



**HILLTOP**  
United Methodist Church

**ECHOS**  
December 2015



[www.mankatohilltop.org](http://www.mankatohilltop.org)

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## FROM THE PASTOR

### Not Yet Christmas

Well, it happened...Just a few days after Halloween I heard the first Christmas song of the season. It was a radio commercial set to the tune of "We Wish You A Merry Christmas," and I just rolled my eyes. Don't get me wrong. I love Christmas! It is honestly one of my favorite times of year, but I've also come to understand the benefit and fruitfulness of actually waiting for Christmas, and that's what Advent is all about.

Starting on November 29<sup>th</sup> and going all the way up to December 24<sup>th</sup> the church worldwide will be in the Advent Season. It's a time when we gather together as one body in hope and anticipation of Christ's future return. It is a time when we look back on Israel's history, and their own waiting for the messiah. And it's a time that we rediscover the Christmas story all over again so that the Holy Spirit may increase our hope in Christ's glorious, future return!

Every year that goes by I always feel that Advent will be more special than the last, and this year I feel that same way. There are many reasons that I feel especially ready for Advent, but one of which is the recent increase of Islamic terrorism around the world. The recent attacks in Paris brought to light once again for many of us just how incredibly broken and fallen this world is, and it should have also reminded us once again of the amazing task set before us—to be agents of Christ's peace and love through the power of the Spirit in this beaten and broken world.

During our worship together this season we will look deeper into the brokenness of the world so that we can better experience the amazing grace of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. Each week through the *Christmas: Uncensored* sermon series we will pull back the curtain on

the sterile and pristine Christmas story we all know and love, to truly get at the root of Christ's entry into this world, and in doing so our hope will increase in his future return in the midst of such a broken world.

So remember that it's not yet Christmas. That time will come at our annual Christmas Eve services when we will let loose and celebrate the coming of our Lord, but until then may you pray with me these o so familiar words:

*O Come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Kelly



### Worship with us Christmas Eve

Celebrate the birth of our Savior with us on Christmas Eve at either 5:00 pm or 7:00 pm on Thursday, December 24th.

Both services will include candlelight and communion with many special music opportunities and full choir at the 7:00 pm service.

## HILLTOP NEWS

### Minutes from Church Conference

Thursday, November 12, 2015, 6:30 pm

**Membership Report** – The membership report as presented and discussed with the recommendation that 9 people be removed from Hilltop’s membership due to two years of inactivity and or unresponsiveness. The voting membership unanimously approved that Nancy and Brett Meyer, Scott and Laura Thoms, Renate Carlson, Dustin Stern, Wes Flesner, Chris Flesner, and Jill Brink be removed from Hilltop’s membership.

**Nominations Report** – The 2016 Servant Leadership Team was presented and discussed with several corrections being offered. Paulette Adams moved to accept the 2016 Servant Leadership Team as amended. Barb Keith seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**Lay Speaker/Minister and Ministry Candidates Report** – Jeff Adams, John Phelps, and Goldie Bosard are requesting to renew certification as lay speaker. Marj Blommel is withdrawing consideration as a certified lay speaker. Andrew Bittner has been recommended as a ongoing declared candidate for ministry. The voting membership unanimously approved all requests of certified lay speakers and ministry candidates.

**Pastoral Compensation Report** – as agreed upon at time of hire, the pastoral wages will remain the same in 2016.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerry Rausch

### Islam Q & A

Recent events have brought Islam back into the spotlight, and Shannon and Kelly would like to spend some time with you to answer any questions you may have regarding the religion of Islam, Muslims, and how the Church might best minister in a growing climate of fear and uncertainty. This will also be during our monthly potluck, so join us for lunch right after the 10:30 service on Sunday, December 6th, and bring your questions to discuss over our meal together.

