

*St. John's Evangelical Church  
211 E. Carrol Street  
Kenton, Ohio 43326  
(Non Profit Organization)*

**Do Not Delay  
Dated Material**



## **St. John's Evangelical Church Newsletter**

December 2020

211 E. Carrol Street  
Kenton, OH 43326  
Church Phone: 419-673-7278  
Pastor Randall cell: 724-290-3651

Rev. Dr. Randall J. Forester, Senior Pastor  
Website: [www.stjohnskenton.org](http://www.stjohnskenton.org)  
Email: [stjohnskenton@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnskenton@gmail.com)

### **Christmas Eve Candlelight Services**

The Christmas Eve Candlelight service on December 24 will be at 9:30 PM. The service will also be available online on our website [www.stjohnskenton.org](http://www.stjohnskenton.org); Facebook: St. John's Kenton, Ohio; and Youtube: St. John's Evangelical Church.



We look forward to seeing you!

**Please note: The church council has decided to close the building for all activities for two week and will meet on December 10 to reevaluate the current situation with COVID. Services will be live streamed and available online. Please be patient as the church continues to make tough decisions to keep people safe while still being the church. All upcoming events are pending conditions at the time. Updates will be made by the One Call Now system. If you have any questions, concerns or needs, please contact the church office at 419-673-7278 or Pastor Randall at 724-290-3651. God Bless!**

# ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

211 East Carrol Street  
Kenton, OH 43326

REV. DR. RANDALL J. FORESTER, PASTOR & TEACHER

Phone: 419-673-7278 (o)

Phone: 724-290-3651 (c)

DECEMBER 2020

## THE PASTOR'S PAGE

E-mail: PastorRandall@stjohnskenton.org

As **Psalm 8:2** reminds us, "Out of the mouths of babes..." comes great wisdom. God does this to prove His Spirit is at work. Wisdom ultimately comes from God, and He speaks through whomever He will. In the Psalm, this is to shame those who consider themselves enemies of God or who rest in their power and insights.

Recently, I heard some wisdom coming from the mouth of a babe – actually, it was a youth. Mike Todd from Child Evangelism Fellowship came to speak to our Youth Group. He was telling them about Jesus and salvation and how one day he would return. One girl blurted out, "With everything going on in the world today, why doesn't He just come back? This year has been terrible.

Indeed, 2020 has been terrible. Like this young lady, I have wondered why Christ hasn't come back already. You may have wondered this as well as we have been isolated from one another and restricted in what we can do. But there is an answer that the Church has used through the ages, and Mike shared that with that girl and everyone else who was in attendance: "Jesus has not come back yet, because He wants others to return to Him."

In other words, if He comes back and people are not saved, they will have no hope, and they will perish. Jesus tarries that more may come to salvation and spend eternity with Him. While Jesus delays His return, He does so that the Church can fulfill her mission of making disci-



*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*  
– Isaiah 11:6.

ples and teaching others of Jesus' Way (**Matthew 28:16**).

The way of Christ is so simple. That's why in **Isaiah 11:6**, when it speaks of peace coming with the new kingdom of God, it says that a child shall lead them. The way of Peace in Christ is simple and basic, but we often over-complicate or obscure it. Sometimes, we forget what Christmas is to be all about. We rush through the themes of Advent (Love, Hope, Joy, and Peace), so we can get to the light displays, the ostentatious decorations, the piles of presents, and the mountains of food.

We forget about those who walk in darkness are in need of seeing a great light (see Isaiah 9:2). And how will they see that light, if we do not shine it upon them. We are called to share the Good News (Romans 10:14). Once we have received, we pass along this wonderful

gift. It's so simple and basic, and yet it is too easily forgotten and neglected as well.

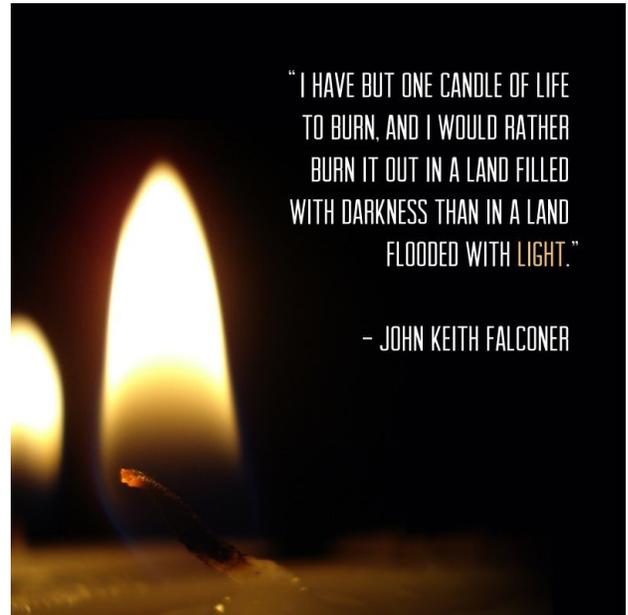
Even in the darkest of days, we are called to share the gift of Christ with this world. That youth and many others are searching for hope in the midst of these difficult days. Confronted with her question, many would shrug their shoulders and wonder, "What can we do?" However, we are called to respond even in some small way. As Donna Raye wrote in one of her children's books, "Even the smallest light shines bright in the darkness."

