



Covenant Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

2911 S.W. Cary Parkway, Cary, NC 27513

Phone: 919.481.4715 Fax: 919.481.4016

E-mail: covenantcc@bellsouth.net

Website: www.CovenantChristianChurch-Cary.org

November 30, 2012

Volume 26 Issue 12

Same Ol'...Same Ol'...What do YOU really want for Christmas?

The Countdown to December 25 has begun! And with the malls clamoring for our \$\$ even before traditional Black Friday, it seems like it's almost over before the Advent/Christmas season has begun... "How can this be?" It's as if consumerism has stolen our very souls; not to mention our wallets. Not to worry...I'm not getting all *hum-buggy* on you; I'm not trying to put a damper on your holiday spirit...or dump a boat load of guilt on you...I'm not even proclaiming a boycott on gift-giving...

But something is stirring around in the depths of my being...perhaps you're feeling it too and just don't want to admit it: "How can I make this Advent/Christmas season a bit different? How do I put a new twist on an ancient story filled with God's gift of Good News...a story that everyone seems to know by heart, leaving no room for surprises; no room in the inn of our lives? How do I help make the joy of this holy time come alive; to make it more like the joy God gave to the entire world at the time of Jesus' birth?"

Gnawing on these questions only causes me to wrestle with even more questions: "How can I give gifts that are more meaningful and personal to each person on my list rather than spending \$\$ on presents that will be lost or broken by the end of Christmas break?" Sure, I've always wanted to fully celebrate an Alternative Christmas by giving all my gifts through the church and other non-profits that feed the hungry or dig new wells in far-away places; helping the poor become more self-sustaining; but while I already do this for some on my list, there are still others who might be disappointed.

After all, the seduction of all the ads & commercials calls out to me with the promises that if I would only buy all those way too expensive gifts, I would feel so much better about myself; others would surely love me more and certainly think more highly of me and my exquisite tastes-ha!. But making those January credit card payments splashes my face with the icy cold waters of reality; leaving me to realize that none of those "perfect" expensive gifts actually delivered on those promises.

So, here I am, a few days either side of Black Friday, about to immerse myself in the art of gift-giving in the midst of searching for the hope, peace, joy and love of this holy time as I explore God's promises guaranteed to last a lifetime. Then it dawned on me; Advent is not the time to focus on what I want FOR Christmas. Advent is the time to focus on what I want FROM Christmas as we're surrounded by the wonder & awe, the beauty & joy of that first Christmas when God, the best Gift-Giver ever, decided to live among us and pitch God's tent in the backyards of our restless hearts...

I'm about to embark on different kind of Advent journey. It's a conspiracy of sorts...An Advent Conspiracy that promises an opportunity to have this "Holy Time Out" not only change our own lives and the lives of those with whom we share life and love as family and as Church; but also to allow God to make more room in our hearts for those who so desperately need us to share out of our abundance...

Intrigued? Hope so...You are invited to come and see what God has in store for us as the Advent Conspiracy unfolds each week...*Blessings, Rev. Joanne*

<><<<<< <<<<<< <<<

From the Moderator:

Like many of us, I didn't grow up celebrating Advent. We moved straight from Thanksgiving to Christmas, and it happened very quickly. It wasn't until a few years ago that the idea of Advent really took hold within me.

Advent is about waiting and preparing. We are all familiar with having to wait and prepare for something, and we've done that our whole lives: birthdays, new jobs, amusement park lines, the first or last day of school... We don't really like to wait. It's human nature to want to move quickly to the next thing.

The anticipation we experience during Advent is different. It's putting the pieces of the story together one at a time—like reading a great book, chapter by chapter. It's a time that encourages us to slow down a little, to reflect on what's coming, and to be fully present in each moment of the season. And it builds, week by week, until we reach Christmas.

This month, there are lots of opportunities at Covenant to ground us in the meaning of the season, as we unfold the story one piece at a time in the coming weeks. It's hard to walk the line between a commercialized holiday and a meaningful Holy Day, but we are called to live out the truest meaning of this time of year. We recognize the joy in the waiting. This time of preparing for the birth of the Christ child gives us a glimpse into our most holy selves.

Let's wait together...*Darla Baldwin, Moderator*

Come Home for the Holidays to Covenant Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)!

The most blessed season of Advent has begun as we prepare to celebrate anew the birth of the Christ Child into our lives. In the midst of this Advent/Christmas season it is so easy to get caught up in the busy-ness of the season and find ourselves running on empty by the time December 25 rolls around. You are warmly invited by God in Jesus Christ as together we make our way through this holy time. **(Childcare is available for all services and activities)**

It's a wonderful time to invite friends, family, neighbors, co-workers & school friends to experience the joy of Covenant. Plan now to take some "Holy Time Out" and share in this joy-filled sacred season:

Saturday, December 1

10a Cantata Rehearsal

Sunday, December 2 First Sunday of Advent: The candle of HOPE!

