

Welcome to Song of Life!

A church with Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors that Loves God, Loves Others, and wants to Change the World.

Get connected with any of our bible studies, small groups, or social activities you see here! We have a new Groups page on our website—you can find out about all the small groups, social events, and service teams at SoL! Also, check us out on our Facebook page!

Worship Service Times >>
8:00, 9:30 & 11:00am

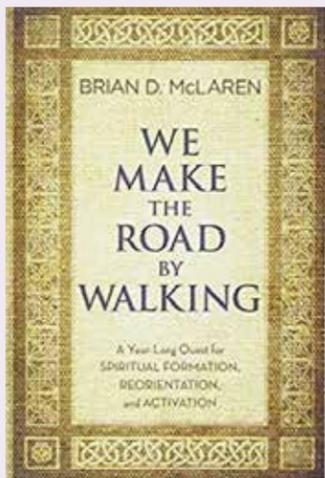


Pastor's Study Group

The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem

This year during Advent, Pastor Jody will offer another Pastor's Study Group which will correspond with our Advent Theme, called *Unexpected Journey*. For this study we will use Adam Hamilton's *The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem*, and we will meet on Wednesday mornings (please note the change in day) at 10:00am in the Sanctuary at SoL. An evening study group on Thursdays at 7pm may also be offered, depending on participant interest.

All are welcome to participate in this study, even if you can only make a few of the sessions. The book is available in both paperback and electronic format through amazon.com as well as from other booksellers. If you would like the office to purchase the book for you at a cost of \$13, please let the office know ASAP. We suggest you buy the book ahead of time and read at least the first chapter before the first session.



District Devotional Study – We Make the Road by Walking

Don't forget to start our District Devotional Study, using the Brian McLaren book *We Make the Road by Walking*, on **Sunday, December 2**. We will begin by reading Chapter 14, continue through the rest of the book, then jump back to the beginning and read Chapters 1-13, finishing right before Advent in 2019. Books are still available in the Sanctuary or can be ordered from amazon.com or from other booksellers.

Online Giving

Did you know that you can give to SoL online? Our general budget is funded 100% by the gifts of people just like you who Love God, Love Others, and want to Change the World.

Give today at
songoflifeumc.churchcenteronline.com/giving



The Pastor's Perspective

Well, here it is...the last month of the year. For some of us, it's the happiest month, and for others, it's the saddest. For some, it's the busiest month of the year, and for others, the most relaxing (I want to meet those people!). It's a time when there's a lot of emphasis on giving, which is always a good thing. But who are we giving to? Are we giving more to those who we love and care about, or more to those who need really need the gifts the most?

This year, during the month of December, we have a wonderful opportunity to give some of the blessings we have received from God to those who are in need. And while there are many charities to choose from, I'd like to suggest we give to those supported by either our local church or the United Methodist Church as a whole. For that reason, I'm dedicating the majority of this newsletter to the organizations supported by Song of Life UMC, and those sponsored by the global UMC, in hopes you will decide to give to them over any others. Please don't get me wrong: there are a lot of charitable organizations out there who need our gifts and are doing good work. But if you are not sure which ones you would like to give to this year, I encourage you to prayerfully consider giving to one or more of the ones highlighted in this newsletter.

In addition, the articles in this newsletter will give you information about various opportunities for worship and fellowship being offered during the month of December at Song of Life UMC. We know this season is one in which we tend to want to spend more time with family and friends, but we also hope you will build into your busy schedules some time to worship the one whose birth we celebrate: our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I look forward to being in worship with you during this holiday season.

