

January 2025

Conley's United Methodist Church



Lewes, Delaware

THE CONNECTION

In essentials, unity

In non-essentials, liberty

In all things, charity



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Special Points of Interest

- Poetry, Prayers, and Words of Wisdom
- Notable Days in Jan.



The Pastor's Pen

a word from Pastor Bill Davis

*Whatever you do--whether in word or deed--do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Colossians 3:17

The new year is upon us. This is, of course, an arbitrary designation; we can each start “new” whenever we so desire. Be that as it may, the start of a new calendar year provides an opportunity to mark a new beginning, to resolve to live better from this point onward. And so, many participate in the annual tradition of making resolutions for the New Year. Ironically, giving up on those resolutions has, itself, become a tradition. “Quitter’s Day” is observed on the second Friday of January. New Year’s resolutions are famous for their high intentions, and are infamous for their low success rate.

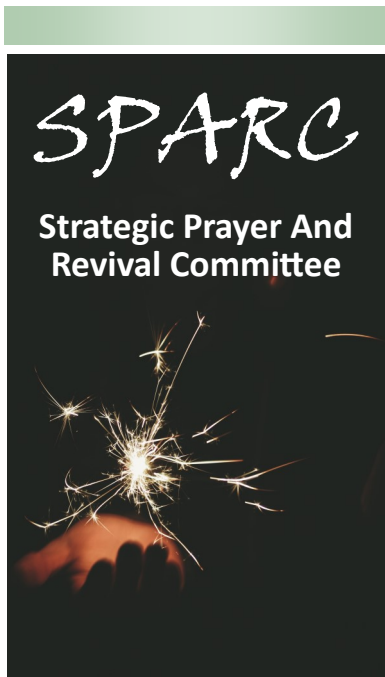
Fortunately, there is plenty of advice available to help us keep our resolutions. Unfortunately, there is little agreement among the advisors. One suggests making multiple small, doable goals; another favors making just one big, inspiring goal. Without making any claims to expertise on the subject--my track record of resolution-keeping is spotty--I present to you the verse above (from our December 29 Lectionary reading) as a worthy resolution regardless of whether it is the only resolution one makes or the first of many. This resolution comes with help that is far greater than any advisor (or pastor) can provide: the blessing of God.

The verse concludes Paul’s instruction to the church regarding how followers of Christ are to live--showing compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, and bearing with each other and forgiving one another (verses 12-13)--in whatever we do. Martin Luther wrote: “The Christian shoemaker does his or her duty not by putting little crosses on shoes, but by making good shoes. God is interested in good craftsmanship.” This quote gets to the heart of the biblical understanding of vocation: God can (and does!) use each and every one of us to make this world a better place. In whatever we do.

In Luther’s medieval context, there were various castes of labor, each assigned a different level of prestige. Luther rejected that worldview. He recognized that God calls all Christians to care for the world God loves. And for this reason, all that is done in the name of the Lord Jesus and with compassion and love for others is of equal value—and equally pleasing to God. In fact, the word vocation stems from the root *vocatio* – or calling. We all are called by God to care for our neighbor and our world. And anything we do toward that end is holy work . . . whether it is done in the church or workplace or home, whether it is paid or volunteer, whether it is prestigious or unnoticed.

The world wonders what 2025 will bring. Many wonder with trepidation. As followers of Christ, we can be sure of what awaits us in the new year: countless opportunities to show our devotion to God by caring for our neighbor and our world for the glory of our Lord. Let us resolve, as a church and as individual believers, to speak and act in a way that bears witness to the Spirit of Christ within us.

Wishes for a happy and blessed New Year from the Davis family to you and yours



Why is Prayer Important?

Advent Continues

Christmas is over. We have unwrapped all the gifts, taken down the lights and decorations and are preparing for the next holiday celebration. In the New Year we hope things will be better than before. We look around for quiet peace and we don't see it in our communities, our stores, our schools or our homes. This year appears to be the same old, same old. A world of wars, political conflict, the number of homeless and people needing help grows. It seems as if when we put away the twinkling Christmas lights we pack away our HOPE, LOVE, JOY and PEACE of Advent.

The season of Advent is over but God is still moving. Our Emmanuel God with us continues to make advent appearances into the lives of the unprepared. Those who are still in darkness and in need of the Light of the World.

