

# Network

Volume 12 Issue 11

December, 2011

Dates to Remember:

DECEMBER 1 & 15

A Just Harvest Dates

DECEMBER 3

Lucia

DECEMBER 11

Choir Concert

DECEMBER 18

S. S. Program

DECEMBER 22

Friendly Towers Party

DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve Services

Inside this issue:

CF News 2

Music Notes,  
S.S. Program 3

A Just Harvest 4

Mission News,  
Stewardship 4

Trustees, Dec.  
Schedule 5

CWM, Friendly  
Towers Party 6

Mailbox, Re-  
minders 7

## Simeon

There are no seasons in the Church year that lend us more colorful characters than Advent and Christmas. Around the conception, pregnancy, and birth of Jesus there is someone for everybody, it seems, and I have always been drawn to Simeon. What is it about him? It must be that deliciously inviting combination of this long waiting and the Holy Child's sudden appearance, all in that moment when we are told

*"He took up the child Jesus in his arms and blessed God and said:  
'Lord, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
A light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel.'"*

Simeon himself is a kind of parable, a living story. He bears in his heart and his words the ancient longing that followed after God's promise. He is also the one blessed to be alive, to hold onto and see and smell and listen to the cooing and the crying of Messiah. To look into the eyes of the Promised One, and to rejoice, oh to rejoice in realizing that all the waiting and hoping and praying was not for naught. Here was God's salvation for all, not just for some, living and breathing grace. What it must have been like to take Christ into his arms, and to bless God in that holy moment. I marvel with Mary and Joseph at what Simeon said about the baby.

Lutheran pastor and writer Walt Wangerin so beautifully ponders that moment. He offers this simple prayer, that invites me:

*O Lord, when I come to die - oh, let me die like Simeon!  
This Christmas, let my eyes see Jesus.  
Give to me that blessed peace.  
O Lord, when I come to die - oh, let me die like Simeon!*

Be reminded, in this busiest month of the year to come, of the most important things. To wait, to watch, to hope and pray, and then once Christmas comes, to bless God, to rejoice, and to find some way of your own to take up the child Jesus into your arms. To see the salvation of God before your very eyes, and to sing some holy song.

This Christmas,  
may you see Jesus,  
take him into your arms,  
and bless God.

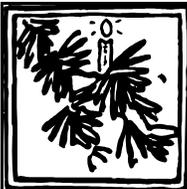
*O Lord, when I come to die - oh, let me die like Simeon!*

Peter Hawkinson

## CHRISTIAN FORMATION NEWS & EVENTS

**CHRISTIAN FORMATION MISSION STATEMENT of WINNETKA COVENANT CHURCH**  
To teach the Christian faith and develop disciples growing in Jesus Christ through the Word of God,  
through the witness of teachers, through the family of faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday School for all ages at 9:45 each week - *there will be no Sunday School on December 25 or January 1.*



*Light*  
*Hope*  
*Joy*  
*Peace*

All adults and senior high students are invited to join us for an

### **ADVENTure In the Upper Room**

**9:45-10:30 a.m. November 27, December 4, 11, 18**

This Advent it is our joy to present you with an opportunity to step out of the **cold wind** and into a **warm room**, away from the **stressed out crowds** or the **solitary internet shopping sprees** and into the **loving presence** of brothers and sisters in Christ. We invite you to spend 45 minutes each Sunday morning in Advent being somewhat still, savoring some **time to ponder the true treasure of Christmas**. Consider it a gift to you in the midst of a busy season. We will sing carols, hear scripture, and enjoy some music and conversation that will help us reflect on the Christmas story and our own stories.

And, oh yes—we will enjoy **good coffee and tasty treats**.

*We hope you'll join us as we pause during Advent to make room for the Savior.*

### **Upcoming Children's Sunday School Workshop Rotations:**

#### **January 8-29: Handel's Messiah**

**Grace Notes:** Learn about the life of Handel, explore the arts of the Baroque Period of the 17th & 18th century. Listen to excerpts from the Messiah and learn about the instruments used in the piece. Sing together "Behold the Lamb of God" and experience how the four choral voices work together.