Grace & Peace, *Pastor Jody*

What to Expect in Worship

As we begin the season of Advent, we thought you might like to know (and share!) the Sermon Series topics that Pastor Jody will be preaching on in the coming months:



Unexpected Journey (Advent)

- 12/2 An Unexpected Announcement
- 12/9 An Unexpected Disclosure
- 12/16 An Unexpected Visitor
- 12/23 An Unexpected Trip
- 12/24 An Unexpected Birthplace (Christmas Eve)
- 12/30 Expecting the Unexpected

Casting Our Vision

- 1/6 Honoring the Past
- 1/13 Imagining the Future
- 1/20 It Takes a Village



Growing in Faith Together (GIFT)

- 1/27 It's All About Gratitude
- 2/3 It's All About Giving Back
- 2/10 It's All About God



A Way Forward

- 2/17 Preparing the Way
- 2/24 A Progress Report
- 3/3 Where Do We Go From Here?



Giving It Up (Lent)

- 3/6 What Are You Giving Up (Ash Wednesday)
- 3/10 Giving Up Control
- 3/17 Giving Up Expectations
- 3/24 Giving Up Superiority
- 3/31 Giving Up Enemies
- 4/7 Giving Up Our Lives
- 4/14 Giving Up Popularity (Palm Sunday)
- 4/18 Humble...Yet Holy (Maundy Thursday)
- 4/19 Good Friday – TBD
- 4/21 At Early Dawn (Easter Sunrise)
- 4/21 Giving Up Death (Easter Sunday)

The Joy of Giving

During this holiday season, we have many opportunities to give some of what we have not only to the church, but also to the organizations supported by our local congregation and the General Church. Since Christmas is the season of giving, we thought we would highlight some of these organizations and how you can help.



Jose's Closet (www.josescloset.org)

Jose's Closet is a non-profit resource center in Apache Junction that supplies foster, adoptive, and kinship families with clothing, strollers, school backpacks, toys, formula, diapers, food, and much, much more. Arizona has over 20,000 kids who are in foster care at this time, many of whom are placed with families with only the clothes on their backs. These vulnerable children, many of whom have already experienced trauma in their lives, are often frightened and hurting, and they lack a lot of the "basics" that could help them lead a more normal life in a loving home. This is where Jose's Closet can be of tremendous help.

But the closet itself is in desperate need. Their current location, located in the A-Pod at the old Superstition Mountain Elementary School, at 550 S. Ironwood Drive in Apache Junction, costs nearly \$16,000 per year to rent...and that doesn't include utilities. What's more, their landlord has suggested that an increase in rent could occur next year, so donations of money are desperately needed, as well as in-kind donations of items like diapers, backpacks, and toys, and other equipment like baby carriers and diaper bags. But most of all, they are in need of regular financial support, and as a **non-profit organization** that provides **help to the working poor**, Single taxpayers can donate up to \$400 (or \$800 for married taxpayers) and receive the **Arizona Charitable Tax Credit** when they file their Arizona State Tax Returns. For more information about Jose's Closet, contact our own Wendy Esquibel at 480-313-8496.





Pan de Vida Foundation (www.pandevidaaz.org)

Pan de Vida Foundation is another organization that helps those in the Queen Creek and San Tan Valley areas who have basic needs that would otherwise be unmet. Founded in 2008 by Mary Gloria, Pan de Vida Foundation is also a non-profit organization that operates a neighborhood revitalization program, offers referrals for assistance and employment, sponsors health screenings and health fairs, and provides holiday assistance programs to those in need. They also offer scholarships to low income students who attend high school in the Queen Creek and San Tan Valley areas.

This year we have been asked by Mary Gloria to provide gift cards from either Walmart or Fry's Food and Drug, that will be given out to the families served by Pan de Vida. To facilitate this, we've placed a "Giving Tree" in the Sanctuary with gift card holders that you can use for your gifts. Simply take one of the holders with you after worship, purchase a gift card from either Fry's or Walmart (minimum \$25 please), place it in the holder and return it to worship the following Sunday. Easy-peasy!! If you're not able to

get one of the holders from the Giving Tree, just bring your gift card to the church during office hours and we'll see it gets added to the tree. Please bring your gift cards by December 9th if possible.

Additional donations can be made directly to Pan de Vida Foundation, and also qualify for the **Arizona Charitable Tax Credit** program, which means donations of up to \$400 for single taxpayers and \$800 for married taxpayers may be taken as a dollar-for-dollar credit on your Arizona State Income Tax Return.

