

## The Advent of Mystery

Dan Wilson, Pastor pastordan@ivychapel.org

Each Advent, God asks us to watch and wait. Get ready. Then remain prepared. Stay alert. As God's Church, our calling is to resist the world's annual "Christmas rush." This may actually come somewhat more naturally this year, since the COVID-19 pandemic has put a damper on many holiday season customs.

The Christian Church Year begins with the Advent Season. Although no one ever flawlessly observes Advent, we do try. God values the simple fact that, as God's Church, we are making a good faith effort to honor Christ's birth. The crescendo of Advent is an unheard of gift. Through the birth of Jesus, God blesses the world in a brand new way. Our human Christmas gift giving is a response to God's wondrous gift of the Christ Child!

Today, God's world is living through and struggling to cope with a whole bunch of foreign experiences. Many of us joke from time to time about 2020 being an apocalyptic year. Historic wildfires, tragic earthquakes, excessive melting of glacial ice, the hyper-active tropical storm and hurricane season, the Black Lives Matter movement, this U. S. Presidential Election, and the COVID-19 pandemic are unprecedented milestones in our lifetime. It may seem eerie and frightening to us that there are references to such catastrophic events in the Holy Scriptures. One place where these are found is in the last book of the Bible, which we know as "The Book of Revelation." Actually, the literal name of this final book is "An Apocalypse of John."

Lately, we may find ourselves wondering, "Is *this* the Apocalypse?!"

I personally believe that this is not a question for us to answer. As we have heard in worship recently, "Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake...therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son is coming at an unexpected hour." (Matthew 24:42-44) "You know neither the day nor the hour." (Matthew 25:13)

In John's Apocalypse, the voice of the Son says, "Go back to what you first received and heard from me. Hold on to it. Change your hearts and lives. Turn back to me. If you don't wake up, I will come to you like a thief, and you won't know what time I will come." (Revelation 3:3) Near the end of the book, an angel of God declares, "See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake." (Revelation 16:15) Ultimately, we hear, "See, I am coming soon...I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.... It is I, Jesus, who send my angel to you (The Advent of Mystery continued on page 2)

#### (The Advent of Mystery continued from page 2)

with this testimony to the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the Bright Morning Star... Surely, I am coming soon." (Revelation 22:12-3, 16, 20)

"Is this the Apocalypse?" Fear not, my friends. We do not need to answer this question. We do not need to solve any riddle. All that God asks us to do is remain alert and ready. There is nothing to fear. We have a Gracious Savior.

Let this serve as a comfort to you, God's beloved. "Now concerning the times and the seasons, dear siblings, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape. But you are not in the dark about these things, beloved, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day. We live under wide open skies, and we know where we stand. So let's not sleepwalk through life. Let's keep our eyes open and stay clearheaded. Since we're creatures of the day, let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight clearheaded; dressed in the faith, love and hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for angry rejection, but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ. He died for us, a death that triggered life! Whether we're awake with the living or asleep with the dead, we're alive with Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, 8-11)

You and I have our Savior's grace and help. So don't be freaked out if people around us are questioning, "Is this the Apocalypse?"

The Church Season of Advent is a time for us to recall that even Mary, the mother of God, once was living through a season of uncertainty. God's Archangel Gabriel came and gave Mary a birth announcement! (The Annunciation—Luke 1:31-33) From that moment on, Mary was living in limbo. Yet she chose to accept calmly whatever God was going to do. "Here am I, a servant of God," Mary vowed to Gabriel. "Let it be with me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) In an empowering, lovely manner, you and I are able to identify with this mother mild. Mary really is very much like us. She instinctively places her faith in God and serenely trusts that God will be with her whatever happens in the future. Mary's attitude also can be our attitude of calm.

