

Covenant Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
2911 S.W. Cary Parkway Cary, NC 27513

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Email: covenantcc@bellsouth.net Web: www.CovenantChristianChurch-Cary.org



Sundays:
9:00am & 11:00am Worship
10:00am Christian Education for All Ages
(Childcare provided for All Programs & Activities)

Volume 23 No.12

November 20, 2009

Setting the Stage for Christmas...

Well...it's hard to believe that the Thanksgiving holiday is upon us and 3 days later, while I'm still eating leftovers, we must make room for the season of Advent, the beginning of the new year in the liturgical life of the church as we again prepare our hearts and lives for the birth of the Christ Child.

One of the things I most enjoy and appreciate during Advent and Christmas is the pageantry—the unfolding of the drama—God's holy drama...like no other drama we have ever experienced. And just like any other drama, we must first set the stage for all that is to take place.

That's what we'll be doing on the first Sunday in Advent—setting the Christmas stage and then for each of the next 3 Sundays, we will continue to reveal the story, with the scenes, the choruses and central characters, until our pageant takes center stage right before our very eyes and ears.

We know that our lives and those with whom we may share life are already over-programmed. We're stressed and struggle with demands and deadlines and we're just getting started with holiday preparations. Why does it always seem like time for spiritual reflection is a luxury we cannot afford? How can we possibly make time for "holy time out in the midst of our busyness?"

We can start by :

- making the effort to be in worship each Sunday as God's story unfolds; to share in some of the special events and music of this sacred season; and to enjoy these weeks ahead through the eyes of our children and young people...
- Praying for those in need within our church family; for peace in this world...
- Giving generously of our time, energy, talent & financial resources as we seek to make this world a better place through the ministries and mission of Covenant...
- Appreciating one another's presence and taking time to say that one, simple, very best word, "thanks," as you choose to live a life filled with gratitude..
- Enjoy special moments with those you love and share life with; and take time to expand your circle by inviting others in or reaching out to others as you share the warmth and joy of the holidays.

I know and trust that you will be blessed beyond measure as you immerse yourself in the Spirit who invites us to set the stage for Christmas... Time's a wastin'...

Let's report for duty as a stage hand for God's unfolding drama...Gather 'round; grab the paint; move the framed canvases into position; prepare to use your wildest imaginations as we attempt to design the backdrop that will help us prepare the way for the One who is to come...

Blessings to you and yours in this holy time, Joanne

And now a word from our Moderator...

Vice-Moderator Derek Rutledge and I want to say THANK YOU for your response to our letter several weeks ago that requested timely fulfillment of pledges and consideration for over and above gifts to help us carry out our mission and meet our year-end 2009 budget. Some very generous gifts have been received recently and our numbers are looking much better. If you have planned to make an extra gift, please do so, because “we aren’t there (to goal) yet!” But we are getting close!

Last Sunday we celebrated our past and the 23 years of the ministry of Covenant Christian Church here in Cary. A few years ago we engaged in a process called “Faithful Planning” to more completely discern our mission and statement of calling (now printed on the back of the bulletin each week) and then we proceeded to plan programs that live out that calling.

To continue to be faithful to our mission and calling and to make sure we have the appropriate facilities to house that mission and the resulting programs, we must continually evaluate and plan toward the future. To that end...

- I have appointed a **Facilities Evaluation and Planning Team** that has met twice so far to evaluate the adequacy of our facilities. Working with the congregation over the next several months they are to recommend by early next spring the facility needs for carrying out our mission and ministry into the future. [Team members are: Darla Baldwin, Ken Hoffman, Phama Larsen-Johnston, Debbie Miller, Dick Reaves, Derek Rutledge, Ro Thompson, and John White. Rev. Joanne, Randy and I serve ex-officio.]
- The **First** of many opportunities we as a congregation will have to give **feedback** throughout the facilities evaluation and planning process will be to participate in one of four **focus groups** that are being planned **between December 5 and 13**. I encourage your participation in these opportunities to share your dreams and ideas about what we will need now and in the future in terms of a physical plant for the next phase of Covenant’s growth.

