



It's hard to believe that Christmas is here once more. The year's flown by, hasn't it? And we've again arrived at the time of year that many identify as their favorite season.

My Mom used to say that she loved these last months of the year because they were filled with family. Maybe that's true for you, too. Others might say it's because they can watch Hallmark Christmas movies round the clock. My brother and his family love this time of year because they're all skiers, and can take to the slopes out west as

they gather together after months apart.

Plenty of folks would say that they love the baking and the special treats that only are made at this time of year, while still others can't get enough of the gift purchasing and giving. I have a friend who always says that they love watching the wonder on kiddos' faces as they experience surprise after surprise.

There are those who are grateful as this is the time of year to give thanks to God for Christ's birth. They love the carols and the pageants and the beautiful decorations that remind everyone of the events that occurred at Bethlehem that first Christmas. Hearing the familiar story of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, shepherds, angels and wisemen never grows old for them. There's something special about God coming to his children in a way that's accessible for all. Because Jesus was a baby, and many of us are parents, we understand what having an infant in the family means. There are ordinary, everyday challenges and joys that accompany a little one's arrival. There's plenty of crying and teething and wet diapers, but there's cuteness, and cuddles and discoveries and joy that also comes with a new baby around.

That's why, at Christmas, it's not new territory for us to see a new mother and father, cradling their newborn. It's an precious sight to behold. Yet, at Bethlehem, Jesus' birth was anything but familiar territory. It was a history-changing moment. Yes, a baby was born, but he was Christ, the Lord, but standing watch over that moment, and all of the events of Bethlehem, was our eternal God. Our God whose love put our salvation into motion, in this most amazing of ways.

Author Ann Voskamp explains the wonder and meaning of God's gift of his son when she writes of the first Christmas, "So God throws open the door of this world—and enters as a baby. As the most vulnerable imaginable. Because He wants unimaginable intimacy with you. What religion ever had a god that wanted such intimacy with us that He came with such vulnerability to us? What God ever came so tender we could touch Him? So fragile that we could break Him? So vulnerable that His bare, beating heart could be hurt? Only the One who loves you to death."

This Love that came down at Christmas—this Love that seeks to live in relationship with us—may it always be our most treasured aspect of all the things that make this season so special. May the Love that became God With Us, always be our most treasured gift. May the joy and delight of this Love, always fill our days and spill over into the lives of brothers and sisters near and far, so they might come to rejoice and worship the baby too.

May a blessed Advent and Merry Christmas be yours,

Pastor Sharon

Advent & Christmas Worship at Faith

Advent and Christmas worship this year will focus on the theme "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)" (Matthew 1:23).

In Advent, we'll focus on the word pictures Isaiah used to describe the coming Messiah. Each week will use a different word picture to describe the Savior.

December 2: Our Potter (Isaiah 64:8): God is with us as our Potter, who shapes us according to his will.

December 9: Our Shepherd (Isaiah 40:11): God is with us as our Shepherd, who carries us close to his heart.

December 16: Our Living Branch (Isaiah 11:1): God is with us as our Living Branch, who died and rose to give us eternal life.

December 23: *Incredible Christmas* will be presented by the children of the church at 10 am. During worship, we'll be singing lots of beloved Christmas carols, and "Goodie Bags" will be handed out.

Christmas Eve, December 24, 7 pm: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, Isaiah foretold. This candlelight service for Christmas Eve reveals the Good News that our Great Light has dawned: Jesus Christ is born!

Christmas Day, December 25, 10 am: This service for Christmas Day celebrates that our Savior has indeed come to be with us in human flesh and swaddling clothes to dwell with us forever. Come worship and adore the Father's only Son. Communion will be celebrated at this worship service.

Just as the Magi shared gifts with the Christ Child. . .

Faith Church has a rich tradition of sharing gifts with those in need in this season. Opportunities for second mile giving through church ministries include:



Slinger Food Pantry: Gifts of non-perishable food, or cash, will be given to the Slinger Food Pantry. These offerings will be received December 2.

The Giving Tree: Gifts to help families in Washington County will again be received this Christmas. The Giving Tree will soon be up in the Narthex. When the tree goes up, please take a few minutes to look through the ornaments, on which will be listed gift items for these families. Please watch for instructions and deadlines when

taking ornaments from the tree so we can get gifts returned to the county's Giving Tree leaders on time.

Advent Coin Folders: These folders present the congregation with an opportunity to support any number of ministries like The Giving Tree, the Love Offering, Faith Family Fund and the like. Each confirmed member or couple will receive a folder for this offering.