Thank You Holy Father God for the Advent of Jesus into the world. The First Advent was Jesus' birth in the small town of Bethlehem. An event hardly noticed by the world at that time but powerful in its effect. Jesus still comes in the small places of our lives. Advents little noticed by others but powerful to us as His LOVE gives HOPE and JOY and PEACE. **Thank You Jesus for coming to us**

even in our smallest need.

The Advent of Jesus' ministry was in the wilderness. He still comes to us in the dry, arid wilderness times of our need.

Thank You Jesus, The Living Water for coming to refresh our thirsty parched souls in the wildernesses of life.

Jesus comes through repentance and baptism. Our baptism is the advent of our coming to Jesus and beginning the journey of forgiveness and LOVE and JOY. The advent of our baptism is a onetime event like the First Advent of Jesus. Like the First Advent It also has a lasting, powerful effect. **May we always remember our baptism and whose we are.**

When Jesus called and taught His disciples and us it was the advent of our service of LOVE. We LOVE because God first loved us. We serve because Jesus showed us how. **Thank You Jesus, Son and Servant of God.**

The prophets promised the ancients God would send an angel to guide them. When Jesus prepared to leave and go to be with The Father, He told the disciples, He would send His Holy Spirit to lead and guide them and now us. The coming of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us is our advent in the journey of faith and righteousness. **Thank You Holy Spirit.**

John was sent to prepare us for the LIGHT of the world to dispel the darkness of our confusion, doubt and despair. The LIGHT is our healer, encourager, and Savior. He rescues us from the darkness. **Thank You, Jesus, Light of the World.**

Advent is not over. It began with the arrival of the Savior Emmanuel and continues through us as we share the peace rejoicing in the Light of the World shining in the darkness. He still makes appearances in the hearts of His people. Advent continues through us, God's Chosen. **Lead us as we partner with You to bring the Light of HOPE, LOVE, JOY and PEACE to those living in darkness until the Second Advent when Jesus returns. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.**

"I want to know one thing, the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. Give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God!"

—John Wesley



Greetings from the Missions Team



Did you know?

Conley's distributes 10% of all income from church offerings to local, national, and international missions programs.

Your Missions Committee has been very busy preparing for 2025. We created the budget, we have added a couple of mission opportunities that will require donations (food, health products).

ASP (Appalachia Service Project) update. We have 5 adults and one youth signed up for this mission trip July 13-19. There will be more than 100 youth attending this weekend. We would like to see Conley's UMC be represented by a few more adults and 3 or 4 more youth. I understand that the summer is the perfect time to work for

young people. We requested hurricane relief areas because that is where the most need is. I promise if you take this one week to serve people who desperately need it you will be more than blessed by the experience. Besides it will look great on your college application.

Kairos Prison Ministries have three weekends planned for spring 2025. Kairos Outside weekend #7 March 28-30, Kairos Inside Sussex Correctional Facility weekend #10 March 27-30 and Kairos Inside Baylor Women's Correctional Facility weekend #1. Thank you for your support of this ministry and thank you for your prayers.

SouperBowl Sunday February 9th



The Mission Team is collecting cans of soup to donate to the **Cape Henlopen Food Basket**. Please join us by bringing a can of soup to the church on or before Superbowl Sunday, February 9th. A simple way to make a meaningful contribution to our community. Please join us!

Evangelism Team News

More Tips To Help You Contribute to Conley's 2025 Lenten Devotional

Do you remember this picture from the 2024 Conley's Lenten Devotional?



"Christ In Gethsemane", Heinrich Hofmann (1886)



That was just one of several pictures, along with several devotions, in the 2024 edition of Conley's Lenten Devotional. You have probably heard by now that we are doing a 2nd Conley's Lenten Devotional this coming Lent and hope many of you will contribute again or be inspired to contribute something for the first time!

With Lent quickly approaching in early March please consider writing a devotion or, without having to write anything, some photo or artwork that is relevant to Lent for use in the upcoming 2025 Conley's Lenten Devotional.