Small acts of kindness make a difference. Anonymous gifts given through Angel Tree or food donations to Angel for the Elderly touch a life in need. As **John 1:5** says, "The Light (Christ) shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it." As the NLT translates that verse below, the darkness cannot extinguish it.

That's the beauty of our Candlelight Christmas Eve service. We each hold a small, flickering flame. That flame does not bring much light and shines for a brief time, but when it shines, it casts away the darkness. Joined with other lights, it helps to illuminate our sanctuary and casts a beautiful glow.

**ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL  
CHURCH:**

MAKING AND MATURING  
DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST



"I HAVE BUT ONE CANDLE OF LIFE  
TO BURN, AND I WOULD RATHER  
BURN IT OUT IN A LAND FILLED  
WITH DARKNESS THAN IN A LAND  
FLOODED WITH LIGHT."

- JOHN KEITH FALCONER

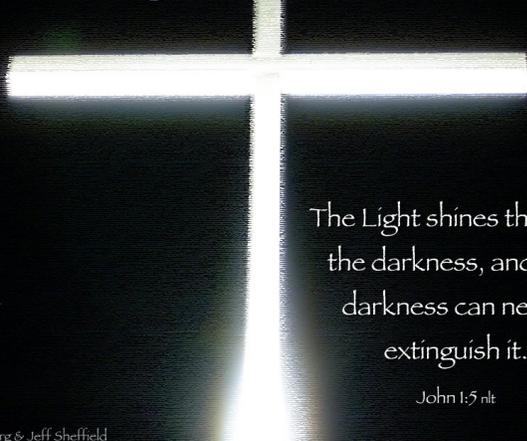
These are dark days; we are in the season of winter, and we are in a spiritual winter. We could curse the darkness and the cold, or we can cast a light and share some warmth. Two-thousand years ago, Christ came as a little-bitty babe. Born into poverty, He was weak and helpless – a small, flickering flame that could have been snuffed out easily. But His small flame endured and changed the world.

We may feel as though we can only do small things in these days, but small things done with great love can change the world. I pray that a childlike faith will guide us in these days. I pray that we listen to wisdom coming from the mouths of babes. Most of all, I pray that we will let our light shine in the darkness, knowing that we shine with the light of Christ, and the darkness can NEVER extinguish it.

**With the hope of Christ,**

*Pastor Randall*

This Light Shines!



The Light shines through  
the darkness, and the  
darkness can never  
extinguish it.

John 1:5 nlt

## Preaching Series

To say things will be different this year is an understatement. With COVID numbers rising and impacting our church members, we are changing how we worship and engage with one another. You don't have to go so far as being like the Holy Family on that first Christmas night and celebrate in a stable, but it's okay to gather in a small group like they did. If the shepherds arrive late at night, you may have to ask them to visit through the porch.

If you feel more comfortable or if you have any symptoms, please join us online. There will come a day when we emerge from these dark days and step once again into the bright light of Christ and His freedom.

Until that day comes, may the LORD prepare us to respond with love and grace. May we share His gifts with others through our generosity and sacrifice. Even in these dark and difficult days, may you see the light of Christ shining upon you and providing a way for you to follow. Like the Magi following the star, the way is lonely but the destination is grand. In these days we celebrate the birth of Immanuel—'God with us!' I pray that soon we will be together in His presence and in fellowship with one another. Until that day comes, continue to follow Christ and hear His words of hope, peace, joy, and love for you and all this world.



06 December Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture: **Isaiah 40:1-11**

**Mark 1:1-8**

Sermon: **Lift Up Your Voice**

13 December Third Sunday of Advent

Scripture: **Isaiah 61:1-11**

**Luke 1:46-55**

Sermon: **Greatly Rejoice!!!**

20 December Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture: **II Samuel 7:1-17**

**Luke 1:26-38**

Sermon: **An Everlasting Kingdom**

24 December Christmas Eve

Scripture: **Isaiah 62:6-12**

**Titus 3:4-7**

**Luke 2:8-20**

Sermon: **Heirs of Hope**

27 December First Sunday of Christmas

Scripture: **Isaiah 61:10-62:3**

**Galatians 4:4-7**

**John 1:1-18**

Sermon: **Christmas Garments**

# Have a Martin Luther Christmas

Series: [Window on the World](#)  
by [Phil Ryken](#) December 12, 2004

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Somehow the legend persists that Martin Luther wrote the famous Christmas carol “Away in a Manger.” The truth of the matter is that the carol was not written in German but in English, and that it did not make its first appearance—right here in Philadelphia—until the 1880’s. However, according to the famous Luther scholar Roland Bainton, “Away in a Manger” may have been written in 1884 to honor the German Reformer on the 400th anniversary of his birth. And in a way the legend is appropriate, because as much as any other theologian, Luther had a passion for celebrating the true meaning of Christmas [see Bainton’s introduction to *Martin Luther’s Christmas Book* (1948; repr. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1997), p. 7].

Over the course of more than thirty years in ministry, Luther often preached from the Christmas narratives in the Gospels, and from other passages related to the incarnation of God the Son. Typically he would preach on Christmas several times a week throughout Advent, carefully working through each passage verse-by-verse. He also wrote at least five Christmas carols, composing the music as well as coming up with the lyrics.