House of Refuge (www.houseofrefuge.org)

House of Refuge, located on the old Williams Air Force Base housing area, is a faith-based, non-profit organization that helps homeless families in crisis by providing transitional housing and supportive services as they strive toward self-sufficiency and seek permanent housing. As a church, Song of Life UMC has supported House of Refuge not only financially, but also through our volunteer efforts, one of which is coming up in the middle of December.

Our church also recently collected donations from more than 50 families totaling \$11,000 which will be used to "Adopt a Home" for one year, so a family in need can have a place they can call home while they work toward transitioning to a more permanent situation. Our family, who we may never know, will receive a safe and stable housing situation (utilities included), monthly food boxes, access to a community center for school-aged children, access to computer labs and job readiness programs, on-going financial literacy programs, and comprehensive support services. House of Refuge is also a non-profit organization that is eligible for the **Arizona Charitable Tax Credit Program**.



United Methodist Connectional Ministries

In addition to the local ministries listed above, our own denomination, the United Methodist Church, has many ways in which we can give to those in need. Some of these are:

- **United Methodist Outreach Ministries (www.umom.org)** – Located near downtown Phoenix, the UMOM New Day Center provides a variety of services to the homeless and the working poor. Some of the services they offer include a Crisis Shelter for families, youth, and single women as well as others experiencing homelessness; transitional services from emergency shelters to more permanent, safe, and stable housing; supportive services, like access to job training, child development, childcare, health care, healthy food, basic financial training, and treatment programs; and much, much more.
- **Justa Center (www.justacenter.org)** – Also located near downtown Phoenix, the Justa Center offers programs and services to homeless seniors, including veterans, helping them along their journey back into housing. At the center, which opens every day at 7am, folks have access to a variety of resources, such as help in establishing resources for independent living, assistance in finding affordable housing, on-site nursing services, daily mid-morning meals supplied by Meals on Wheels and other community groups, and limited counseling to help individuals succeed in ending their homelessness situations.
- **United Methodist Committee on Relief (www.umcor.org)** – UMCOR is the humanitarian relief and development arm of the UMC, and is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization operated under the auspices of the General Board of Global Ministries. As such, often representatives from UMCOR or their disaster response teams are among the first to respond to humanitarian relief efforts due to natural or man-made disasters. Individuals and groups interested in supporting UMCOR's efforts may do so by assembling Relief kits in addition to making financial donations either online or by check.

Song of Life United Methodist Church (www.songoflifeumc.org)

And last but certainly not least, additional contributions, over and above your 2018 financial commitments, may be made to support the mission and ministries of Song of Life United Methodist Church. Your additional financial gift can either be made to support our general fund and annual budget, or can be designated to support a particular ministry, or to help pay down our current mortgage debt associated with our current church buildings.

Because we have been blessed by God, we are called to give generously to those in need and to the mission and ministry of Christ's church. Our example for that comes from our founder, John Wesley, himself, who believed we should earn, save, and give as much as we can. Wesley's own commitment to giving was consistent throughout his life. As a student at Oxford, he figured out how much he needed in order to pay his bills, and gave the rest to those in need. And as his earnings increased, so did his giving. Rather than increase his lifestyle, John Wesley continued living on the same meager amount, so that eventually he gave more than 75% of his income to benefit the poor!

At this time of year, as we all prepare to experience the Joy of Giving, our prayer is that we will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to give a little bit more than we already have been giving to benefit those who have so little. Let us give so that others might live a better life. Amen.



