



“ABUNDANT GRACE” NEWSLETTER



Vol. 2, No. 7

January, 2025

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

Greetings Abundant Grace family,
I hope this message finds you all doing well. As we step into 2025, I pray that this year brings renewed hope, deeper faith, and abundant blessings, to you and your loved ones. There is something so special about the turning of the calendar; it offers us a fresh start, a chance to reflect, and an opportunity to grow closer to God.

In the Bible, we are reminded that “**God’s mercies are new every morning**” Lamentations 3:23. Just as each new day offers us the gift of God’s mercy, each new year invites us to walk with God in new ways. This is a perfect time for reflection, but also for anticipation of the wonderful things God has in store for us as a church family.

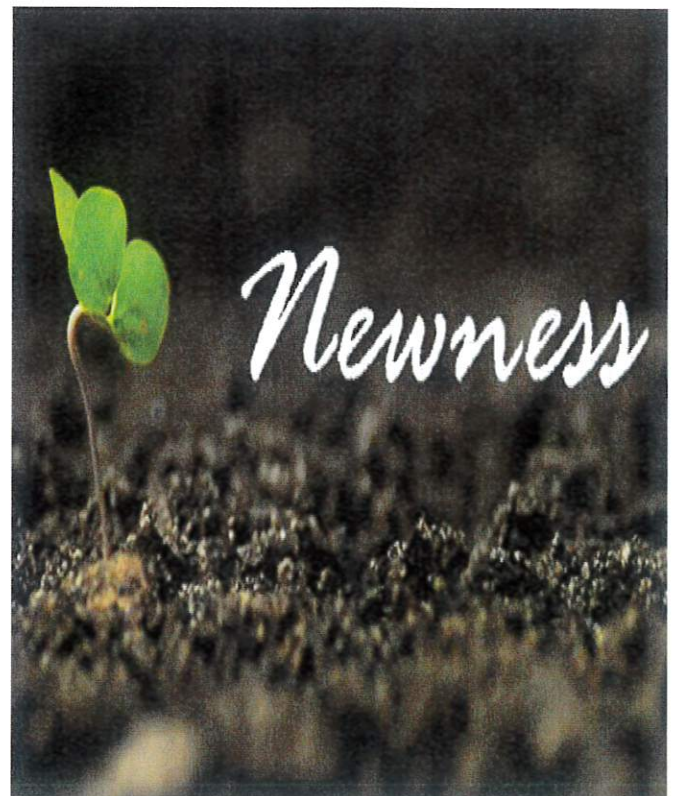
I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your continued support, prayers, and involvement, in the life of our church. Last year we did some wonderful work getting our ministries organized, focused, and engaged. This year our focus should be on growing in grace — not only in our personal walks with Christ but also as a community. We need to explore what it means to extend God’s grace to others, to deepen our spiritual roots, and to live out the gospel in tangible ways. Our teachings, worship, and ministry initiatives throughout the year, should be focused on what God is calling us to do, what God is molding us to be, and how do we manifest God’s desires for Abundant Grace, through

the ministries and mission work of the church. I am excited for all that God will do in and through us this year!

As we begin this new year, I encourage you to hold onto the promise that God is with us every step of the way. God knows our hearts, sees our struggles, and God will guide us toward greater things. Trust in God’s plan, lean on God’s grace, and remember that together, we are God’s church, a community built on love, faith, and hope.

May 2025 be a year of spiritual growth, unity, and deepening trust in the Lord.

