



Celebration News

December, 2015 - Volume 25 - Issue 7

The Middle Road to Bethlehem

Much is made of a swinging pendulum. It is most often used in the context of the presence of extremes. Humans in general seem to naturally overcompensate when things are either good or bad. We seem to shy away from living our lives somewhere in the middle.

Modern day scriptures caution us to practice moderation in all things, but it seems we have a problem there. In light of recent world events, it is obvious we have come to live in a world of extremes. The challenge before us as we consider a Parisian Christmas, is to not react in extremes.

We must move forward with caution and thoughtfulness as we respond to acts of terror in a world pleading for peace. God would have us be both strong and smart as we prayerfully consider our options in the face of extremes.

You may wish to argue that we are not among those making these decisions. I would point out that we live in a time like no other. Each of us has the ability to reach out to our elected officials to make them more aware of a measured strong and smart response to violent forces.

Remember, that no matter your source of information, NONE of us has all the facts. This makes it all the more important that we respond as Christ's children when confronted with terror. We must remind those in charge what Jesus would have us do and, armed with that knowledge, we can simply ask that they respond in kind.

As we anticipate the celebration of the birth of Jesus, let us understand the power He gave us. May we live our lives in such a way that our friends and neighbors see us as peacemakers. Let us be mindful of the greatest gift we have been given, the gift of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, Son of God, Prince of Peace.

Merry Christmas Everyone!

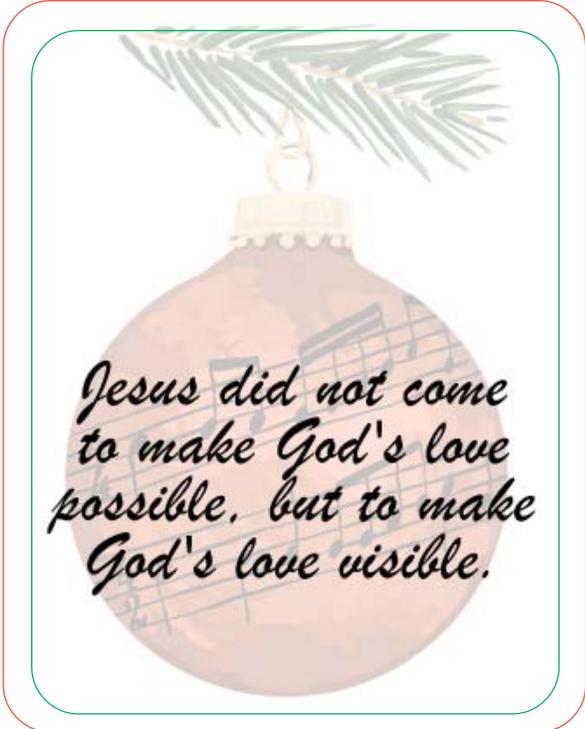
Jim Deering, Pursue Peace Ministries

Christmas Eve Service

On **Christmas Eve at 6:00 pm** you are invited to gather in the sanctuary for candles, carols, and the story of Jesus' birth. Make this candlelight service a part of your preparation for Christmas as we remember "Jesus is the reason for the season," God's gift to us.

Wednesday's Prayer and Praise service will not be held on December 23rd.

Charyn Walker for the Worship Team



*Jesus did not come
to make God's love
possible, but to make
God's love visible.*

Congregational Financial Update

As we approach the end of the year, it is always helpful to know where we stand financially as a congregation. Our cash position is very strong. This allows us to vigorously execute our missional tasks. We have through the end of October contributed \$2,332.43 more than we have expended on our budgeted expenses. There has been about \$3,040.00 expended from our building and grounds reserves to upgrade the lighting in the Fellowship Hall, classrooms, and the parking lot. This means that our net expenses for the year have exceeded our contributions by about \$700.00.