9a & 11a Hanging of the Greens during morning worship
12:15p Children's Play Practice

Friday, December 7:

5-6:30p JYF (grades 3-5) Christmas Party at Church & Caroling at Carolina House
7:00p Women's Ministry Program "Facing Loss and Grief during the Holidays."

Saturday, December 8

10a Cantata Rehearsal

Sunday, December 9: Second Sunday of Advent: The candle of PEACE!

11a Christmas Cantata: "Wondrous Night" by Eugene Butler
12:15p Children's Play Practice
5p CYF Christmas Party at Church

Wednesday, December 12

5-8p Covenant Benefit Shopping Event at Ten Thousand Villages in Raleigh's Cameron Village. 15% of total purchases from church members, friends, family...anyone who mentions Covenant Christian Church at the checkout will be donated to Covenant.

Thursday, December 13

11a Staff & Volunteer Christmas Brunch

Saturday, December 15:

10:30a Children's Christmas Play Dress Rehearsal & Christmas Party
5:00p Chi Rho Christmas Party at Alex Dalberth's home

Sunday, December 16: Third Sunday of Advent: The Candle of JOY!

9a & 11a Worship/Receive the Christmas Offering toward our Regional Ministries
5:00-7:00p Annual Christmas Play & Holiday Tasting Party

Wednesday, December 19:

7:30p Service of Healing & Remembrance

Sunday, December 23: Fourth Sunday of Advent-the Candle of LOVE!

9a & 11a Worship/ Receive the Christmas Offering toward our Regional Ministries

Monday, December 24: Christmas Eve

6:30p Lessons & Carols & Candlelight Communion Service

Sunday, December 30: Christmas I

NO 9am Worship; NO Sunday School;

11:00a Informal/Kid-Friendly Worship with Blessing of Toys & Gifts. Adults as well as children & youth are encouraged to bring one toy or gift to be blessed...

<><<<< <><<<< <><

A Cantata for Christmas... "Wondrous Night" by Eugene Butler

Sunday, December 9, 11:00a Worship

The Choir invites you to join us for our presentation of Eugene Butler's cantata, Wondrous Night. This beautiful setting of the Christmas Story will be sure to take your mind out of the shopping mall and into the real spirit of Christmas. Included in the service will be selections by K. Lee Scott & Camille Saint-Saens. Come and let us sing you into the season! Invite your friends & family!

Disciples Men Working, Sharing, Studying, Eating...

- Disciples Men purchased 13 new round tables plus 4 rectangular tables and removed 16 very heavy tables to storage for future sale.
- Next, we're planning to purchase new round table cloths.
- We've also begun a new study on the History of the New Testament in twelve sessions.

Our next Breakfast Meeting is planned at 8a, December 1, at the church. Bob Kennel, Secretary

<><<<< <><<<< <><

Women's Ministry News

Many thanks to all who put together the annual Craft and Bake Sale – the displays were so nice and the items for sale were noteworthy! Our BBQ Plate lunch was handled so smoothly, I think I want to hire Marian and Pam for my next party! Thank you to everyone on the Women's Ministry Steering Committee who spent countless hours making sure that everything went off without a hitch – and to all other volunteers, on that day, a heartfelt thanks.

Our next Women's Ministry gathering is **Friday, December 7: 7:00 to 8:30 pm**. Our guest speaker, Ivy Hooper, a bilingual psychotherapist, from Durham, will be with us to discuss "Facing Loss and Grief during the Holidays."

All who plan to attend are asked to bring a favorite dessert to share. Coffee and tea will be provided. If childcare is needed, please contact me as soon as possible: 919-542-1856 or covenantccwomen@yahoo.com

Blessings, Nancy Jones, Chr.

Monthly Bible Study For Women

We met in October and began a study focusing on **the New Testament books of 1 and 2 Peter, 1-3 John & Jude- "Dispatches to God's Household: The General Epistles."** These letters were written to be shared and read aloud in early Christian communities to teach us what it means to live in community; and what it means to belong to the household of God. They were meant to inspire and comfort the faithful in first-century Asia Minor, and they continue to speak to us today as we grapple with how to live in community as Disciples of Christ. The monthly study is 9 weeks long. **Our next meeting is Wednesday, November 28 at 6:30p at the church.**

<><<<< <><<<< <><

It's Christmas Time...