*Blessings,
Pastor Emory*





FAITH DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

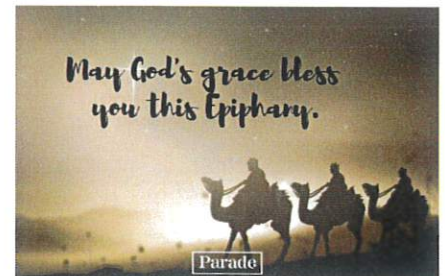
EPIPHANY – As we turn the page of our calendar from **2024**, we delight in acknowledging that God has allowed us yet another year of life. A year in which we celebrate afresh God’s presence in our lives. We acknowledge that this year, **2025**, affords us new experiences as the people of God. Yet, we do not enter this year unscathed. We bring with us pain and sorrow from losses endured in **2024**. As we turn the page, let us reflect on lyrics written by Andre’ Crouch, in his song, *“Through It All.”* Therein, he penned the words, “I have had many tears and sorrows. I have had questions for tomorrow. There have been times that I didn’t know right from wrong. But in every situation, God gave blessed consolation that my trials have only come to make me strong ... Through it all, through it all, I have learned to trust in Jesus, I have learned to trust in God.”

As we turn the page, we look forward with heightened anticipation to the wonders God will reveal in our lives, and for our common good. Turning the page, we enter the season many churches celebrate as Epiphany. Webster defines Epiphany as “1. A Christian festival held on January 6th to celebrate the manifestation of the divine nature of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi. 2. A revelatory manifestation of a divine being. 3.a. A sudden manifestation of the meaning

or essence of something. b. A sudden intuitive realization or perception of reality.”

Examples of Epiphany appear in many familiar biblical passages: In the Old Testament, aka Hebrew Scripture, God spoke to Moses after claiming Moses’ attention through a burning bush; God provided a pillar of clouds by day and a pillar of fire by night for the Hebrew people as they traveled in the wilderness; and God called the child Samuel from slumber and his mentor, Eli, taught Samuel how to respond. Turning to our New Testament Scripture, we find examples of Epiphany in John upon seeing Jesus informing his followers, “Behold the Lamb of God”; the woman at the well in Samaria, whom Jesus engaged in conversation and taught about living water to quench her thirst; and Saul being knocked down from his horse and challenged as to why he was persecuting the Christ.

Yes, this is the season of Epiphany. Let us celebrate and rejoice as we, too, find



evidence of God in our midst. Epiphany extends through the months of January and February.

ACTION ITEMS:

We have a national call to action listed on the United Church of Christ website at www.ucc.org:

News Item 1: Sign a letter of support declaring freedom of expression as an essential



right. There is a bill before Congress that will allow congregations to be stripped of their legal status without due process if the Administration is opposed to their work.

News Item 2: Sign a letter indicating that it is imperative that the United States pursue peace in the Middle East and cease the sale of weapons used in the war against the people of Gaza.



News Item 3: Sign a letter supporting the Affordable Connectivity Program which ensures that low-income families will have access to the internet. Funding for this program will end unless action is taken.



NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS:

Share in a national virtual conversation with Rev. Mark Pettis titled “Nurture the Soul Special Offering: What’s Next What our Covenant Calls us to Do and Be in This Time” on **January 6th at 3:30 p.m.** Register your desire to participate at www.ucc.org

Nurture the Soul Special Offering: “*What Next,*” *The Flourishing Body* with Rev. Dr. Bevely Dale on **January 9th at 3:00 p.m.**

Nurture the Soul’s Reading into the New Year: “*The Recovery of Joy while Living with Depression*” with Robert Griggs, on **January 23rd at 3:00 p.m.**

Nurture the Soul’s Reading into the New Year: “*Don’t Just Give Me That Old Time Religion*” with Rev. Dr. Christine Y. Wiley, on **January 30th at 3:00 p.m.**



TIME FOR A COZY WINTER READ

Are you ready? Please join the Women's Book Discussion Group, **Thursday, January 9, 10:00 am.**

We will be discussing “*The Christmas Bookshop*”, a new book by Jenny Colgan.

Jenny is a new author to us, and we are really looking forward to reading her. All women and friends are invited.



2025 FUNDRAISING CALENDAR

January 14 – Aurelio’s Homewood

February 15 – Hoedown Dinner/Dance

March 16 – Chili Cookoff

April 5 – NIU Steelband

May/June – ??? – We Welcome Your Ideas.