# Our Sympathies...

...to the family and loved ones of **Ronn Foster** who passed on to life eternal November 9. We extend our love and sympathy to **Dottie Foster**; to Ronn's children: Mark (Debra) Foster, **Cindy** Foster (Matt Kettler), and **Trish** (Mark) Baker; and to each member of Ronn's family. Rest in peace.

- ...to the family and loved ones of John Bosnak (brother of **Diann Sheahan**). John passed on to life eternal Nov. 9. We extend our love and sympathy to John's wife Laura, to their children (Erin, Kirsten, Andy), and to their grandchildren and great grandchildren.
- ...to the family and loved ones of Brad Rosner (friend of **Anna DiVesta**). Brad passed on to life eternal Nov. 5. We extend our love and sympathy to Brad's wife Barbara, and to their children (Cole and David).
- ...to the family and loved ones of Neva Fugate (aunt of **Mark Moody**). Neva passed onto life eternal Nov. 6.

## Thank You...

Many thanks to those who donated Tuesday, May 17 at the blood drive Ivy Chapel UCC hosted for Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center.

We had 21 donors, resulting in 25 units, toppling our goal of 21 units by 4!!!!! We had 4 donors who donated on the ALYX



machine which collects double red cells. Since each whole blood donation can be broken down into multiple components, 55+ lives can be saved by our donors!

Mark your calendars for Thursday, May 13, 2021, which will be our next drive. I appreciate your caring for humanity! Sue Wilson, Drive Coordinator

## **ENHANCING VIRTUAL WORSHIP**

The Deacons are placing hymnals and supplemental worship booklets on a table in the Narthex. Please sign up and take them home to enhance your virtual worship. If you've any questions, call 314-576-0091 or email gail.thoele@gmail.com, Gail Thoele.



## Fourth Grade Bible Presentation

As is our tradition here at Ivy Chapel, each year we present our fourth graders with the gift of their own personal Bibles. Our fourth graders this year are **Audrey Farrell**, **Miller DiVesta** and **Rory Winship**. Due to the



Our fourth graders this year are **Audrey Farrell**, **Miller DiVesta** and **Rory Winship**. Due to the coronavirus, we had to adapt the presentation to include the fourth graders and their families only. It was a lovely service, surrounded by the sounds of nature and the beautiful fall foliage. There is a **video of the** presentation available here: **https://tinyurl.com/yyvlr9al Glory to God in the highest! And on earth peace, good will to all!** 

## It's Christmas Pageant Time

**Calling all angels, shepherds and wise people!** We need your help to tell the Christmas story. This year we will be filming our parts in our own homes and then Tara Lowry will edit them together into Ivy Chapel's first virtual Christmas Pageant. There will be speaking and non-speaking parts for anyone who would like to participate. Contact **Tara Lowry** if you would like to take part in the pageant.



### Adults, there are parts for you too! The pageant isn't just for the young people

in the church. We thought it would be fun to get everyone in on the act. We need narrators, non-speaking actors and people to take small speaking parts. Dust off your acting skills, throw on a costume (or a bathrobe/sheet/scarf) and join the children to tell the story of the first Christmas. We will be filming our parts in the comfort of our homes and Tara Lowry will be editing them together for our virtual pageant. If you need technical advice to film your part, we can help you. Let's make this truly an all-church pageant. Contact Tara Lowry taralowry.96@gmail.com / 314-973-6284 if you would like to take part.

## ADVENT STORYTELLUNG AND HOT COCOA PARTY

(Virtually) Many things are different this year, but we are still going to gather to share Christmas and Advent stories. We will have to gather virtually this year, but we can spend time together, even if we are physically apart. We will gather via Zoom on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 pm. Make some cocoa (or your favorite beverage). Set out some snacks. Pick out a few Christmas stories and get ready to read, or just listen. Contact Sarah Heend at skheend@gmail.com or 314-283-5215 if you are interested.