And what's Christmas without children sharing the Christmas story with us? Practices have already begun, but the good news is, there's still room for any and all children, ages 3-5th grade who want to participate. See the rehearsal schedule below. Our dedicated directors this year are Becky Sterling & Robin Miller. The performance will be **Sunday, December 16, at 5p. here at Covenant.**

And immediately following: a flair for the dramatic for your stomach at our **Annual Holiday Tasting Party!**

Bring your favorite holiday (or simply a favorite) dish) to share with the Covenant family.

For more information or questions please contact: Rev. Randy at the church office:
919- 481-4715 or randy-ccc@bellsouth.net

Play Practice Schedule:

December 2nd & 9th: 12:15 PM – 2 PM

December 15th – Dress Rehearsal & Pizza Party – 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM



Covenant's SCRIP Update

As we come to the holiday season, several retailers offer lower denomination gift cards, perfect for those that you would like to give a little something to. Starbucks and Barnes and Noble are each offering a special \$5 card for the holiday season, and Target is offering a \$10 card just for the season.

These are in addition to numerous other retailers that regularly provide \$10 gift cards – like Starbucks, Panera Bread, Buffalo Wild Wings, Caribou Coffee, and Lowe's Foods. Stop by and visit the SCRIP volunteers in the library after either service to see the full listing of retailers offering \$5 and \$10 gift cards, or to get other ideas of how you can use SCRIP this holiday season.

Robin Miller, SCRIP Coordinator

<><<<< <><<<< <><

Diversity Lunch Bunch

We meet on the first Sunday of each month. Plan now to join with us Sunday, December 2. Look for Nancy Jones and help choose a favorite spot to have lunch after 11a worship.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS IDEAS FROM YOUR OUTREACH MINISTRY!

****Purchase holiday gifts from SERRV** (www.serrv.org) We have chocolate bars and coffee available for sale on the table near the office - please follow the instructions for payment.

****Covenant Benefit Shopping Event at Ten Thousand Villages**

Come One, Come All! To the Covenant Benefit Shopping Night, Wednesday, December 12, from 5 - 8 pm at Ten Thousand Villages in Raleigh's Cameron Village. Get some last minute holiday shopping done and help support artisans and farmers from developing countries around the world AND help raise funds for Covenant! Shop for gifts from SERRV and other organizations and businesses that follow fair trade practices and support social justice causes. Shop with friends from Covenant and know that 15% of total purchases from church members, friends, family, and anyone that mentions our church at checkout will be donated to Covenant.

It's a perfect way to show your support to Covenant while at the same time helping build sustainable communities around the world. It's a Win-Win for all! As an extra incentive, coffee/tea and treats will be available to sample.

If you would like to carpool or have any questions, please contact Becky Stiles: 919-387-0737 who will happy to arrange transportation from church. Look forward to seeing you there!!

****Purchase Holiday Honor Cards from Urban Ministries** - We have cards for sale for \$5 in the entry way and all proceeds go directly to help needy families in Wake County. Put your check (made payable to Urban Ministries of Wake County) or cash in the envelope provided. If we are out of the card you'd like or you want additional ones of that type, please fill out the sheet indicating which style, quantity, phone number, and place payment in the envelope. You will have your cards by the first week of December.

****Heifer International** - pick up a catalog on the table in the hallway near the office. All instructions for purchasing animals to help build sustainable communities is included in this catalog.

****WeCare Christmas Trees** - Order your tree from this organization and all money goes to help families in Ashe County of NC. This year we aren't delivering the trees to the church so you'll need to pick up an order form on the table in the hallway and mail your order and arrange your own pickup or delivery.

Order deadline is December 1.

Food Pantry Ongoing Needs

We also continue to need your help to provide non-perishable food items for the food bank, especially during the upcoming holiday season. Please place your non-perishable food items in the designated basket in the entry way. The following items are needed:

- Canned fruits and vegetables (no green beans or corn)
- Canned soups and canned beans
- Breakfast cereals; grits, powdered or boxed milk
- Dried beans, Mac & cheese, peanut butter & jelly
- Pasta, dry and canned past a meals, rice
- Juice, juice boxes

Adopt a Shelf for the Dorcas Ministry

In order to meet a growing need right here in Cary, we have committed to participate in the Dorcas Ministries' "Adopt-A-Shelf" project. This is a very ambitious project in which Dorcas Ministry has asked local congregations to provide items on an on-going basis to keep their shelves full. We have been asked to provide:

DISPOSABLE DIAPERS SIZE 4.

Bring your donations and place in the designated box in the entryway.

Christmas Angel Tree

All Angels have been adopted! Bring your unwrapped gifts with the angel attached to the Church **no later than this Sunday, December 2**...Thank you for your generous spirit as we share with children who might otherwise not have a gift to open on Christmas morning!

Have a blessed Christmas! Renie Palmer, Outreach Chr.

