

# The Visitor

Of Independence First United Methodist Church

“Living Christ’s love by  
Connecting Faith to  
Life through  
passionate worship,  
genuine fellowship,  
and tangible outreach”

[.indepmo-fumc.org](http://.indepmo-fumc.org)

DECEMBER 13, 2011

## Happy Holidays!

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If you get your feathers ruffled easily over the “Happy Holidays vs. Merry Christmas” debate, stop reading now.

For the rest of us who receive the fracas as an unnecessary seasonal distraction, or as a well-intentioned but misguided adventure in missing the point, I have a question for us to ponder. *Do you think Jesus would prefer for Christians to insist on merchants saying “Merry Christmas,” or would he prefer us to focus our energies on living out the meaning of the season?”* This of course, brings up another interesting question, *What exactly is the meaning of Christmas?*

This time of year as we focus on Jesus’ advent, we celebrate more than the story itself, we rejoice in the grace, hope and potential for redemption it represents. Each Sunday we’ve been focusing on Jesus’ coming for the sake of **forgiveness**, which is the *mission behind the manger*, at least in part. But part of forgiveness is doing **justice** in order to set-right the broken parts of our relationships. A season of forgiveness requires us putting the needs of others first by expressing **kindness**, and mirroring Christ’s character by conveying **humility** in everything we say and do (call these *Connecting Faith to Life*). To teach and empower us to live as such is why Jesus came in the first place.

As Linus Van Pelt has said so memorably, “That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown”. The prophet Micah foretold the coming of a savior who would be born of a small clan in Bethlehem who would “*shepherd his flock*” and “*be our peace*” (5:2-5). In the next chapter Micah asks how people should properly respond to such a king. Should we bow low before him offering burnt offerings, or give extravagant gifts? What kind of worship does the Prince of Peace expect exactly? Micah answers his own question by saying this heavenly ruler,

*“Has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (6:8)*

I received an Advent card recently from another pastor. The card depicted sparkling Christmas ornaments and pretty lettering, very festive indeed. It read,

*“Instead of getting upset over innocent greetings or signs in department stores because we want to keep Christ in Christmas, maybe we can do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God...you know, maybe we can BE Christ this Christmas.”*

Yes, the season is about Jesus. Yes, Christians should keep Christ at the center of this season. Yes, if a clerk offers me a “Happy Holidays”, I’m likely to smile and reply, “Merry Christmas”. But I’m not going to insist on others doing the same, and I’m not going to boycott or grandstand if they don’t. I’ll be too busy trying to learn how to better forgive. I’ll be preoccupied by attempting to live with my neighbors more justly. I’ll be trying to right my apparent inability to perfectly love kindness; I’ll be too distracted by trying to correct my imperfect walk of humbleness to worry much about superficial greetings.

What’s that you say?... Oh yes, Happy holidays to you too.

## Meet our Newest Members. . .

On November 27th we were so pleased to welcome into our Family of Faith at the 9:00 a.m. Worship Service Kerry Cornett by Baptism, and Dave Leahy and Dennis Johnson by transfer of their memberships from other churches.



Dennis Johnson  
200 N. Osage, #B  
Indep., MO 64050  
816-446-6765

Received by Transfer



Dave Leahy                  Kerry Cornett  
14601 E. 40th St.  
Indep., MO 64055  
816-896-3179

David received  
by transfer

Kerry by Baptism  
and Profession of Faith.

(continued on page 3)

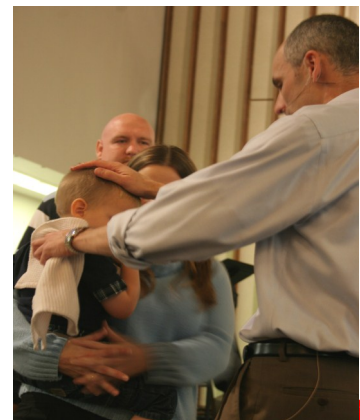
# The Scott Family

## Received by Baptism/Profession of Faith

4304 S. Briarcliff Ave.  
Indep., MO 64055  
816-457-9689



Travis Scott  
Kristen Scott  
Blake Vance  
Dalton Vance  
Chase Scott



## Pastor Donice's Annual Heavenly Party Christmas Letter. . .

Once upon a time the angel Gabriel came to the Lord saying, *"Lord, it's that time again, time for our annual Heavenly Christmas Party. We have welcomed several to our population during 2011"* The Lord agreed to gather all our loved ones to again celebrate His birth and rejoice that all their pain and tears had disappeared as the Lord had promised.