Advent: A time to prepare hearts and minds for Christ's birth!

A time set apart. The season of Advent is a season of reflection. It's a time set apart by the church, to think on the gift of our friend and Savior, Jesus. Several devotional materials are available for your use during this season of preparation.



God With Us daily devotional for Advent is available at the entrances to the sanctuary. Each week of Advent the devotional focuses on a different word picture of the coming Christ—pictures found in Isaiah's prophecy. The devotional will help us think about the ways God continues to reveal himself to the world as our Potter, Shepherd and Living Branch.

An Advent Calendar for families with children 18 and under is available for pick up from the KFC leaders. The *Living Light* calendar has a picture and a Bible passage behind each window. The back of each calendar leads children on an "Advent Treasure Hunt" each day with a question, a riddle or a fill-in-the-blank ... answered or filled in when you open the window on the other side. If you haven't yet received your calendar, please check with Beth Miller, Christa Wendorf or Jenni Gordon.

A Cookie Tradition!



Attention Parents of College Students! Please be sure Barb Markiewicz has your student's current address to which Christmas cookies can be sent. They will be shipped out the first week of December.

Attention Cookie Bakers! Please help Barb by baking cookies for college students. Barb will pack the boxes on Saturday, December 1 at 1 pm. The church will be open at 8 am on December 1.

Thank you in advance! Barb Markiewicz

What We're Learning in KFC!

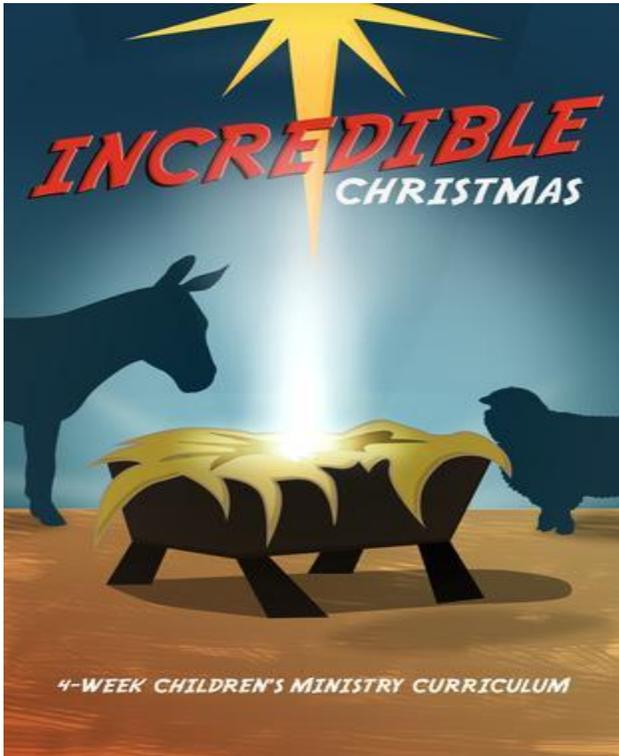
God sent Jesus to save us all. That's why Jesus was born in Bethlehem into poverty, in a stable. That's great news that we want the kids to remember, along with the truth that "Jesus was born for everyone!"

We'll start discovering all sorts of things about Jesus and Bethlehem throughout the month. We'll remember the Bible treasure verse from Luke 2:8-9a—"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them."

The shepherd leadership assignments for these next few months are:

Elizabeth and Aric:	December 2; January 20, February 24
Aaron & Miley:	December 9, January 27, March 3
Ashley	December 16, February 3, March 10
JJ & Emily:	January 6, February 10, March 17,
Landon & Wesley:	January 13, February 17, March 24

KFC Kids and Leaders to Present *Incredible Christmas* December 23



This year, the kiddos who participate in KFC, will tell the story of Jesus' birth in a unique way as they offer, *Incredible Christmas* during the morning worship service, December 23 at 10 am.

Incredible Christmas tells the story of a mysterious figure known as the "Looker-Outer" who is sent to call a girl named Kim to become a super hero. Although Kim is gifted with amazing powers, she finds it hard to believe an ordinary girl like herself can do anything great.

The Looker-Outer points Kim to the Christmas story and the story of Jesus over and over, showing her that she can do incredible things and teaching her about the incredible gift God gave us in Jesus.

The Incredible Christmas cast includes:

Joseph--Landon Wendorf; Mary--Elizabeth Melius;
Looker-Outer--Jamie Melius; Kim--Ashley Nadelhoffer;

Angel--Emily Melius; Elizabeth--Mylie Wendorf; Shepherds--Aaron & Aric Nadelhoffer, Wesley Gordon, Gerald "JJ" Nicholas; Wisepeople--Beth Miller, Christa Wendorf, Jenni Gordon.

