

From the Pastor

Do you have the holiday blues? (Part 1)



The holidays are here. For some it is the "best time of the year". But for others, it is the worst time of the year. Holidays can be hell for many of us. That's why they call it "Blue Christmas." It seems that the rest of the world is timing trees and singing "fa-la-la-la-la," and we are sitting in the dark with tears in our eyes. Yes, we know that Jesus is the reason for the season, but it is vital that we are real about how we really feel.

According to *Psychology Today magazine*, "The stress of the holidays triggers sadness and depression for many people. This time of year is especially difficult because there's an expectation of feeling merry and generous. People compare their emotions to what they assume others are experiencing or what they're supposed to feel. Then they think that they alone fall short. They judge themselves and feel like an outsider.

There are a host of things that add to stress and difficult emotions during the holidays.

- **Finances.** Not enough money or the fear of not having enough to buy gifts leads to sadness and guilt. The stress of financial hardship during this economic downturn is often compounded by shame. When you can't afford to celebrate, it can feel devastating.
- **Stress.** For example, there is the stress of shopping and planning family dinners when you're already overworked and tired. Often women spread themselves too thin by trying to do everything. Much of the planning, shopping, and cooking is done by women, so they carry the greater burden in preparing for family gatherings. Women are at greater risk for depression than men.
- **Loneliness.** At least 43 percent of Americans are single, and 27 percent of Americans live alone. When others are with their families, it can be very painful for those who are alone. Seventeen percent of singles are over 65, when health, age, and mobility can make it more difficult to enjoy yourself.
- **Grief.** Missing a deceased loved one. Seniors have more reasons to grieve.
- **Estrangement.** When you're not speaking to a relative, family get-togethers can usher in feelings of sadness, guilt, resentment, or inner conflict about whether to communicate.
- **Divorce.** If you're newly divorced, the holidays may remind you of happier times and accentuate your grief. It's especially difficult for adult children of divorce who have to balance seeing two sets of parents. The stress is multiplied for married children who have three or even four sets of parents to visit.
- **Pleasing.** Trying to please all of your relatives – deciding what to get, whom to see, and what to do – can make you feel guilty, which leads to depression.
- **SAD.** Many people experience the blues during gloomy weather due to decreased sunlight, called *Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)*."

Do any of the above speak to how you are feeling? Stick with me this month and I will be writing suggestions for addressing some of the concerns. Next week we will address grief at Christmas.



Are the holidays a difficult time for you?

Whether it's the loss of a loved one or a divorce, the pain seems to intensify at Christmas.

'THE PARK' is sponsoring an informative seminar entitled "Handling Holiday Grief" led by Dr. Sheron C. Patterson on Wednesday, Dec. 13th from 6:30PM – 7:30PM in the Chapel.



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO OUR BROTHERS IN WHITE

"I was in prison and you came unto me." ~ Matthew 25:35

COALITION CHURCHES PRISON MINISTRY OUTREACH NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Thursday, DEC 14TH – 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. MEN are needed to set up the CLC in preparation for 'stuffing the bags' for our incarcerated brothers.

Friday, DEC 15TH – 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (OR UNTIL FINISHED) MEN AND WOMEN will work together stuffing approximately 8,400 bags to be delivered to the Palestine, TX prisons.

Saturday, DEC 16TH – 8:00 a.m. MEN will depart HPUMC to go to the Michael Unit for delivery of the Christmas gifts and participation in worship service.

If you are interested please contact or see Louis Robinson, Theresa Jackson, Rochester Edmond, LaVan Alexander or Matt Welsh in the CLC.

'THE PARK' CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS



Adorn your Christmas tree this year with beautiful 'THE PARK' ornaments. Contact the church office to place your order or purchase them on 12/10 in the CLC.

Actual size: 2" X 3" White ceramic oval on a gray cord.



PRISON FELLOWSHIP ANGEL TREE

needs your support to be a blessing to children with incarcerated parents by providing a gift on the parents' behalf.

For more information please stop by our table in the CLC. The deadline for being a blessing with your wrapped gift is Dec. 17th. Gifts should be valued between \$10-\$25. You may contact Nancy Wilson @ 214-538-7941 or Eloise Wells @ 832-561-9330 with Special Days Ministry.

December UNITY Worship

December 24th and December 31st (No 8:00 Chapel on those Sundays)



Church Office Holiday Schedule

Closed Christmas & New Years and the following dates:

Friday 12/22, Tuesday 12/26, Friday 12/29, and Tuesday 01/02