



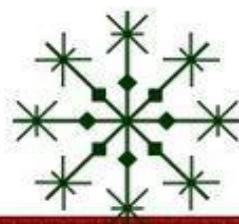
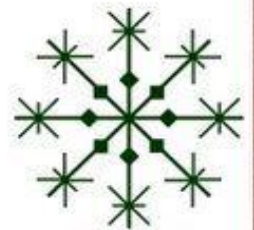
Merry Christmas

Christmas Greetings to one and all,

What a delight it is to extend a Merry Christmas to our whole church family at the crowning of the year! Christmas brings celebration, gatherings, wonderful food, gifts, pageants, and delightful time for the whole family. And yes, there is a special worship at John Stewart UMC on Christmas eve at 7:00 pm. This service will bring together all the best of our Christian traditions. There will be storytelling, a Christmas Choir, hand bells, Christmas Carols and goodies. Be sure to invite friends, neighbors, and family from far and wide. I am looking forward to seeing everyone, all this to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ at Bethlehem. While it was centuries ago, it grips us today as though it happened just yesterday. Christmas is always new, always fresh, ever part of our faith and hope. This is Christmas 2021!

It is my delight on behalf of Lynn and I, to wish everyone a merry and meaningful Christmas and a new year of blessings abundant.

Pastor Johnny & Lynn





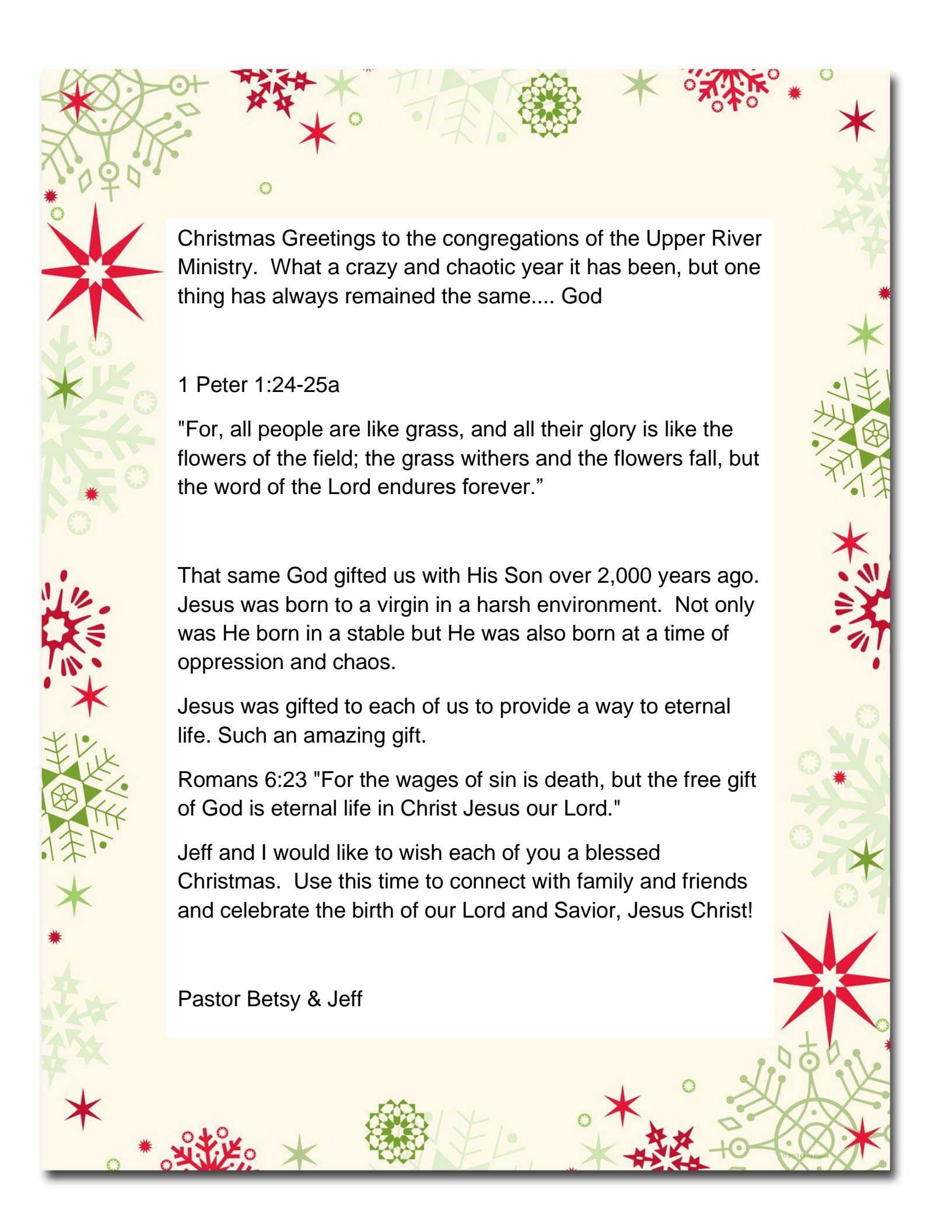
Church Family,

We are at that time a year again when we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. It seems like every year at this time we start to reflect on the past year. When reflecting on this past year I am reminded of the many blessings that we God given to us. I am speaking about blessings at the church and in our family house.