Upcoming Facilities Focus Groups and Congregational Survey – Your opportunities for feedback

- Please plan to participate in at least one of the following sessions:
Saturday, December 5 (10:30am) following the Women’s Ministry Breakfast
Thursday, December 10 (10:00am)
Thursday, December 10 (6:30pm) prior to choir rehearsal
Sunday, December 13 (following the 11am service)
- So everyone will have a chance to have their ideas heard and for those who may not be able to attend a focus group or who are more comfortable thinking on paper instead of in conversation, congregational feedback will also be solicited through a **simple, short, open-ended written survey**, which will be available beginning Sunday, November 29. Deadline for returning written surveys is Dec. 20.
- The Team will then collate the evaluation and recommendations into a report and then more focus groups will be convened in late February or early March to react to the Team report and plan.

Excitement fills the air! What a great time to share in the life of Covenant! We hope you will participate fully and prayerfully as we walk together into God’s future for Covenant Christian Church.

Thanking you in advance, *Karen Nolan, Moderator*

*Below you will find some of the Outreach projects for the upcoming holiday season.
Please consider participating in at least one of them
as together we reach out to make a difference in our community...*

ANGEL TREE PROJECT



Brighten the holidays for an area child in need through the Salvation Army Angel Tree project - a great way to enjoy the true meaning of Christmas! Angels are available for sign-out in the entryway. Take one today! The gifts are due back at Covenant by December 12. Questions? Call Ruth Jordan: 609-1335.



CHRISTMAS BASKETS



Once again we at Covenant have the opportunity to put a Christmas dinner on the table of families that otherwise would do without! Urban Ministries will distribute baskets to those most in need this holiday season.

Time is short! The baskets must be at Urban Ministries by December 12th!

Place your donations in the decorated Christmas boxes in the entryway...and your Food Lion gift cards in the offering plates.

MAIN COURSE: \$25 Gift Card from Food Lion for a turkey, ham or chicken

SIDE DISHES: stuffing
 potatoes or yams
 cranberry sauce
 canned fruit
 canned vegetables
 biscuit mix
 cream of mushroom soup

DESSERTS: cake mix with prepared icing
 pie filling



WE'RE RECEIVING WINTER WEAR DONATIONS BEGINNING SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Outgrown your winter coat? Got some winter scarves, hats or gloves that you don't need? Consider bringing your winter wear and putting it in the designated donation box in the church entryway, November 29-December 20.

These items will be donated to the Raleigh Rescue Mission and the Rescue Mission in Johnston Co. and given to the children and adults who need them to stay warm this winter. Questions? Contact the Church office: covenantcc@bellsouth.net or Chris & Liz Grennan: cglg614@aol.com

It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas...

Please take time to view the following pages that invite you to the many ways Covenant is planning to celebrate this Blessed Advent/Christmas Season. Mark your calendars & invite your friends, neighbors & family! We'll all be glad we did!

**The Worship Ministry of Covenant Christian Church invites you to
join us
On the Road to Bethlehem...**



This Advent season, we invite you to immerse yourself in what it means to journey to Bethlehem as we await the birth of the savior. Our sanctuary decorations are meant to help each of us find a moment of peace, reflection, and calm in the midst of a busy time.

As you enter the sanctuary, you will notice a dark night sky above you, and a star to lead the way. You'll see a road down the aisle, leading you to an empty manger, just waiting for a tiny swaddled baby.

As the weeks go on, we will anticipate the coming of the infant Jesus. With hope, we will notice the star in the sky, pointing the way. Peace cranes will remind us of the Prince of Peace who is to come. The angels will joyfully proclaim the birth of the Holy One. Jesus will teach us, and hearts we see will keep us focused on love. And then on Christmas Eve we will gather to celebrate the hope, peace, joy & love "wrapped in bands of cloths and lying in a manger..."