It should be noted however, that we have not contributed anywhere near the amount that we budgeted for the year. Our budgeted contributions to date should be \$49,736.66. Our actual contributions through October are \$38,191.79. This also means that we have not expended funds in all of the areas that we intended to when we established the budget. It is probably true that many of you have expended funds from your own pockets for congregational activities and not sought reimbursement. When this happens, we have no idea of the actual cost of our activities. When you make such expenditures out of pocket, it helps us know our true cost of operation if you would seek reimbursement. You could then contribute the reimbursed amount and receive a receipt for your contribution.

Dick Kramer, Congregational Financial Officer



Joel Rodriguez was baptized and confirmed during the November 1st Worship Service. Charlie Walker baptized him and Charyn Walker and Bob Slasor confirmed him a member of *Community of Christ*. We welcome Joel and look forward to working and serving with him.

Has It Really Been Twenty Years?

Do you remember what you were doing on January 28, 1996? It was a very happy and busy time for our church here in Bradenton/Sarasota. As a congregation we were celebrating the dedication of our church facility! We had many events going on beginning on Wednesday. That evening we began our celebration with a soup supper and a worship service. There was an Young Adult Dinner and program on Friday. Fun time started the events on Saturday and were followed by the "Dedication of the Landscaped Area". A Potluck dinner with barbecue chicken came after that followed by an entertaining program! Fellowship and refreshment time followed the Sunday morning Praise Service. The weekend ended with a Dedication Service.

Are you wondering why we are including this summary from 20 years ago in our December, 2015, Christmas issue of *Celebration News*? Well, it presents us with the opportunity to worship, eat, and celebrate once again. During the dedication of the landscaped area, all those present had the opportunity to place a letter in a time capsule that was to be opened 20 years later. The time capsule has been buried and waiting year after year to be uncovered in 2016!

On **January 31, 2016**, we will be having a worship service to mark the 20 years since the dedication of our church facility. A potluck dinner will follow with barbecue chicken. See, things don't change much in 20 years; food plays an important part in our planning! It is hoped that new and old members and friends will celebrate together as we open the time capsule. Please make sure you mark this celebration on your 2016 calendar. Circle January 31, and plan on being a part of our looking back and moving forward.

Celebrating Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace

The first Sunday of Advent is celebrated Sunday, November 29. The journey of preparing ourselves for the coming of our Savior begins with the lighting of the first candle in the Advent wreath, the candle of Hope.

As the second week of Advent begins, preparations for the coming of the Lord are well underway in our congregation and our homes. For many, this is a time to clean the house, put away ordinary items, and decorate for Christmas. In spite of the local and world events that are happening around us, we continue to prepare.

LOVE

December 6 *Prepare the Way of the Lord* **Luke 3:1-6**

John's message in verse 4 of the third chapter of Luke is the message of Advent, a message of preparation. John preached the call for a change of heart or mind. On this second Sunday of Advent, this idea will be explored by High Priest **Rick Jones** and Elder **Charyn Walker** during the Communion service.

JOY

December 13 *Proclaim the Good News* **Luke 3:7-18**

The third Sunday of Advent continues to build joyful expectation of Emmanuel, God's love come to live with us. John preaches the good news of the expected Messiah and calls the people to life-changing response. The good news will be joyfully shared by Evangelist **Bob Slasor** and Priest **Melinda Creel**.

PEACE

December 20 *Peace* **Luke 1:39-55**

This passage of scripture tells about Mary visiting Elizabeth to share her news. Because of Mary's faith, she was better prepared for God's unexpected message. What unexpected things are happening in your life? Are you prepared? Teacher **Fay Beers** and Elder **Jim Deering** will lead us in celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. We will witness the blessing of a baby on this the fourth Sunday of Advent.

December 27 *Develop Disciples to Service* **Luke 2:41-52**

The excitement of Christmas day has passed, but we are still within the Christmas season. We journey from the birth in Bethlehem to the life we are called to lead wherever we are. As *Community of Christ* we pursue our mission to "proclaim Jesus Christ and promote communities of joy, hope, love, and peace." The theme this first Sunday after Christmas is one of our five Mission Initiatives. Priest **Vera Kramer** and Elder **Ginger Robertson** will share how we can be equipped to be a living expression of Christ in the world.