## **COLLEGE CARE PACKAGE DONATIONS NEEDED**

We are asking for donations of wrapped food and other items for our Ivy Chapel college students. Our college students are **Skylar Droege**, **Calvin Heend**, **Emily Pfau** and **Gloria Wintrode**. Suggested items are individually wrapped snack packets (chips, crackers, etc.), candy, gum and mints, microwave popcorn, hot chocolate, spiced cider or tea packets, dried soup packets, Ramen noodles, stamps, money for the laundry room or anything else that college students might need. You can place donations in the container in the Narthex. We will make the packages and distribute them to the college students when they are home for winter break. *We need your items by December 13*.

Join us for Virtual Worship with Children's Message each Sunday on YouTube or livestreaming on Facebook Live.

The Ivy Vine, December 2020 www.ivychapel.org

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I can't believe it's December! This year has absolutely flown by. I really struggled with what to write today, because this year is just so weird. If we are able to gather in the spring, it would almost be like this year never happened. However,



we all know that is not the case. We are damaged. We are missing loved ones. Regardless, it's hard to celebrate the holidays with so much strife. This year is certainly like no other. Usually I write about how with all the hustle and bustle, it can be hard to sit down and just enjoy the magic of Christmas. This year, I am missing the many concerts and choirs that would be. I haven't set foot in a theater since March. Regardless, I feel like I'm just as busy if not more than on a usual Christmas. Doing things "virtual" equates to a lot more work. Don't get me wrong. I'm grateful for all my continued work while pandemic rages on. It is not lost on me that many of my musician/artist friends are struggling. I am so thankful for you, Ivy Chapel and for my piano studio, but it is a lot. I am tired. My fuse is short while working through virtual learning challenges with my children. My heart hurts for the loss of life and for the loss of our routines. I really miss hugs. But, with Christmas comes hope. With Christmas comes promise. We may never be the same, but Christ's love remains the same. Focus on the good. Focus on the positive. It's dark now. It is bleak. People are yearning for some words of comfort from God. Be the light and share the good news. Christ is born!

I hope that you have all been enjoying our live-streamed worship during the pandemic. It is surreal at times, but it is comforting being in the sanctuary and imagining all of you there with me. 2020 is a year unlike any others so it may not come as a surprise that this year's cantata is like no other. We are limited in the amount of musicians we can have, and we obviously do not have a choir, but we are going to make the best of it. Please join us Sunday, December 13th at 10am for "Shouts of Joy: a Cantata for 2020." It will be hodge podge/mish mash cantata with all your favorites! Come and listen for messages of peace, hope, joy and love. And of course, it's the third Sunday so we light the pink candle! If you're not available at 10am, you're in luck, it will be posted on Facebook or YouTube for later viewing. I thank you all for the contributions from the

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## Christian Action

## TWO YEAR-END OUTREACH



**OPPORTUNITIES:** HABITAT's work in St. Louis continues in spite of COVID! Because the cost of building materials has increased substantially, please consider a year-end gift to support this ministry.

In addition, ISAIAH-58 provides a family with a holiday meal for \$30. Your donations for both agencies can be mailed to Peter LaSalle, 2015 Wilson Ridge Lane, Chesterfield MO 63005 through December. Mark HABITAT or ISAIAH-58 on the memo line of your check. *Christian Action thanks you for your generosity.* 

#### YEAR-END IS QUICKLY APPROACHING

If you are planning on donating stock or making a *Qualified Charitable Distribution* from your IRA to fulfill your pledge, now is the time to contact your broker. If you have questions, please contact **Peter LaSalle** at 636-579-0970.



# Scripture Worship

- 6 DEC. 2020~ 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8
- **13 DEC. 2020~3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126/Luke 1:46b-55, 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24, John 1:6-8, 19-28
- **20 Dec. 2020~4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-29, Romans 16:25-27, Luke 1:26-38

#### 24 DEC. 2020~CHRISTMAS EVE

#### **4:30PM LIVESTREAM WORSHIP**

Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1–20 **25 DEC. 2020~CHRISTMAS DAY**: Isaiah 52:7-10.

