

OTTERBEIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
176 West Market Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

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Tidings



November 2025

The Tidings
Otterbein United Methodist
Church

176 West Market Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Office - (540) 434-7747
oumcharrisonburg.org

Tidings articles are generally due
by the 15th of each month.
You may either bring articles to
the church office or email them
to oumcadm@hotmail.com

Sunday Schedule

9:30 am Sunday School
10:30 am Worship Service

Please check the calendar for
times of regular and special
events.

Weekday Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm



Have you checked out our Facebook Page? You
can find us at facebook.com/OUMCHarrisonburg or
through the link on our website. Please check out
our page and share with your friends!

Our Staff

Rev. Adam Blagg
Senior Pastor
oumcpastor@hotmail.com

Melissa Miller
Office Manager
oumcadm@hotmail.com

Gary Edlind
Director of Visitation
Ricky Goodwyn, Jr.
Director of Music Ministries
oumcmusic@hotmail.com

Dan Curtis
Organist

Drew Dodson
Bell Choir Director

Melvin Falls
Custodian

Bonnie Andrade
Treasurer
oumctreasurer@hotmail.com

Office: 540-434-7747
x200 for Melissa
x201 for Adam

TIME TO ORDER POINSETTIAS!

Poinsettias may be ordered in memory or in honor of a loved one.
Each poinsettia is \$9.50. **Order Deadline: Sunday, November 23**

In memory of:

In honor of:

Given by:

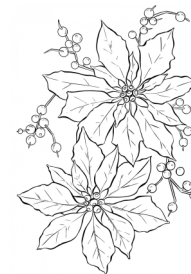
_____ X \$9.50= _____

Please make checks payable to Otterbein UMC with
“poinsettia” written on the memo line.

Tear off this form and place in offering plate or return to church office.

Time to Order Poinsettias!

During the Christmas season, our church is decorated with
beautiful poinsettias from Riverside Plants and Mulch. If you
would like to order one to help decorate the church, use the
order form above or found in the bulletin during the month of
November. They may be ordered in memory or in honor of a
loved one. Each poinsettia is **\$9.50**. The **order**
deadline is Sunday, November 23. Please make
checks payable to Otterbein UMC with
“poinsettia” written on the memo line. Order
forms and payment can be placed in the offering
plate or returned to the church office. They may
be taken home after the Christmas Eve service.



For Your Information

- *Tidings* deadline for the **December** issue is **Monday, November 17** by **9 am**. All groups, classes, and individuals are welcome to submit articles for the *Tidings*. Plan your activities and bring the written details to the church office or email to the office at oumcadm@hotmail.com by the 17th.

OOTSP (One of the Sweetest People)

I'd like to highlight an OOTSP person each month as I discover them as I do my visiting of Otterbein UMC members who can no longer attend church. Here's one:

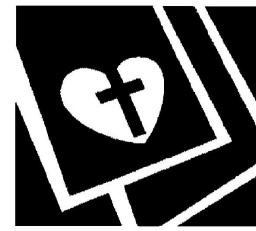
Carolyn Stroop

She was born in the "old" Rockingham Memorial Hospital and she has lived in Harrisonburg, Bridgewater, Mt Pleasant, and also in Mississippi for 7 years. She attended Bridgewater College, taking business courses, and worked for the Agriculture Department in the old post office building. She did bookkeeping for the Rockingham County office. She attended and was married in Mt. Pleasant Church of the Brethren. She had a happy marriage to Richard, who had a successful career as a quality control engineer. He passed away 6 years ago. She attended a Methodist church in Mississippi and joined Otterbein UMC when the family moved back to Virginia. She taught children's Sunday School and served on several committees. She has a daughter, Shelly, who lives locally and attends Asbury UMC. She went to Bellaire at Stoneport (Near Sentara RMH Hospital) 3 years ago. She attends a 9:30 am Sunday service at Bellaire and goes to the dining hall for most meals. She uses her computer and I showed her the OUMC website on the bulletin and she is going to try that to see the service on Sundays. Judy Monger visits her regularly and thanked me for visiting her friend and former neighbor. Judy Richardson brings her literature. I visit her regularly, read scripture and pray, and have brought her flowers .

