



BLUFF PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Christmas @ Bluff Park

The Advent and Christmas season is an important and cherished time in the life of the church. We prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child throughout the season of Advent with prayer services, a special Advent Sunday sermon series, and special holiday worship services.

We have made a few changes to our Christmas schedule this holiday season. First, we have adjusted the worship times on Christmas Eve to 3:00 and 5:00 pm. And, as we only recently welcomed our Interim Choir Director Art DeWeese, there will not be a Christmas choir concert this year.

Christmas Schedule

Sunday Morning Worship

8:45am and 11:00am

Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 2nd 8:45am and 11:00am

Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

December 24th @ 3:00pm and 5:00pm

The Gathering Christmas Eve Service

December 24th @ 5:00pm

Advent Morning Prayer

Advent Morning Prayer will begin on Thursday, December 6th at 7:30 AM in the sanctuary. This is a service of Prayer, Scripture and Holy Communion. The service will be held on each Thursday morning of Advent (December 6, 13 and 20). The service lasts approximately 30 minutes.

Financial Update

Lately, we have been celebrating the Church's recent successes. There have been many great accomplishments that should make us proud. Unfortunately, I also need to call to your attention that we have gotten off track for this year's General Fund giving. As of October 31st, our receipts were \$123,116 under our budgeted giving, and so far in November, the deficit has increased.

With this in mind, I prayerfully ask that you review your 2018 pledge amounts and help us get back in line with our budget. Your Finance Committee takes to heart their role to ensure that we are being good stewards of your donations, and it has been a pleasure to see this group work in the best interest of our congregation. Thank you for your contribution of money, time, and talents to the church. Please know that you are helping make a difference.

In addition to Jason, Joe, and John Whitcomb (Church Treasurer), feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns about our finances.

Rick Hardy

Finance Committee Chairman

Seek God, Lose Yourself, Find Life

www.BluffParkUMC.org

Sunday Morning

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP 8:45 & 11:00 am

THE GATHERING AT BLUFF PARK: 11:00 am

SUNDAY SCHOOL: 9:45 am

Nursery care available all morning!

Our Staff

PHONE: 205.822.0910

PASTORS:

Mike Holly

mholly@bpumc.org, ext. 104

Angela Martin

amartin@bpumc.org, ext. 107

John Carl Hastings

jchastings@bpumc.org, ext. 120

DIRECTOR OF SENIOR MINISTRIES: Fran Gatch

fgatch@bpumc.org, ext. 103

INTERIM DIRECTOR OF STUDENT MINISTRIES:

Stephen Ingram

stephen.ingram@ministryarchitects.com, ext. 105

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES:

Stanley Davidson

sdavidson@bpumc.org, ext. 105

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION:

Jason McCrory

jmccrory@bpumc.org, ext. 117

FINANCIAL MANAGER: Joe Pitard

jpitar@bpumc.org, ext. 101

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA:

Andrew Seltz

aseltz@bpumc.org, ext. 119

SECRETARY: Brenda Atkins

batkins@bpumc.org, ext. 111

Interim Choir Director

INTERIM CHOIR DIRECTOR: Art DeWeese

adeweese@bpumc.org

ORGANIST: Jay Tumminello

jtumminello@bpumc.org

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR: Tracy Estes

imagination@bpumc.org

FACILITIES MANAGER: Chad Malcom

cmalcom@bpumc.org

Published monthly by

Bluff Park United Methodist Church

733 Valley Street, Hoover, AL 35226

Article deadline 2nd Tuesday monthly

Editor, Andrew Seltz

newsletter@bpumc.org

Our faith, our lives, and our ministries take on a new life when the stories are shared with others. Help us tell God's story of love as it unfolds in our church and community. Send news, photos, videos, and stories to newsletter@bpumc.org

Message from the Pastor

At Thanksgiving this year, I was able to report to my family all of the wonderful things happening at Bluff Park UMC! My father, who attends two separate Methodist churches in the Carolinas, remarked how impressed he is with the level of activity and the depth of ministry at our church. We certainly have a lot to be thankful for on the Bluff!