We hope you enjoy all that awaits you in worship this Advent/Christmas season as we celebrate together "on the road to Bethlehem." **Darla & Brad Baldwin, Worship Ministry Chairs**

Hanging of the Greens...



The holiday season is quickly approaching and the worship committee has decided to make some slight adjustments to this year's Advent activities. Our annual "Hanging of the Greens" service will be replaced with a Hanging of the Greens decorating session, food & fun!

*All Covenant members and guests are invited to join us at **3 PM on Sunday, November 29** to help us decorate our church house for this year's Advent/Christmas season.*

There will be a light dinner served and plenty of time for spiritual renewal and holiday cheer. More information? Contact the church office: 481-4715 or

covenantcc@bellsouth.net or Darla & Brad Baldwin: darlabaldwin@nc.rr.com

**Covenant Christian Church Choir
Presents "Sing We Now of Christmas!"**

*As part of the 11am Worship
Sunday, December 13, 2009
Save the date
Come Celebrate the Sacred Story*

JOIN THE CHOIR FOR CHRISTMAS...

Put the following Christmas music rehearsal dates on your calendar

(childcare provided upon request):

Thursdays, 7:30-9pm:

December 3 & 10

Saturday, December 12, 10 a.m. – Noon

(Continental Breakfast provided)

Sunday, December 13, 9:45-10:30am

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Caroling Anyone?

December 13th @ 4 PM Covenant's Chi Rho (Middle schoolers) will be entering the community to spread some musical holiday cheer to friends and members of our congregation. Everyone is invited to help us carol-- truthfully, the more the merrier!

Here are 2 ways you can help be a part of this special event:

First, let us know the name or names of anyone you want to be put on our "Christmas Cheer List". We can realistically carol at 8 - 10 households **MAXIMUM**; so get your suggestions to us **ASAP**, before we run out of slots. You will need to confirm that your suggested person/family will be home on December 13 between 4 & 6 PM.

Secondly, we need your voice. Sure 6 or 8 voices joined together in song is nice, but nothing's better than a crowd of folks filling a room or porch with holiday cheer! Plan now to join us and help us make a difference! Plan on joining us for this event and help us make a difference! Refreshments/Hot Apple Cider will be waiting for us at the church. For more information please contact the church office.

For more information please contact the church office: 481-4715;
covenantcc@bellsouth.net or Randy Holste: randy-ccc@bellsouth.net

A Service of Healing and Remembrance
Wednesday, December 16, 7:30pm

Each of us approaches and moves through the upcoming holidays differently. Soon after Halloween, Christmas decorations were popping up and catalogs filled our mailboxes. Santa's chair awaits the soon to arrive throngs of young children at every mall long before we've taken that first bite of Thanksgiving dinner. It's no wonder many of us are tempted to claim Scrooge as our new BFF--Best Friends Forever 😊

These early preparations are enough to cause us stress and frustration, let alone when concerns of personal finances, employment, health issues(our own or those of loved ones), death of a loved one, aging parents, broken relationships or broken dreams come cascading over us. There seems to be plenty of issues to choose from that can easily put a huge damper on a season that is supposed to be filled with joys and holiday cheer.

As a community of faith we are here to support one another in time of need and we do so as we share *in A Service of Healing and Remembrance—a time of prayer and reflection that helps us slow down a bit; touch base with the true spirit of this holy time; tune out the hustle and bustle long enough to offer God whatever is empty or painful within us as we make more room for God's hope, peace, joy & love.* Invite someone you know who would benefit from this special service as we see the presence of the Living Christ, the Light of the World, born anew this Christmastide. Childcare is provided.



Christmas Play & Tasting Party!

Who's ready for snowflakes, hot apple cider, caroling, and Christmas pageants? If you love this time of year, join us for our annual Christmas Play & Tasting Party. This year's play, "Matt & Lucy's Version Births," based on the Christmas story found in the gospels of Matthew & Luke, proves to be something special and something you and your family DO NOT want to miss.