Carolyn Stroop misses her church, She is truly an OOTSP - one of the sweetest people! If you remember her, or not, give her a call or a note or a visit - and you will definitely make her day.

Note: I have been authorized to bring Holy Communion to people I visit who can not make it to church any more. Please contact me at GaryEdlindSr@gmail.com and we will make an appointment.

Thank you, Gary Edlind, Sr. - Director of Visitation, OUMC



FROM THE PASTOR

At the October JOY Group, we had a presentation on AI and how it works in our world. The perspective was from a long-established IT professor at JMU who had a fairly positive outlook on technology and AI, albeit with some cautionary notes. As I was writing this article for *Tidings* I thought about AI and wondered if it could do my job, so I gave it a prompt. The results are below; I'll add my own commentary afterwards.

A Season of Gratitude

As we enter the Thanksgiving season, our hearts are drawn once again to the goodness of God and the blessings He has poured into our lives. Thanksgiving is more than a day on the calendar – it's a posture of the heart. It's a time to pause, reflect, and give thanks for God's faithfulness through every season of life.

This year, we are reminded that gratitude is not dependent on our circumstances but rooted in the steadfast love of the Lord. In times of joy and in times of challenge, God remains present, guiding and providing for His people. When we take time to give thanks, we realign our hearts with His goodness and remember that every good and perfect gift comes from above (James 1:17).

As a church family, let's use this season to reach out in love – to share a meal, offer a prayer, or lend a helping hand to someone in need. True thanksgiving is not only spoken but lived out in acts of generosity and kindness.

May your homes be filled with laughter, your tables with abundance, and your hearts with peace. Above all, may we each find renewed joy in the greatest gift of all – our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever." – Psalm 107:1

Happy Thanksgiving from your church family!

(Generated by chatgpt.com with the prompt
"newsletter article for church about thanksgiving")

Not bad for a machine! I did not find anything wrong with what was generated; it touches on several key points about being thankful and even provides suggestions about ways we can be active "to reach out in love." On the other hand, it has no voice of its own. It does not sound like "Adam" or "Otterbein"; it is very impersonal. We could write all of our Advent devotionals this way, but after about 20 of those you would not know any more about the writer than when you started. AI takes the vanilla of the world and reproduces in it a form that resembles something that we might say as people, but it lacks the heart of a person. This November we do things in the church that are pretty routine and not unique to Otterbein. We will worship on All Saint's Sunday, we will do Charge Conference, we will celebrate Thanksgiving. All sorts of churches do this, but we acknowledge that our participation in each of those is unique because we have personal stories and connections that make them different. AI and ChatGPT can never replicate the relationships we have with each other and how those inform our lives together. AI can give us something that looks similar, but it will never replace those connections we truly cherish. AI has its place, I love spell check every time I type, but it will always be a tool, never a replacement for what it truly meaningful. I'll save my true November grateful moments for when I see you in person.

Until then, blessings on the journey.

Adam

Are you interested in a SHORT TERM SUNDAY SCHOOL MORNING STUDY?

Come to Room 204 at 9:30 am for a four week Advent study (November 9, 16, 23, 30). Ron Cartee will lead the discussion of the James W. Moore booklet *The Miracle of Christmas*. Study booklets available; see Linda Conrad.



129 Franklin Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801
(540)434-0295
firststepva.com

10/8/25

Dear Congregation of Otterbein United Methodist Church and Fresh Start,

A huge thank you for your continued support of First Step and our mission. We are so grateful for the continued support of your congregation in providing for the guests of our shelter. Over the past several weeks, Fresh Start has assisted a family of three and two single women in our shelter with the supplies that they needed. Whether it be cooking supplies, new bedsheets, or sanitary supplies, these necessary items helped these survivors to feel safe and comfortable in their new homes. We appreciate your congregation and all that you continue to do for us and survivors.