Add the Wednesday night Prayer and Praise services to your preparation. Here you will find opportunities to renew and refresh your relationship with God during this busy season.

Advent is here. Let us make our preparations. We prepare the way for God's coming in our midst. We celebrate the coming of the Lord.

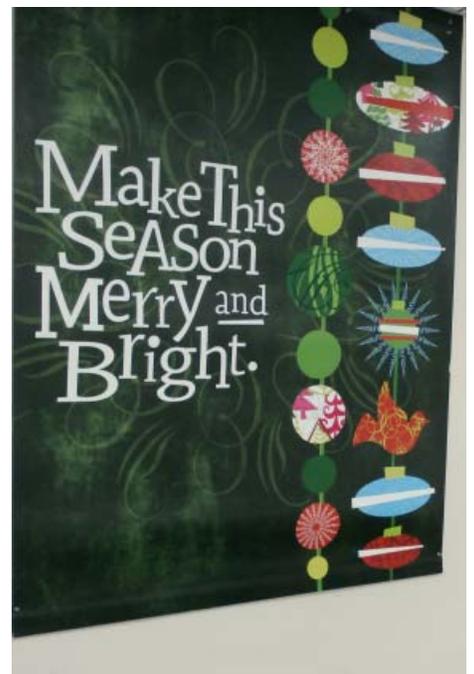
Jo Fenn-Martin for the Worship Team

Congregational Budget

A **Budget Meeting for 2016** will be held **Sunday, December 13th, at 9:30 am**. At this meeting we will be considering the planned budget for 2016, and the appointments to the Pastor's Leadership Team will need to be sustained. Your attendance is important.

Silent Auction

The Fund Raising Team is sponsoring a **Silent Auction**. Take a stroll in the Information Center and check out the items and services that are available for you to bid on. The bidding has started and will be waiting for your bid a couple times. The bidding will cease on **December 6**. Make sure you stop by and enjoy the competition of bidding.



Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.

---Calvin Coolidge

Enjoy a Meal and Working Together

A Christmas **Family Fun Night** will be taking place on **Wednesday, December 2nd!** Invite your friends, neighbors, and family for a free dinner followed by an evening of spreading the Christmas spirit. One of the activities will be making holiday ornaments for our church Christmas tree. Then we will put together Manna Bags for the homeless and for the new Port Richey Group. If you can, please bring instant soups and cereal, crackers, and cookies. Make sure your contribution won't melt. The homeless appreciate anything so let's make this holiday season special for them.

Andrea Cooper, Invitational Ministries



Hanging of the Greens

The wreaths have been hung and the Advent candles were in place for the first Sunday of Advent. Just as we prepare ourselves in the coming weeks for the Christmas celebration, so will our church home be prepared in the next few weeks.

On **Wednesday evening, December 2**, decorations for the tree will be made at the **Family Fun Night**. Angels, doves, and poinsettias will be made to decorate the tree in the sanctuary. Be sure to come and help. It will be fun and you will be able to take your original ornament home after Christmas to use in your home next year.

Saturday, December 5, the Christmas decorations will come down from the attic,

and a crew will continue adding decorations to make our church home festive. You are invited to be a member of that crew. You are encouraged to be a member of that crew. It takes a lot of hands and creative minds to accomplish this task.

By 10:00 am the first crew will have the tree ready to be decorated. The nativity scene will be waiting for someone to place it in the narthex. The wreaths, banners and poinsettias will all be waiting to take their place. Everything is waiting for you.

Please lend your hands and your creative spirit. Join us on **Saturday, December 5, at 10:00 am**. Your efforts will be enjoyed and appreciated by all who enter our church home during the holidays.