Our resident drama expert Tracy Brown & her musical director Robin Miller are having a great time with our children and youth as they prepare for the performance on December 20th at 5p, followed by our Tasting Party (details follow below). Questions? Contact the church office: 481-4715; covenantcc@bellsouth.net or Randy: randy-ccc@bellsouth.net

And Immediately following...

...We'll Enjoy the Many Tastes of Christmas

What are the aromas and tastes of Christmas for you? Did your grandmother always make gingerbread cookies? Or create a Gingerbread House? Did your mother always serve your favorite pasta dish or sandwich on Christmas Eve? Did your dad smoke a turkey? How about your aunt's Yule Log cake or your own mint brownies or thumbprint cookies? Does your family prefer eggnog or mulled cider? Or good ol' hot chocolate? Yum! We're getting hungry just thinking about all this!

*Gifts of food are such a part of our many celebrations of Christ's birth. So, whatever your special holiday foods are, we hope you will bring them to share at our annual **Holiday Tasting Party** following the Children's Christmas play on December 20. The festivities begin at 5pm and end at 7pm. Childcare for infants provided. Share your special foods and enjoy the delicious treats provided by others! See you then...**Mary Lou Jackson, Ann Hall & Ginny Evett, Membership & Hospitality Co-Chrs.***



Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service
Thursday, December 24 at 6:30pm
(childcare provided for infants & toddlers)

Come, O Long Expected Jesus...into our hearts, into our worship of Lessons & Carols with Candlelight & Holy Communion this Christmas Eve. Come, satisfy our spiritual hunger and longing for peace in our lives and in this world; as we strive to make this world a better place; filled with hope, love & joy!

Advent 2009 invites us to walk the Road to Bethlehem that brings us to the place where Jesus was born. We will meet interesting people and share stories along the way as the road beckons us to travel...And when the time is nigh, we will be able to say with the shepherds, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see what has taken place that God has made known to us..." (Luke 2: 15b).

Invite others to travel the road with you as together we experience once again the birth of the Christ Child, born anew in our hearts this night...

Worship & Wonder INVADES 11 AM Worship!

A WARNING to all who are under the impression that the Sunday immediately following Christmas, December 27, will be filled with whimsical charades of holiday cheer and excitement. Instead you will have the opportunity to see the Christmas Story (more accurately: "Meeting the Christ Child") up close and personal as our ever popular and much loved Children's Worship & Wonder program invades Covenant's 11 AM worship service.



Experience the magic of the season as we see it through the eyes of our children. Find new ways to engage in the story of Christ's birth. Join us AT 11AM (our only service this day) and come prepared to be inspired and truly amazed.

We will also have our traditional Blessing of the Toys & Gifts for ALL AGES—children, youth & adults.

Questions? Contact the church office: covenantcc@bellsouth.net; or 481-4715; or Randy Holste randy-ccc@bellsouth.net

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD... & Covenant's Kids



It's not a stretch to say that at Covenant, we strive to be active participants in our community and world. We encourage our families to look at the "BIG picture" and fully understand what it means to be Christian and what it means to ACT like a Christian. As Disciples we don't stop at a textbook definition of what it means to believe – we ask the hard questions and strive to find the answers.

At Covenant we believe our children would benefit from similar practices therefore our Kids 2 Kids (elementary aged children) program is dedicating 4 months of it's up-coming programming to focus on various Religions of the World. During the months of December, January, & February our children will be traveling to other places of worship to not only tour their facility & learn about the their faith tradition/beliefs (& vice versa), but to participate in a joint service project that will benefit the Triangle community as well. Our Kids to Kids leaders, Jody & Jay Barish have been hard at work to put this plan into action.

The goal of this project is simple:

- 1) to educate our children to the truly diverse nature of this world &
- 2) to expound upon their understanding of their own faith/Christian beliefs.

December 6th, our journey begins as we trek west to the Hindu Temple of Morrisville and together participate in a "Project Linus" service project to benefit children in local hospitals by providing them with warm, comfy blankets while they endure physical hardship and stress.

