of Christ, Amy

TEENS HELPING TEENS:

Nobody ever wants to give up! This group is not growing as anticipated; however, the students already involved want to give it, "**The Big Push.**" They are aware that this program is worth fighting for. Most teens don't drive, and too many parents don't want to be bothered. Another huge factor we face is the apathy on the part of school administrators. All of you can help in this mission. Offer a ride. Talk to a high school principal. Pray for the teens.

SENIOR COMPUTER CLASS:

Our Seniors are having a ball! The teens who are teaching them are really learning, too. There is real excitement in the air when our Seniors and our Teens get together. It is too bad that we, as a church, have wasted so much time in our own little groups. Everyone learns. Everyone is so happy. Praise the Lord in all His glory!



The UMM met November 16th at 8:30 a.m. for their regular Breakfast Meeting. A delicious breakfast was prepared by **Julie Griffin** and **Lynn & Marvin Hiner**. There were 16 men present. Our Devotion was **Matthew 24: 1-25** which was about **TALENTS**. You may use them or lose them. How are you using the talents God gave you? What are you not using that you should be using? This is something to think about.

Bob Galliera told us about an experience he had while on the road with his truck. The event was to long for this newsletter, but it involves "**Guardian Angels**". I don't know if you believe in "**Guardian Angels**", but I do and so does Bob.

The **Harvest Day Dinner** was a huge success. We had a great crowd, great food and great Christian fellowship.

Lynwood spoke to the men about the **Lawn Care Service for 2004**. A commitment was made by the UMM to set aside **\$900.00** to assist in this on-going effort to keep the grounds neat and well trimmed. I feel it is easier to sell barbecue than mow grass. We also gave **Julie Griffin** financial aid to help **Needy Families** at Christmas through the **Cumberland County Mental Health**, and also gave financial aid to the sweethearts of St. Matthew's, the **FFF** to help in their **Food For Shut-Ins Mission**. I think this is one of the most appreciated missions in our church from the recipients and the least known from the members.

Other business discussed was getting a **Sign** for activities and special events that are happening at our church. Dr. Hale and our president, Charles Lucas will discuss this at another time.

ALL MEN of St. Matthew's is invited to attend our UMM Breakfast Meeting which is held on the third Sunday of every month at 8:30 a.m. We try to call the members to remind them, but sometimes we fail. Every man is a member.

Troy Willoughby, UMM Secretary



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2 - Adella Pray
Karie Bridgeman | 16 - Heather Shackelford
David Gibson |
| 3 - Rebecca Ramirez
Dan Eberhardt | 18 - Donna Dorwart |
| 7 - Phil Ogden | 20 - Meghann Dominie |
| 8 - Amy Eberhardt | 25 - Lorene Biggs |
| 12 - Robin Shields | 30 - Virginia Bachelor
Marie Strub |
| 14 - Nate Unruh | |

GOD'S TEENS:

In March, the members of God's Teens are planning on taking a *Mission Trip* to the **Mountains in Spruce Pine, N.C.** We plan to share our experiences and give testimonies on what we have been through during the past few years. We will be sharing this with the youth at Spruce Pine UMC. Our major emphasis will be on an exciting and enlightening Bible Study experience.

We will also explore the many sites of the **N.C. Mountains** in a spiritual and God-given way. Some activities include *Gem Mining* and *Exploring the Blue Ridge Parkway*. We look forward to having a fun time with one another while keeping God first. Please read all future articles for more information and ways to help us raise money for our *Mission Trip*.

May God bless you especially during this time of the birth of Christ.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP:

We just finished up the *English Garden Series* in November and decided with the busy Christmas schedule to skip this month. We plan to start fresh in January with a new book and maybe a new author. The Book Title and Author will be available in the January "Challenge".

We invite anyone who enjoys reading to come and join us. Young or old or anywhere in between. We have lively discussions and enjoy each others fellowship while sharing a meal.



SPECIAL OFFERINGS WERE GIVEN TO THE FOLLOWING FROM:

EMERGENCY FUND

- ◆ Betty Priest
- ◆ Sunday Morning Bible Study Class
- ◆ The Andersons
- ◆ Mary Rozier in memory of Fran Lynn & Millie Sessoms
- ◆ Ruth-Ethel Smith Circle
- ◆ United Methodist Women
- ◆ Paul & Jewel Sharpe
- ◆ God's Teens for families with children

POWER BILL

- ◆ The Thrift Shop

SCHOLARSHIP FUND

- ◆ The Andersons

FOOD PANTRY

- ◆ The Andersons

FRAYED & FRAZZLED FLOCK:

We wish to **thank everyone** for their on-going **support, prayers, and donations of food items, plastic containers and monetary donations** throughout this past year. Remember, we can also use your recycled butter tubs and cool whip containers.