Check Your Information

During December, please check your name, address, and phone numbers on the list that will be on the bulletin board in the Information Center. If your information is correct, please put "OK" beside your name. If there are changes to be made, make the corrections by your name. If you have further questions, contact **Elaine Gregg**.

Chili Cook-off

The weatherman provided some cool weather for the **Chili Cook-off!** Delicious chilis will be available for you to sample by some of our best chili chefs who will be competing for the honor of Best Chili! The Cook-off will take place following the morning's worship service on **December 6**. There will be drinks, a salad bar and desserts in addition to the chili soups. The Fund Raising Committee is sponsoring this lunch and is asking for your generous donation. "To Go" meals will be available also.

If you would like to enter the cook-off, please contact **Karla Van Beek** now! All are welcome to come and enjoy the warmth of the chili and good friends.



Welcome Back, Jackie

Hello All, I am Jackie Prevey. My husband Paul and I have been residents of Cincinnati, Ohio, until the spring of 2014 when we took the plunge and decided to become "snowbirds" and make Florida our home. We are living in the home that was my parents' home on Snead Island in Palmetto. We have three adult children, Sheelah, Julie, and Mike and two teenage granddaughters all living in the Cincinnati region.

I am a convert to this church and became a member at the age of 19 after a male friend and several of his friends witnessed to me in that summer after my first year of college when I was looking for something more in life and purpose. At that time I was living at home with my family in Mentor, Ohio. It was after I was baptized in Ohio, that my family and I moved to Florida, and I became a member of the Bradenton/Sarasota congregation.



It was shortly after I arrived here, at the age of 20, that I was recruited to lead the Zion's League which I knew nothing about. But the teenagers all taught me, and we had much fun, but I'm not sure that I was a very good adult role model. I moved up to Cincinnati at the age of 25. I worked as an Operating Room Technician for a few years and later became a Registered Nurse. It was there that I met and later married my husband.

Paul and I just bought a used canoe that needs some cleanup, and we plan on enjoying a closer look of the rivers and bays around the area. We also have a 15 foot Day Sailing boat. We love the tropical plants down here and are enjoying creating our gardens and watching the plants grow, which they do a lot of here in the south.

I am an ordained Priest and a Reiki Master living happily ever after!

Jackie Prevey

Power Thoughts

I can do whatever I need to do in life through Christ.
Phillipians 4:13

God loves me unconditionally!
Ephesians 1:4

I will not live in fear.
2nd Timothy 1:7

I am difficult to offend.
Psalms 119:165

I love people and I enjoy helping them.
John 13:34

I trust God completely; There is no need to worry!
Proverbs 3:5

I am content and emotionally stable.
1 Timothy 6:6

God meets all my needs abundantly.
3 John: 2

I pursue peace with God, myself, and others.
Psalm 34:14

I live in the present and enjoy each moment.
Psalm 118:24

I am disciplined and self-controlled.
Hebrews 12:11

I put God first in my life.
Exodus 20:3

Are you looking for a great gift for yourself, friend, or family member? "Power Thoughts" by Joyce Meyer who finds wonderful inspiration in scripture gives these thoughts to read and reread.

The happiness and joy during the holidays is yours for the taking and giving. God bless you all and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Geri Bernadic

Youth Retreat

On **January 29-31** there will be a **Youth Retreat at Deerhaven**. All youth in 6th-12th grades are invited to the retreat. *Take Back Your life* will be a weekend of fun, friendship, swimming in the heated pool, worship, classes, campfire, and more. See the flyer on the bulletin board in the Information Center. Registration can be done on-line at www.cofchristfmc.org.

DID YOU KNOW ???

Cooks Needed for Deerhaven

After years of faithful service, Judy Wegner is stepping back from cooking for Deerhaven events. The campground is in need of more cooks to fill the many requests for food service from both rental groups and Florida Mission Center events in the coming year. For more information, please contact the Mission Center office at fmcbartlett@aol.com or 407.977.4288.