What were some of the main themes in Luther’s theology of Christmas and the cross? The famous Reformer often emphasized the humble circumstances of the people who witnessed the Savior’s birth. He characterized Mary as “a lowly maid from a mean town,” and said that among “the downtrodden people she was one of the lowliest, not a maid of high station in the capital city, but a daughter of a plain man in a small town” [pp. 12–13]. Of the shepherds he said, “That was a mean job, watching flocks by night.

Common sense calls it low-down work, and the men who do it are regarded as trash” [p.35].

Luther used similar language to describe the earthiness of our Savior’s birth. “Bad enough,” he wrote, “that a young bride married only a year could not have had her baby at Nazareth in her own house instead of making all that journey of three days when heavy with child. The inn was full. No one would

release a room to this pregnant woman. She had to go to a cow stall and there bring forth the Maker of all creatures because nobody would give way” [p. 30]. So it was that when the wise man came to worship the newborn King, “they saw but a tumbled down shack and a poor young mother with a poor little babe, not like a king at all” [p. 58].



These sufferings were all part of God’s saving plan.

In order for God the Son to do the work of redemption—and to save ordinary sinners like Mary and the shepherds—he had to become a man and endure all the difficulties and degradations of our human situation.

We might be tempted to think that if we had been in Bethlehem, we would have given the baby Jesus the welcome he deserved. “If only I had been there!” Luther imagines us saying. “How quick I would have been to help the Baby.” And yet, said Luther, “You only say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Why don’t you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself” [p. 31]. Spoken like a true pastor, always trying to encourage his congregation to put their faith into

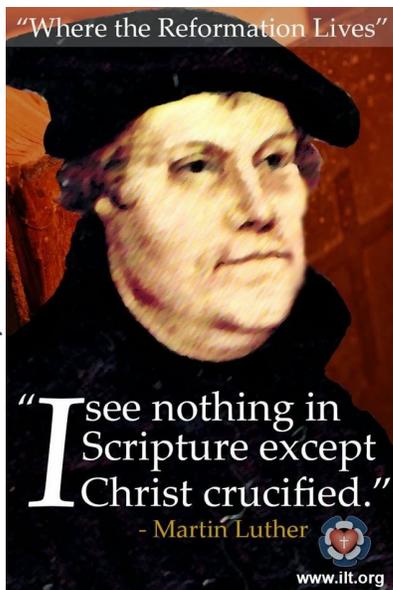
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# Have a Martin Luther Christmas

Series: [Window on the World](#)  
by [Phil Ryken](#) December 12, 2004

practice.

Throughout his preaching on the incarnation, Martin Luther had a pressing concern for Christmas to make its way into our hearts. “We must both read and meditate upon the Nativity,” he preached. “If the meditation does not reach the heart, we shall sense no sweetness, nor shall we know what solace for humankind lies in this contemplation. The heart will not laugh nor be merry” [p. 15].



The true believer’s response to the true meaning of Christmas is beautifully expressed in a carol that Luther wrote for his young children—a carol commonly known by its opening words: “From Heaven High.” The carol seems to have been written for a Christmas pageant to be performed in Luther’s church. First an angel sings, announcing the Savior’s birth. The final stanza of the angel’s song goes like this:

Look now, you children, at the sign,  
A manger cradle far from fine.  
A tiny baby you will see.  
Upholder of the world is he.

These words serve as the cue for the church’s children to come forward and worship the Christ. With reverent wonder they sing:

How glad we’ll be if it is so!  
With all the shepherds let us go  
To see what God for us has done  
In sending us his own dear Son.  
Look, look, my heart, and let me peek.  
Whom in the manger do you seek?

Who is that lovely little one?  
The Baby Jesus, God’s own Son.  
Be welcome, Lord; be now our guest.  
By you poor sinners have been blessed.  
In nakedness and cold you lie.  
How can I thank you—how can I?  
O dear Lord Jesus, for your head  
Now will I make the softest bed.  
The chamber where this bed shall be  
Is in my heart, inside of me.

Then the whole congregation joins the song, celebrating Christmas the Martin Luther way, and the way of every true believer in the Christ of Christmas:

To God who sent his only Son  
Be glory, laud, and honor done.  
Let all the choir of heaven rejoice,  
The new ring in with heart and voice [pp. 71–72].

By Phil Ryken. © 2020 Tenth Presbyterian Church.  
Website: [tenth.org](http://tenth.org)

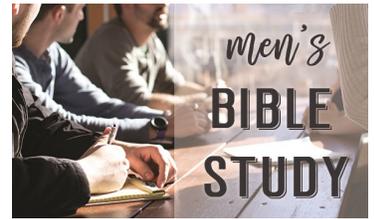
Phil Ryken was the senior minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church from 1995—2010 and is now the President of Wheaton College. He is the author of *Loving the Way Jesus Loved*, *Art for God’s Sake*, and *Grace Transforming*



# Upcoming EVENTS

## Community Men's Bible Study

A Community Men's Bible Study meets Saturday mornings at 7:30 am at St. John's Church Chapel.



## Advent: Angels for the Elderly Food Drive



We will be collecting food for Angels for the Elderly again this year. The mission committee created a suggested donation by week but will take anything at any time and will place it in the back of the sanctuary.

Week 1 (Nov. 29): Proteins (canned meat & peanut butter)

Week 2 (Dec. 6): Fruits and Vegetable (canned)

Week 3 (Dec. 13): Pre-made meals (spaghetti, tuna and noodle)

Week 4 (Dec. 20): Personal care & paper products, laundry detergent

## Chancel Choir

Choir will practice once a month on the Wednesday before the first Sunday of the month at 7:30. The first practice will be October 28 and they will sing on November 1.