Back in December I mentioned some initial concepts and thoughts that I found at "**How to Write a Devotional: The Definitive Guide**" (at <https://jerryjenkins.com/how-to-write-a-devotional/>) about devotionals in general. To recap, I addressed two main items -

1) What You Should Bring to the Table:

- "With humility, graciousness, and spiritual sensitivity, you can create something that can alter a reader's thinking and behavior.
- Provide an engaging piece of writing that offers new insights. Be genuine and honest,
- Good devotional writing says, Walk with me a few minutes. Examine something with me.

2) Meet Readers Where They Are:

- People turn to devotionals to meet deep needs. Some have lost friendships, been divorced, suffered from criticism, betrayal, or the death of a loved one.
- Others seek intimacy with God. Their prayer lives are lax, their testimonies weak, and their church attendance sporadic. They need to find their way back to Jesus.

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Evangelism Team News

- Some just want to grow spiritually or to discover a better way to share their faith. Your devotional may be their only connection to the Bible all day!”

Here is some other useful information I found on the website:

The Makings of a Good Devotional

- “Your reader is giving you a few minutes, and in exchange you must provide an engaging piece of writing that offers new insights. Be genuine and honest, not grandiose or admonishing.
- Good devotional writing says, ‘Walk with me a few minutes. Examine something with me.’
- Although your anecdotes and illustrations should be drawn from your life, the lesson should always be drawn from Scripture.
- Present God’s wisdom in a package your reader can relate to.
- Try to stick with tangible images, things readers can see, touch, smell, hear, and taste.”

But I feel one of the greatest points the writer makes is this: “Because much of what we observe and say has potential to become material for a devotional, **keep a journal for ideas, thoughts, and feelings.** For example, when did God make Himself known to you in a dramatic way? **Did you receive an answer to prayer regarding a health issue, financial need, or spiritual awakening that proved He was working in your life?”**

Have you ever journaled? I went to a weekend retreat about 20 years ago where the leader encouraged us to journal each day. I learned that along with being very helpful spiritually, journaling does produce devotionals!

During this first month of a new year, we should all try to **make a resolution that we start each day by jotting down and journaling our thoughts and feelings on how God is working in our lives.**

It’s up to you how the 2025 edition of Conley’s Lenten devotional ends up. It will contain Lenten-related pictures or artwork and I am sure some Lenten-related prayers, favorite hymns and personal testimonies. But it’s up to you!

Thanks for your prayerful consideration to contribute to the 2025 Conley’s Lenten Devotional but **please drop them off to Sandy in the church office or email them directly to me by no later than mid-February!**

Jerry Pawlikowski (at gjpawlikowski@verizon.net)



SOCIAL CONCERNS

The Latest from Conley's Social Concerns Team



Feeding the Flock

As 2024 draws to a close, I have been reflecting on how this ministry has grown, both in the number of meals we are serving per week, 300 on average; and in the scope of what we do. Our tee shirts say "Nourishing Body, Mind and Spirit" and I see the many ways that we now do this.

We have been able to give out lunches and food boxes; provide an ear to listen; pray with people; and provide clothing and household items. We pray that we have been able to demonstrate the love of Christ in the communities we serve and to serve as an example of what living as part of the larger Body of Christ can look

like.

We are continuing with our ministry in the Homeless Community by providing meals at the Community Resource Center and the LCOS women's overnight, Code Purple shelter.

The generosity of the congregation and the community surrounding Conley's has been nothing short of amazing. Financial support and donations of clothing and food have enabled us to care for many.

Conley's garden and the Historic Lewes Farmer's Market provided an abundance of fresh produce. We also received dairy and meat once a month. As prices at the grocery store increased, we were able to supplement people's purchases. The year end report from the farmer's market showed that we received \$17,300 in product from them between mid-April and mid-December.

Family Assistance

There has been a definite increase in the number of calls for assistance. Being able to vet people through Love, INC has definitely been helpful. In line with their policies, we are encouraging people to enroll in transitional ministry programs to help learn life skills such as budgeting. I now have access to the Love, INC data base so I can look up information when the Connection Center is closed. We also have many people asking for gas cards. We have set a limit of one card in a calendar month

Food Pantry

In November, we had a pounding and the pantry is now well stocked. Our ongoing needs are jelly, spaghetti sauce, beef stew and shelf stable milk.

