



# The Paradox of Christmas

Paul, the apostle, summarized Jesus' mission with the words:

*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."*  
2 Corinthians 8:9

Christ left the riches of heaven—its glory and majesty—to be born in poverty, to live in poverty, and to die in poverty . . . for us that we, one day, might enjoy the riches of heaven. This mission began with His birth.

There is no earthly beauty about the birth of Christ. Jesus' journey on earth began in a wooden cattle-trough in a smelly stable in an insignificant town called Bethlehem and ended on a wooden instrument of torture outside the city gates of Jerusalem—the city of God! His birth, like His life and death, is filled with paradox. The definition of "paradox" is a seeming contradiction. While something that is paradoxical may seem contradictory, it is not. It is merely some reality that transcends our own limited human perspective. Paul outlined some of these paradoxes in his letter to the Corinthians. Paul speaks of

- God's "foolishness" being wiser than man's wisdom,
- God's "weakness" being stronger than man's strength,
- Foolish things shaming the wise,
- Weak things shaming the strong,
- Nonentities nullifying things which are (1 Corinthians 1:25-28).

All to ensure one thing: "so that no one may boast before Him" (1 Corinthians 1:29). When God the Infinite One assumed human life and expressed His thoughts in earthly categories, there was both mystery and paradox.

## **BIRTH**

Paul in talking about the enfleshment of God said: "Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a *body*" (1 Timothy 3:16a).

The message of Christmas is "mysterious." This should not surprise us since we are dealing with the supernatural as well as the natural. The "enfleshment of God Almighty" is incredible, incomparable, and staggering to the human mind. How could it be otherwise?

## **LIFE**

Jesus' life was a paradox: the One who was perfect became obedient to sinful, though righteous, parents. He who was the rightful King of His people became a servant.

## **TEACHINGS**

Jesus' teachings were a paradox. He made such statements as

- "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43).
- "The last will be first and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:16).

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- "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it." (John 12:25)

## **DEATH**

Jesus' death was a paradox. In fact, the very physical structure of the cross is a paradox with its horizontal and vertical beams intersecting each other. The cross was placed in the cold earth, but pointed upward . . . toward heaven. The arms of the cross were outstretched between heaven and earth toward all of mankind.

During His life Jesus expressed many paradoxes, but by His death He enacted the climactic paradox which fulfilled and transcended all that He had taught.

## **THE PARADOXES OF HIS BIRTH**

The Christmas event made His death possible as He "appeared in a physical body." And Jesus' birth is filled with paradox. Think with me.

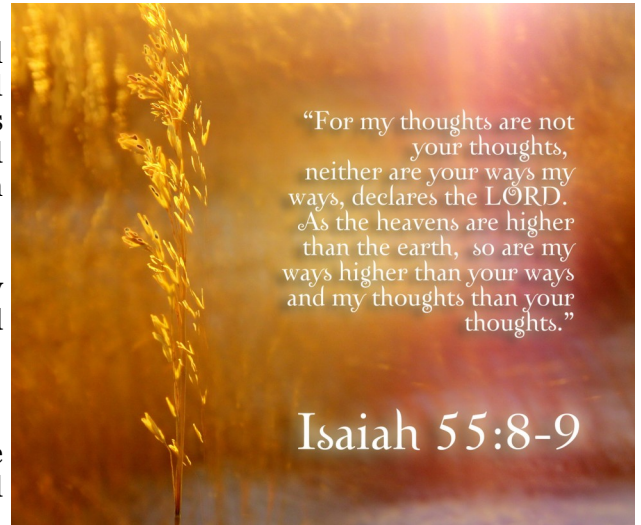
- That God the Son who had glory with God the Father before the world existed came down from the heights of that glory to the gory depths of earth's humiliation.
- That He who was the Son of God was born like any other son.
- That Christ, who, along with God the Father and the Spirit, created the universe, became an embryo.
- That though He was the "image of the invisible God" He looked like any other baby.
- That the infinite God, became confined to human skin.
- That He who is all powerful appears powerless.
- That a defenseless little baby is to grow up to save mankind from its sin.
- That He who was born, was actually born to die.

Is it any wonder that Paul calls this paradox a mystery? God is mysterious. He is unfathomable. His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Paradox captures the human condition, the humiliation of the birth in a cattle-trough, the pain of Calvary, and the restored glory of the new heavens and the new earth.

