

Christmas Joy

“Once again the star appeared to them, guiding them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!”

(Matthew 2:9-10, NLT)

I like Matthew’s account of the first Christmas. Three men realize their long journey in searching for a promised Messiah is over when they look to the heavens and see the star. It’s a special star – coming into their lives as a beacon! It points them in a direction that will lead to the gift of God. At once they are filled with unspeakable joy because they have found the Messiah!

My prayer for Dearborn Congregational Church is that we all experience a Christmas of unexpected blessing and joy. This Christmas, may we all know the joy of family and friends. I pray that we all experience the joy of Church and Christian fellowship. And may every heart realize the joy of knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

As I read the New Testament accounts of that first Christmas, I’m also blessed by the story of Jesus - beginning with the angelic announcement, **“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.”** This is the Christmas promise of an exciting festival of life, an assurance that this holiday is not only for the “now” ... but for the eternity of every believer!

From our house to yours,
Have a Merry and Joyful Christmas!

Pastor Bill and Sue

Messages from the Diaconate

Volunteers on Sunday: We need people to serve on Sunday mornings in December. If you are able and available to lend a hand as an usher, liturgist, or fellowship host, please see Cheryl Brown or sign the sheet on the table in the Mayflower Room. Thank you!

UCC "Christmas Fund" Offering: In December, our congregation is taking up its annual "Christmas Fund" offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. The theme for 2014 is *A Light Is Drawing Near*, a message reflecting the spirit of the fund which is to reflect the light of Jesus Christ in the lives of the many women and men who have so faithfully and selflessly served, and who now find themselves facing unforeseen financial crises. We ask you to prayerfully consider a donation to the best of your ability. Donation envelopes can be found in the pews. The offering will be collected on each of the 4 Sundays in Advent, thru December 21. Thank you!

"Hanging of the Greens" & Potluck Dinner: On Friday, December 5th, we will gather to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. Prior to decorating, there will be a Potluck dinner in the Mayflower Room at 6:00 pm. The Diaconate is providing a spiral-sliced, Dearborn-brand ham as the main dish. Sign-up sheets are in the sanctuary and in the Mayflower Room. Please indicate how many in your party are coming. You may also call the church office or let a fellow member know if you'd like your name added. We'd like an accurate head count to ensure we order enough ham. If you can, bring a side dish. If not, come anyway! Hope to see you there!

Addendum -for every decoration that goes up for Christmas, alas, it must eventually come down. Please consider helping "take down the greens" after the service and coffee hour on Sunday, Jan. 4. It would be much appreciated!

Sign-Up for Christmas Poinsettias: With Christmas right around the corner, it's time once again to order poinsettias to adorn the sanctuary. If you'd like to purchase a poinsettia

(or two), please add your name to the sheet at the back of the sanctuary or in the Mayflower Room. The sign-up period is from Nov. 30 until Dec. 14. Price is \$7.00 / plant. Payment can be placed in an offering envelope at Sunday service or given to John Peters, Diaconate chair. Poinsettias will arrive in time to be placed in front of the altar for the Dec. 21 service.

Christmas Eve Service: Our traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, led for the first time by Pastor William Kren, will begin at 7:00 pm. It promises to be a solemn, yet joyful celebration of the birth of the Christ child. Join us, if you can, as we come together to sing hymns and hear 2 special solos, including one by Pastor Kren's wife, Sue.

After-Christmas Service: On December 28th, we will meet in the comfort of the Mayflower Room for an informal worship service at 10:00 am. Members have enjoyed this casual end-of-season gathering the past 2 years where we reflect on Christmas holidays of the past and enjoy music played by a guest instrumentalist, so plan to join us on this special occasion.

Altar Flowers Chart for 2015 -A new altar flowers chart for the soon-to-arrive New Year is now posted in the sanctuary on the bulletin board. Feel free to choose a Sunday on which to dedicate flowers to a loved one in 2015.

Treasurer's Report for October 2014

Income- \$57,964.42
Expenses- \$8,427.21

Capital Improvement Fund - \$11,059.55
Investments with UBS valued at \$215,873.25

Matthew Haling, Treasurer



OUR CHURCH AT WORK In December



Helpers for Sunday Services

Greeters:

- December 7 – Ian Haas
- December 14 – Ian Haas
- December 21 – Ian Haas
- December 28 – Ian Haas

Ushers:

- December 7 – Available
- December 14 – Available
- December 21 – Available
- December 28 – Available

Liturgists:

- December 7 – John Peters
- December 14 – Available
- December 21 – Valerie Haas
- December 28 – Available

