

FROM PASTOR MARC'S DESK

A Season of Service

You don't need to hear me tell you how different this past holiday season has been. Thousands upon thousands of words have been written about that already. For better or for worse, the pandemic has stripped away much of our celebrated pageantry through which we have come to recognize so much of the holiday season. I couldn't help but be reminded of the classic children's book, *(Continued...on page 3)*

(From Pastor Marc...contined from pg 1)

How The Grinch Stole Christmas by Dr. Seuss. Like that hairy green antagonist of the movie, it feels like COVID-19 snuck into our homes uninvited this year and took away so many of our celebrations, our gatherings, our meals, and so many of our trimmings.

And yet...Christmas came nevertheless.

The end of Dr. Seuss' classic Christmas story is one of my favorites. At the end of the story, after the Grinch looks down with glee from the top of Mt. Crumpit at the mischief he has created, he is surprised and even shocked to discover that even without presents...that even without tags...(that even "without packages, boxes, or bags")

...Christmas came nevertheless. The Who's down in Whoville gather outside in the town square in the midst of all they've lost and lift up their voices in song. The Grinch discovers that the true meaning of Christmas ultimately transcends the material...and even the mortal, itself, and no virus can ever take that away.

I remember watching this cartoon as a child and wondered how it would feel to experience a Christmas like that. I feel like I don't have to wonder anymore. Our youth group here at Oxford Presbyterian Church has also lost many of their beloved holiday traditions that tend to pop up this time of year: overnight lock-ins, Christmas caroling, meals together, and Christmas goodies. Like the Grinch, COVID-19 invaded our holiday youth group plans and snatched away many of the things we often look forward to.

And yet, like the Who's down in Whoville, the youth of Oxford Presbyterian Church still showed up to witness to the fact that the true meaning of the holiday season transcends the material. This year, the youth group at Oxford Presbyterian Church partnered with the Deacons to host a No-Contact Food Drive to support TOPPS in our ongoing mission to eradicate systemic poverty.

With masks on and lines of cars wrapped around the Seminary building, the youth group (along with your generosity) collected 955 pounds of food and pantry donations! That's nearly half a ton of donations to TOPPS from the food drive, alone! The Seminary Building was quite literally overflowing!

But it didn't stop there. In between unloading bags of collected food items from the trunks of vehicles, the youth group also secretly filmed several scenes for this year's Celebration at the Manger (which was produced virtually this year). Following the "broadcast" of the Christmas production, the youth group partnered with the Deacons once again and spent that Sunday evening writing Christmas cards to each of the individuals on our Deacons' Angel List.

The youth also wrote letters to local legislators supporting Bread for the World, a Christian advocacy organization that seeks to urge leaders of all political parties to work towards ending hunger and systemic poverty.

Even in the midst of COVID-19, the true meaning of season still endures. While this may have been a much humbler holiday experience than we are used to, we are also reminded that the very first Christmas was also very humble in its beginnings. Yet, God's presence continues to show up again and again just as it did away in a manger so very long ago, and nothing in heaven or on earth can ever separate us from the love and the presence of God.

As we move into this New Year together, may we give thanks for the ways that God continues to show up.