What wonderful gifts our loved ones have received, gifts none of us could have given them or bought for any price. Those who had bodies racked with pain have been filled with health; failing hearts have been made new, old bodies were made young and minds that had deteriorated were restored. There was no fear or sorrow at this Heavenly Party, only joy and peace. *"Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing."* The Lord held out his hands to each one gathered around and said, *"I want to give each of you a special gift, tell me what the greatest of all would be to you."* A gentle voice from a gracious woman spoke up, *"Please tell my daughter that my body has been healed, and I am enjoying being with the children in this beautiful place, just like I always enjoyed them on earth."*

Another beautiful woman with a soft gentle voice spoke up, *"I am so grateful to be in this unbelievable place Jesus promised to prepare for me. I have gathered the angels together and taught them the art of tatting. Their wings look so beautiful with the delicate lace around them. Please tell my daughter and son and their spouses and of course those wonderful ones who called me Grammy that even though I am out of sight, I love them still and will be waiting for them when their time on earth is done."*

A deeper voice broke in, *"Lord, please tell my friends at church and my family that I am so happy to be with my other loved ones. Tell my son and daughter how much I appreciated their care of me when I needed their help, and tell them to continue to share the bounty from the garden with others in memory of me."*

*"I couldn't wait for the annual Heavenly Party. I had heard so much about it over the years. Even though I loved to travel and see the wonderful places on earth, none of them compare with the beauty and peace I have found at this place. Tell my spouse and the rest of my family that I am cured of my disease and in perfect health...I have also been knitting with the angels and have joined their Heavenly Choir."*

"A quiet woman spoke up, *"Lord, you know how my body was racked with pain on earth...what a blessing it is to be pain-free, and what a wonderful surprise it was to find my loving spouse waiting for me when I arrived at this place with my mind restored and my vision clear once again."*

Many others spoke that night, including two men...one younger than the other. *"I know it's getting late, but Lord, I want the wonderful woman who is my grandmother to know I am so happy that my Dad (her son) and I can be together. The happiness and love that is shared with everyone here is just like Jesus said, 'Love one another as I have loved you.'" A voice in the background said, "that is so true, so please tell my mother not to have any regrets or worries because I am completely healed."* After everyone had made their requests of the Lord, the Lord cleared his voice and said, *"Dear Ones, for those who will listen, I will assure your loved ones that in my Father's House are many mansions. I will tell them that the end of life on earth only means a beginning of a new life in heaven. I will remind them that although I was born a baby in a manger, I did not remain there and **"the free gift of God is eternal life, to those who believe in Him."*** Gabriel reminded the Lord it was late.

(This is my annual Christmas article honoring our loved ones who have joined the Heavenly Party during the past year. In the midst of your loss, may you also find comfort knowing they have received their reward from their Creator.) Shalom, Donice



### Job postings/ openings at IFUMC – spread the word

**Half-time Director of Children’s Ministry** – Oversee Christian formation and spur new programs for growing population of children, deepen relationships with established preschool, supervise all children’s ministry volunteers. Hope to fill near first of the year! 20 hours.

**Half-time Choir/Worship Arts Coordinator** – Works as part of a team to craft two diverse worship services. Responsible for visual and audio aspects of worship, directs choir and coordinates with all other musicians. 20 hours.

**Quarter time Coordinator of Youth Ministry** – Work with volunteers to direct small-group driven youth program, coordinate special events.  
All inquiries made to thejarvi@hotmail.com

## Immediate Need for Ministers of Hospitality

Here is a truism; every one of us knows Jesus Christ because of another person. Someone, a family member or a friend, encouraged us at some point to attend church that we might hear and respond to the gospel. Here is another truth; if we were uncomfortable, or felt unwelcome or ignored, we wouldn’t have come back. People matter, encouragement matters, hospitality matters!

We have an *immediate need* to form up to 4 teams of hospitality ministers (team = 2-3 folk each) to serve on a rotating basis. This ministry includes:

- Meeting folks at the outside door (opening the door for them with a smile, *and in good weather greeting them on the sidewalk.*)
- Keeping an eye out for folks who seem unfamiliar with our facility (they’re easy to spot as they look about searching for signs to point the way...sometimes you can even hear them say, “Do we go in here?”) Walk *with* these folks and help them find the coffee, the sanctuary, the nursery and the lavatory.
- If they seem open to it, introduce guests around (to a pastor or a Sunday school teacher.)
- Look for guests after service, thank them for being with us, ask them their name and tell them you’ll look for them next week.
- Pass on any information they’ve shared to one of our pastors.
- Volunteer to follow-up with your new friend in some way.