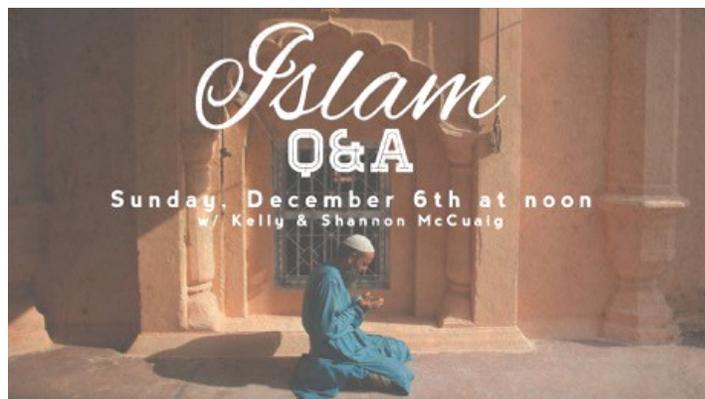
### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hilltop Women’s Retreat

The second annual Hilltop Women’s Retreat is scheduled for the evening of Friday, May 13, 2016 through the afternoon of Sunday, May 15, 2016. Please mark your calendars now to save the weekend for this great opportunity for a Lavender Springs Spa. This will be a spiritually nourishing retreat in which you'll journey through the psalms of the Bible, studying the different kinds of songs, poems, and psalms that have inspired people for centuries. You'll learn how the psalms help us share our feelings, disappointments, celebrations, and doubts with a truly great listener: God. And you'll leave with a fresh approach to prayer that will grow your faith throughout the months to come.

### 2016 Pledge Update

A big “thank you” to all for your 2016 pledge! Thanks to your generosity we have already received over 68 pledges with \$178,440 pledged to the general fund and \$32,745 pledged to the increase fund. Pledges are still coming in and it’s not too late to turn in your pledge. I want you to remember that your gift funds a ministry that changes lives. The Lord has some amazing things in store for us in 2016, including a new, full-time position to help lead our youth as well as help us plant a college ministry here in Mankato. Thank you for being a part of the Hilltop family and for helping us accomplish the vision God has given us.

You may drop your red envelope in the offering plate or in the mail so we can count you in as we carry out God’s mission for us in 2016.



## HILLTOP NEWS

### Baskets for the Christmas Festival

It's not too late to donate a basket for our Hilltop Christmas Festival! A list of suggested themes and directions for making a basket can be found in the narthex. When selecting items remember that all baskets begin with a minimum \$25.00 bid. Baskets need to be at Hilltop by Friday, December 4th For more information, please contact Char Kraywinkel at 257-3151 or Paula Peterson at 317-5794.

### Christmas Festival 2015

The Christmas Festival will be held Saturday, December 5, 2015, from 9 am to noon. We will be selling peanut brittle, crafts, soups, cookie sale, candies, baked goods, silent auction, breakfast, and more. There will also be a Kids Korner with face painting and make & take ornaments. Half of the proceeds will go to Backpack Food Program. The Youth will be setting up tables for the Festival on Wednesday evening, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, during their youth meeting. Drop off times for baked goods, crafts, cookies etc. is Friday December 4<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. If you have any questions or want to volunteer for a task, please feel free to contact Terry Berg at 625-1865 or bergtb1356@yahoo.com or Kendra Daby at 507-382-5202 or kensdaby@gmail.com

### Annual Christmas Program

The Christmas Program "C is for the . . . ?" will take place at the 10:30 am worship service on Sunday, December 13, 2015. The play takes place at a mall where the kids are hanging out and practicing for the live nativity show, while wondering about the real meaning of Christmas.

Our main program practice will be Wednesday, December 9th from 4:30-7:00 pm. The first hour of practice we will go through the Nativity pageant with all the costumes. After a supper break we will work with everyone that has speaking parts.

### Operation Christmas Child

Thank you to everyone at Hilltop for your participation, donations and support for Operation Christmas Child. Hilltop has provided 279 shoebox gifts--that's 279 kids who will hear the message that Jesus loves them, and that there are people in the world who care about them! Thanks for loving God's people!

Total boxes dropped off at our Collection Center this year was 2,809. Total boxes shipped in our truck after our 5 Relay Centers delivered their boxes was 6,438.

These numbers show a tremendous increase from 2014 when Hilltop packed 229 boxes and we shipped 5,212 boxes from the Mankato area.

Join us at worship at 10:30 am on December 6th and hear the testimony of Mary Ware - she will also talk with Kids Kinection at 10:00am. Mary was the recipient of an OCC shoebox when she was a child living in Russia. Today she lives in Texas and loves to pack shoeboxes with her husband and two small children. Mary wants to share the joy she experienced as a 10 year old girl through the ministry of Operation Christmas Child with children all around the world.

