



Weekly Update – December 21, 2016

A Personal Word... From Rev. Jim Pollard

At Last...It's Christmas...

I remember as a boy eagerly watching the “Shopping Days Until Christmas” calendar on the front page of the Buffalo Evening News. My sense of anticipation grew as the days counted down, and, finally, at last, it was Christmas!!! We walked to Kenmore Methodist Church on Christmas Eve and heard the music and readings and sang the carols; then went home and went to bed. I was filled with excitement in anticipation of Christmas morning around the tree, the opening of gifts, and our special breakfast on the best china at the dining room table!! To this day I get up early on Christmas morning, turn on the tree lights, listen to the Christmas anthems and carols and anticipate the rest of the day. At last, it's Christmas!!!

Here in Christ Church we've been experiencing the expectancy of the Advent season, reflecting on the mystery and the meaning of the birth of the reality of the God of the universe in the human life of Jesus of Nazareth. What an astounding event!! God, not far off in a massive universe, but intimately present, lovable and loving, living a life like ours, and living life like it is supposed to be lived, life that is the very presence of God's undying love – life that is a gift to the entire world.

In the birth of Christ, God gives the gift the world desperately needs!! ...the gift the world is waiting for. Our joy is to receive it, proclaim it, to live it, to help make it a reality! The waiting is over!!!

At last...it's Christmas!

In Christ's service,
Jim

Music & Meditation - December 23 - 5:30 - 6 pm

Advent is a season for stillness, for quiet, for discernment. Give yourself the gift of peace. Music, meditation, prayer and candlelight.

Daily Bible Reading – 2016 Shaping Our Life Experience

Excerpts from both the Old and New Testament are included each day. This is a great way to support your ongoing growth in faith and the Christ Church community as well.

December 21: Micah 6-7; Revelation 12

December 22: Nahum 1-3; Revelation 13

December 23: Habakkuk 1-3; Revelation 14

December 24: Zephaniah 1-3; Revelation 15

December 25: Haggai 1-2; Revelation 16

December 26: Zechariah 1-3; Revelation 17

December 27: Zechariah 4-6; Revelation 18

In Our Prayers

Joy – Thank you to **Diane & Chris Klenk** (9am) and **Jim Pollard** (11 am) for lighting the candles on our Advent wreath on Sunday.

Joy – Many thanks to members of the Christian Education Team – **Mary Ball, Kay Barber, Sharon Ferrelli, Lisa Lawson, Dennis Scaringi & Peter Shanley** --for their planning, encouraging, and dedication for this year's Christmas pageant, "**Merry Christ-Mess**" and the Open The Door party that followed. Thank you to **Margaret Mugel**, pageant director, and to all who participated- **David Lawson, Tom Weaver, Ryan Lopez, Erin & Chris Johnson (very special thanks for stepping in at the last minute) Abby, Brennan, & Audrey Johnson, Michelle, Jeremiah & Graciella Cordero, Laura June Merrill, Laura, Olivia & Annette Smith, Emilia & Danielle Johnson, Johnathan Swist, Mary Ball, Becca Lopez, Sandy Cumming, Joe & Nick Teresi, Dennis Scaringi** in telling the Christmas story in our own unique way! *You are AWESOME!!* Thank you to all the parents and grandparents and spouses who supported us throughout the pageant. Thank you to Paul Staley, the choir, Liz Staley, Robert Paddock and Ashley Miller for special music.

Special thanks Scott Smith and Brad Bermudez for snow removal, ice melting and personal escorting to the building on icy pavement.

Joy - To date 89 pledge commitments have been received for \$212,440 plus some additional gifts. Thank you to all for your faithful & generous support as we set goals for ministry in 2017!

Joy - In August 2017, four people from Christ Church and two friends will be heading to Uganda, Africa for a two week mission trip! The team includes **Kathy Weaver, John Miller, son Jonathan** and niece Samantha, and **Janelle Martin** and her friend, Bob. Plans are currently underway and the team would be grateful for your prayers and financial support as they look forward to seeing how God will work in the lives and hearts of many people.

- **Janelle Martin will be offering gift wrapping services in the lobby of Bender's Christian Store on the evening of Friday, December 23 and Saturday, December 24, from 10am-5pm. Proceeds will support the Uganda mission team. Spend less time wrapping this year and support a great cause! Contact Janelle in the church office with any questions (839-2460).**

Keep in your prayers – Jeremiah Cordero, Richard Mestler- at home, Al Tolsma- recovering from eye surgery, Mary Landel, Joyce Moser, Bob Kreib, Rita Arnold, Carol Teresi, Patty Keller, Charles Terranova, Joe & Carolyn Day, Janet Hill, Elvira Gonzalez, Florence Stengel, Fred & Lynda Painton, Janelle Martin’s grandmothers, Castellino family.

The family and friends of Walter Reitz, who died on December 18.

Keep the church consultation process and planning team in your prayers as we move to determining goals will be achievable in the coming year or two and designing strategies for achieving them.

Pray for the coming together of all nations.

Pray for Chris Maliken, Lindsey Darling & Ian Johnson – all serve in the US Navy

This Week at Christ Church

Church Office – Mon., Wed., Fri. – 9 am to 5 pm, Tues. & Thurs. – 9am to Noon

Wednesday, December 21 - 7 pm – Choir Rehearsal

Friday, December 23 - **5:30 pm Music & Meditation**

Saturday, December 24 - **9 pm – Christmas Eve - Lessons & Carols**

Reception following – share cookies & other snacks

Sunday, December 11 - **11 am - Christmas Day Worship – Story & Song**

Opportunities to Make A Difference

Food Pantry –

December 18 – Canned fruits & vegetables

December 25 – Rice & Pasta

Hunger doesn’t take a vacation over the holidays!!

All food items are always needed to help stock local food pantries. Paper products and toiletries are welcome anytime. Grocery carts are available in the church for your donations.

The Café is a connecting place.

Sign up on the bulletin board in the Café to host some Sunday morning! Invite your family, friends, ministry team or group to join you! Share in this Café ministry of hospitality and welcome. Donations are welcome in the Café for use on Sunday mornings – baked goods, half & half, OJ, fruit & cookies are useful!

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Coming Soon...Mark your calendar

Advent Fridays – Give yourself the gift of peace

5:30 – 6 pm – Music & Meditation Taize style*

*(*Contemplative form of prayer, meditation, music, silence and candles)*

Saturday, December 24 – Christmas Eve 9 pm

Service of Lessons & Carols

Candles & Choir

Sunday, December 25 – Christmas Day Worship

Story & Song - 1 worship service at 11 am

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I actually think that's a pretty understandable request. We put a lot of time and energy into managing things, controlling as many of the variables of our twenty-first century lives as possible, and frankly are nearly worn out by the effort. Little wonder we come to church wanting not just a respite from the frenetic pace of everyday life but something more, something comforting and comfortable, something, preferably, warm, cozy, and inspiring. And so we devour Luke's nativity scene like it's a kind of spiritual comfort food, chicken soup, as it were, for the beleaguered soul... Except that that's not Luke's nativity scene. Luke knows something about wanting to order chaotic lives, too. .. Luke sets his story amid a census, the act of ordering -- that is, registering, counting, and taxing everyone -- par excellence. Yet this is only background for Luke; the main action takes place elsewhere, on the fringe, far away from the centers of power, in a little backwater town called Bethlehem... if we take even a moment to gaze around us we see how many lead lives that are difficult, painful, and all too short. And so God comes not at the center of the world to straighten things out a bit, but on the fringe to call the orders and structures of the day into question and herald a new beginning altogether.