Our pantry is so blessed to receive donations from the Food Bank of Delaware. They have supplied us with many dry/staple products over the past year. Maintaining health standards in our food supply is important. In light of this but not discounting your generosity in donating to us;

PLEASE DO NOT BRING:

**SPAGHETTI/PASTA PRODUCTS RICE PEANUT BUTTER TUNA FISH
BISQUICK, PANCAKE MIX CAKE/BROWNIE MIXES CANNED CORN**

A number of community members donated food between Thanksgiving and Christmas. We also received 32 additional chickens from Mountaire as well as additional turkeys from Mohan Farms. This enabled us to provide all of the Angel Tree families with a food box.

Soup for the Soul

Please sign up in the Narthex to bring soup and desserts for the Wednesday Soup Social. Contact Dale Kehrer with any questions



Solitary religion is not to be found . . . The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social religion; no holiness but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection.

(From John Wesley's intro to "Hymns and Sacred Poems.")

**NEWS
from
CONLEY'S
THRIFT SHOP**



We're not sure where all of 2024 went. Seems like it was just yesterday that we were complaining about the summer heat and now we are complaining as to how cold we are.

Sally and I want to give our thanks to our staff and all of the great volunteers that have helped make this a great year. It has been a really good year with a lot of opportunities to help a lot of people with clothing and furniture donations. We gave approximately \$35,000.00 cash donations to local charities. It is a great blessing to help so many of our friends and neighbors.

On January 13th we will celebrate our volunteers with a luncheon. We look forward to a great time of fun and fellowship. We are always looking for new volunteers. Please consider volunteering one 3 hour time slot a week. You will be a great help to us and will meet a lot of nice friendly people.

If you are planning on dropping off donations, please consider the weather conditions before you stop by. If it is below freezing, raining or extreme wind conditions, we will close the donation center early for the safety and health of our donation staff. Please call the shop at 302 945 5566 before you make the trip over. Thanks for your understanding.

We are looking forward to a great year in 2025. Thanks for letting us serve you.

Pat & Sally

Did you know?

Conley's Thrift Shop donates 10% of all income to local charities.



Talk about Happy Endings!



Thank you, Conley's, for helping to make the **Christmas Party** for our Campers such an incredible success! We were amazed at the quality donations of not only hats, gloves, and scarves but also the incredible cookies and other goodies. The Nativity cake, made by Cheryl Wood, was particularly ingenious! Not to mention the financial donations which allowed us to give each child such a nice selection of gifts.

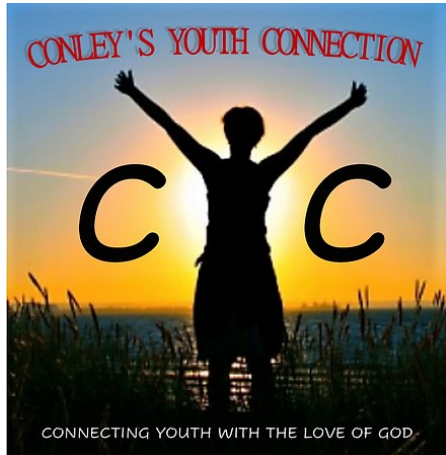
I'd like to thank each one of the Camp Hope team members – along with the Conley's congregation and our partner churches - for such a great year. So much work was accomplished by this special group of people, each playing their unique role. This year we had eight graduates and we already have three new young ones lined up to take their place. By the grace of God, the camp is growing and it's becoming well known. More and more people are hearing about the camp, believing in it, and making the Camp Hope dream come true! Don't hesitate to join us in some way in 2025. As they say,... *It's a wonderful life!*

Karen Lessey, Camp Hope Director
All praise and glory to God!



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Happy New Year, Conley's Family! I love the refreshing feeling that is accompanied by a new year. After having a few days rest from all that Christmas brings, we can settle ourselves and consider all of the possibilities the new year has in store for us or even the changes we would like to make in our lives or in the lives of others. However, a new beginning can start or re-start at anytime throughout the year - so don't get discouraged if something doesn't work out right away-the timing has to be right!! After listening and reflecting on Pastor Bill's sermon this past Sunday (12/28), I remember a familiar verse standing out - 'Here I am, Lord. Send me.' Pastor Bill talked about sacrificing ourselves to God by putting our personal gifts to work daily for God's glory. I was excited and challenged at this thought. Can we be more open-minded this year and in the future to God's call and be ready when new opportunities or challenges present themselves - whether they are in or out of our comfort zones, to say 'Here I am, Lord.', trusting God's plan to serve Him? Let's be more open to God's call and be ready to step out in BOLD FAITH with hands raised- open and ready to serve. He has a plan and it's ALWAYS good! I am looking forward to what God has planned for Conley's Church and Church family!