### Gifts for St. Peter Regional Treatment Center

The Mary Martha Circle will be collecting donations for those at the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center. Gift suggestions include:

- colored pencils, sketchpads (no wire), markers, writing pads, and other craft/art supplies
- men's socks and boxer shorts size 2XL-4XL, men's t-shirts and button-up flannel shirts size XL to 5xl
- toothpaste and toothbrushes
- DVD movies - any genre - released in 2015, 2014

Please bring unwrapped gifts to Hilltop by Sunday December 6th. You can drop them off at the donation center in the narthex.

# HILLTOP NEWS

## Weekly Eucharist at Hilltop

**Eucharist Service** 12:10-12:30 pm

**Fellowship Lunch** 12:30-12:50 pm

Please join us each Wednesday during the lunch hour to give thanks to God for his love and mercy through the broken body and shed blood of Christ. As one body we will experience the real and present Spirit of Christ amongst us and in us, and be nourished to go forth to be faithful witnesses of God's love and grace in the world. Bring your lunch with you and continue to fellowship with one another through the lunch hour after the service.

## Mission Potluck

Please bring a dish to share and enjoy fellowship with Hilltop families following the 10:30 am worship service on Sunday, December 6th. A freewill offering will benefit the Blue Earth County Backpack Food Program which focuses on ensuring that students have nutritious food when school is out. We will also have special guests: Mary Ware and Nicole Sheldon from Operation Christmas Child. Mary will be giving a testimony during the 10:30 am service.

## Newsletter Submissions

When submitting newsletter articles, be sure to include the date, time, location, other details, contact name and number, and the name of the team or committee hosting the event. There is a submission form on the shelf by the copier or submit to [office@mankatohilltop.org](mailto:office@mankatohilltop.org) and include "newsletter article" in the subject line. The deadline for the January newsletter is **Mon., Dec. 21, 2015**.

Worship Attendance Statistics			
Sundays:	2015	2014	2013
October 25	206	187	163
November 1	198	197	215
November 8	233	183	186
November 15	227	213	231
November 22	210	219	234
<b>Average</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>205</b>

## Happy Birthday!

Julie Foster	12/1	Jacob Zierdt	12/16
Barb Keith	12/3	John Bittner	12/16
Paula Smithson	12/3	Marlys Marrs	12/17
Joseph Eckert	12/4	Adam Born	12/19
Mike Mattox	12/5	Cori Mundt	12/20
Ron Beaty	12/5	Dan Held	12/22
Jeanette Phillips	12/9	Holly Aasen	12/23
Ella Gavin	12/10	Matthew Lee	12/23
Joan Lang	12/14	Sarah Horn	12/28
Anna Rivers	12/16	Aaron Daby	12/29
		Sophia Morgan	12/29

## Happy Anniversary!



Craig & Diane Zimmerman	12/2
Mike & Dee Mattox	12/10
Dan & Fiona Swanson	12/21
Rick & Penny Johnson	12/23
Linda Vogel & Peter Jarnstrom	12/26
Dianne & John Mell	12/27
Rolly & Zada Utzinger	12/27
Bob & Terry Berg	12/28

## Interested in joining Hilltop Church?

For anyone interested in joining Hilltop United Methodist Church, we invite you to meet with Pastor Kelly at the church on **Wednesday, December 2nd at 6:30pm**. This gathering is to get to know each other better, and discuss the questions and expectations of membership, and, if you are ready, to schedule a Sunday to welcome you into membership. Please let Kelly know if you would like to attend this meeting or need to schedule a different time to meet.

## 2016 Offering Envelopes

Please find your box of envelopes at the Welcome Center. If you do not use these, you need not take them. If you would like to use them and don't see your name, please contact Michelle in the office at 387-3877.