At the same time, we also have challenges. We have been talking about worship attendance in our Traditional Worship services. We have seen a drop in giving as Rick Hardy will explain in more detail on the front page of the newsletter. I have personally spoken to some of our members who simply cannot attend as much as they would like. They have transitioned into a fixed income situation and may not be able to meet their pledge amounts. I have reminded each of these persons that this is always their church and we understand when changes occur. The only step needed is to call the financial staff and give them an update about your giving.

I trust that some of our church members will be able to stand in the breach and give a bit more this year to help our church meet its ministry and mission goals. We have received over 200 pledges for the 2019 budget and those pledges remain strong. We still need many more to make our budget for the new year. As you can imagine, this is a time where deep commitment and compelling vision are needed. We are ready to take our next steps but we can only do so together as one church!

Please feel free to contact our church office and staff with any questions that you might have about our current needs!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike".

An Early Christmas

August in Alabama hardly puts you in the spirit of the Christmas season. But, in the middle of kids returning to school and end of summer trips to the lake, we started collecting Christmas Shoeboxes to send to our missionaries working in Central and South America.

The reason we must start so early is that those boxes have a long journey ahead of them before arriving in the hands of a child at Christmas. After we collect them at the church, they are brought to the UMCOR Warehouse in Decatur, AL to join the donations from many other United Methodist churches. The individual boxes must be checked before being crated up to ship to their final destination in time for Christmas.

So much of what we do to share the love of Jesus with others requires advanced planning and preparation. We collected socks and blankets in October so that our partners ministering to the homeless in our area have supplies on hand when the weather turns cold. Our food pantry team has been making arrangements to distribute special holiday boxes during the month of December, and our Festival of Three Kings sponsors gather gifts for children during the month of November to distribute in early December.

Thank you to all of the church members who plan ahead and ensure that the mission work of Bluff Park UMC is ready to meet the needs that God places before us.



CELEBRATING GIFTS AND YEAR-END GIVING

Churches typically receive as much as 25% of their gifts in the last two months of the year. As you make your plans to complete your 2018 financial commitment, here are three additional possibilities for resources beyond cash gifts. Please note that these possibilities are listed for educational purposes. Please consult your personal advisor for your specific information.

GIFTS OF APPRECIATED STOCKS OR BONDS

You can transfer ownership of stocks, bonds or mutual funds to the church and receive a charitable tax deduction based on the full fair market value of the securities on the date of the transfer. This avoids the capital gains tax while giving the church the benefit of the full value of the security. To receive this benefit, it is important to transfer ownership before the security is sold. For your gift to apply to the current tax year, the securities must be in the account of the local church (or our Foundation) by December 31st. So, allow plenty of lead time for your broker to complete this transaction.

GIFTS OF REAL ESTATE

A charitable gift of real estate can be especially tax advantageous. If a home, vacation home, acreage or farm property has appreciated in value over the years – its sale could result in a sizable capital gains tax. If the real estate is given to the church prior to the sale, you can avoid the tax and realize a charitable deduction for the full fair market value of the real estate. One could even consider a bargain sale transaction with half of the funds to the church and the other half to the donor.

GIFTS OF LIFE INSURANCE

When you name the church as the owner and beneficiary of a life insurance policy, it usually offers you a tax advantage in the year you make the gift. You can take a charitable deduction approximately equal to the cash value at the time of the gift. Additionally, continued payments of premiums may qualify as charitable tax deductions each year.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Thanksgiving has passed and Christmas is fast approaching, it seems a great time to reflect on and celebrate the ways God has blessed the Children's Ministry at Bluff Park UMC in 2018. In the past year:

We offered 4 mission trip/field trips to teach children the importance of sharing the love of Christ with their friends, their family, their community, and the world. The 26 children who attended each field trip shopped for and packed/delivered school supplies, Christmas gifts, blankets, food, etc. for people in our community and around the world who were in need of these things.