Lending a Hand! We need some willing workers following worship December 16 and 23. Help's needed to set up the chancel area Christmas program on December 16. Following worship, December 23, we'll need some help getting everything set up for Christmas eve worship. If you can help, please let Beth, Christa, Jenni or Pastor Sharon know.



KFC Kids Collecting Socks, Caps & Mittens

When the weather gets cold, we remember that there are children and adults who need caps and mittens and socks to wear when the weather becomes frightful!

Throughout Advent and Christmas-tide, the kids of the congregation will be collecting socks, caps, mittens, scarves for people of any age—newborns through the most aged members of any community. Home made, new or gently-used items will be gladly and gratefully accepted for the tree through January 6.

Items will be shared with area ministries, like Family Promise, that assist the homeless and other low income neighbors.

Time to Gather the Goodies!

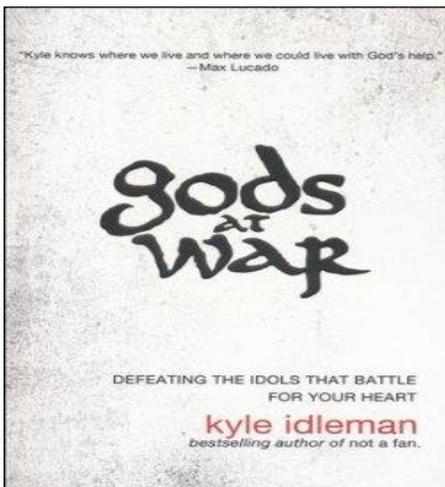


Its Christmas Bag treat time! Faith has a long-standing tradition of giving goodie bags, filled with all kinds of delicious treats, to the children of the congregation. Family members also reserve goodie bags for other family members and friends, too. The bags are handed out during the "Carol Sing" during worship, December 23.

Reserving a bag is easy. Please give the names of the bag recipients to Christa Wendorf, Jim Sachse or Ruth Schowalter no later than December 9th.

A contribution toward purchasing the goodies for the bags will be gratefully received. If you wish to make your donation by check, please write the check out to Christa or Jim.

Winter Bible Study to Take a Look at the gods who Want to Capture Our Hearts



There may be no wooden or golden idols in your home, such as the ancient Israelites struggled with, but chances are, there are significant idols in your heart. These idols can look like normal, everyday concerns about security, financial stability, desire for attention or affection, but can easily become the ugly reality of anxiety, greed, and seeking approval of other human beings, rather than God.

In *Gods at War*, Kyle Idleman addresses the issue of idolatry in the lives of believers by asking insightful questions that will help you determine which false gods are striving to sit on the throne of your heart. By sharing true and powerful testimonies of those who have struggled with the idols of money, sex, success, food and romance, Idleman clears away the cultural baggage of the 21st century to expose these gods for what they are--rivals to our unhindered devotion to Christ. Discover the freedom that

awaits you when you allow the true God to reside unchallenged in your heart and life.

Interested in digging deeper and learning more about God's grace? You can sign up on the narthex bulletin board or let Pastor Sharon know of your plans to attend the class. If you can do so by January 1, that would be fantastic!

As is our practice, you are not required to pay for class materials. However, if you wish to reimburse the church for the class materials, \$20 will cover the cost of the books and \$2 will help defray the shipping expenses. Reimbursement will be gratefully received by the church.

Classes will meet from 6-8 pm on the following Tuesdays:

Tuesday, January 8
Tuesday, February 5

Tuesday, January 22
Tuesday, February 12

Tuesday, January 29
Tuesday, February 26

Classes will meet from 6:30-8 on the following Wednesdays:

Wednesday, January 16

Wednesday, February 20

Supper will be served at each gathering.

Sunday Morning Worship Leadership!