Our main mission is that we cook at least once a month on Saturday mornings (twice if needed) and deliver one hot dish and normally two or three frozen dishes to the sick or shut-ins or anyone who might just need a visit. We try to keep two or three different dishes in the freezer all the time.

We welcome names of anyone you might know that could use a hot lunch. During the cold months, soup has proven to work the best. We welcome anyone who would like to join us. We wish everyone a "**Merry Christmas**"!





UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The "**Shoebox Ministry**" was a great success. We had almost **50** boxes that left from St. Matthew's to go out across the world to share our love and God's love to many children who are in need. God bless you for your efforts to help children around the world. A very special **thanks** to the **Thrift Shop** for their participation by sponsoring the shipping and handling of each box. As we work towards this holiday season, I encourage each of you to take time to enjoy the **REASON FOR THE SEASON!**

Adella Pray, President UMW

THANKSGIVING REFLECTION

The Turkeys and Ham were cooked, Vegetables prepared, Rice & Gravy and Stuffing was on the stove. A young lady arrived early to help place the Cranberry Sauce, Butter and Rolls on the tables before members of St. Matthew's began to arrive with their friends and family. We all joined together with friends from the **Bethany UMC** to serve our first "**Community Thanksgiving Dinner**" for people in need, alone, or elderly in our community. The folks began to arrive, not in the numbers that we had hoped for, but in small numbers. Members of our team had time to visit, eat, and fellowship. We prepared **29 Take-Out Plates** and approximately **40 Eat-In Plates** plus our team members. The remainder of the food was taken to a shelter who received it with much thankfulness. The amount of love, care and fellowship that took place was exceptional. **A SPECIAL THANKS** to **Troy Willoughby** for the Turkey and to all who donated desserts. If you gave of your time **MANY THANKS** for a wonderful Thanksgiving.

FAMILIES FIRST

St. Matthew's continues to work with the "**Families First**" through the Dept. of Social Services. Our most active family is a Mother with 3 Children. She is making ends meet with her job, but has nothing extra. Therefore, we will be helping them for Christmas. She has a **Girl age 5** and wears **Size 6-7**, a **Boy age 4** who wears **Size 5-6**, and a **Girl age 1** who wears **2T** and is still in diapers. The **Mother** wears **Size 14-16**. This family can use anything. We have just provided them with a Sofa and are working on beds for the children. If you are interested in helping make this a special Christmas, please call Adella at 864-1207 or 309-1788.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH "CHOCOLATE SUPREME"

By: Betty Jennings

INGREDIENTS:

1 stick Margarine
1 cup Self-Rising Flour
1/2 cup Chopped Nuts



FILLING:

18 oz. Pkg. Cream Cheese
at room temperature
2 pkg. Instant Chocolate
Pudding
1 cup Powdered Sugar
1 large Cool Whip
3 cups Milk

Mix dry ingredients, pour over butter, press in bottom of 9X12 baking dish. Cook @ 300 degrees for 15 minutes and then cool. Mix softened Cream Cheese & Powdered Sugar. Blend & fold in 1 cup Cool Whip mixture. Spread on Crust. Mix Chocolate Pudding & Milk. Spread remaining Cool Whip on top. Sprinkle with nuts & refrigerate.

May use Butterscotch, Pistachio or Lemon Pudding.



DECEMBER

ST. MATTHEW'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	UMW General Mtg. & One-By-One – 7:00pm	Prayer Group – 6:30pm	Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	THT – 7:00pm		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
UMW Sub-District Mtg. at Victory UMC – 2:00pm Cantata – 7:00pm	One-By-One – 7:00pm	Prayer Group – 6:30pm	Ruth-Ethel Smith Circle – 11:00am Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	Help'N Hands meet at church to go to Hudson Bay – 11am Night Owls meet at Roberta's – 6:30pm THT – 7:00pm		BREAKFAST WITH SANTA 8:00 – 9:30am
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Cantata at Mt. Pisgah – 7:00pm	One-By-One – 7:00pm	Prayer Group – 6:30pm	Home Extensions-9:30am Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	NO THT – 7:00pm		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
UMM Breakfast Mtg. – 8:30am	NO One-By-One	NO Prayer Group	Christmas Eve Service – 7:00pm	CHRISTMAS DAY HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS!!		
28	29	30	31			
Christmas Song Service – 7:00pm	NO One-By-One	NO Prayer Group	NO Regular Services			
	NO One-By-One	NO Prayer Group				