NEW YEAR WORD SEARCH

BALL	COUNTDOWN	FIREWORKS	HAT	YEAR
CELEBRATE	DECEMBER	HAPPY	KISS	HORNS
CONFETTI	EVE	GAMES	JANUARY	MUSIC
CLOCK	DANCING	HOURLASS	MIDNIGHT	RESOLUTION

E O D C E L E B R A T E Y L
H T Y X O F I R E W O R K S
U O R G H N R O F J A R A M
L C R B T M F O B U L B G I
V L K N W U D E N O G Q Y D
A O I I S S L A T M E V E N
C C S B U I J K T T X L A I
H K S U Y C S M C N I E R G
D O Z R E S O L U T I O N H
E Y U H A P P Y A N W D N T
C C D R C E X H C T F K Q H

MISSION CONTROL

Well, dear people of AGUCC, you did it again! We finished up our 2024 Christmas with over 18 bags of groceries, meat roasts, numerous cases of canned goods, and gallons of apple juice.



We were able to contribute to Respond Now's huge macaroni'n'cheese drive, with 22 boxes of noodles, and 22 bags of cheese.

Our Mission Tree of socks and t-shirts went to PADS, and will help keep people warmer during our winter months. The "Teen" tree



had over 25 candy bars and 25 McDonalds cards (the way to a teen's heart). We were thanked profusely for this special treat for some of the "forgotten" crowd at Respond Now.

Our Mission Tree for children and infants delivered dozens of items, including stuffed animals, and boxes n' boxes of diapers.

The wonderfully decorated "hats, scarves, and mittens" tree, was also given to Respond Now for the winter months' needs.

And let's not forget our special connection with ANEW, and the family we adopted for the Christmas holidays. Spearheaded by Naomi Circle, we were fortunate to be able to help a mom and her five children. We were able to donate 18 bags of food to the shelter itself, along with 8 bags to the mom, and 22 presents to this special family.

Your Do-Able Committee will provide a complete fiscal 2024 financial report to Council, if you are interested. We thank you so much for your generosity, care, and concern. It shows in your actions and support. Great job AGUCC!



MEN'S BOOK CLUB

The Men's Book Club is making a couple of changes. While it will continue to meet the **second Saturday**, every other month, the location of the meeting will change. The group will meet at the Kingsberry Waffle House, 3345 Vollmer in Flossmoor, and we will discuss books of various topics, while having breakfast. Each person will be responsible for his own menu selection and check. Our next meeting will be **Saturday, January 11, 2025, at 10:00 am**. We will formalize our meetings and re-visit the book, entitled the "*The 6:20 Man*": A Thriller by David Baldacci. All men are invited, even if you have not read the book. Join us and help us get our group off the ground.



**Join us at Aurelio's Pizza in Homewood
for a fundraiser to benefit
ABUNDANT GRACE CHURCH**

**Tuesday, January 14, 2025
11:30am – 9:00pm.**

Enjoy lunch or dinner at Aurelio's Pizza in Homewood and support Abundant Grace Church. Aurelio's is helping us raise money by donating 20% of any food and drink purchased on Tuesday, January 14, 2025.

**TO PARTICIPATE, YOU MUST MENTION THIS FLYER, SHOW THE FLYER
ON YOUR PHONE OR PRESENT IT TO YOUR AURELIO'S TEAM MEMBER
FOR ABUNDANT GRACE CHURCH TO BENEFIT. FLYERS ARE NOT
AVAILABLE AT AURELIO'S.**

**Aurelio's Pizza Homewood
18162 Harwood Ave.
708.798.8050**

**Aurelio's fundraiser to benefit
ABUNDANT GRACE CHURCH
Tuesday, January 14, 2025**

\$_____ Amount before tax.