See Pastor Mitch for more info or to volunteer.



An  
Opportunity  
For  
Genuine  
Fellowship  
For all  
Men of  
Our  
Community

## Men's Club News...

Thirteen were in attendance Saturday, December 3 at the Cracker Barrel restaurant on Lee's Summit Road for the regular monthly meeting of the Men's Club (United Methodist Men).

The occasion of the restaurant setting was the annual appreciation for Jack Hill, Virgil Bybee and Don Rohr, those who rise early to prepare breakfast for the regular meetings the rest of the year. Those in attendance not only pay for their own breakfast selections, but they chip in to pay the breakfast bills of the honorees.

The next meeting is scheduled for 7:30 a.m. Saturday, January 7. All men in the church are eligible to participate. There are no dues. David Sage is the president.

## Library News...

Where is the church library? A lot of us have never been there. When the Gathering Place was constructed, the library seemed to gain a new life as sliding glass doors were installed at a relocated entrance adjacent to the new space. If it is dark when you approach the room, enter and the light will come on. Check it out!

Many new books are located on the New Book Shelf, and there is a shelf for large print books. Good Christmas books are there to help you better understand the meaning of the season. Pastor Mitch recommended two books by Adam Hamilton, and Paula Jones donated them this past month. For the UMW, the book cart is conveniently located by the doors.

We also have a table and corner just for children. There are many wonderful books for them to look through and spend some quiet time enjoying.

As with any library, there are also reference books, books on tape, videos and DVDs.

It is easy to check out a book or video. Just write your name and the name of the material you are borrowing on the checkout sheet. You may keep the books as long as you need, but don't be greedy. Someone may be waiting for your book.

Also, check out the display of historical items that are rotated periodically in the lighted display case. We have such a wealth of history to enjoy. This project has been undertaken by Lizz Scott, and is greatly appreciated.

Come have a look, and you might just find that certain book that will strengthen your faith.

News  
Of  
Our  
Community  
Of  
Faith

## Sharing in Sorrow...

Since our last newsletter, we have learned of the loss of the following family members, loved ones and friends related to members of our Family of Faith. We share our sympathy, love and prayers with them.

Leona Fox, died November 24, 2011

Mary Shineman, died December 10, 2011

(Jim Shineman's wife)

Visitation Thursday 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Service Friday 10:00 a.m.

At New Salem Funeral Home (1823 Blue Mills Rd)

## Our Financial Status...

Thru 11/30/11

### General Budget

Staff Payroll	158,100.91	
Property/Utilities/Insurance/etc.	48,911.54	
Apportionments	22,557.00	
All other expenses	13,648.48	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>243,217.93</b>	
Total Income	231,890.76	
<b>Net Income</b>		<b>-11,327.17</b>

### Hallway remodel funds

Contract cost	\$28,097.00	
Furniture	2,579.92	
Other expenses	687.81	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$31,364.73</b>
Received from pledges	\$12,935.00	
Received from non pledges	9,109.86	
Received from memorials	5,538.84	
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>\$27,583.70</b>
<b>Net unfunded</b>		<b>3,781.03</b>
<b>Pledges not yet fulfilled</b>		<b>1,190.00</b>

### 2012 PLEDGE UPDATE

As of 12/11/2011

Number of pledges	46
Amount pledged	\$104,963.00

Have you  
Turned in  
your  
2012  
pledge  
card yet?  
They are  
needed  
ASAP

## Mighty Warriors Youth News...

Season's Greetings!

Christmas is here! And let me tell you, it couldn't come any sooner, judging by the glazed looks in our youth group's eyes. It seems that this semester has been a very difficult one, and we are all thankful that it is coming to an end. However, there is a whole week of finals ahead so there is still much work to do, so your thoughts and prayers are most welcome. We are looking forward to Christmas Caroling with you though, once everything is finished this week! If you would like to come, please join us on Sunday 12/18 at 3:45p.m. We will be going out from 4pm to 6pm to serenade some of our congregation and visit the retirement community at Heritage House. After that, we welcome you to join us for the first part of our Christmas Party. We would love to have a time of fellowship with you before we adjourn for a huge video game tournament (this is a matter of great pride in the group, it will get intense!). If you would like to come, please plan to bring a treat or snack to share with 10-12 people. We will have plenty of hot chocolate and other warm drinks to revive us after our singing voyage! I hope to see you there!