Thank You,

Megan Britsch

Legal Advocate

Otterbein in Prayer

David Angier
Katherine Arthur
Rosalie Bailey
Carole Barber
Gary Billingsley
Whitney Bradley
Millie Bruce
Rev. Louis Carson
Nissa D'Andrea
Cliff Davis
Diane Cline Davis
Jo Ellen Dickenson

Elva Downs
Mike Earman
Judi Espinoza
Charles Glassick
Ray Griffith
Art Hanger
Fred Hopkins
Tina Jolly
Steve Lily
Chuck Macklin
Penny Markowitz
Art & Mary Jo Mitchell

Leonard Moyers
BJ Payne
Maxine Perry
Judy Pruett
Rich Ripley
Dot Swartz
Carolyn Stroop
Juanita Taylor
Daisy VanPelt
Michelle VanPelt
Hazel Willi
Gina Wyse

From Your Outreach Ministry Team

*For there will never cease to be poor in the land.
Therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your
brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.*

Deuteronomy 15:11

New Project

Kingsway Apple Tree Project—*Bev Earman, point person*

It's that time of year. Read the article from Bev in this *Tidings* to learn how supporting the project will bring joy to children who need reassurance they are not alone during the holiday season.

Ongoing Projects

Mercy House – *Susan Pollard, point person*—Next delivery Nov. 29th.

Fresh Start – *Carla Nemoytin, point person*

First Step had three distributions this month (see letter). Megan Britsch, legal advocate at First Step, says there is money available to place others in need, but the lack of affordable housing, especially for families, is hindering any placement. If any Otterbein members know of low-cost housing available, please contact Megan at First Step.

Soup Kitchen – *Susan Pollard, point person*

The Soup Kitchen served 97 guests in September!

Clothes Closet – *Linda Conrad, point person*

The Clothes Closet was open four Mondays in September. 35 men and women and 3 children were served; this included 9 new shoppers!

The Clothes Closet is in need of Men's' Clothing!!

Gleaning – *Vicki Gaines, point person*

Over 362 lbs. of fresh vegetables have been delivered to The Salvation Army, Our Community Place, and Gemienschaft. Otterbein is now sharing donated produce with Shenandoah Valley Garden Share who then distributes to county food banks. Those donations are included in our totals and reported to The Society of St. Andrew under Otterbein.

Your Outreach Team!



United
Women
in Faith

United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.

Greetings!

Thank you to the United Methodist Men and our Otterbein family for your help and gracious response to our outreach projects for this fall: donations for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and funds for the rebuilding of the church in Padina, Serbia. When we work together for our neighbors near and far, God uses our efforts to bring change! *"We believe love in action can change the world"* - United Women in Faith mission statement. Watch the bulletin for updates.

Our November meeting will be Tuesday, November 11 at 11 am in Room 204. We will gather for study and fellowship as we learn about "World Thank Offering", one of the five channels of undesignated giving. Our offering will be a celebration of all the ways God has blessed us this past year. Please join us and bring a friend! See Judy Monger, Betty Redmond, or Pat Wingert for more information.

Grace & Peace,
Pat Wingert

*Let God grant us grace and bless us; let God make
his face shine on us, so that your way becomes known
on earth, so that your salvation becomes known among
all the nations. Let all the people thank you, God!*

Let all the people thank you!

~ Psalm 67:1-3 ~



In September the Otterbein United Methodist Men were honored to be asked to support the *Ladies Autumn Tea*. The program brought a large turnout of ladies to Memorial Hall for this special event!

The men were able to “try out” their new UMen’s red aprons for the first time! **Check out the photo on the Otterbein UMC website: <https://www.oumcharrisonburg.org/united-methodist-men>**

You’ll see these aprons again when the men prepare and serve a ***Family Pancake Brunch*** on **Sunday, December 7** in **Memorial Hall** immediately following the Christmas Cantata during the Worship Service. Plan to stay after Worship and enjoy pancakes with syrup and a variety of fruit toppings, sausage, fresh fruit, and a beverage. On Saturday, December 6 at 7:30 am, the men will meet in Memorial Hall for a light breakfast and to set up for the brunch.