Psalm 98, Heb. 1:1-12, John 1:1–14

**27 DEC. 2020~1ST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**: Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Psalm 148, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40

http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/

# Holiday Brass Concert

Fans of the Christmas music performance held for the past several years at Manchester Methodist Church will be glad to know they won't have to miss the experience entirely this year. Between December 1-31, holiday music lovers can go to www.myiwbc.org/holiday-brass to view the one-hour concert, 24/7. It's free but there's an opportunity on the website to benefit the International Women's Brass Conference, the usual



recipient of proceeds from this traditional treat featuring carols, bagpipers, a steel band and an outstanding soprano. If there are problems accessing the

concert, email generalmanager@myiwbc.org



#### (The Advent of Mystery continued on page 2)

Here's another persistent question. What are we to do with the Incarnation? God's people of faith esteem the Incarnation as a miracle which we cannot fully comprehend. This majorly frustrates certain personality types! Yet this is a faithful, biblical perspective. Marvel purely marvel—over the Holy Birth.

*Mystery* is huge in Holy Scripture. The biblical word for *mystery* ('musterion') makes 29 appearances in the New Testament. Christian faith prizes *mystery*. Various strains of Christendom call the Church's Sacraments by the name "*Holy Mysteries*." God's faithful people yield to *mystery*.

One of the hymns which many people love is Natalie Sleeth's "Hymn of Promise." The chorus celebrates there are things which "God alone can see." This hymn captivates by singing of Christ's life, death and resurrection. In particular, verse 2 proclaims: "There's a song in every silence, Seeking word and melody; There's a dawn in every darkness, Bringing hope to you and me. From the past will come the future; what it holds, a

*mystery*, Un-revealed until its season, Something God alone can see." This resonates intimately with the core of our faith. Essentially, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the *mysterious* story of God's Incarnation—the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

Now, back to our earlier question: What are you and I to do with the Incarnation? First, believe. Then, praise God!

The *'mystery'* of the Incarnation is central to who God is. There is immeasurable depth and beauty to *'mystery.'*  Again, consider Christ's mother Mary. While Mary is still trying to absorb Archangel Gabriel's revelation (Luke 1:26 -38), Mary yields to God's word. Before long, there's a song in the air. Mary's lovely song, The Magnificat, is a tribute to God's *mysterious* works and ways. Think of Luke 1:46-55 as Mary's serenade to God's *'mystery.'* 

Mary allows herself to be fascinated. Mary ponders. She pondered angelic prophecy. As soon as Gabriel accosted her, "Hail, O favored one! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28); Mary "pondered what sort of greeting this might be." (Luke 1:29) Much later, on the night of Jesus' birth, she pondered the shepherds' story. "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19)

This month, you and I and Christians everywhere, will revisit the inexplicable conception and child-bearing of Mother Mary. She was (*and is!*) a woman 'great with child.' Mary is open to what God will do with her life and with the life of the baby she carries. Such trust she displays! Mary is a model of faith for all time.

This Advent and beyond, may you and I live with openness to each *'new thing'* which our God is about to do.

Ponder in your heart the mystery of God Emmanuel,

**Pastor Dan** 

Look! I am about to do a new thing!" declares God. Isaiah 43:19 dvent began as early as the 4th and 5th centuries as a time of fasting and prayer for new Christians. The first mention of Advent occurred in the 300's A.D at a meeting of church leaders called the Council of Sargossa. It gradually developed into a season that stretched across

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "*coming*," which is a translation of the Greek word Parousia—a word used for both the coming of Christ in human flesh and his Second Coming. Advent, then, always tended to focus on both.



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the month of December.

congregation with the favorite songs, memories and messages that will make up the musical numbers as well as the narration.



