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Family is soul of Bethlehem Fish Fry

By Vicki Stout

FOR WILLIAMSON A.M.

The Bethlehem Fish Fry, coming up July 17, is a family affair for many members of the United Methodist Church in Grassland, which hosts the huge affair.

Among them are Emogene Ownby Hyde; her daughters, Marijane McQuiddy and Susanne Johnson; and McQuiddy's daughter, Meg.

Hyde is famous for her cream cheese pound cakes, the recipe for which is so top secret the FBI probably couldn't pry it from her.

"I made two of those pound cakes for the very first fish fry; it was an election year so lots of candidates were there. The cakes were auctioned off; they brought more than \$400 each. I've been making them ever since," she says.

This year she'll make 13, and she'll spend most of the week leading up to the fish fry doing it. One will be sold at live auction; others will be in the sprawling bake sale that accompanies this hugely popular event.

Hyde, who has been part of every fish fry, also will work at the carryout station; in the past she's helped with coleslaw (another top secret recipe).

Her daughters will run the kitchen this year.

McQuiddy says she and her sister also have helped with white beans, and they, too, contribute to the bake sale. Even younger generations get into the act: her daughter, Meg, a rising seventh-grader, makes cupcakes for the sale and works in the kids' area the day of the event.

"Meg and I made animal cupcakes last year. We decorated them to look like frogs and fish. The children seem to enjoy them," McQuiddy said.

The youngest of this multi-generational fish fry team says she loves helping her mom bake and enjoys making the whimsical cupcakes for the fish fry.

Johnson says the family has grown up in this church and with the fish fry.

"All of us love to cook, but it's special to be able to come together with family and participate in this great event," she says.

The menu for the fish fry includes fresh fried farm-raised catfish, coleslaw, white beans, sliced homegrown tomatoes and a wide range of homemade desserts.

Staged at the church and on its grounds, this year's event is expected to draw 4,000 hungry folks. It has moved far beyond a small church fundraiser to a community event. A silent auction, kids' area and live music complement the fab food these church volunteers serve from 4:30 to 8 p.m.

Ticket prices are \$10 in advance, \$12 the day of for adults; \$5 for children. For more information, call the church at 794-6721 or visit www.BethlehemUMC.com The church is just off Old Hillsboro Road at 1419 Bethlehem Loop in Grassland.

Tickets are available at the church; they'll go fast, as will the 1,400 pounds of catfish that will be fried that day.

SPICED PECANS

1 pound pecan halves

1/2 stick butter

1/2 teaspoon cumin

1/2 teaspoon red pepper

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup brown sugar

Melt butter in large saucepan. Add cumin, pepper, garlic and salt. Simmer over low heat 2 minutes. Add nuts; stir well to coat. Add brown sugar coating nuts well.

Spread nuts on foil lined cookie sheet. Bake 300 degrees for 20 minutes. Cool. Store in an airtight container.

FUDGE PIE

(available at the bake sale)

3 cups sugar

6 tablespoons cocoa

2 teaspoons vanilla

4 eggs

2 ounces Pet Milk

1 stick butter

Melt butter, mix all ingredients together. Stir well to dissolve sugar. Pour into two deep dish pie shells.

Bake 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Delicious warm with vanilla ice cream on top.