During October the Otterbein Men partnered with the Otterbein United Women in Faith on a project to support the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. Everyone

attending worship each Sunday was asked to bring 1 canned food item for each member of their household and placed in the buckets at the altar rail. This project was very successful, and we were proud to support our neighbors who are struggling to put food on their tables.

For additional information concerning our fellowship, please go to our website:

<https://www.oumcharrisonburg.org/united-methodist-men>

Leadership/Planning Team:

Mike Earman, Bill Pollard, Carter Ritchie

left is shown in light-colored clothing and appears more brightly illuminated than the other shepherds. With hands folded prayerfully as she gazes upon the angel, I felt it could also represent Mary’s visitation by the angel Gabriel when he foretold the birth of Jesus. Next to this woman is a tall jug which might make one think of Jesus’ first miracle of turning water to wine at Cana. At her feet is an empty leather bag reminding us of our complete dependency on God rather than on worldly possessions or our attempts at self-sufficiency.

The brightly colored cloak of the shepherd in red is in contrast to the drab clothing usually associated with a herdsman. Red is often used to represent love and sacrifice as evidenced by Christ’s bloodshed and suffering. Next to the man is a basket with loaves of bread and an overturned wineskin. This might cue recall of another miracle when Jesus fed the multitude from a few loaves of bread and fish. Additionally, Holy Communion and the remembrance of the body and blood of Christ might be the intended message. Christ, the Bread of Life, is our source for eternal spiritual life and fulfillment.

The shepherd boy is clad in brown which is a color representative of a life of repentance, humility, and renunciation of worldly possessions. Of interest, a cowboy style hat is on the ground behind the shepherd boy. It is known that artisans often inserted objects familiar to local congregations. Thus, this farming community, (especially as it was in 1918, when construction of the church was completed) would connect with the image of a cowboy hat.

We’re not done! There is still much more to explore about this window. Look for a continuation of this discussion (Part 2) in the next issue of *Tidings*. I hope you will enjoy looking at these windows with a different perspective.

Hidden In Plain Sight—Part 1

by Carole Gaines

During a recent Sunday morning children's message, Anna Steele pointed out a cat and dog depicted in the alcove art piece, "Jesus With Children." That prompted me to take a closer look at the two large painted glass windows in the sanctuary to discover what else I might have failed to notice in the art that surrounds us.

Research reveals that the use of stained glass windows in churches became even more popular during the Middle Ages, not only for their beauty, but in part to illustrate Bible stories since much of the population was illiterate or had limited access to printed Bibles. Common elements were often used in symbolic ways to relay stories or ideas.

(DISCLAIMER: this is not a professional evaluation, rather my observations and interpretations based on research of the colors and elements used in stained glass art. As an added bonus, I was fortunate to cross paths with local stained glass historian, D. Lee Beard who had actually photographed all of our windows in 2012, during research for his project, *Stained Glass Windows Of The Shenandoah Valley*. He listened to my discoveries and interpretations and was amazed at some of the symbolic images that had escaped his notice during his study of our windows years ago. As we discussed possible meanings of the various elements, we were mindful of the fact that art can be viewed and interpreted differently by each individual.)

On closer inspection of "Annunciation To The Shepherds," I found many things that I had never noticed before. For instance, there is light streaming from a star that illuminates Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem. How had I never seen that before!! I also considered that the entire window may be telling more than just the familiar story from Luke 2. The shepherdess on the

continued next page...

Kingsway Apple Tree Project

Otterbein is again helping Kingsway Prison and Family Outreach in their mission to support families impacted by incarceration. The Apple Tree Project collects Christmas gifts for children of families affected by the incarceration of a parent or step-parent. These children are innocent victims caught in the middle. Without this program, some children would not receive any gifts for Christmas. This program lets the children in these families know that they are not forgotten. Kingsway is expecting to help over 400 children to receive gifts this year. Each child will receive three gifts – a Bible or Christian book, toy and, a game. Some children have never had their own Bible.