Bethlehem! It is here that life and death, love and hatred, sin and salvation met. It is here that the perfect Man and perfect God—the God-Man—was born for sinful man.

It is the paradox of the cross that such a humble place as a barn in Bethlehem, usually reserved only for animals, became the site where God introduced the only One in the universe who could save mankind from its sin.

This is the paradox of the birth of Christ. And it is to that birth which we owe our life, for that birth made Christ's death possible. It is the paradox of Christ that though He is so great that the heavens cannot contain Him; He is so little that He can dwell in our hearts.



**Pastor Lars**

**Silent Prayer Service**  
**Sunday, December 16**  
**11:15 am – 12:00 noon**  
**Focusing on the Pastoral Search and Our Church**  
 Everyone Welcome & Encouraged to Attend

**Mark 1:35:** Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

## Pastoral Search Committee Update

Many of you have asked how we are doing in our search for a new senior pastor. We'd like to share with you a bit more about how the process works so you can be in prayer for us as we go through it.

Shortly after our Committee started meeting, we prayed together and asked God to take away all our fears and prejudices regarding the search process. We also prayed that we would be open to God's plan and discernment in finding a pastor who could lead us in fulfilling that plan. We have contacted many prospects, some given to us by the East Coast Conference, some through personal recommendations, and some who have applied on their own. It has been a growing experience for us as we speak with prospective candidates and hear about their experiences and their vision for church ministry.

We are all aware that we have been entrusted with a great responsibility by the congregation. We feel we owe it to you to do a thorough job as we go through the process.

The process includes an initial contact with the prospect by someone on our Committee. If that pastor is interested in speaking with us, there is an interview with our whole committee (in person or

by phone, depending on where the pastor lives), and then follow up conversations as we feel led. Some prospects are invited to visit our area for a more in-depth interview. It is important that our Committee keep all our contact with prospects confidential for their sake as well as ours. These pastors know this and appreciate it.

We are all aware that we have been entrusted with a great responsibility by the congregation. We feel we owe it to you to do a thorough job as we go through the process. This is why we are continuing to interview and we will contact additional prospects as the Lord leads. Any pastor who fills the senior pastor position wants to be called knowing that we have done a thorough search and that God's will for our church is being done.

In the interim we are grateful that we have Pastor Lars. This gives us the opportunity to take the appropriate time to make the right choice in recommending a candidate for our congregation. We thank you for your continued patience and ask for your continued prayers for the process.

**PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE**  
***Bobbie Morgan (Chair), Bill Austin, Barb Drummond, Judy Goyette, Bob Lindquist, Jim Meyers, John Monroe, Paul Veerman***

pilgrim pines conference center presents

# WINTER \* FEST

ECC senior high • january 4-6, 2013 • glen spey, NY



*don't miss out!*

worship with The East Coast Experience

40' climbing wall

challenging seminars

800' zip line

frisbee golf

prizes

talent show

late night pizza party!

speaker: Michael Carrion

high ropes course

skating

hockey

Squanto friends!



[www.pilgrimines.org](http://www.pilgrimines.org)

*winterfest essentials:*

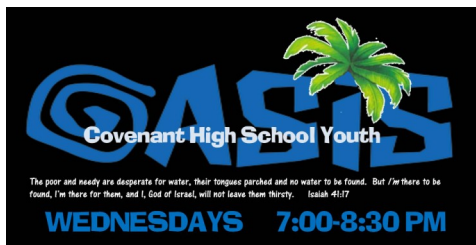
Bible, towel, warm clothes, sleeping bag and pillow, personal hygiene products, MONEY (for one of those cool WF13 tshirts and other goodies)! optional: swim suit, ice skates

**COST: \$140**

Registration Forms are available in the Welcome Center or online at [www.coveaston.org](http://www.coveaston.org).

# Youth News

Oasis and JHAMS spent October and November focusing on the difference between a mere fan of Jesus and a devoted follower whose life is changed by Jesus. One week focused on real, internal life change versus outward actions meant to give the appearance of following Christ. Another week looked at the pitfall of being a self-empowered Christian when we are called to find our power in the Spirit-filled life.



teachings of Jesus, the cross and resurrection, the early church and Covenant origins and influences. The Covenant curriculum has a wonderful scope and depth to help our middle school students understand their faith at this transitional age, from the faith of their parents to a personal understanding and relationship with God.