CARRYOUT, DELIVERY OR DINE-IN

We've Come This Far By Faith

Arr by Thurston G. Frazier

Albert A. Goodson

We've come this far by faith Lean-ing on the Lord; Trust-ing in His Ho-ly

6 Word, He's ne-ver fail_me_ yet. Oh, Can't turn a-round

11 We've come this far by faith_ Don't be dis-cour-aged_ with trou-ble_ in your life_ He'll_ bear_ your
*Just oth-er day I heard a man say he did-n't be-lieve in God's word I can say God has

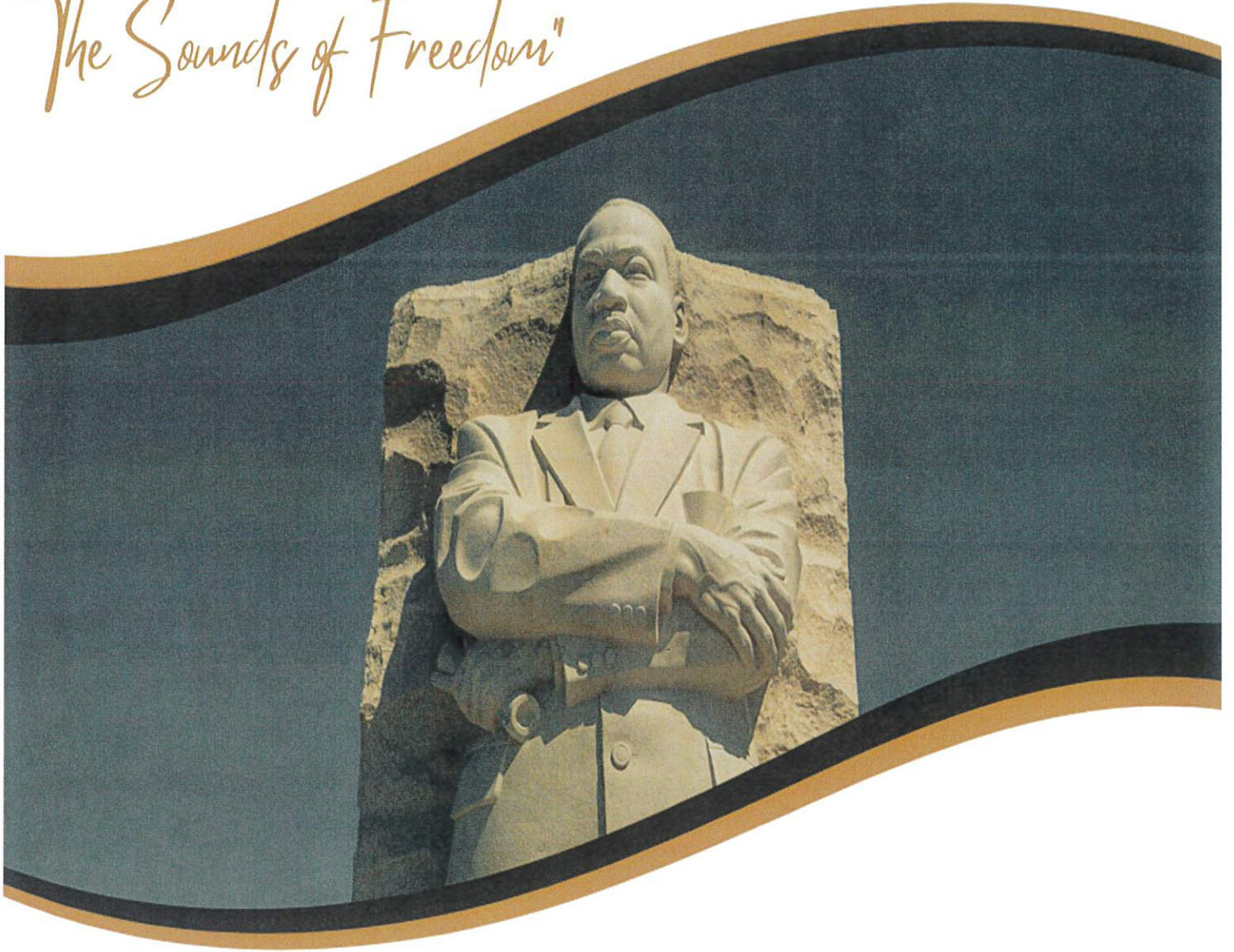
* Optional: Recitation

18 bur-dens And move all mis-er-y and strife That's why we've made a way, He's ne-ver failed me yet Thank God We've