SoL Kids & Youth News

The Baby Jesus Experience! (BJE! for short)

Come and share this exciting experience at Song of Life this Christmas Season. The 9:30 Sunday School classes will be working on a small performance to be presented in worship on December 16 at the 9:30 and 11am services. We will be continuing to plan and rehearse this presentation December 2 and December 9. All kids are welcome and encouraged to take part! Whether you are age 2, 17 or somewhere in between, come be a part of it all.*

Kids: we will also have something for your parents too! During the 9:30 Sunday School time, we will offer a time of "Coffee and Conversation" in the Youth Room on the church campus. Pastor Jody will provide some conversation starters based on the current sermon series, or you can talk about other things that are on your minds. Coffee and snacks will also be provided, so no need to get up in time for breakfast! Feed the kids and have breakfast on us!!

*If your family isn't able to participate in the BJE, Children's Church with Ms. Kris will still be available during the 11am service after the Children's Message.

Christmas Movie Party (for SoLteens)

On December 2, right after church we will go to the Pollack theaters in Tempe to join with other UMC youth groups from around Arizona to have a movie party!! Dress festive and bring about \$15 to cover the cost of the movie and/or snacks. Those in 6th grade and up are invited to attend!

Our SoLteens Christmas Party will be December 16th at 6:30pm at the church. Join us for some holiday desserts and our annual White Elephant Gift Exchange. Bring a gift (keep it under 10 dollars) to participate in the exchange. We will also play some games and have a rocking Christmas celebration.

Winter Camp

The conference is holding a winter camp at Mingus over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend in January 2019. Those interested in going to camp and playing in the snow should let Carrie Claypool so she can get you all the information you need to participate.

Song of Life Leadership Board Members

Stuart Blair: sfblairusa@yahoo.com

John Campbell: campbell51jc@gmail.com

Sean Claypool: sclaypool2009@gmail.com

Casey DeWitt: cdewitt@songoflifeumc.org

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Jerry Shanks: geraldsha@gmail.com

NEED TO ADD SOMETHING TO THE SoL NEWS??? Email your content and any graphic request to info@songoflifeumc.org two weeks prior to the month it needs to be published. You can also request news and events to be added to our website, so be sure to email for those requests as well. Thank you!

SoL Campus

Worship 8:00, 9:30 & 11:00am
Sunday School for Kids & Teens 9:45am
Children's Church 11:15am

20164 S. Sossaman Road,
Queen Creek, AZ, 85142

480.641.1200



Come & Follow Us!

Here's what you'll find on our Facebook:
– weekly LIVE sermons
– articles that go deeper on this week's topic
– comments & insights from SoL members
– up-to-date info on coming events
(Be sure to invite your friends!)

[@songoflifeumc](https://www.facebook.com/songoflifeumc)

Our Staff

Rev. Jody Topping, Lead Pastor
Nina Yardley, Office Assistant

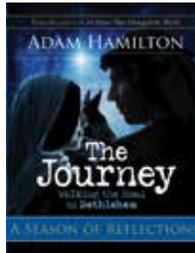
www.songoflifeumc.org

Thinking Theologically | Jody Topping

Now the birth of Jesus took place in this way...

– Matthew 1:18a

On December 2, we will begin the season of Advent, the season in which we prepare ourselves to celebrate the traditional birth of Jesus. This year, I have chosen to write a sermon series called "Unexpected Journey," based on the Advent study book written by Rev. Adam Hamilton called *The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem*. In addition to his book, which we will be reading as part of our own SoL Pastor's Advent Study, Pastor Adam wrote a small volume of daily devotions intended as a companion to the book. At the beginning of that volume, he devotes a few pages to the meaning of Advent...and since I couldn't describe it better than he does, here's part of what Pastor Adam writes about this season of waiting called Advent:



Today, radio stations and shopping centers begin playing Christmas music weeks before Thanksgiving. Halloween now seems to be the unofficial beginning of the Christmas season! Yet somehow, though we've extended the season of Christmas, we have moved further and further from the meaning of Christmas.

Christmas today seems like an orgy of overindulgence. Many Americans go into debt to make sure their children have "enough" under the tree at Christmas and then watch as their kids become weary after opening so many presents. We find ourselves with a "Christmas hangover" when the credit card bills arrive. Somehow we miss out on the true message and joy of Christmas.