The youth group families participated in the Thanksgiving basket collections for Covenant to Care by providing canned vegetables. Thanks to Melissa Otten for spear heading the coat collection for the Bridgeport Rescue Mission that spread to an all-church event.

The Foundations class is currently working its way through the New Testament this year. In 30 sessions they will examine the culture and setting into which Christ came, the life and

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**JHAMS WINTER RETREAT at PILGRIM PINES  
JANUARY 25-27, 2013**



## December Birthdays & Anniversaries

12/1	Chloe Gustavson	12/10	Carol Mojcher	12/24	Carola Perez
12/2	Larry Boyle	12/11	Randy Cobaugh		Joyce Fiscus
12/3	Bob Rieger		Snoopi Botten		Sara Jane Meachen
	Kyle Lent	12/13	Emily Monroe	12/26	Christina Contacessi
12/4	Julian Rosa	12/14	Sam Keegan	12/28	Bobbie Morgan
12/7	Kasey Kellerman		Mark Hatfield		Elena Meachen
	Savannah Bradley	12/17	Bob Forstrom		♥Nancy & Tom Wilber♥
12/9	Lyn Wemple		Monica Schaper	12/30	Benay Shive
	Michael Blair	12/19	Jill Miller		

## Weekly Sermons Available Online

Have you missed a Sunday and wanted to hear the sermon? Have you wanted to share a sermon with a friend, neighbor, or relative? You can! Sermons are available online on the church website. Simply visit <http://www.coveaston.org/#/worship/listen-to-sermons>.

# Children's Ministry

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 11

6:30 - 7:45 pm

**Come & Bring Your Friends**

*"God's gift of grace was  
more than enough for  
the whole world!"*

Romans 5:15 (NIVR)



## TRAIL BLAZER WINTER RETREAT

at Pilgrim Pines  
Swansey, New Hampshire

**JANUARY 11-13, 2013  
for 4th & 5th Graders**

**COST: \$120**

*A Weekend Full of FUN in the  
snow, sledding, broomball, awe-  
some worship & much more!*

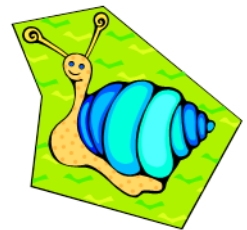


## Faith Friends

*"Know that I'm on your side, right alongside you. You're not in this alone.  
I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God."*

Colossians 2:1-2 (The Message)

When is the last time your child received "snail mail"? Or personal encouragement from an adult at church? We have adults in our congregation who would love to occasionally send your child a little note in the mail, reminding him/her of God's love and how important kids are to our church family. Please contact Alma Kearns or Roseann Slater if your child would like this, or if you are one of those "adults who would love to send a note." We certainly can't pray for or encourage our children too much!



## Service Ministry

# HANDYMAN MINISTRY



## Looking for a Few Good People!

### CONTACT INFORMATION

#### **CARL OTTEN**

(203) 858-6692  
(evenings)

cot@eitzen-chemical.com  
(anytime)

Covenant's Service Ministry would like to put together a Handyman Ministry (of skilled and unskilled people) to assist church members with small repair needs around the house. If you can change a light bulb, replace a light switch, repair a sink faucet, paint, do yard work, etc. —

**We Need You!**

If you are in need of small handyman-type jobs around your home or property that you are unable to do or need help with, please contact Carl Otten.

## Covenant to Care—School Backpacks

We have received several thank you cards from the children who received school backpacks from our church. Take some time to check out the bulletin board in the Welcome Center to read the cards. Here is just a taste of the thanks we've received.

*Dear Church Members,  
Thank you for the school supplies & bag. I really like it.  
Love,  
Lamone*

*Thank you for book bags and the nice gifts inside. It really came in handy.  
Thanks again,  
Dóvone*

*Thank You!*

# You Decorated My Life

Sometimes my life feels like a paper. When I was 16 and gave my life to Jesus, that is when God took His pen and started writing in my soul. Throughout my life, God has put so many things in my environment that not only made me who I am, but the gift He put in me has touched so many people around the world. And even today, even though I can't type, I am blessed to be able to tell my thoughts to Blake Roberts so I can still write for the *Salt Shaker*.



continue to get weaker. But I look at it as God bringing out the colors inside me that I never even knew were there. And even

life, I feel like having a Christmas tree and decorating my apartment for the Christmas season. I have seldom done that before because it seemed silly to put decorations up for one month and then take them down. But now, from out of the blue, I look at it as a celebration of how God decorates everything.