- ◆ **When the children** in the Kindergarten class had the opportunity to ask God one important question, **Liam Quinn** wanted to ask - "God, when are you coming again?"
- ◆ **Judith Hamilton** is a member of the Anna Maria Island Chorus and performed in the delightful "Symphony on the Sand" with the Anna Maria Island Orchestra?
- ◆ **NO aluminum cans** will be collected at the church due to the difficulty of getting them to the recycle location and the low payment being paid at this time?
- ◆ **Karen and Charles Palko** have welcomed their granddaughter, Livia Palko Spiguel, the daughter of Lisa and Andre and sister to brothers Cristian and Alexandre? She was born on November 2nd, and they all believe they are so blessed. Congratulations to all.



The Wonder of Christmas

At Christmas, shivers in the spine have nothing to do with climate. Songs are sung not with the lips but with the heart. And light comes not from utilities but from the heavens.



Christmas Potluck

When you think of Christmas, what are your favorite food dishes? Is it the special stuffing your grandmother made? Or maybe it is the cranberry salad that found its way to your table every holiday? Is it something your children ask you to make every year? Dig up the recipes, make the dishes, and bring them to the **Christmas Potluck on Sunday, December 13**. Please bring two of your favorite Christmas dishes (main dish, salad, vegetable or dessert) so we can share our Christmas traditions at a meal together.

A New Study is Being Offered

Coming January 11, 2016, there will be a book study on *The Course in Miracles* (a combined volume with text, workbook for students, manual for teachers). **Jackie Prevey** will facilitate this study. All who are interested should e-mail preveyjr@gmail.com or call her at 513.257.5122. Several used copies of the books are available for your purchase at a cost of between \$8.00 to \$12.00, but new books can be purchased from \$17.95 to \$23.00 on Amazon books. The time for this study will be determined by the needs of those who are interested in the study.

A Course in Miracles is considered a universal curriculum studied all over the world by people of many faiths. It came about after Helen Schucman began hearing a voice constantly for several days, and she began writing down the instructions. This is a part of what she heard: "God has provided the Answer, the only way out, the True Helper. It is the function of His Voice, His Holy Spirit, to mediate between the two worlds. He can do this because while on the one hand He knows the truth and on the other hand He also recognizes our illusions, but without believing in them. It is the Holy Spirit's goal to help us escape from the dream world by teaching us how to reverse our thinking and unlearn our mistakes. Forgiveness is the Holy Spirit's great learning aid in bringing this thought reversal about." That voice was Jesus.

Jackie Prevey

*Merry Christmas and
best wishes for a joyful
New Year.*



**Birthdays &
Anniversaries**



December

- 7 Daryl Quinn
- 9 Bob Slasor
- 13 Rosalee Long
- 16 Santiago Gonzalez
- 20 Nick Roehl
- 22 Jerilyn Gregg-Chlebina
- 26 Jim Brougher
- 26 Joel Rodriguez
- 29 Shirley Clow
- 30 Carol Law
- 30 Nancy & Lee Peters.
Anniversary

January

- 2 Lonnie Cooper
- 5 Jean Botelho
- 6 Nancy Skene
- 9 Lee Peters
- 10 Lennon Quinn
- 13 Kaitlyn James
- 13 Nanette Dizney
- 13 Pauline Kelly
- 17 Heather Quinn
- 20 Elaine Gregg
- 21 Heather Devine
- 21 Rebecca Creel
- 24 Tara Butler
- 26 Larry & Patti Bell,
Anniversary
- 30 Dawn Kolquist

How Far to Christmas?

How far is it to Christmas Day?

The journey's just as long as taking time to listen to a joyful angel song.

It's just as far as one can go in doing a loving deed that helps someone feel better or that meets their special need.

For Christmas is a journey that the heart makes every year.

It starts right with your family and those you hold so dear.

It travels on to strangers 'round the world to everyone with the message that God loves us and that's why he's sent his Son!

---Peggy Ferrell

Celebration News is a publication of the

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST

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