This is why now, more than ever, Advent matters. Advent is the way the church prepares for Christmas. Since sometime in the late fifth or early sixth century, this season has been a time to recall the meaning of Christmas. The word "Advent" is from the Latin "adventus," and it means "coming." Christians use this opportunity both to recall Jesus' coming to the earth as a babe in Bethlehem and to prepare themselves for his promised return to earth. The Advent season begins four Sundays before

Christmas Day, so it lasts from twenty-two to twenty-eight days, depending upon the day when Christmas falls....

*In a world where so much focus at Christmas is placed on gift giving, card sending, and party attending, the season of Advent itself is a precious gift. Its purpose is to help us remember the story of a peasant girl who gave birth in a stable to a child whose life, death and resurrection would change the world.**

My prayer is that, during this season of Advent, we will prepare our hearts in such a way as to bring new meaning to this season.

**Excerpt from the Journey: A Season of Reflections by Rev. Adam Hamilton, ©2011 by Abingdon Press, Nashville, pgs. 12-14*

December is Here!

Join Your Church Family for Two Important Events!!
On Saturday, December 1 we have two exciting events happening involving Song of Life

Hanging of the Greens

At 10am, we will meet at the church to decorate for the Advent Season, which begins the very next day. This will be a great time of fellowship as we prepare our church campus for our Advent and Christmas celebrations. Light refreshments will be served.



Queen Creek Holiday Festival Parade

The 36th Annual Queen Creek Holiday Festival will begin at 12:00 noon at the QC Library Complex with live entertainment, craft vendors, food vendors, activities, and even photos with Santa! The Parade begins at 3:30pm, and as has become our custom, Song of Life will be participating in the parade to bring some Christmas

Cheer! The parade will run north on Old Ellsworth Road and will end at the Recreation Annex/Library where attendees will continue to enjoy the fabulous holiday festival until 7:00 p.m. Be sure to stay for the Tree Lighting Ceremony in the Library area at 6:00 p.m.

Calendar Modifications

Friends, in this newsletter you will not only find a lot of interesting information, but also our Master Calendar for the month of December. And as is often the case, there are a few changes to some of our usual monthly activities. These changes include:

- **Joy Circle** – instead of meeting at the Village Inn in Queen Creek Marketplace, we will meet at the home of Kris Miller for a Christmas Tea. If you don't have her address, contact the office and we'll gladly give it to you. Please bring your own tea cup or mug, and "tea time" snacks to share.
- **MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers)** – instead of meeting on the first and third Fridays this month, this group will meet on the first and second Fridays.
- **Men's Breakfast** – the Men's Breakfast, which usually meets on the 3rd Saturday of every month, will meet on the 2nd Saturday in order to allow those men on the House of Refuge Food Distribution Team to support that ministry effort on the 3rd Saturday, when they would normally meet.
- **Pastor Jody's On- and Off-Site Office Hours** – this month, in addition to trying out a couple of new places, Pastor Jody has adjusted her office hours because of other activities at the church as well as the Christmas and New Year's holidays.
- **Church Office Closure** – The Church Office will be closed on both Christmas and New Year's Days.