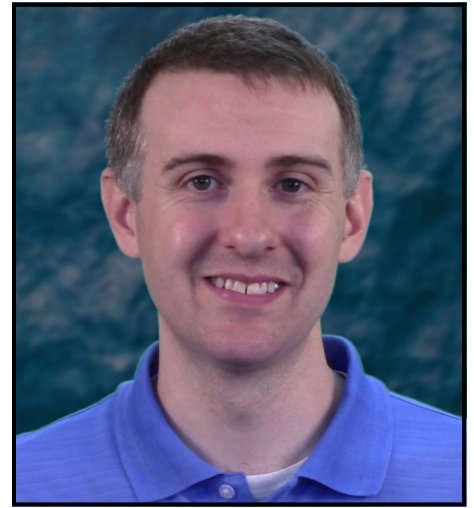
We offered our second year of Camp on the Bluff, a free skills-based summer camp geared towards children in our community who may not be able to afford to attend summer camp, as well as the children of our church. 60 children attended our first year (2017), and that number grew to 100 children this year. Vacation Bible School also grew from 205 children in 2017 to 263 children in 2018.

The children of our church and community raised \$1375 dollars at VBS to benefit Room 35226, and \$317 at our Halloween Carnival to benefit NeverThirst.

We began providing age appropriate Bibles to all the children of our church at three key points in their spiritual journey: once when they are baptized, once when they enter Kindergarten, and once when they enter the 3rd grade.

We have continued to teach our children how much God loves them, how they can form a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, how they can grow in that relationship, and how they can share the love of God with others!

God has truly blessed the Children's Ministry in 2018, and we could not have accomplished everything above without the help of such a loving and caring congregation. Whether you prayed for us, volunteered with us, contributed you tithes and offerings, or loved on the children of our church in any way, we could not have done it without you! Thank you for investing in the lives of the children of our church and our community, and thank you for helping us have such a great year! Merry Christmas!



STUDENT MINISTRY

Holy Ground through December 12

We have decided to continue having Holy Ground through December 12 this year so that we can dive deep into the Advent story. On November 28, December 5 and 12 we will explore the unexpected story that God tells through the birth of Jesus. I hope you will be there as we will be switching things up some at Holy Ground, playing some fun Christmas games and of course singing some awesome Christmas music!

Christmas Party and Caroling- December 16

We will cap off our semester with our annual Christmas Party and Caroling. This is going to be an awesome night full of fun, great games, Dirty Santa, caroling with shut ins and of course some tacky Christmas sweaters! We will meet in the Holy Ground room at 5:00 sharp to start the party! We will have food, drinks, and some fun games ready for you! All you need to do is to bring your best and tackiest Christmas Sweater, a \$5 dirty Santa gift (keep it PG gang) and some great energy! After the Christmas party we will load up in vans and go caroling to some of our members who are shut in and are not able to go out and experience some of the joys of the Christmas season. We will return back to the church by 7:00pm for the parents to pick everyone up. We cannot wait to see you there!

Hello from Stephen!

First, I would like to introduce myself, my name is Stephen Ingram and I am so excited to be serving as your interim



Director of Student Ministries. I have been in full time ministry for 20 years and am excited to continue my ministry here at Bluff Park UMC with you all. I currently work full time as a lead consultant for a national ministry consulting firm, Ministry Architects. I live in Homewood with my wife Mary Liz and our three kids Mary Clare, Patrick and Nora. Again, I am so excited about spending the coming months in ministry with you all!

What a terrific time we have had in 2018! The year began with a tremendous study to answer the “Tough Questions” with Dr. Dennis Sansom. A scholar of merit and intellectual scope took us through the Stories of Geneses and explored God’s relationship with men and women. Next, we had a lovely Valentine Lunch and a trip to the Virginia Samford Theater. In March we hosted about 100 persons attending the “First Day of Spring Luncheon” with Dolores Hydock. Flowers and music created a splendid mood as the remarkable meal was served! A spring trip to Birmingham Botanical Gardens was a delight to our group. We enjoyed the blooming flowers – and the gift shop! Writer, Denise George presented her book about Birmingham WWII hero, Gerald Hodges. In May we visited the Military History Museum in Aliceville, AL, enjoyed the lecture presented by the Museum Curator and saw the military uniform and other belongings of the Elizabeth Davis family. June launched a new event spectacular. The “American Dinner Theater” was such a great experience! The “Drexel and Friends Band”