Everyone in the whole world at one time or another will have bad health and slowly decline until they move into eternity. I don't know if I am at that point, but I do know that day by day I

though I can't type or do anything, I am trying to spend more time with people around me so I can decorate their lives.

This year if you are healthy or if your health is declining, I hope you can remember that every gift that you have is a decoration and a reminder of the kingdom of Heaven that is to come and how glorious it will be. Have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

This year for the first time in my

***Snoopi Botten***



**BIG SUNDAY**

**December 16 & December 30**  
**10:00 am**  
Where we can all worship together.  
On these Sundays there will only be one worship service.

Come join us as we unite our hearts and minds as we worship the Lord our God together.



*Christmas Carol  
Service  
Sunday  
December 16  
10:00 am*

**Celebrate Christmas at The Covenant Church of Easton!**

We'll sing Christmas Carols, the Choir will be singing and the King's Kids will also participate.

Interspersed throughout the Service we will follow the path that mankind has taken from creation and the fall, through the dealings God had with the Israelites and how His Gift to us all in the birth of Jesus provided the culmination of so many prophecies from hundreds of years earlier.

Amid the hustle & bustle of Christmas, take this time to relax and reflect on what it all really means.

Purchase College, 735 Anderson Hill Rd, Purchase, NY Presented at The Performing Arts Center

# ROB MATHES 19TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT

FRI-SAT, DEC 21-22, 8PM

Tickets  
Performing Arts Center Box Office:  
(914) 251-6200 or online at [artscenter.org](http://artscenter.org)  
Prices: \$35, \$45, \$60 & \$75

[robmathes.com](http://robmathes.com)




**Saturday, December 8  
8:00 pm**  
Church of St. Mary the Virgin  
New York City

Featuring Arvo Pärt: *Magnificat*,  
Morten Lauridsen: *Ave Maria*, Edwin  
Fissinger: *Lux Aeterna* and holiday fa-  
vorites

**MASTER  
NYC CHORALE**  
Travel Arrangements: American Express

# SNOW Cancellations

## Winter Storm Cancellation Notice

If you are wondering whether or not Covenant is open during a winter storm, please turn on your TV to Channel 8 (WTNH). You can also go online at [www.WTNH.com](http://www.WTNH.com). Additionally you can tune your radio to either WICC (AM 600) or WEBE (FM 108).

Every person needs to decide for themselves whether or not to venture out in a winter storm. If you plan to attend, please check the above locations first to make sure that the Worship Service (or other event) has not been canceled.



# Christmas Eve

Family Service  
December 24, 4:00 p.m.  
with Live Animals



CHRISTMAS EVE  
SERVICE

10:00 pm

# December

May the peace and hope of  
*Christ's birth*  
be with you now and in the days ahead...



## Covenant Church of Easton

1 Sport Hill Road  
Easton, CT 06612

[www.coveaston.org](http://www.coveaston.org)

Phone: 203.371.8335

Fax: 203.373.9025

Rooted in Christ - Reaching Out to the World

## December Worship

### TWO SERVICES EACH SUNDAY – 9:00 am and 10:45 am

December	2	<b><i>The Cradle, the Cross &amp; the Crown</i></b> Holy Communion	Pastor Lars
December	9	<b><i>The Stillness of Christmas</i></b> Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, 7; Psalm 46:10	Pastor Lars
December	16	<b>BIG SUNDAY – 10:00 am Worship</b> <b><i>Christmas Concert</i></b>	
December	23	<b><i>Jesus' Approach to Christmas</i></b> Luke 2:1-7	Pastor Lars
December	24	<b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b> <b>4:00 pm – Family Worship with Live Animals</b> <b>10:00 pm – Candlelight Worship</b>	Pastor Cary Pastor Cary
December	30	<b>BIG SUNDAY – 10:00 am Worship</b> <b><i>A New Beginning Again</i></b> Joshua 1:1-9	Pastor Lars