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone for all the support for Sarah and I during these past few weeks. It has been a rough time since her surgery last month and it is only due the cards, visits and generous donations of meals that helped us get through. Truly, your actions reflect the Body of Christ caring for itself and supporting its members during time of trouble. We are eternally grateful for all that God has done through you, and we pray that you will show that generosity to others should they encounter similar obstacles. Just to give you an update, Sarah is getting better and stronger every day, and before long she will be up charging around like the ol' days.

In Closing, I look forward to celebrating Christmas here with you in a couple weeks. It will be a bittersweet one being that it is our last with you, but I am eagerly anticipating it nonetheless. Until then, stay warm and come sing with us!

In Christ,  
*Bryson*

Here we  
go a  
Caroling!

Come join  
Us!



## Small Group Chats to be held in January...

We are planning a series of listening sessions and small-group discussions for January. Watch for details on how to sign up for one of the conversation times that may be held in someone's home or at the church; day or evening opportunities will be available.

The purpose of the chats are to ensure folks have good, correct information about some recent changes, and to hear any concerns you may have.

**Genuine  
Fellowship  
and  
Tangible  
Outreach**

## Sunsetters News . .

A crowd of nearly 90 persons gathered in Fellowship Hall Saturday night, December 10, for "Sweets and Songs", the final activity of the year for the Sunsetters, the church's group of seniors.

The twin purpose of the evening was fellowship and service. Fellowship came in the form of an outpouring of desserts, the festive atmosphere provided by the unique decorations at each of the tables and the program of a variety of Christmas music. Service was realized by the presence of guests from Hillcrest Ministries, the service organization for people in transitional housing. The guests also received gifts of household and winter personal items.

The musical program consisted of vocal and piano solos, selections by the hand-bell quartet, a variety duet, trivia time and closing hymns by members of the Sanctuary Choir and Candlelight Closing.

Participants included Vicky Reuter, Angy Bounds, Karen Kelley, Susan Wopata, Melissa Morawitz, and Kathy Kelley, who also acted as the emcee/coordinator.

Nylene Sage and Adele Rohr are coordinators of the Sunsetters.

## Meals on Wheels. . .

~ Thanks to everyone who has purchased an ornament for the Meals on Wheels tree. Including a large donation from the Mizpah Class, the Meals on Wheels tree has generated over \$400 for the Independence program. Let's top the \$500 mark. A few ornaments are available for purchase this Sunday. Help to make the tree full on Christmas morning.

~ You may also help by placing your greeting to our Faith Community on the "Gifts to the Community" board in the Gathering Area. There is an envelope for you to place your donations in. The names of folks placing their cards on the board will be listed in the January 2012 newsletter.

The need continues to be great for all of us to help those less fortunate.

**True  
Tangible  
Outreach**

## Notes of Appreciation...

Hi UMW Friend,  
I really loved the card for Thanksgiving. I want to say may God be at the table with you and your families. God bless all of you and your families.

Your Friend,  
*Dorothy Higgins*

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for all the food, cards, prayers and love our FUMC family has shown us during Sarah's surgery and recovery. We feel so incredibly blessed that while our biological families are not here, we have such an amazing church family to love and take care of us. Blessings to you all.

*Sarah and Bryson*

"I don't fear the future—God's already there." Thank you for the *Visitor*.

*Lucile DeHart*

Thanks to all the Sunday School and Children's Church members who made the ornaments for the Meals on Wheels tree. Without them, the project would not have been a success. How beautiful the tree looks all full of love and caring for our neighbors.

## Prayer Partner Ministry...

I wanted to extend a special thank you to all of you who have participated in the Prayer Partner program with Starshine Preschool. It is wonderful to know that each of the children is covered in prayer. I believe that is truly what keeps our school going! We have enjoyed meeting many of you. If you're ever in the building during the week, please find me and say hello!

*Kim Oyler, Starshine Preschool Director.*

## Looking to 2012...

~ **Offering Envelopes for 2012** will be available on the table outside the Church Office for you to pick up (cutting down on the cost of mailing). They should be in alphabetical order and ready to pick up the week of December 19th. They will remain there until January 15th.

~ **2012 Flower Chart** is posted on the bulletin board in the Gathering Room. The cost is \$15 per arrangement. This is a wonderful way to honor that special person in your life or remember a loved one. All sponsorship is appreciated, as those Sundays that aren't sponsored have to come out of the budget.