rocked the night with popular, folk, country and rock and roll. After a delicious barbeque dinner, World Tour Guide, Niki Sepsas, presented a breathtaking visual tour of American’s past sacrifices and glory. The night ended with the recognition of our veterans and the singing of the national anthem. One hundred and twenty-five persons enjoyed this evening. The “Summer Dance” was a sensation! Pocket Change played a fabulous and varied amount of tunes. Rosemary Dallum prepared a suburb dinner for us: Grilled Salmon or Chicken Cordon Blue, scrumptious salad and ice cream and cookies for dessert. All enjoyed the dancing and fun. August brought the return of “Conversation and Candlelight” – we meet in the Faith Classroom and enjoy a marvelous fellowship as we dine for the Wednesday evening meal. “Welcome Fall” was the theme of our event on Sept. 25th. Kristi Tingle and Jan Hunter entertained and there was a shopping op for those needing pumpkins and such. A trip to beautiful Berea, Kentucky was the highlight of October. We enjoyed three of the most glorious days of blue skies and red and orange trees. The two museums: The Ark and the Creation were truly splendid. It was a learning experience for sure. November brought a chance to buy pecans to help fund the 55+ Ministry. December began with 55+ Sunday School Classes filling stockings for the homebound members of each class. It was a comfort to the homebound to know that their church was thinking of them! We ended the year with a “Home for the Holidays” Christmas. The Alabama Symphony and the Birmingham Southern Hilltop Singers are some of the rarest and most delightful musicians on the planet. Much gratitude is extended to the Volunteer Leaders of the 55+ Ministry Council who brought these offerings into reality.

The outreach ministry of Open Door Café has had many inspiring and educational guests in 2018. Both the mayor of Hoover and the Mayor of Vestavia Hills spoke. We had the Director of the Hoover Senior Center speak about the center which many of our members enjoy. Contemporary musician, Cole Arn sang, played guitar and shared his spiritual journey. Psychologist, Dr. Don Weindorf taught us about “Brain Health” and on another day he brought his Gospel Band. The Museum of Flight sent a representative to reveal “The History of Flight” and we took a trip to Paris one day with the help of Niki Sepsas. Julie White, BPUMC member and realtor helped us learn about many housing options for older adults. Musician, George Winter played dance music and many of our group enjoyed big band dancing. Rosemary Dallum helped us decorate cookies and enjoy peach ice cream. Charlie Trucks Preached according to John Wayne, Andy and Barney – just for a little something different. Kathy Martin, President of the Etiquette School of Birmingham, taught about “Manners in Practice” – very useful for church members. Mike Holly shared with us the fundamentals of “All Saint’s Day”, “All Hallows Eve”, and just for good measure - he threw in “The Reformation”! WOW! “Thanks, Mike!” Helicopter Patrolman, Kent Smith told about his adventures in rescuing the lost. Just in time for football, Gary Sanders, UAB Sports Journalist talked about “Teams and Coaches” in Alabama. We traveled to Tuscaloosa’s North River Yawt Club and the Cypress Inn. Other travels included Montevallo’s Carved Trees and Peach Park. Many thanks to Shepherd Center volunteers and new volunteers for Open Door beginning in September.

The Festival of Three Kings

Each year we help others experience the joy of Christmas by providing gifts to children. Individuals, families, Sunday School classes and others sponsor a child, receive a "wish list" and head out to the stores. These gifts are brought to the church and gathered together to be delivered to the families in early December. The Festival of Three Kings is sponsored by the Bluff Park United Appeal Fund. Thank you to everyone who participated this year.

White Christmas Offering

Each Advent, our church takes up the White Christmas Offering in support of the United Methodist Children's Home. Their mission is to heal children, unite families, and change lives in northern Alabama. Through your support, children are placed in safe and loving foster homes and are able to continue to be cared for in college as they transition into independent adulthood. Simply assign checks or envelopes to "White Christmas Offering" in morning worship throughout Advent, or by dropping off your gift in our Financial Office. The Festival of Three Kings is sponsored by the Bluff Park United Appeal Fund.



Give the Gift of Furniture

We are still in need of financial gifts for chairs, tables, and other furniture needs in our newly completed Student Ministry building. A wonderful gift has already been given, but we are still in need of \$5000 to complete our purchases for the classrooms and other areas of the new building!