## Hardin County Collective Youth Group

Hardin County Collective has suspended all meetings and activities at this time. Watch for updates at a later time through the remind app or the St. John's Youth Facebook page. Any questions, please contact Michele Sherman.



## Christmas Adopt A Family

We will be buying for a family through Helping Hands.. If anyone wants to help sponsor and cannot get to the church, please contact Heather Erwin at 567-674-0020.

## Community Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study is currently not meeting due to Covid Concerns. We will provide updates when they are available. Thank you for your understanding and stay safe!

## Bus Driver Needed- Wednesday Nights

Bus driver needed for the Wednesday Night Program a couple times a month from 5-7 pm. Please see Jane Donnelly or contact the church office for more information.

## Youth Donation Request

If you have any of the following items you would like to donate, the youth group would greatly appreciate it: Pool Noodles, Christmas Inflatables that no longer inflate (small holes etc.), golf balls. Please see Michele Sherman will any questions.

## Wheelchair Donations

If you have borrowed a wheelchair from the church and no longer need it, please return or if you have one that you no longer use and would like to donate it, that would be appreciated. We used to have several to lend out to those in need. Any questions, please contact the church office. Thank you!



## Confirmation Class Interest

Anyone interested in participating in a confirmation class in the fall please contact the church office or Michele Sherman.

## Friday With Friends

Friday With Friends is a wonderful group of widows, widowers, and single seniors who meet twice a month for a special time of food, fellowship, and fun. We meet the first and third Fridays of every month. Please join us if you are a widow, widower, or single senior adult. This is not exclusive to St. John's, so pass the word along to someone that you know who could be blessed by this special group. For more information, contact Ethel Koch at 419-674-6344.

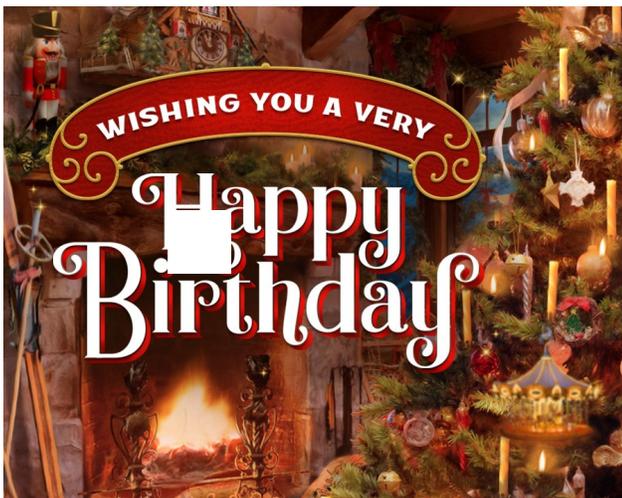
### Forthcoming outings will be as follows:

If out of town, meet at St. John's, corner of Wayne St. and E. Carrol St. to carpool. They leave sharply at 10:45. Still eating at 11:30 am.

All luncheons are currently on hold due to Covid concerns.

#### Church Staff:

Senior Pastor: Rev. Dr. Randall J. Forester  
Youth Ministry: Michele Sherman  
Financial Secretary: Kay Rush  
Church Secretary: Kathy Forester  
Chancel Choir Director: David Beazley  
Organists: Randall S. Rogers, Teresa Broseke and Linda Zeigler  
Children's Choirs Director: Hope Cauley  
Bell Choir Director: Jane Baker  
Technical Support: Richard Katterjohn  
Historian: Gerald Pfister  
Janitor: Denny Sprang



## Mission of the Month— Love Inc. of Hardin County



Love In the Name of Christ is a Christian based service and referral agency that assists people with a variety of needs by connecting them with churches or other organizations/agencies.

The mission of Love INC is to mobilize local churches to transform lives and communities in the Name of Christ.

The organization bridges resources by working with local churches, agencies, and other community resources.

As each one has received a special gift,  
employ it in serving one another as  
good stewards of the  
manifold grace  
of God.



1 Peter 4:10

[Knowing-Jesus.com](http://Knowing-Jesus.com)

## Birthday Blessings (over 80 yrs. Young)

Happy Birthday!! Please contact the church office if a name was omitted from the list. Thank you so much.

December 5: Janet Jones  
128 Oak Lane Drive  
Kenton, OH 43326

December 10: Kay Rush  
16839 SR 309E  
Kenton, OH 43326



Can you believe Christmas is only a few weeks away? We hope you and your family are staying safe this holiday season.

**Here are a few things coming up in our ministry . . .**

Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>- Wednesday Night Youth starts back from Thanksgiving break

Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>- HCC meeting—canceled

Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>- No Wednesday Night for Christmas Break (return Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>)

**What we're Teaching this month...**

Another Christmas is almost here, along with the annual onslaught of Christmas music, movies, lights, shopping lists, ads, and inflatable lawn ornaments. We all know the Christmas season is supposed to be about generosity, family, and celebrating the gift of Jesus . . . but be honest — how much of your Christmas holiday is actually spent thinking about yourself and what you want? Since we're all familiar with this selfishness struggle, this 4-week series will take us back to the very first Christmas — a day that was only possible because of the selflessness, generosity, and sacrifice of God and God's people. On the first Christmas, Mary and Joseph gave up their comfort, the shepherds gave their stories, the wise men gave their worship, and God gave everything. So this Christmas, what will you give in response?