So stop by the Apple Tree in the Narthex and pick an envelope or two. Each envelope shows the age of the child and a suggested gift. After shopping and selecting the gift, attach the envelope with a few dollars to help with shipping costs and return it to the tubs set up in the hall or near the tree. Do not wrap the gift. When shopping, remember that many of the items will be shipped so please, no heavy chess or Chinese checkers sets.

Suggested Board games include: Don't Spill the Beans, Mouse Trap, Memory, Connect 4, Chutes & Ladders, Don't Bee Last, Trouble, Sorry, and Life. Suggested Card games include: Go Fish, Uno, Phase 10, Taco Loco, Slap Jack, Skipbo, Blink, Crazy 8's, Potato Tomato, and Match Games. *No regular playing cards with diamonds, hearts, spades, and clubs.*

Timeless Toys, located in the Shenandoah Farmer's Market, is giving you 30% off of your purchase of toys and books for Apple Tree if you bring in one of the coupons which may be found on the table in the Narthex. Please take the coupon to the store and be sure to thank them for supporting Kingsway and the Apple Tree Project.

If you have any questions, call Bev Earman at 443-994-0841.



"Leave the leaves!"

CREATION CARE TASK FORCE

This is a rallying cry that you may hear from ecologically-focused people as fall approaches. But what's the deal with "leaving the leaves?" Aren't we supposed to rake them all up, jump in the pile, rake them again, and bag them to be hauled away?

The truth is that leaves provide a habitat for many ecologically critical organisms, and tossing out yard debris that aren't growing anymore means you are tossing out homes and possibly even several little critters that have settled in for the winter! Leaving the leaves and other plant debris doesn't have to mean sacrificing your yard to the wilderness. Here are five tips for "leaving the leaves:"

- 1) A thin layer of leaves is actually healthy for grass, but the leaves also don't need to be left exactly where they fall. You can rake them into garden beds, around tree bases, or into other designated areas. Leaves are great for soil quality: they can suppress weeds, retain moisture, and boost nutrition. And perennial plants appreciate the extra insulation through the winter, too!
- 2) Avoid mulching and chopping leaves, and let the bugs do that for you! Shredded leaves will not provide the same cover as leaving them whole, and you may be destroying eggs, caterpillars, and cocoons along with the leaves. Instead of a mower, use a rake or blower to keep leaves intact. If you use leaves for compost, consider creating a leaf pile and allowing it to break down naturally if space allows. Millipedes, roly-polys, and other leaf-eating bugs will help and enjoy the meal! You can also add the leaves gradually to your existing compost pile.
- 3) Instead of trashing pieces of wood, stack them up! Plenty of insects seek out fallen pieces of wood to hibernate in. Piles can be as big or small as you have space for, and you can hide the pile behind a hedge or

wildflowers to keep the yard looking clean. Logs and stumps can also be used as borders around a native planting area to add definition to the space.

- 4) Approximately 70 percent of all bee species nest in the ground, frequently in yards and garden beds. If you're planning on planting a cool season cover, a winter crop, or just moving perennials around, try to keep any disturbances as limited and shallow as possible to avoid destroying native bee nests. If that's not possible, try to keep an eye out for groups of nests, and place markers so that you can avoid them while working in your garden.
- 5) Instead of cutting back everything at the end of summer, leave the stems of perennial plants. The seed heads will feed birds, and the stems will provide shelter for many insects that nest in them. If you do decide you need to remove the leaves next season, make sure you wait to clean up the garden until late in the spring so as not to destroy all the life you've worked to protect.

Your yard's wild residents benefit immensely when you leave things a little messy and wild. After all, when you think of what these animals need, it is best to visualize the natural areas where they have evolved. Natural areas are not manicured, sticks and leaves are not "cleaned up" and removed, grasses grow long, seed heads are left for songbirds to feed on, and seeds can fall where they might germinate.

It can be hard to change something that has been the norm in our part of the world for decades, like keeping a perfectly manicured lawn. But change starts with knowledge, so when you are leaving your yard to the wild this winter, inform your neighbors of WHY! Your yard is playing an important role in the ecosystem all year round, and it's easy to find a compromise between a functional space for you and one that provides for wildlife.