Member Updates

CONGRATULATIONS...

Congratulations to Melissa and David Miller on the birth of a daughter, Scarlett Grace Miller on November 15th.

Congratulations to Sarah and Brandon Miller on the birth of a daughter, Eleanor (Ellie) James Miller on November 25th.

SYMPATHY OF THE CONGREGATION...

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to Patty Cain on the passing of her husband Charles on October 27th. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to Jean Brown on the passing of her husband Col. Gene Brown on October 30th. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

The sympathy of the congregation goes out to Fran Campbell on the passing of her husband Bill on November 13th. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family in their time of loss.

LIFETRACK

December 1

Nehemiah 9:26-31 | Psalm 144

December 2

Jeremiah 33:14-16 | Psalm 111

December 3

2 Peter 3:14-18 | Psalm 1

December 4

Revelation 22:12-16 | Psalm 6

December 5

Luke 11:29-32 | Psalm 14

December 6

Luke 1:68-79 | Psalm 18:1-20

December 7

Philippians 1:18-26 | Psalm 16

December 8

Malachi 4 | Psalm 20

December 9

Malachi 3:1-4 | Psalm 150

December 10

Isaiah 40:1-11 | Psalm 15

December 11

2 Peter 1:2-15 | Psalm 28

December 12

Luke 7:18-30 | Psalm 38

December 13

Isaiah 12:2-6 | Psalm 37:1-15

December 14

2 Corinthians 9 | Psalm 31

December 15

Luke 1:57-66 | Psalm 32

December 16

Philippians 4:4-7 | Psalm 103

December 17

Isaiah 11:1-9 | Psalm 47

December 18

Acts 28:23-31 | Psalm 53

December 19

Luke 7:31-35 | Psalm 49

December 20

Jeremiah 31:31-34 | Psalm 121

December 21

Isaiah 9:2-7 | Psalm 33

December 22

Luke 1:46b-55 | Psalm 147

December 23

Luke 1:39-55 | Psalm 102

December 24

Luke 2:1-20 | Isaiah 59:15-21

December 25

John 1:1-14 | Psalm 85

December 26

Acts 6:1-7 | Psalm 98

December 27

John 21:19-24 | Psalm 2

December 28

Revelation 21:1-7 | Psalm 23

December 29

1 Corinthians 3:10-17 | Psalm 93

December 30

Luke 2:41-52 | Psalm 90

December 31

John 8:12-19 | Psalm 96

Monthly Calendar for December 2018

Sunday, December 2

8:45 am Traditional Worship Service
9:45 am Sunday School
11:00 am The Gathering at Bluff Park
11:00 am Traditional Worship Service
4:00 pm UMW Compassion Circle
5:00 pm Christmas Pageant
5:30 pm Church-Wide Christmas Party

Monday, December 3

10:00 am Prayer Shawl

Wednesday, December 5

9:00 am Food Pantry
4:00 pm Student Ministry
5:30 pm Men's Chorus
6:30 pm LifePath Strengths Course
6:30 pm Choir

Thursday, December 6

7:30 am Advent Morning Prayer
9:30 am Sewing Group
10:00 am The Open Door Cafe

Saturday, December 8

3:00 pm Parents Night Out

Sunday, December 9

8:45 am Traditional Worship Service
9:45 am Sunday School
11:00 am The Gathering at Bluff Park
11:00 am Traditional Worship Service
12:30 pm Youth Council

Monday, December 10

8:00 am UMW Executive Committee
5:00 pm UMW Christmas Party
10:00 am Prayer Shawl

Tuesday, December 11

8:30 am Maintenance
6:00 pm Under the Bridge

Wednesday, December 12

4:00 pm Student Ministry
5:30 pm Men's Chorus
6:30 pm LifePath Strengths Course
6:30 pm Choir

Thursday, December 13

7:30 am Advent Morning Prayer
9:30 am Sewing Group
10:00 am The Open Door Cafe

Friday, December 14

12:00 pm Friendship Class Luncheon

Sunday, December 16

8:45 am Traditional Worship Service
9:45 am Sunday School
10:00 am Children's Sunday School
Christmas Party