**Tip of the Month**

Think about someone who shaped your future because of their influence during your teenage years. Someone who made you who you are today. Seriously, do it. Right now. Got a name? Great. Now consider this. In a few years, what will your kid say you've instilled in them? And what voices (besides yours) are helping to shape them? If you're not sure, don't let this week go by without recruiting another trusted adult to help you influence your kid.

**Question of the Month**

Here's a question for you. **What's on your teenager's Christmas list this year?** Email us your answers at [michelesjyouth@gmail.com](mailto:michelesjyouth@gmail.com)

Merry Christmas St. John's Family! I know this year has been hard, physically and emotionally for a lot of us and we may not be in the Church where His presence is always found. But please know that He is always with you, and loves hearing from you. We love you as well and are praying for you all. Have a blessed Christmas!  
-Michele

The Magic of  
*Christmas*  
is not in the presents  
but in *His* presence



Look at the Candy Cane, What do you see? Stripes that are red like the blood shed for me! White for my Savior who's SINLESS and pure! "J" is for Jesus, my Lord, that's for sure! Turn it around and a Staff you will see Jesus, my Shepherd, IS COMING FOR ME!



Below is what the kid's program at St. John's has been doing:

Kids Busy Bags: I am still doing busy bags for the kids. They are located at the door of the Sanctuary. I am purchasing a little snack to put in them. Thank you to all of those that have donated to fill these bags for the children. This is very much appreciated! I also put a bible activity in each bag for the children to complete.

St. John's Children's Ministry Page on Facebook: Updates for the Wednesday Night Kids program or Sunday School will be on this Facebook page and also on the remind app. If you would like to be added to the remind app., just contact the church office at 419-673-7278.

Sunday School at St. John's: Sunday School has been going great. This month the kids will be attaching leaves to a pumpkin and writing things they are thankful for on the leaf. We will have one big pumpkin across from my office and another one right outside the sanctuary. We would like you all to participate. Just write down something you are thankful for and add it to the pumpkin on the wall. We have 7 kids currently attending Sunday School right now. The children are able to attend service with their family from 10:00 to 11:00am. Pk-1<sup>st</sup> grade meets with Miss Hope in her room. She takes their temperature before entering the room. The child puts some hand sanitizer on before entering the classroom. Miss Hope is using the curriculum called, "Instant Bible Lessons for Preschool". So far they have discussed the following with the kids: \*God creates the Earth and Us-how to for God's example. \*Seventh Day of Rest-7 Days of Creation. \*Adam and Eve- God forgives me. \*Cain and Abel-Wonderful worship. \*Noah-Listening to God. Each lesson also has a memory verse. They also have a story and an art activity to go along with the story. 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade meets with Natasha Weaver in the middle classroom. They are learning some solid foundation in God's word with Miss Natasha. They have been focusing on prayer and the purpose of prayer. Every week, Natasha sends home a Sunday School take home page for the parents telling all about Sunday School. This paper includes: What they learned, A memory verse to work on, A suggested Parent/Child activity, and a daily prayer. The last week in November, Natasha's class will start learning about the advent candles, wreath, and their history. With this being a tradition in the church that is not taught much about to the kids, so Miss Natasha thought this would be a really good topic! She plans on giving the kids a book to help prepare for advent. This group also meets at 9:00am in the Middle Classroom. If there are over 6 kids, they will meet in the chapel or fellowship hall so the kids can safely social distance.

Wednesday Night Kids Program: Our 1<sup>st</sup> night was on September 30, 2020 at 5:30pm. We are so excited to be starting this Wednesday night program! We have made the night shorter than normal. We are doing everything possible to stay safe and healthy. If you have a child K-5<sup>th</sup> that would like to join our program on Wednesday nights, please call me at 567-674-1733 or stop in the church office Monday – Friday from 9:00 to 1:00pm and pick up a kids packet to fill out. We do have a bus route, so we can pick up and drop off your child. The "New" Wednesday night will look a little like this: We bus in the kids. They eat dinner in the fellowship hall. They walk over to the Sanctuary and have a seat. They listen to a bible story and stand up and participate in a few worship songs. This is lead by Kristi and Donovan Weaver. They then exit the church and head back home. Jane Donnelly drives the bus. Our bus rider helpers this year are LeVern Weaver, Mary Ralston, and Shane Harkenrider. We are looking for a 4<sup>th</sup> volunteer willing to ride the bus and take the temperatures of the kids before entering the bus. We might be sending home some take home crafts this year. The program is working out great this year. Mike Todd from CEF will be meeting with the kids on December 2, 2020 and will be giving them a Christmas Blessing.

Nursery: The Nursery is still closed.

**I am wishing you all the Spirit of Christmas which is PEACE, the Blessing of Christmas which is HOPE, from the Heart of Christmas which is CHRIST! I hope you all have a blessed Month!**

**Trish Wilcox**





This December will always be remembered to be the end of a year that brought us all changes that were less than desirable. Yes our way of living has been altered, economy depressed, civil unrest taken away our sense of security. Yet now at the end of the year, we celebrate the birth of the only true hope for this world. Jesus Christ never promised us a rose garden life on this earth, but he did show us a way to overcome whatever this world

throws at us. As we unite in service to Christ we will triumph and become stronger in the Faith. Let's celebrate this year with renewed confidence that we as believers are in God's hands. Way back in my Sunday School teaching days at St. John's I looked at how our fellow believers around the world celebrated our Savior's birth. This is a reprise of that lesson.