PRAYER LIST



Bernice Hartling	Medical Concerns
Shirley Fedraw	Medical Concerns
Bunny Hoganson	Medical Concerns
Geri Sampson	Medical Concerns
Suzanne Van Ranst	Medical Concerns
Dotty Klein	Medical Concerns
R. Ferguson Family	Healing, spiritual guidance
Sean Goldie	Medical Concerns
Ron Hopson	Medical Concerns
Harley Fisher	Medical Concerns
Daniel Less	Medical Concerns
Stacy Bono	Spiritual Guidance

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Janice Chapman
- 13 Mary Ellen Matchynski
- 15 Shirley Fedraw
- 18 Brianne Schilbe
Elizabeth Bilton Rabinowitz
- 20 Kathryn Weyeneth
- 25 Baby Jesus
- 30 Bernice Hartling

Dedication of Flowers - December

- December 7 – Available
- December 14 – Available
- December 21 – Available
- December 28 – Available

Fellowship Hour – December

- December 7 – Available
- December 14 – Available
- December 21 – Available
- December 28 – Available

DATES TO REMEMBER...

December	10	Trustees Meeting	7pm
December	11	Diaconate Meeting	7pm
December	24	Christmas Eve Service	7pm

I'm Just Sayin'...

...with Pat Stacho

Does anyone read 'O'..Oprah's magazine? You don't have to admit it out loud, no show of hands required. Just would've made it easier for me.

Oprah has an article in every issue, titled "Things I know for sure." Might just be me, but at times that bit of attitude bugs me. We all know how rich she is; do we really need to know how smart she is?? Really??

It did get me thinking about things I'm NOT really sure about.

Like that darn little pop-up on a turkey. I'm not really sure if it's accurate. What if the heat from the oven causes it to 'pop' and the bird is simply not ready? Holiday dilemma number 46. I'm betting Oprah isn't concerned in the least. Her chef most likely isn't depending on a pop-up bird.

I'm not sure about bananas. Should I buy them a little green so they ripen gradually, or just get the yellow ones and hurriedly eat them before the golden yellow turns brown and we're forced to eat more banana bread? Which, by the way, is God's way of telling us to eat more fruit! I'm sure about that, just confused by the buying process. Oprah really doesn't know this one for sure either. I am willing to bet she has someone in her kitchen slicing fresh golden bananas for her. No brown bananas to confuse Ms. Winfrey.

I'm not really sure which underwear to buy. A private concern, but all women know of which I speak. Thongs are automatically ruled out, I am sure of that! SILK LOSES ITS APPEAL ONCE IT BECOMES A WEDGIE. I'M NOT REALLY SURE 'GRANNY FANNY' PANTIES ARE THE MOST ATTRACTIVE WAY TO GO, BUT IT SEEMS TO BE WORKING FOR ME. Besides, at my age, grandpa is the only one seeing them. (OK...an occasional ER doctor... but he's usually preoccupied with my heartbeat.

I'm not really sure if it is still ok to blast Bob Seger when I'm out & about....but I do. And I am sure I will continue to do so. Let me share a little story with you. Several years back, I was picking up my grandson. As I got out of the car, he was on the porch with a friend, waiting for grandma. His friend said, "Your grandma is cool...she was jammin'." My sweet, precious grandson replied, "Nah, she's hard of hearing!" WHAT!?!

I'm not really sure if I have a favorite grandson anymore.

I'm not really sure if I will ever be able to wear high heels again. Bo, scratch that. I KNOW that will never happen. But I rocked them in my day. I'm not really sure if I want to share those stories. I still have a pair of those killer shoes, a memory of long ago strutting, dancing, and the basic 'look at me' moves.

I'm not really sure if I will ever catch up to today's technology. I rely on my son, a computer genius. Excuse me, that's ITT Specialist. I still don't know exactly what he does, but he is very good at it. My dear friends Teresa & Melissa help me too. They patiently help with my numerous questions, and very rarely laugh. Thanks.

Can you still buy film? AHA! You were laughing, weren't you? I miss the whole process. I have lots of pictures on my Kindle, my computer, and my phone. I'm not really sure how to share them with you. Sorry.

One thing I am sure of, I truly wish all of you a Blessed, Joyful, Holiday season. I hope you have lots of laughs, love and friends and family to share it all. Enjoy all the good food the season requires. I'm not really sure if I will be paying attention to Daniel Plan or Weight Watchers, but I am pretty sure I will enjoy it all!

MERRY CHRISTMAS...Take time to count your blessings, and make them count!

I'm just sayin'

Pastoral Visitation

Did you know that pastoral visitation is an essential part of the ministry? Pastor Kren has been called to Dearborn Congregational Church as a shepherd of the flock. A good shepherd knows his flock and is serious about his calling. His duties include encouraging believers in their Christian faith. Pastor Kren is also aware that in this day and age when so many people are busy, he should make an appointment before visiting the home of a member. To help the pastor and for those who want a visit from Pastor Kren, why not contact him and request a visit? You can use the **Visitor's Card and Pew Envelope** – just fill in your name, address and phone number/email address and at the bottom write: “**Pastor Visit Requested**”. He will contact you and set up an appointment. You can also e-mail Pastor Kren: wkren@msn.com, phone his office: **(313) 344-9808** or his cell phone: **(734) 276-1455**.