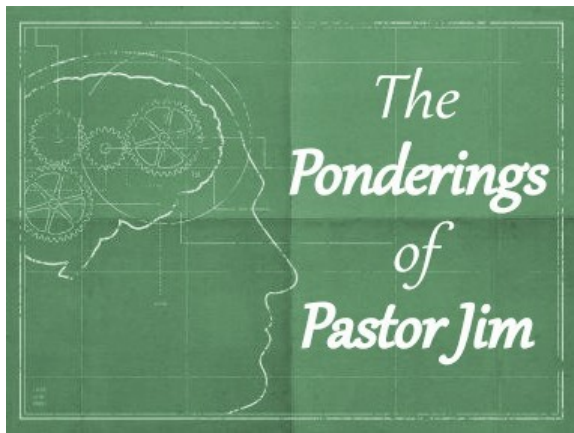
I would also like to invite you to join me in choosing a word for 2025. This word can be used to help guide, inspire, and fuel your spiritual growth journey with God in the coming year. Ask God, in prayer, and let the Holy Spirit lay the special word on your heart. Carry the word with you throughout the year and see the many ways it's continually revealed and used as you journey with God in 2025. Last year my word was trust - there were so many lessons I learned by trusting in Him and new ways I trusted Him more through 2024. I will continue to rely on that word as it resonated so much on my faith journey this past year, but will be adding another word for 2025. Some other examples are love, patience, grace, obey, serve, and peace. What word will God reveal in you?

May God's Blessings and Peace be upon you in 2025 and always!

Jess

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?" And I said "Here I am. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8

Thank you to all who participated in the Facebook Advent Picture Challenge! Seeing everyone's daily submissions made the Christmas season so much brighter and extra special!



On Christmas day there was a knock on the parsonage door. A couple was standing outside, asking to be married. I replied, “Well, we can talk about that. Let’s set up a time later this week, when we can meet.”

The two looked at each other and then explained: “We want to be married today.” I gave them all the reasons why that was impossible: I was eating Christmas dinner, the need for premarital discussion. They responded by wordlessly holding out a marriage license.

This couple, exuding innocence, was invited into the parsonage. Our family filled the home for the holiday, but I found a private spot where we could talk. The man was in the military and his departure to Afghanistan was imminent. The pair wanted to be married and have a brief honeymoon before he spent a year in combat. Plus, she was pregnant. I made some telephone inquiries. I called their parents and other references they could give me. Their story checked out. Everyone thought they should get married. What would you do in such a situation?

They were married in the parsonage living room, in front of a roaring fireplace. For their wedding reception, they stayed and had Christmas dinner with our family.

Did I do the right thing? Who knows? But there was a couple, expecting a child, standing at our front door on December 25th, with an untimely request. Was it like the first Christmas, with Mary and Joseph seeking aid, and there was no room at the inn? I continue to wonder.

But it was a Christmas my family will never forget.

Conley's Caring Hearts Ministry



Being part of God's Caring Hearts Ministry has really set my heart on other's needs. Jesus said that "The Greatest in God's Kingdom are the ones who Serve Others". That is what all of us do with a Caring Heart!

Pastor Bill and I were able to serve communion and get to know the John family during the end of Ed's earthly life. It was difficult but also a wonderful blessing! I can really appreciate hospice and other care-givers who help those whose life on earth is coming to an end.

We also reached out to several people who had surgery or hadn't been to church due to illness. I realize that pride (I am also guilty) sometimes gets in the way of asking or accepting help. Please don't take away the joy that God provides us when you help someone else, if you need a Caring Heart!

We wish everyone a Blessed Christmas! God Bless!