11:00 am The Gathering at Bluff Park
11:00 am Traditional Worship Service

Monday, December 17

10:00 am Prayer Shawl

Tuesday, December 18

6:00 pm Under the Bridge

Wednesday, December 19

5:30 pm Men's Chorus
6:30 pm Choir

Thursday, December 20

7:30 am Advent Morning Prayer
9:30 am Sewing Group

Sunday, December 23

8:45 am Traditional Worship Service
9:45 am Sunday School
11:00 am The Gathering at Bluff Park
11:00 am Traditional Worship Service

Monday, December 24—Christmas Eve

OFFICE CLOSED

3:00 pm Traditional Candlelight

Worship Service

5:00 pm Traditional Candlelight

Worship Service

5:00 pm The Gathering at Bluff Park

Tuesday, December 25—Christmas Day

OFFICE CLOSED

Wednesday, December 26

5:30 pm Men's Chorus
6:30 pm Choir

Thursday, December 27

9:30 am Sewing Group
9:30 am UMW Friendship Circle
6:30 pm Finance Committee
7:00 pm Book Club

Sunday, December 30

8:45 am Traditional Worship Service
9:45 am Sunday School
11:00 am The Gathering at Bluff Park
11:00 am Traditional Worship Service

Monday, December 31—New Year's Eve

OFFICE CLOSED



MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

In Memory of...

GENERAL OPERATING FUND

Ken Adams, by Kenny and Tracy Adams

John David Baird, by Wesley Forum Class

Gene Brown, by Kay Adams, Janice Black, Friendship Class, Doris M. Crowe, John and Nancy Holt, Andy and Linda King, A.V. and Mary Marlow, James and Sara Perry, Wayne and Jackie Walton

Leland Brown, by Kathy Hayes, Debbie Powell

Earl B. Harper, by Pony Green

Reggie LeCren, by John and Jeannette Burland

CHOIR FUND

Tom Finley, by Canterbury Class

FOOD PANTRY

Gene Brown, by Bob and Ann Nelson

Tom Finley, by Kay Adams

Reggie LeCren, by David and Jeannie Jenkins

PASTOR'S DISCRETIONARY

John David Baird, by Bob and Ann Nelson

Gene Brown, by Alan and Catherine Hallmark

CROCKETT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Gene Brown, by Harry and Peggy Hill

Note: Some Memorials and Honorariums are not listed by the request of the donors.

X



733 Valley Street
Hoover, AL 35226
(205) 822-0910

X

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
AUTO
BIRMINGHAM, AL
PERMIT NO. 1816



follow us

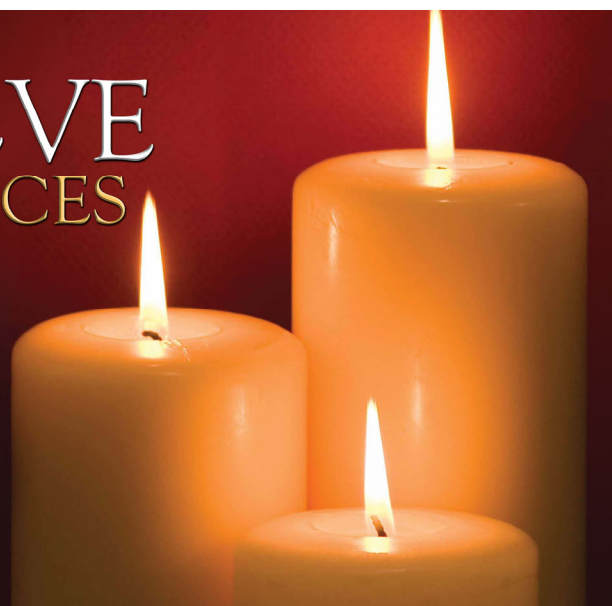


CHRISTMAS EVE

CANDLELIGHT SERVICES

Traditional Worship
3:00pm and 5:00pm

The Gathering
5:00pm



Christmas Poinsettias

Reserve your beautiful poinsettia now to remember or honor a loved one at Christmas. The cost is \$15.00 per plant payable to the church.

Deadline for ordering is December 10th.

In Honor Of: _____ by _____

In Memory of: _____ by _____

Return order form and payment to the church office.