This past year we have had much to celebrate we started the year out with our son, Tyler, getting married to Megan in February. (We hit a little snag a couple weeks before the wedding when Sue broke her arm in two places) Megan is a great addition to the family, and they have been blessed with a great marriage. Sue and I celebrated another great year of marriage in March. This past May I graduated from Methodist Theology School of Ohio (MTSO) when I completed the pastor's course of study. In June we were able to get all the kids together for a quick little family vacation, where many memories were made. This august I started a master's program at MTSO. Jackie and CJ are enjoying the blissful life of marriage and making strides to put roots down in Columbus buying property to build a house in Sunbury. Lou, the parsonage dog is still kicking- despite the seizures, and the battle against the neighborhood the cats rage on with the support of the grand dogs - Shoutout to Axel and Remington.

Merry Christmas to all and may 2022 be full of blessings!!

Pastor Doug & Sue



Christmas Greetings to the congregations of the Upper River Ministry. What a crazy and chaotic year it has been, but one thing has always remained the same.... God

1 Peter 1:24-25a

"For, all people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

That same God gifted us with His Son over 2,000 years ago. Jesus was born to a virgin in a harsh environment. Not only was He born in a stable but He was also born at a time of oppression and chaos.

Jesus was gifted to each of us to provide a way to eternal life. Such an amazing gift.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jeff and I would like to wish each of you a blessed Christmas. Use this time to connect with family and friends and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Pastor Betsy & Jeff

Christmas Eve Services:

6:30 pm @ Forest UMC

7:00 pm @ John Stewart UMC

8:00 pm @ Marseilles UMC



Forest UMC

111 E Dixon Street
Forest

John Stewart UMC

130 W Johnson Street
Upper Sandusky

Marseilles UMC

20273 Main Street (parsonage)
Upper Sandusky

Salem UMC

17008 Township Highway 96
Upper Sandusky

Wesley Chapel UMC

12544 County Highway 63
Upper Sandusky

Wharton UMC

208 E Sandusky Street
Upper Sandusky



The Candy Cane

1. The candy cane is in the shape of a shepherd's staff. Jesus is our Shepherd, and we are His flock. A sheep follows his own shepherd, knows his voice, trusts him and knows that he is totally safe with him. The sheep will follow no other shepherd than their own. In the same way, if we belong to Jesus, we are to follow only Him. ([John 10:11](#); [Psalm 23:1](#); [Isaiah 40:11](#))

2. Turned over, the candy cane is a "J," the first letter of Jesus' name. ([Luke 1:31](#)) It is made of hard candy to remind us that Christ is the "rock" of our salvation.

3. The wide red stripes on the candy cane represent the blood Jesus shed on the cross for each one of us so that we can have eternal life through Him. He restores us and cleans us with His shed blood – the only thing that can wash away our sin. ([Luke 22:20](#))

4. The white stripes on the candy cane represent Jesus' virgin birth and His pure, sinless life. He is the only human being ever who never committed a single sin, even though He was tempted just as we are. ([1 Peter 2:22](#))

5. The narrow red stripes on candy canes symbolize Jesus' stripes, or scars, which He got when He was arrested and whipped. The Bible says we are healed (of sin) because He took those wounds. ([Isaiah 53:5](#); [1 Peter 2:24](#))

6. The flavoring in the candy cane is peppermint, which is similar to hyssop. Hyssop is of the mint family and was used in Old Testament times for purification and sacrifice. ([John 19:29](#); [Psalm 51:7](#))

7. When we break our candy cane, it reminds us that Jesus' body was broken for us. When we have communion, it is a reminder of what He did for us. ([1 Corinthians 11:24](#))

8. AND, if we share our candy cane and give some to someone else because we love that person, we are sharing the love of Jesus. ([1 John 4:7,8](#)) God gave Himself to us when He sent Jesus to earth to save us. He loves us so much that He wants us to spend eternity with Him. We are assured of that when we accept Jesus into our hearts as our Savior. ([John 1:12](#); [John 3:3,16](#))