Jay



New Year—-New You



How many resolutions have you made over the years hoping for a different outcome in your life? I know I've made so many that I can't remember even one that I've kept more than a week. I bet that even you can say the same thing.

You can't become a "new you" by your own resolution to change or do better than last year. It may take shape for a little while, but sooner or later than we care to admit, we slip back into old habits.

Through the years, I found a resolution that is sure to work if you follow this lead.

Make a resolution to become a friend of Jesus. It's a strong give and take relationship. He does most of the giving and you do most of the taking. Jesus is there when you need him and there when you think you don't.

How can anything surpass this arrangement?

All He asks for this resolution to be permanent is for you to invite him into your life.

You'll be so satisfied that another resolution will never be necessary.

Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. James 4:8

A man that has friends, must show himself friendly and there is a friend that stickest closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24

By: Sandie Wysocki

Worship With Us This Month

Worship with us on Sundays at 10am. You may join us either in-person or online. Our worship service is livestreamed on Vimeo and Youtube; links are provided on our website.

When joining us online, please check-in using the "Connect Card" located under the worship tab at the upper left corner of our homepage — we want to know you're worshipping with us!

The "Connect Card" may also be used to submit prayer requests and/or praise reports during our worship service or any time.

You may give your tithes and offerings to the Lord through the church via the "donate" button at the lower right corner of our homepage.

Thank you for your faithfulness in giving — we believe God is doing great things through the ministry of his church!

What's Happening

On-Going Weekly Events

Sunday

Adult Bible Study taught by Rev. Jim Vanderwall in the Library, 8:30-9:30am.

Youth Sunday School-9am, led by Jess Mastriana.

Monday

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday Worship Service, Jan 20th, 10am, in the sanctuary, followed by refreshments in the Fellowship Hall.

Choir practice in the Choir Room, 6-7:00 pm.

Bell Ringers practice in the Fellowship Hall, 7:00-8:00pm.

Tuesday

Over 50 Yoga in the Fellowship Hall, 10:30—11:45am. Bring your own mat and bottled water. Cost is \$10 per session, cash only.

Wednesday

Soup for the Soul provides free lunch and fellowship in the Fellowship Hall, 11am-1pm. Contributions are welcome; sign-up sheets are in the narthex.

Adult Bible Study Led by Pastor Bill, 6:30pm resumes Jan 15-Feb 19.

Thursday

Adult Bible Study—Led by Louise Finn and Karen Lessey, 10am, Jan 16-Feb 20.

Praise Team practice in the Sanctuary, 5:30-6:30pm.

Happening This Month

The Trustees meet Tuesday, Jan. 7th, 6:30pm, in the Library.

SPRC —meets Tuesday, January 14th, 6:30pm in the Library.

The Church Council will meet Thursday, January 16th, 6:30pm in the Library.

United Women in Faith-Undecorating the church, Saturday, Jan 11th at 10am.

ASP Mission Trip-July 13-19. Please consider joining the group, to be a blessing to someone in need. Call Marie Van Der Wall, 302-249-7897, or the church office to sign up.

Opportunities to Be a Blessing

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Join Conley's Sight and Sound Team!

We are in need of people on Sunday mornings to operate the soundboard, screen projection computer, and livestream computer. Are you computer literate; are you willing to learn? Our friendly Sight and Sound Team will train you so that you can take a turn in this ministry that supports Sunday worship.



ON-GOING OPPORTUNITIES

Greeters

A friendly welcome at the door makes a great first impression—both for new comers and regular attenders. Help get people ready for worship with a warm welcome to all and helpful directions to visitors.

Ushers

You can help worshipers by directing them to open seats and bringing a microphone for prayers and praises, and providing helpful directions as needed.

Contact the church office if you would like to serve your Conley's Church family in any of these capacities; 302-945-1881

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;

if it is serving, then serve;

if it is teaching, then teach;

if it is to encourage, then give encouragement;

if it is giving, then give generously;

if it is to lead, do it diligently;

if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

ROMANS 12:4-8

**Conley's United
Methodist Church**

began as a Methodist society in 1800 and was incorporated as a Methodist church in 1838.

Our Mission:
To make disciples
of Jesus Christ.

Notable Days in January _____

- 1st New Year's Day
- 5th Epiphany Sunday
- 20th Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Conley's United Methodist Church

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