Also please note, any last minute changes to any of our calendar items, especially Pastor Jody's On- and Off-site office hours, will be posted on our Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/songoflifeumc/). If you are not on Facebook, we encourage you to create an account, and if you do nothing else on Facebook, "Like" and/or "Follow" our church's FB page and group so you can receive up-to-the-minute announcements and calendar changes.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Notes: For all events listed here, specific location details are on our website at songoflifeumc.org or call the church office at 480.641.1200.						1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Hanging of the Greens 12pm Queen Creek Holiday Festival (Parade starts 3:30pm)
2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am Classic Worship w/Communion 9:30am SoL Coffee & Conversation, Sunday School for Children & Youth 9:30am Traditional Worship 10:45am Koinonia Study Group @ Wolfahrt Home 10:45am Bible Buddies @ Howard & Sue Franklin's 11:00am Praise Worship 11:15am Children's Church East District Youth Movie Nite 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am-12pm Pastor Jody @ SoL, church office 1-4pm Pastor Jody @Slate Bistro 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop Meeting, Campus-wide 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30pm Webelos Scouts, SoL Classroom 7:00pm Contemplative Prayer, Sanctuary 7:00pm SoL Leadership Board, YouthRoom 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor's Study: The Journey 1-4pm Pastor Jody @ Panera – QC Marketplace 5:30pm Bells Rehearsal 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 7:30pm Praise Rehearsal 	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9-11am JOY Circle Christmas Tea @ Miller's 7pm Pastor's Study: The Journey 	7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers), Sanctuary 	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am SoL Men's Breakfast, Slate Bistro @ Trilogy
9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am Classic Worship w/Communion 9:30am SoL Coffee & Conversation, Sunday School for Children & Youth 9:30am Traditional Worship 10:45am Koinonia Study Group @ Wolfahrt Home 10:45am Bible Buddies @ Howard & Sue Franklin's 11:00am Praise Worship 11:15am Children's Church 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am-12pm Pastor Jody @SoL, church office 1-4pm Pastor Jody @Slate Bistro 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop Meeting, Campus-wide 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am-12pm Pastor Jody @Starbucks – Sprouts Shopping Center 6:30pm Webelos Scouts, SoL Classroom 7:00pm Contemplative Prayer, Sanctuary 	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor's Study: The Journey 1-4pm Pastor Jody @ Panera – QC Marketplace 5:30pm Bells Rehearsal 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 7:30pm Praise Rehearsal 	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7pm Pastor's Study: The Journey 	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers), Sanctuary 	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7-11am House of Refuge Distribution Team
16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am Classic Worship w/Communion 9:30am Traditional Worship 10:45am Koinonia Study Group @Hoddsden's Home 10:45am Bible Buddies @Howard & Sue Franklin's 11:00am Praise Worship 11:15am Children's Church 12:30pm New Member Gathering, SoL Classroom SoL Youth Christmas Gift Exchange 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am-12pm Pastor Jody @ SoL, church office 1-4pm Pastor Jody @ Starbucks – Sprouts Shopping Center 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop Meeting, Campus-wide 	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30pm Webelos Scouts, SoL Classroom 7:00pm Contemplative Prayer, Sanctuary 	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor's Study: The Journey 1-4pm Pastor Jody @ Panera – QC Marketplace 5:30pm Bells Rehearsal 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 7:30pm Praise Rehearsal 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7pm Pastor's Study: The Journey 	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am-12pm Pastor Jody @Starbucks – Higley Pt. 7pm Blue Christmas Service 	22
23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am Classic Worship w/Communion 9:30am SoL Coffee & Conversation, Sunday School for Children & Youth 9:30am Traditional Worship 10:45 Adult Fellowship Brunch @ Slate Bistro in Trilogy (Koinonia Study Group & Bible Buddies combined) 11:00am Praise Worship 11:15am Children's Church 	24 Christmas Eve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5pm Family Worship 8pm Traditional Worship 11pm Communion Service <p>*all Christmas Eve worship times are tentative</p>	25 Christmas Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church office closed 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor's Study: The Journey (tentative) 7:30pm Praise Rehearsal 	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7pm Pastor's Study: The Journey (tentative) 	28	29
30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am Classic Worship w/Communion 9:30am SoL Coffee & Conversation, Sunday School for Children & Youth 9:30am Traditional Worship No Koinonia Study Group 10:45am Bible Buddies @ Howard & Sue Franklin's 11:00am Praise Worship 11:15am Children's Church 	24 New Year's Eve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop Meeting, Campus-wide 	Jan 1 New Year's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church office closed 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10am Pastor's Study: The Journey 7:30pm Praise Rehearsal 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9-11am JOY Circle Christmas Tea @ Miller's 7pm Pastor's Study: The Journey 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers), Sanctuary 	5