Similarly, the Children's Christmas Pageant will be like no other as well. I want to give a quick shout out to **Tara Lowry** for helping put this together. Her ideas are phenomenal, and I am so excited to see what she puts together. These two programs, while different than we ever have had, fill my heart with such joy and give me so much to look forward to in such an odd time. I hope you find them inspirational and they will warm your heart. Charlie and I are already planning a hot cocoa viewing party.

Get out your hot cocoa. Do something kind just for the sake of being kind. Stay safe. Merry Christmas! All my love to you.

Smiles, Anna DiVesta 314-609-0865 www.AnnaDiVesta.com

## THE CHRISTMAS FUND

For the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund



In 2019, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 350 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,347,419)
- Health premium supplementation for 144 retired clergy and lay employees (\$374,577)
- Emergency grants for 69 individuals and families (\$123,727)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 521 retired clergy and lay employees (\$260,500)

Gifts assist U. C. C. ministers and lay church employees serving in ministry or have retired as a supplementation to small pensions or health coverage as an emergency grant to assist with an unexpected and burdensome expense throughout the year.

TO DONATE BY CHECK payable to "THE CHRISTMAS FUND"

Mail to: The Rev. Dr. Jonathan B. Lee, Philanthropy Officer The Pension Boards-United Church of Christ, Inc. 475 Riverside Drive, Room 1020 New York, New York 10115-0059

OR donate <u>at this link</u>



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### NO "GROUP" Hanging of the Greens

In light of public health dangers posed by COVID-19, Ivy Chapel UCC will not have our customary "Group" Hanging of the Greens events. Our Council (at their



Nov. 16 meeting) decided that we will not gather in our traditional manner for Hanging of the Greens.

Instead, church Christmas decorations will be brought down from the attic and placed in the office hallway. Members may come to church on an individual basis and put up decorations of their choice. Inside the church building, every member is required to wear a face mask and practice safe social distancing. Each one of us must display consideration for everyone's health and safety. *Thank you.* 

## **GENEROUS GIVING STRATEGY**

Did you know that you can donate appreciated stock and mutual fund holdings to Ivy Chapel? Such a donation, whether to cover a 2020 or 2021 pledge, or as an extra donation, is not only a potential income tax deduction, but also eliminates a sale of assets which would be subject to capital gains taxation. This is a sound tax strategy which benefits your personal income taxes and also helps Ivy Chapel fulfill its mission. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact **Tom Glenn**, Investment Chair, at **thomglenn@sbcglobal.net** 

### Something New is Happening This Year!

Tara Lowry is on the hunt for fun Christmas traditions, memories, and decorations from each Ivy Chapel family. This year's Christmas season will be vastly different from the ones that have come before it, which means it's a great year to look back on Christmas past. Tara is counting on all of you to send her a little memento of how your family celebrates Christmas. You could send her a photo of your favorite Christmas decoration, a video of you explaining a Christmas tradition your family has, or even a letter about your favorite Christmas memory. The plan is to compile all the photos, videos, and written submissions into a video and PDF for everyone to enjoy! Please e-mail your submissions to Tara Lowry at taralowry96@gmail.com by December 6 so she has time to put everything together!

# Trustees

The days are getting shorter, the weather cooler, and the Ivy Chapel grounds are filled with fallen leaves. The Trustees have been busy getting the grounds ready for winter, cleaning the gutters, trimming brush, and raking leaves. We have been experiencing unusually high water and sewer bills and this has been traced to a leak in the water lines into the Church. The location of the leak has been located under the west parking lot and efforts are underway to repair it. Fellowship Hall will be getting a new roof sometime this year.

Following the new St. Louis County Health Directive effective from Nov. 17–Dec. 15, groups meeting at Ivy Chapel will need to have 10 or less socially distanced people. We have checked to make sure both AA meetings and the Juniper Root Preschool will be in compliance

## Thank You...

to the Ivy Chapel Council, Board and Committee members, Pastor Dan, Anna DiVesta, worship leaders, helpers and others that we don't know about; for helping us—Ivy Chapel members—to worship at home and keeping us in touch through the Ivy Chapel website, YouTube, FB, newsletters, and Sunday e-Keeping You Posted, e-mails and more...