**2025 ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
FAITH IN ACTION ASSEMBLY**



*"The People's Inauguration:
The Sounds of Freedom"*



**MONDAY, JANUARY 20, 2025
SAVE THE DATE**

COMMUNITY RENEWAL SOCIETY

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS



"LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL OF YOUR
HEART, MIND, AND STRENGTH," DEUT. 6:5

"DO NOT FEAR, FOR I AM WITH YOU; DO NOT
BE DISMAYED, FOR I AM YOUR GOD." ISA.
41:10

"LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF" MATT.
22:39

"YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN; YOU WERE BOUGHT
WITH A PRICE, THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD WITH
YOUR BODIES" 1 COR. 6:20

"SET YOUR MINDS ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON
EARTHLY THINGS." COL. 3:2

"TAKE DELIGHT IN THE LORD, AND HE WILL GIVE
YOU THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART." PSA. 37:4

"SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS
RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL
BE GIVEN TO YOU AS WELL." MATT. 6:33

AURELIO'S FUNDRAISING EVENT

Tuesday, January 14th, we will have a fundraising day, (11:30 am - 9:00 pm) at Aurelio's in Homewood. Flyers are available in this newsletter, in your Sunday Bulletins, via email and by the elevator.

When you dine, show your flyer, paper or electronic, and AGUCC will receive 20% of the sales. Flyers cannot be handed out in or on the premises, but we sure can spread the word. Post an electronic copy on your Facebook page or whatever social media you use. Invite friends, family, and neighbors.



Make this a fun meal out, while adding to the fundraising budget; it's a win, win situation!



FEBRUARY FUNDRAISING DINNER/DANCE

Sweetheart Dance-Shmeetheart Dance; we're having a good ole-fashioned Hoedown! Put on your best (or worst) country garb, pull on them boots, and plan to have a foot-stompin', knee-slappin', sh..-kickin' time. We'll have music to dance to, and plenty of good-ole country grub to gnaw on.

So, when is this shindig? **Saturday, February 15th, 6:00 pm.** Reservations will start **January 26th**, and for a mere \$25, you will get your belly full of guffaws, (laughs), a tummy full of food, and a chance to wear out those boots. Yee-haw! Y'all Come!!!



**CHILI
COOK-
OFF**

AGUCC'S 1ST EVER CHILI COOKOFF!!

Do you make chili? Is it good? Do you brag about it even a little bit? Well, here's your chance to "put your money where your mouth is" on **Sunday, March 16th.**