While visiting our neighbors in the Morrisville Temple, our children will learn that most Hindus worship one or more deities, believe in reincarnation, value the practice of meditation, and observe festive holidays like Diwali and Holi.

Questions? Contact Jody & Jay Barish: jodylb23@yahoo.com or Randy Holste: randy-ccc@bellsouth.net

December 2009

Calendar for Children & Youth

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5 Birthday – Drew Kidwell
6 12- 1:30 PM – <u>Christmas Play Practice</u> <u>Kids 2 Kids – Hindu Temple</u> 5 PM – 6:30 PM <u>Chi Rho/CYF</u>	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 12- 1:30 PM – <u>Christmas Play Practice</u> 4 PM – 6:30 PM <u>Caroling Party</u>	14	15	16	17	18 Birthday – Riley Hurley	19
20 3:30 PM – Christmas Play Practice 5 PM – 7 PM <u>Christmas Play</u>	21	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 6:30 PM – Christmas Eve Service (Church Office Closed)	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS (Church Office Closed)	26
27 NO 9 AM Worship NO Sunday Sch. Only ONE Service: 11 AM – Worship & Wonder Story – Worship Service	28	29	30	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE (Church Office Closed)	January 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY (Church Office Closed)	

Upcoming December & January Events:

December 13: Christmas Cantata

December 20: Holiday Tasting Party & Children's Play

December 27: Blessing of the Toys & Gifts/Worship & Wonder
leads in worship at 11am

January - TBD: Kids 2 Kids - Jewish Synagogue Tour

January - TBD: Chi Rho Lock-In w/Triangle Disciples Churches



Women's Ministries Quarterly Breakfast
Saturday, December 5 8:30-10:30 AM
MIND BODY and SPIRIT

Guest Speaker: Reverend Dr. Penny Ziemer

Mark your calendars now. You won't want to miss this one!
Penny is a delightful and energetic mix of humor, wisdom, and faith.

Time to Get Cooking!

Remember all those great family recipes that you submitted to Women's Ministries a while back? You will soon see these in print! Thanks to the great efforts of Elisa Huncik, Elaine Fry and Patty Cole, our cookbook has gone to press! ***Come to the Table*** is comprised of "tried and true" recipes from our own Covenant families and will be available for sale in the 2nd week of this month. The cookbooks are \$10.00 per copy. What a great way to remember friends and family this holiday!

QUADRENNIAL ASSEMBLY (QA) June 23-27
Koury Convention Center Greensboro, NC

Do you have a knack for photography? Check out the link **QA Events** at our website www.quadrennial.org. QA is seeking photos that depict our theme: **AWAKE! AWAKE!** to be placed on exhibit.

The Women's Ministry Bible Study to reconvene next month.

Let's ring in the New Year together as we continue our studies on the book of Joshua.

May the promise of hope, peace, joy and love surround you and yours this blessed Christmas season... **Ann Washington and Marilyn Williams, Co-chairs**



Disciples Men Expand Their Ministries

The Covenant Disciple Men made several strong decisions at our November Meeting to strengthen the group and serve the church more responsibly.

First, we elected Ted Glasener as the new President. Bob Kennel was re-elected Secretary.

Second, we created a "think team" to define methods to appeal to a broader range of our Covenant Men. This team includes Jack Reilly, Ken Hoffman, Dave Garrett, Boyd Kidwell & Norm Banks. That group will be meeting in early December to brainstorm some broader interest groups such as young adults, parents & and grandparents..

Third, we voted to provide \$200 to Drew Kidwell's College Christian Ministry and \$500 to the Camp Caroline Kitchen Project.

Fourth, we want to continue some of the good things we normally do such as great breakfasts, father-son meals, Kids-to-Kids work projects, Warmth for Wake, District/Regional Fellowship, special studies, Fun(d) Raising Day and other church-wide fund-raising projects.