Ready for a quick trip around the world? Let's head north first.

### **Greenland:**

Greenland Inuits celebrate by going to Christmas Eve services wearing white anoraks (used only on special occasions). The traditional decoration is a piece of driftwood trimmed with heather. Illuminated stars are placed in windows since the sun never rises in winter that far north of the Arctic Circle. The traditional Christmas feast is whale skin with a strip of blubber inside and Kiviak (the decomposed flesh of a seabird called an auk). It is traditional that on Christmas night the men serve the women food, and coffee, even stirring it for them. Santa Claus lives in Greenland having a home near the town of Uummannaq.

### **Iceland:**

In Iceland the Christmas season is called Yule from the ancient winter solstice. As we will see elsewhere in the world Christmas is often celebrated through or on Twelfth Night or January 6th or 7th depending on calendar. The customs here are most likely very representative of what most of our Norse and Teutonic ancestors practiced.

On December 12th the magical Yuletide Lads begin appearing from the mountains. These beings came to Iceland in the 17th century as the sons of child eating, blood thirsty ogres, however now they have become playful elves who like to eat and play tricks on people. A different one appears each day. They leave presents for good children in shoes placed on the windowsill and the bad children get a potato or little note telling them be good. The last lad comes on Yule Eve and they begin to leave on Christmas day with the last one making an exit on Twelfth Night (January 6th). The first formal celebrations being on December 23rd St. Thorlakur Thorhallsson's Day (the patron Saint of Iceland). A meal of putrefied skate is eaten and the Christmas tree decorated. This is the "Black Friday" shopping day in Iceland. Yule Eve beings at 6:00 PM which is the old Icelandic beginning of a new day. The TV stations go off at 5:00 PM and resume at 10:00 PM, the time when the Yule Eve meal is eaten. The children open their presents after the meal. Yule Day is when the extended families join together for a meal of roast lamb or Rjupa (a sea bird called a Rock Ptarmigan. They also enjoy a pastry called Laufabrauð which is baked with thin sheets of dough and cut into delicate patterns.

Boxing Day follows Christmas with more visiting, eating and public entertainment such as dancing which would be considered inappropriate on the Yule Days.

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are celebrated with bonfires and fireworks displays. Many magical traditions are supposed to happen on this day. Seals take human form, the dead rise from their graves and the Elves move house. Twelfth Night is the last day of Yule, celebrated with more bonfires and in addition to the magic events occurring on New Year's, the elves dance.

### **Ireland:**

As in Iceland Christmas last from Christmas Eve to the feast of Epiphany on January 6th.

In traditional homes a large candle is lit on a windowsill after dark on Christmas Eve to welcome Mary and Joseph. As a typical Catholic country there are special Masses held on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The unusual celebration here is on St. Stephen's Day (Boxing Day) with the Wren Boys Procession. Young men and women dress up in homemade costumes and go from house to house carrying a long pole with a holly bush tied to its top and singing a rhyme about a wren. In the old times a wren was killed and placed in the holly. They sing:

"The wren, the wren, the king of all birds

On St. Stephen's Day was caught in the furze."

They then ask for money "for the starving wren".

The tiny wren is known as the king of all birds because of the legend of a wren who rode on top of an eagle's head and boasted that he had flown higher than an eagle.

The other unusual custom here is similar to our friends in Greenland. Known as Women's Christmas on the feast of the Epiphany (January 6th), the women get the day off and the men do the housework and cooking. The women traditionally meet to socialize and have tea and cakes.

## **England:**

Prince Albert who was Queen Victoria's husband brought the custom of Christmas trees to England from his native Germany in the 1800s. The English previously used Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe. Christmas Eve Services are traditionally by candlelight and quite well attended. Traditionally, the wassail is celebrated on Twelfth Night (mostly regarded as January 6, but more properly the evening of January 5). However most people insist on wassailing on 'Old Twelvey Night' (January 17) as that would have been the correct date before the introduction of the Gregorian Calendar in 1752. The practice has its roots in the middle ages as a reciprocal exchange between the feudal lords and their peasants as a form of recipient initiated charitable giving, to be distinguished from begging. This point is made in the song "Here We Come A-Wassailing", when the wassailers inform the lord of the house that "we are not daily beggars that beg from door to door but we are friendly neighbors whom you have seen before." The lord of the manor would give food and drink to the peasants in exchange for their blessing and goodwill, i.e. "Love and joy come to you, And to you your wassail too; And God bless you and send you a Happy New Year". The Christmas meal is traditionally eaten midday and is traditionally roast goose and if in Scotland Haggis.

## **Germany**

Christmas Trees were first used here in the Middle Ages and are usually secretly decorated by the mother of the family on Christmas Eve. This is when gifts are exchanged and during the evening the Bible is read and carols sung.