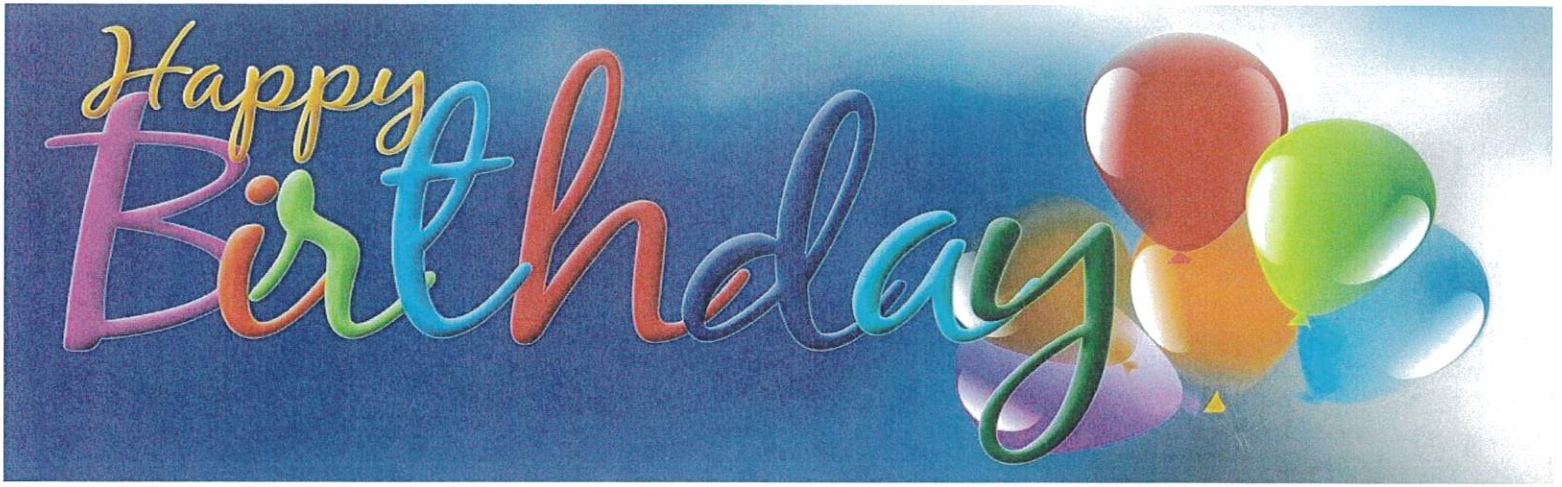


Enter this contest for a mere \$5, and possibly win a \$50 Visa Gift Card! Don't be shy, start tweekin' your recipe now, and sign-up! (we already have 3 contestants).

Who will vote and decide the winner? For a \$10 participation fee, you will be given one ballot, and tastings of all the entries. If you can't decide...extra votes will be available for a nominal fee.

This is a **FUN**raising event, so let's have some tasty fun! a tummy full of food, and a chance to wear out those boots. Yee-haw! Y'all Come!!!





JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

6 Pete Luna

9 Kirk Powers

10 Sharon Platt

14 Anna Washington

19 Patricia Garnett

21 Sam Moore

22 Bob Martin

30 Mary Anne Martin

JANUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			<u>1</u> NEW YEARS'S DAY OFFICE CLOSED	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>5</u> COMMUNION SUNDAY 9:30 AM - WORSHIP SERVICE	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> 10:00 AM - BIBLE STUDY	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u> 7:00 PM - CHOIR REHEARSAL	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u> 10:00 AM - MEN'S BOOK CLUB KINGSBERRY RESTAURANT
<u>12</u> 9:30 AM - WORSHIP SERVICE 10:30 AM - FINANCE COMMITTEE 10:30 AM - W&M MTG.	<u>13</u> 10:00 AM - HOSPITALITY MTG.	<u>14</u> 10:00 AM - BIBLE STUDY 11:30 AM - AURELIO'S PIZZA FUNDRAISER	<u>15</u> 12:30 PM - PRC MTG. 1:00 PM - SSP MTG.	<u>16</u> 7:00 PM - CHOIR REHEARSAL	<u>17</u> 10:30 AM - FUNDRAISING CLEAN LIBRARY ROOM	<u>18</u> 9:00 AM - COUNCIL MTG 10:00 AM - FAITH DEVELOPMENT ZOOM MTG. 10:30 AM - SATURDAY MORNING MANNA (MEN'S GROUP)
<u>19</u> 9:30 AM - WORSHIP SERVICE 10:45 AM - FUNDRAISING MTG.	<u>20</u> MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OFFICE CLOSED	<u>21</u> 10:00 AM - BIBLE STUDY 12:00 PM - PASTOR, CHAIR, V. CHAIR MTG. 1:00 PM - PROPERTY MTG.	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u> 1:00 PM - NAOMI CIRCLE 7:00 PM - CHOIR REHEARSAL	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
<u>26</u> 9:30 AM - WORSHIP SERVICE	<u>27</u>	<u>28</u> 10:00 AM - BIBLE STUDY	<u>29</u>	<u>30</u> 7:00 PM - CHOIR REHEARSAL	<u>31</u>	