God Bless, Bob Kennel, Secretary

Outreach Ministry News



TIPS FOR A “GREEN” CHRISTMAS

Adapted from: <http://www.ecochildsplay.com>

1. **Wrap Presents in Fabric and Forgo the Box:** If you feel the need to wrap presents, which does create some wonder in children's eyes, try wrapping presents in fabric. Fabric is reusable and less likely to be tossed in a landfill after the presents are opened. You can find less expensive fabric that has already been cut into "fat quarters" at fabric stores, as well as thrift stores. Left over fabric wrapping "paper" is great for later kid crafts and quilting. Furthermore, if offered a box from a retailer to place your present in before wrapping, decline this extra packaging. The more we reduce, the less waste we create. ***Another idea is to consider purchasing canvas bags at Covenant as the “gift wrap that keeps on giving!”***
2. **Decorate a Live Christmas Tree:** Every holiday season, we see lot after lot of cut down trees. Many of these trees go to waste, and even those that come home with families end up in incinerators or landfills. The alternative is to buy a potted tree or, or dig one up in the forest . You can take advantage of live Christmas tree shopping to buy a new tree for your yard. Shop native plant nurseries to find the perfect species to replant after the holidays. According to LiveEarth.org, **"A single tree can absorb more than one ton of CO2 over its lifetime."** If you don't have room on your property for a tree or you rent your home, you can plant your tree in a friend's yard or a national forest (along as you chose a native species). Click [here](#) for tips on caring for a live Christmas tree. Live trees can be expensive, and there is even a [company that rents live trees](#) to families for the holidays.
3. **Ship Directly From Online and Catalog retailers:** If you make purchases online or from catalogs, chose to ship the presents directly to the receiver. By shipping them directly, you will save money by not having to ship the gift twice (once to you, and once to the receiver). The money saved can be used to purchase gift wrapping from the retailer, if you feel that is necessary. Furthermore, you will reduce your carbon footprint for the holiday by not having your gifts be transported twice. If you must ship packages, use [US Postal Service Priority Mail or Express Mail](#) packaging. These **USPS packaging materials "have been awarded Cradle to Cradle(SM) Certification** for their environmental attributes. The Postal Service is committed to finding new ways to protect the environment and is the first in its industry to receive this certification." At least our government is doing one thing right.
4. **Decorate with Homemade Items and Hand-Me-Down Ornaments:** Kristen Chase, of [Cool Mom Picks](#) and the [League of Maternal Justice](#) suggests using cranberries or the traditional popcorn for decorations.
5. **Buy Gifts That Count:** We all have people on our lists we feel obligated to buy a gift for who really don't need anything. These can be challenging gifts to buy, and often, these gifts end up in second hand stores or landfills. To meet the challenge, think about giving gifts that count, such as carbon credits from [TerraPass](#) or a charitable gift to [Heifer International](#). ***Of course, a donation to Covenant Christian Church in honor of a loved one makes a perfect Christmas gift as well!*** Also, think of ways to give gifts without spending money, such as promising special time together out of your busy life with a loved one.

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A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

Thank you so much to Women's Ministry at Covenant for their generous donation of \$500 to the Green Fund. This allows us to continue responding to the suggestions in the energy audit and help us to achieve maximum energy efficiency! So, the “greening” goes on!
(See more info re: the Green Fund on page 3 of this newsletter).

And Now a Word from Mary Lou...

Updated Membership Directories are always available via email... just let me know and I will send you the attachment...or you can pick up a copy on the table outside the church office.

Attendance Counts! We need to know when you're here for worship; church school; meetings and events here at Covenant...Please remember to sign the attendance registry and pass it down your row even if the Worship Leader forgets to ask you to do so...The names of our guests are important to Invitation Ministry too!

AND...the usual, "one more thing" is not so usual:

All Staff, Officers, Leaders and Ministry Chairs:The final newsletter of 2009 which promotes January 2010 ministries & events is an abbreviated version. So time and space are both at a premium. Submit your articles by Friday, December 11...thanks...