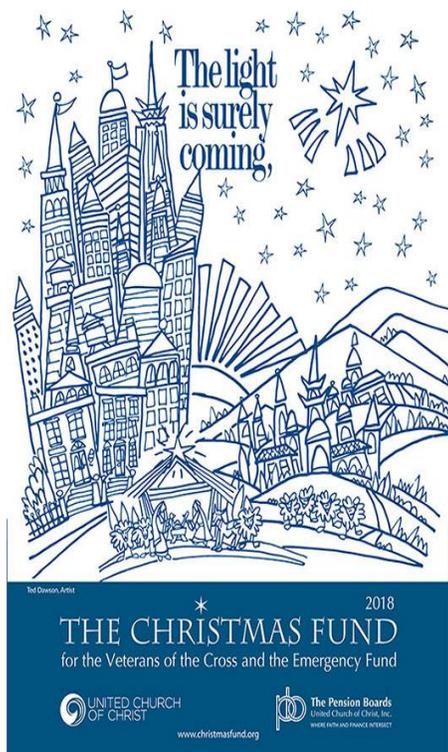
Is God calling you to participate in worship in a new way? Might God be asking you to assist in worship leadership by reading scriptures, ushering and offering a warm welcome to our Sunday morning guests? Perhaps you'd like to call the church to worship by ringing the church bell, or maybe God's asking you to remind us that Christ, the Light of the World, is with us by serving as an acolyte. Could God be asking you to participate in the Altar Guild—the group that sets up communion and coordinates decorations in the sanctuary.

Please know that we have made a change in the Acolyte's group, as adults of all ages are invited to serve in that role, in addition to the kids. No one's ever never too old to acolyte! Might God be calling you to serve?

If you answer "Yes!" to any of these questions, and wish to begin serving, you're asked to let Pastor Sharon know of your interest or before December 31. You'll then be scheduled to serve in a leadership role for worship at various times throughout the year.

If you're already serving and sense God's call to continue in this ministry, you'll automatically be put on the schedule that begins in February of next year. If you believe you're called to serve elsewhere in ministry, please let Pastor Sharon know on or before December 31 so your name can be removed from the schedule.

The Christmas Fund Offering to be Received December 23



Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.

"It wasn't easy picking up the telephone to share with you my present situation. In fact, it was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life although it reminded me that grace still happens. Sometimes we as clergy persons lose sight of God's grace when the negative stuff comes into our lives."

"...thanks so much for sharing your time and ministry with me. Your most gracious gift is appreciated more than words can say as I continue to live in the 'meantime.'"

These eloquent words are from a pastor who is the recipient of the caring and concern of those who contribute to the Christmas Fund Offering.

You have the opportunity to be a part of this ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ through your participation in this year's Christmas Fund Offering. This offering will be received during worship, December 23. Offering envelopes will be included in the Sunday morning worship bulletins.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will not only assist pastors like the one above, but also provide for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks next December to lower-income retirees.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

Bits and Pieces for Our Life Together. . .

Have an article for the newsletter? That's GREAT! Please send it to Pastor Sharon at sstier@outlook.com on or before the 20th of each month for publication in the next newsletter.

Giving has never been easier with online donations! Simply visit <https://easytithe.com/faithslinger> to set up a free account to begin offering your gifts to the church securely using your checking account or credit card. See Alan Lehman if you have any questions.

In Our Prayers: Prayers are asked for healing for Jed Dolnick, Darlene Endres, Edna Schall, Dianne Wiedmeyer, Greg Ruchi, Bruce Miller, Beth Miller, Judy Schowalter, Elizabeth Melius, Dick Mayer, Jean Happel, Ami Cooper (Dick & Marilyn Mayer's granddaughter), Amy Meyer, Don Jackson, Annette Egan, Kathy Baumgart, (friend of Nancy Mark Cardinal), Julie Stier, (Pastor Sharon's sister-in-law), Abby Fisher member of Bethel UCC, Eden) and Ivan Schall. Prayers for Christ's presence and God's protection for Marine Lance Corporal Josh Zehner who is currently deployed. Please remember the homebound members of the congregation including: Edie Pickhard and Don & Sandy Jackson.



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A Sunday Reminder: Life can get pretty busy for folks. To help remind folks of Sunday morning worship responsibilities, reminder texts and/or emails will go out to those who are scheduled to lend a hand in the coming week. If your schedule has changed and you can't serve as assigned, please find a substitute who will take care of the duties! Thanks!

Baptism

Elizabeth Marie Melius, daughter of Jim and Bev Melius received the sacrament of baptism during worship on Sunday, November 18. Her godparents are Jamie Melius and Christa Wendorf.

We Give Thanks to God For. . . .