## Nov. Council Lifted Up:

- Sarah Heend and Jo Ann Moody for completing the MMS Micro Grant paperwork that would help fund the audio upgrades in the Sanctuary.
- **• Trustees** for keeping the Church maintained.

### **KEEPING YOU POSTED**

You're invited to send Frieda Clark messages—by end of *any* Wednesday—news about you or the family, pets, garden....anything...that you want to *share* with the rest of the congregation and she will put it in a *weekly* <u>Keeping</u> <u>You</u> <u>Posted</u> to email to all of you every Friday.

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Isaiah 58 Ministries donations of food, clothing, plastic bags/ egg cartons—place in plastic grocery bags on marked shelves in the coatroom. Mark bags with "Isaiah 58." Bag of Blessings sheet on Fellowship Hall bulletin board. www.i58ministries.org

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RITENOUR CO-CARE FOOD PANTRY Collects food and personal care items. www.ritenourcocare.org

The Ivy Vine, December 2020 www.ivychapel.org

their dreams. www.ierschool.org

www.shoecrewwater.org

SHOECREW PROJECT: Place your unwanted

the white box/bag in the cloak room.

(no holes or loose soles please) footwear in

INSTITUTO EL REY: Explore the website how YOU can

help students in rural northern Honduras pursue

door.

8 www.facebook.com/lvyChapel

shqeman

water projects

Ivy Chapel UCC • 620 N Woods Mill Road Chesterfield, MO 63017 • 314-434-4991

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
20	20	1	2	<b>3</b> AA 12pm	4	5
Decen	mb.er	AA S.O.S 10-11am AA 12pm				AA 10:30am
<b>6 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b> CHRISTMAS FUND PROMOTION FLYER pg 6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10am Worship	AA 1pm	AA S.O.S 10-11am AA 12pm		AA 12pm		AA 10:30am
<b>13</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> <b>Sunday of Advent</b> CHRISTMAS FUND	· 14	15 Articles for	16 Men's Lunche	17	18	19
PROMOTION FLYER pg 6 10am Worship	AA 1pm	The Ivy Vine due	11:30am @ Massa's	AA 12pm		AA 10:30am
6:30pm Virtual Advent Storytelling pg 3		AA S.O.S 10-11am AA 12pm	14312 South Outer Rd, Town and Cnt	40		
		Mary & Martha Wms Grp 1pm				
		Deacons Mtg 7pm				
<b>20</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT CHRISTMAS FUND PROMOTION FLYER pg 6	21	<b>22</b> AA S.O.S 10-11am	23	24 CHRISTI	25 MAS CHRISTMA	26 <b>AS</b>
10am Worship Virtual Children's	AA 1pm Council Mtg	AA 12pm		AA 12pm	Office Close	AA 10:30am d
Christmas Pageant pg 3	7pm			4:30p Livestre Worsh	eam hip	
				CHRISTMAS FU	JND	
<b>27</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> S aft Christmas <b>10am Worship</b>	28	<b>29</b> AA S.O.S 10-11am	30	31 New Year's		021 January 2 2021
	AA 1pm	AA 12pm		AA 12pm	New Year's Day Office Close	AA 10:30am
In January 20 11th All Board		<b>o change)</b> D 31st Annual Mt	DTBD Installation	n of officers	7th Annual Report	s due
AA=Alcoholics Anonymous CC=Chancel Choir EMMP=Eric Moody Memo	CA=Christian A	ction <b>FH = F</b> ellowship ation <b>LL=L</b> OWER <b>L</b> EVEL		EPING YOU POSTED		P=PURPLE PAGES
Т	uesday RWP 8:30-3:30	Wednesday JRWP 8:30-3:30	Thursd		ST-SAIVETUART SS	SESUNDAY SCHOOL