In many parts of Germany children write to the "Christkind" asking for presents. The Christkind is a young girl with Christ like qualities wearing a long white and gold dress. She has blond hair and a gold crown. In Nurnberg she opens the Christmas market on the Friday before Advent and has many official duties including visits to hospitals and nursing homes. Santa Claus delivers his gifts on Christmas Eve while December 6th is St. Nicholas Day and he brings small gifts to the children during the night. He is accompanied by an Ogre named "Knecht Ruprecht" who punishes the bad children and gives them a birch. St. Nicholas may also be accompanied in some parts by Schwarz Peter, a small whip carrying man or Belsnickel a man dressed all in fur. In the Catholic areas from December 27th to Epiphany, four children are known as the Sternsinger who go from house to house to sing and collect for charity. Three are dressed like the Wisemen and one carries a star on a pole representing the Star of Bethlehem. When they leave a house they write a sign over the door in chalk. It is considered bad luck to wash this away. The Christmas meal favorites are carp or goose and off course stollen.

## **Lithuania**

Christmas Eve as the last day of Advent is more important here than Christmas Day. After a thorough cleaning of house and inhabitants and fasting all day, the family sits down to a 12 course meal (one for each Apostle). Straw is the traditional decoration which is spread on the table top and covered with a clean white tablecloth. The table is then set with candles and twigs from a fir tree. An extra place is set for a family member who is missing or died during the past year. The family draws straws from under the cloth; a long one means a long life, a short one a short life and a fat one means a rich and happy life. The meal starts with the appearance of the first star and traditionally contains herring but no meat. After the meal presents are exchanged and the adults go to a Mass called the Shepherd's Mass.

## **Italy**

Nativity cribs were made popular in Italy by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223. Many Italian families have a crib in their homes to celebrate Christmas. They are traditionally put out on the 8th of December with the figure of Baby Jesus added on Christmas Eve.

Children in Italy go caroling dressed as shepherds, playing shepherd's pipes.

Christmas Eve is a fast day and no food is eaten until after attending Midnight Mass.

## **Greece**

Greek children regularly go out singing (Kalanda - does this word remind you of last week's lesson). They play drums and triangles and carry model boats decorated with nuts painted gold. They may be rewarded with money, nuts, sweets or dried figs.

Traditionally there are no Christmas trees, but a sprig of basil wrapped around a cross hangs in a shallow bowl of water. Once a day the mother dips the cross & basil in some holy water and sprinkles it throughout the house. This keeps the Killantzaroi (bad spirits) away. These spirits only appear during the days between Christmas to Epiphany. Following the Christmas Eve fast Greeks go to a Midnight Mass and then back home to a meal of roast lamb or pork followed by the sweet pastries they are famous for - Baklava, Kataifi and Theeples. The table is decorated with loaves of "Christopsomo" Christ's bread. The presents are exchanged on New Year's day and instead of Santa Claus, St. Basil delivers them to the children. On the Epiphany Greeks celebrate Jesus's baptism with "the Blessing of the Waters. Men across the country dive into lakes, rivers and the sea to find a cross blessed by a Priest and thrown into the water. Good luck comes to the one who recovers it. There are many Epiphany festivals which feature blessing of ships and boats.

## Armenia

The Armenian Apostolic Church uses the Julian calendar, and celebrates Christmas on January 6th. The Christmas season starts on New Year's Eve and continues to the Julian New Year's eve on January 13th. December 25th is celebrated as St. Steven's day.

Kaghand Papa (Santa Claus) comes on New Years Eve and Christmas Day is reserved for religious activities. During this season many homes are open for parties that feature glazed ham, annoshaboos (pudding) and lots of sweets.

## Ethiopia

Using the Julian calendar, Christmas is celebrated here on January 7th. After a Christmas Eve fast, people dress in a white shamma (toga) for a Mass beginning at 4 AM. Their churches are built in three concentric circles. The congregants holding candles walk around the church three times in procession, while the choir sings from the outer circle. They then go to the 2nd circle and stand during the service. The men and women are separated during services and the inner circle is the holy place in the church where the priest serves Holy Communion and says Mass. Twelve days later on the 19th, Ethiopians celebrate Timkat (the baptism of Jesus). Children walk to church in procession wearing crowns and robes of their youth groups, their parents again dress in shamma while the priests wear red and white robes. Music is played during the procession and the Priests keep the rhythm with a long prayer stick which is also used as a support during a very long Timkat service. For the Ethiopians this season is not for gift giving, but for going to church and feasting and playing games.

## India

India is home to some 25 million Christians, mostly Catholics. Midnight Mass is celebrated followed by a massive feast of curries. Mango or banana trees are decorated. Small oil burning lamps on the roofs show that Jesus is the light of the world. Giant lanterns are hung between the houses making a pathway of stars. In northwest India the Bhil people go from village to village singing carols all night and telling the Christmas story.

## Philippines

Christmas carols start here in September although formal celebrations don't begin until December 16th with nine days of pre-dawn Masses. They continue to the first Sunday in January when the Feast of the Three Kings is celebrated. Christmas Eve means staying up all night following the Mass for a feast called Noche Buena. This is a big celebration with all invited. Most homes put out roast pig, ham, fruit and rice cakes with many different kinds of drinks. The traditional decoration is called a "parol" which is a bamboo pole with a star lantern on top which represents the star that guided the wise men.

## Argentina

Here they light the night sky on Christmas Eve with "Golobos", colorful paper balloons lit with a candle inside. Trees are decorated with cotton balls to simulate snow. The children receive presents on January 6th (Three Kings Day) after placing their shoes outside the front door the night before to be filled by the Magi. They also leave hay and water for the horses of the Magi as they journey toward Bethlehem.