- Bryan Herther for providing the autumn decorations for the sanctuary and narthex
- Merrilee & Alan Lehman; Beth Miller; Reuben & Ruth Schowalter; Wendy Schauer, Gerald Nicholas; Tracy Decker; Jim, Bev, Chris, Jamie, Patrick, Emily and Elizabeth Melius; Rob Schowalter; Paul, Jenni, Wesley and Wyatt Gordon; Jim Genz; Christa, Landon and Mylie Wendorf; Cassie Strupp; Mike Sachse, Dennis Kittel for their work on the Christmas parade float and their participation in the Hartford and West Bend Christmas parades.
- Barb Meyer, Linda Hautala, Marilyn Nadelhoffer and Karen Reinders for hosting coffee fellowship;
- Reuben and Ruth Schowalter for stuffing bulletins
- Marilyn Nadelhoffer for providing the rose for Elizabeth's baptism
- Laurie Stretz for completing the baptism certificate and for keeping the church records in order
- Reuben, Rob and Ruth Schowalter; Dan & Sandy Neuburg; Marilyn, Tom, Jodi, Aaron, Ashley, Aric Nadelhoffer; Karen Reinders; Jim, Bev, Thomas, Patrick, Elizabeth and Emily Melius; Bryan Herther; Jim Genz; Nancy Schilling-Genz; Laurie Stretz; Shelly Mayer; Sue Klein; Mike, Melanie & Christian Sachse; Christa, Landon & Mylie Wendorf; Wendy Schauer; JJ Nicholas; Cathy Schmidt, Beth Miller and a cast of dozens, who helped decorate the church for Advent & Christmas
- Bryan Herther for providing lunch during the Advent Decorating gathering

Worship Leadership Responsibilities

Altar Guild: Sue Klein & Nancy Cardinal

Communion Servers, December 2: Rob Schowalter, Alan Lehman, Jim Melius, Jim Sachse

Communion Servers, December 25: Jim Sachse, Jim Melius, Wendy Schauer

Date	Reader	Acolyte	Ushers	Bell Ringer
12/2	Alan Lehman	Landon W.	Dan Neuburg, Bill Nehm, Joyce Herther	Dick Mayer
12/9	Cathy Schmidt	Patrick Melius	Carl & Marilyn Schmidt	Alan Lehman
12/16	Barb Meyer	Ashley Nadelhoffer	Barb Meyer & Reuben Schowalter	Rob Schowalter
12/23	Jenni Gordon		Karen Nehm, Carol Wagner, Curtis	Dan Neuburg
12/24	Karen Reinders	Landon W	Dick, Dennis, Dylan & Ike Mayer	Alan Lehman
12/25	Nancy Schilling-Genz	Patrick Melius	Jim, Thomas, Chris, Jamie Melius	Jim Melius
12/30	Reuben Schowalter	Ashley Nadelhoffer	JJ & Barb Markiewicz, Sue Nehm	Tom Nadelhoffer

December 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 8-1 Christmas cookie drop-off; 1 pack Christmas cookies
2 8:45 am KFC 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship; 10 am Worship w/ Communion, Hanging of the Greens & Food Pantry offering; 11 am Coffee Fellowship; Elizabeth Melius' Birthday	3	4	5 8 pm Choir Rehearsal	6	7	8
9 8:45 am KFC; 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship; 10 am Worship w/ Worby baptisms; 11 am Coffee Fellowship; 11:15 am Consistory; Josh Zehner's Birthday	10	11	12 8 pm Choir Rehearsal	13	14 Barb Markiewicz' Birthday	15 9-10 am Incredible Christmas practice for main characters; 10-11 am Incredible Christmas practice for all
16 8:45 am KFC; 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship; 10 am Worship; 11 am Coffee Fellowship	17	18	19 8 pm Choir Rehearsal Sandy Neuburg & Sam Reinders VanSwol's Birthdays	20	21 JJ Markiewicz' Birthday	22 9:30-11 am Incredible Christmas practice for all
23 8:45 am KFC; 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship; 10 am Worship w/ Christmas program; 11 am Coffee Fellowship; Merrilee Lehman's Birth-day	24 7 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	25 10 am Christmas Day Worship with Communion	26 Patrick Melius' Birthday	27	28 Lynn Wuerch's Birthday	29 Cathy Schmidt's Birthday
30 9:30 am Coffee Fellowship; 10 am Worship w/ Christmas program; 11 am Coffee Fellowship; Jim & Bev Melius' Anniversary	31 Cassie Mayer Strupp's Birthday	<p>Dates of note! Jan, 6: Epiphany worship. Taking down of Christmas decorations following worship Jan. 23: Slinger Ecumenical Week of Prayer for Christian Unity worship. We host! Ash Wednesday: March 6 Helping Hands Fish Fries: March 8 and April 12</p> <p>Let Us Know! If you've not seen your birthday or anniversary shared on the monthly calendar, and you'd like to share those special days with the congregation, please email Pastor Sharon at sstier@outlook.com, and the date will be added to the calendar.</p>				