# December Calendar at Hilltop

Details to each calendar event can be found at <http://mankatohilltop.org/calendar/> by clicking on the event.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b> 1:30p Women's Bible Study 5:30p Prayer & Share 7:00p CG - Family Tree 7:30p CG - Gifts	<b>2</b> 12:10p Eucharist 6:15-8p Youth Group 6:30p Choir practice 7:45p CG-Mere Christianity 9:00p KTV Broadcast	<b>3</b> 12:00p Bulletin Deadline 6:30p CG-Ten	<b>4</b> 4:30a-6:30p Tea Roll 7a Men's Morning Risers 12:30p KTV Broadcast	<b>5</b> 9a-12p CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL 1-4p Organist Practice
<b>6 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Advent</b> 8:00a Worship 9:15a Kids Kinection 9:15a Connect Groups 10:30a Worship 11:30p Mission Potluck	<b>7</b> 6:30p CG-Epic of Eden	<b>8</b> 1:30p Women's Bible Study 5:30p Prayer & Share 7:30p CG - Gifts	<b>9</b> 12:10p Eucharist 5:30-8p Youth Group 6:30p Choir practice 9:00p KTV Broadcast	<b>10</b> 12:00p Bulletin Deadline 6:30p CG-Ten	<b>11</b> 7a Men's Morning Risers 12:30p KTV Broadcast	<b>12</b> 4p Chandler/Roemhildt Wedding
<b>13 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Advent</b> 8:00a Worship 9:15a Kids Kinection 9:15a Connect Groups 10:30a Christmas Program	<b>14</b> 6:30p CG-Epic of Eden	<b>15</b> 1:30p Women's Bible Study 5:30p Prayer & Share 7:30p CG - Gifts	<b>16</b> 12:10p Eucharist 6:15-8p Youth Group 6:30p Choir practice 9:00p KTV Broadcast	<b>17</b> 12:00p Bulletin Deadline 6:30p Comm. Meetings 7:30p Ad Council 6:30p CG-Ten	<b>18</b> 7a Men's Morning Risers 12:30p KTV Broadcast	<b>19</b> 1-4p Organist Practice
<b>20 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Advent</b> 8:00a Worship 9:15a Kids Kinection 9:15a Connect Groups 10:30a Worship	<b>21</b> 8:00a Newsletter Deadline 6:30p CG-Epic of Eden	<b>22</b> 1:30p Women's Bible Study 5:30p Prayer & Share	<b>23</b> 6:30p Choir practice 9:00p KTV Broadcast	<b>24 CHRISTMAS EVE</b> 5:00p Worship 7:00p Worship Service	<b>25 CHRISTMAS DAY</b> FOR UNTO US <i>a child is born,</i> * UNTO US <i>a son is given.</i> - ISAIAH 9:6	<b>26</b> 1-4p Organist Practice
<b>27</b> 8:00a Worship 9:15a Kids Kinection 10:30a Worship	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 1:30p Women's Bible Study 5:30p Prayer & Share	<b>30</b> 12:10p Eucharist 9:00p KTV Broadcast	<b>31 NEW YEAR'S EVE</b>		The Mary Martha Circle will not meet in December.



[www.mankatohilltop.org](http://www.mankatohilltop.org)

Pastor Kelly McCuaig

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Hilltop United Methodist Church

## MINNESOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### From Membership to Discipleship

**Date:** February 6, 2016, 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Advent UMC, 3945 Lexington Ave., Eagan MN 55123

**Registration:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BreakthroughMaynard> or contact Gail Johnson at [gail.johnson@mnumc.org](mailto:gail.johnson@mnumc.org) or (612) 230-6125.

**Register by:** February 1, 2016

**Cost:** Tuition is \$100 per team of five or more, or \$25 per person, and includes hospitality and materials.

It doesn't happen by just sitting in a pew on Sunday morning. Surprisingly, it doesn't even happen by just attending Bible studies. Discipleship takes an intentional process with clear goals, appropriate relationships, phased training, and accountability. The membership-to-discipleship shift developed by Dr. Phil Maynard has become a leading process in helping congregations across

the country begin to grow maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. Individual disciples are discovering how to take next steps toward becoming more like Jesus. Congregations are moving beyond just Christian education to creating equipping relationships. And, churches are developing an intentional process for supporting the growth of maturing disciples. This workshop will help your leadership/discipleship team move beyond the academic approach of providing just classes and provide an understanding of the dynamics of intentional discipleship.

Presenter: Dr. Phil Maynard serves as director of the General Board of Discipleship's Path 1 Coaching Network and director of the Church Leadership Training Institute. He also serves as a coach/consultant with Epicenter and partners with other coaches to lead a variety of training and congregational transformation activities. He has led dozens of churches through the process of transformation and the development of discipleship processes.