We've now gone to some of the many places which celebrate the birth of our Savior. I hope you are encouraged by the universality of the celebration of Christmas.

Prayer: Heavenly Father we thank You for the greatest gift the world ever received, Your Son Jesus Christ. Help us as we study Jesus and the Christian religions around the world. Give us the tolerance and grace to realize that while we may be different, we are united in the acceptance of Christ as our Lord and Savior. Help us keep the spirit of Christmas in our hearts. Give us the patience and inner peace we need to make it through the stress of the season. As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, we pray for all those suffering in the world. Thank you, Lord, for all Christians, our Church, our community and our country. We ask this all in Jesus name Amen.

Jerry Pfister, Historian



St. John's Evangelical Church  
Church Council Agenda  
Thursday, October 8, 2020  
7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER - Carol Wilcox, President

OPENING PRAYER - Pastor Randall

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT - Pastor Randall

OFFICER'S REPORT

Secretary's Report - Kristi Weaver

- September 10, 2020 minutes – Motion to accept minutes and seconded, council vote, motion carried.

REPORTS

2) Finance - Russ Cahill

- Treasurer's report and Balance Sheet e-mailed out for review prior to the meeting.
- Review of the income – total about \$13,000 down
- Review of expenses -Staff salary are down, most other expenses down
- Having 60 -78 people on Sundays
- Meeting October 13
- Stewardship all set

3) Christian Education—Trish Wilcox-Michele Sherman

- Lots of good things going on with the kids program – Wednesday night kids have started up, Sunday school started up
- Question on the nursery opening up, and decision is not to open it right now.
- Youth went well last night
- Have had some HCC meetings
- Michele is doing an on-line devotional with the youth

4) Women's Ministry - Carol Wilcox

- Did do the Pastor appreciation
- Paid for the sheets, pillows, and mattress covers, and bedding for the Silent Night Bed Ministry

5) Worship, Arts & Music - Nancy Rickenbacher

- Dave and Pastor Randall met with James about doing some praise and worship service. Discussion of a budget for guest musicians that has not been used. Motion to bring James Rostorfer as a guest musician from budget line item 5.27.26 at \$50 to max \$75 per Sunday for up to two Sundays per month was made and seconded, council discussion, council vote, motion passed.

6) Personnel Committee - Jerry Pfister, chairperson

- Working on evaluations

7) Pastoral Relations - Carol Wilcox

- November 8, 2020

8) Trustees—Russ Cahill, Greg Martin, Greg Liedel

- Audio Visual – got a price of \$15,578 to upgrade the equipment, helping with the Wednesday night kids program
- Automatic door opener on the east door – got a quote of \$4,087.84 plus about \$200 in electric. Have a generous donation to cover it and potential for a grant.
- Had the boilers inspected and had to have 2 gas lines replaced \$375-\$400 to replace it. Quality will have to fix it and then inspect the boilers again.
- North door was not shutting again, had it looked at again.
- Bus - have an ongoing problem with the door opening
- Farm – Signed 3 hunting permits, may have a few more

9) Missions, Evangelism - Heather Erwin/ Mark Sherman

- Trunk or Treat – using the east and north parking lot – will put up a sign up
- Set up the 2021 missions of the month – doubling up the Bed Ministry and the Angels for the Elderly next year

10) Pastor's Report - Pastor Randall

- Report distributed for review prior to meeting
- Revive Ohio – Church from Ada requested a meeting
- Would like to think about a sabbatical in a few years, it would take a plan to pay
- Discussion of the keys for AA
- Question on the Safe Sanctuary Policy and background checks– A motion was made and seconded that we allow an individual to volunteer for kids night as given tasks by the church, and moving forward each individual volunteer will be reviewed case by case with the same procedure that no violent offenses, sexual offenses, crimes against the elderly or children, or gang affiliations will be immediately disqualified, council vote, motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Safety of Church Alice Program
- Rental agreements
- Church inventory – Shawn offered to help Heather

NEW BUSINESS:

- Review of evaluation created by the Survey Committee of Peggy Cahill, Donna Myers, Kim Wirbel, Terry Hord, Pam Miller, and Jerry Pfister
- Question about if there is any UCC requirement – and there is none
- Discussion of what it means to be a member of the church, the committee is having an issue with looking into what is active. Need a new system to help with this task.
- Discussion of the timing to send out, will probably not be until next year
- Need to make sure that we announce in newsletter, bulletin, service, etc.
- Summary –
  1. Council needs to decide who
  2. Council needs to decide when
  3. Council needs to decide if we want to update the software – important no matter what
  4. Council need to look at by-laws and constitution and see if we want to update it on what is a member
    - Council to review and decide next month
    - NA Key Change – discussed in the Pastor's report
    - Safe Sanctuary Question - discussed
    - Committees – Budgets for next year – turn in if you have a request
    - Nominating Committee – Mark and Shawn will be on the committee

Next Meeting: November 12, 2020 7:00 PM

ADJOURNMENT – Motion and seconded to adjourn, Council Vote, motion carried.

LORD'S PRAYER

For  
Unto  
us a  
CHILD  
is born  
Unto us a Son  
is given, and the  
Government shall be  
Upon His shoulders,  
and His Name shall be called,  
Wonderful, Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace!  
Isaiah 9:6