STEWARDSHIP

Envelopes for your Church Giving will be available as usual. If you want a box and your name does not appear on the boxes that will be on the table at the rear of the sanctuary, please call Phyllis Preston. These are generic envelopes which require you to print your name and/or envelope number on the envelopes.

Third Quarter statements as well as End of Year statements will be provided as usual.

A breakdown of the 33 pledging units in 2014 is as follows:

\$1300 - \$6,000	8 pledging units
1,000 - 1200	10 pledging units
500 - 900	8 pledging units
200 - 400	7 pledging units

Where are you?

The Pledge you make this next year is to yourself. Be generous and keep Our Church Alive!

Eve Circle Potluck

There will be an Eve Circle Christmas Potluck, Monday Dec 8, at 6:30pm at Roberta Adamson's home, 9 Branford Lane, Dearborn, RSVP to Roberta 336-0352, readamson@att.net

All ladies from the church are invited.

Small Things and Possibility: An Advent Reflection

By Dennis Bratcher

We live in a world in which bigger and better define our expectations for much of life. We have become so enamored by super-size, super stars, and high definition that we tend to view life through a lens that so magnifies what we expect out of the world that we tend not to see potential in small things. But as the prophet Zechariah reminds us (Zech 4:10), we should not "despise the day of small things," because God does some of his best work with small beginnings and impossible situations.

It is truly a humbling experience to read back through the Old Testament and see how frail and imperfect all the "heroes" actually are. Abraham, the coward who cannot believe the promise. Jacob, the cheat who struggles with everybody. Joseph, the immature and arrogant teen. Moses, the impatient murderer who cannot wait for God. Gideon, the cowardly Baal-worshipper. Samson, the womanizing drunk. David, the power abusing adulterer. Solomon, the unwise wise man. Hezekiah, the reforming king who could not quite go far enough. And finally, a very young Jewish girl from a small village in a remote corner of a great empire.

It never ceases to amaze me that God often begins with small things and inadequate people. It certainly seems that God could have chosen "bigger" things and "better" people to do His work in the world. Yet if God can use them, and reveal Himself through them in such marvelous ways, it means that He might be able to use me, inadequate, and unwise, and too often lacking in faith that I am. And it means that I need to be careful that I do not in my own self-righteousness put limits on what God can do with the smallest things, the most unlikely of people, in the most hopeless of circumstances. I think that is part of the wonder of the Advent Season.

The season of Advent is about hope. It is not just hope for a better day or hope for the lessening of pain and suffering, although that is certainly a significant part of it. It is more about hope that human existence has meaning and possibility beyond our present experiences, a hope that the limits of our lives are not nearly as narrow as we experience them to be. It is not that *we* have possibility in ourselves, but that *God* is a God of new things and so all things are possible (Isa 42:9, Mt 19:26, Mk 14:36)

God's people in the first century wanted Him to come and change their oppressive circumstances, and were angry when those immediate circumstances did not change. But that is a short sighted view of the nature of hope. Our hope cannot be in circumstances, no matter how badly we want them or how important they are to us. The reality of human existence, with which the Book of Job struggles, is that God's people experience that physical existence in the same way that others do. Christians get sick and die, Christians are victims of violent crimes, and Christians are hurt and killed in traffic accidents, bombings, war, and in some parts of the world, famine.

If our hope is only in our circumstances, as we define them to be good or as we want them to be to make us happy, we will always be disappointed. That is why we hope, not in circumstances, but in God. He has continually, over the span of four thousand years, revealed himself to be a God of newness, of possibility, of redemption, the recovery or transformation of possibility from endings that goes beyond what we can think or even imagine (Eph 3:20).

Yet, it all begins in the hope that God will come and come again into our world to reveal himself as a God of newness, of possibility, a God of new things. This time of year we contemplate that hope embodied, enfleshed, incarnated, in a newborn baby, the perfect example of newness, potential, and possibility. During Advent, we groan and long for that newness with the hope, the expectation, indeed the faith, that God will once again be faithful to see our circumstances, to hear our cries, to know our longings for a better world and a whole life (Ex 3:7). And we hope that as he first came as an infant, so he will come again as King!

Our experience tells us that those who have suffered and still hope understand far more about God and about life than those who have not. Maybe that is what hope is about: a way to live, not just to survive, but to live authentically amidst all the problems of life with a Faith that continues to see possibility when there is no present evidence of it, just because God is God. That is also the wonder of Advent.