**Moved by the Spirit:** Express a variety of Messiah pieces with movement and props.

**Thou Art:** Explore how Handel's Messiah was interpreted by Timothy Botts' calligraphy. Kids will create their own calligraphy expression of a musical passage of Messiah.

**Garden of Eatin':** Using snack food as their medium, kids will express their emotions while listening to "The Messiah."

Workshop leaders are still needed for Thou Art and Garden of Eatin'. Please contact Pastor Andrea if you'd like more information or are interested.

#### **February 12-March 4: Jesus' Baptism**

**Thou Art:** Create baptism banners with a dove motif.

**Good News Games:** Meet Martha as she remembers Jesus' baptism and then play a matching game with scriptures and road signs that are appropriate to reveal the way that Jesus communicated the Kingdom.

**Moved by the Spirit:** Use string figures to tell the story of Jesus Christ. Do a guided imagery to ponder the scripture, "You are my own Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Create a giant ICHTHUS (Fish symbol of Christ).

**Disciples' Drama:** Create a puppet show about John's message based on the song "Bugs for Lunch" by Brian Sirchio.

If you are interested in being a workshop leader for any of the Jesus' Baptism workshops, please contact Pastor Andrea.

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**CHRISTMAS POST OFFICE** - Through the month of December the youth will again offer a Christmas Post Office in the Narthex. If you bring your Christmas cards for WCC church members and friends, the students will sort them and have them ready for pick-up at the end of the service. Please include a check in the amount that you are saving on postage, to be used for Youth Activities and upcoming mission trips.

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## MUSIC NOTES

*Pause . . . Ponder . . . Praise . . . the dear Christ enters in.*

This is our Choir concert theme for December 11 at 5:00 p.m. Take time to consider the wondrous miracle of incarnation. Let God-Christ permeate your life. Praise The Lord!



In 1972, I sang Robert Wetzler's beautiful chant to this Bernard of Clairvaux text from c. 1135 and it has been with me ever since. I often repeat it in my mind as a prayer. It helps me focus on Jesus

ruling my heart - my day. These words convey the core of the message we want to share in this Advent and Christmas season:

O Jesus, King, most wonderful, Thou Conqueror renowned,  
Thou sweetness most ineffable, In whom all joys are found!

When once thou visitest the heart, Then truth begins to shine;  
Then earthly vanities depart, Then kindles love divine.

Opening our Advent service, the men will sing verse 2:

O Jesus Light of all below, Thou fount of living fire,  
Surpassing all the joys we know, All that we can desire.

May every heart confess Thy name and ever Thee adore;  
And seeking Thee, itself inflame To seek Thee more and more.

As week 3 of Advent brings us to the focus of 'JOY', we echo the wonderful promise in Psalm 126 singing the end of Movement II from the Brahms' Requiem:

The redeemed of the Lord shall return again and come rejoicing unto Zion.  
Gladness, joy everlasting upon their heads shall be their portion,  
And tears, and sighing, shall flee from them.

I hope our music embodies the timeless hope found in our Savior's coming so that His promise and presence fills your whole being!

Thank you to all who have contributed to the organ restoration fund for your generous support. Through a combination of individual donations and designations from memorial funds we are now up to \$45,766.

*Sing We Now of Christmas! Dawn*

### **Children's Sunday School Christmas Program and December Plans**

Every Sunday until December 18, kids age 4 through grade 5 will be practicing music for the Children's Christmas program. Our program this year is a youth version of Handel's "Messiah."

They will practice with Dawn Pegis from **9:45 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. in the choir room**. At 10:10 they will go to room 203 for a special story and drama time. Some gifted story-reading adults will read the story, "They Followed a Bright Star"--a beautiful picture book--and the kids will act out parts of the story each week, with costumes and props.

The Children's Christmas Program will be on **Sunday, December 18, at 5:00 p.m.** A dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 17, from 10:00-11:00 a.m. If you your child plans to participate in the program, attendance at Sunday morning practices and the dress rehearsal is necessary. It's understandable if they cannot be there every Sunday, but we request their presence for the majority of the practices. To help us plan, please contact Pastor Andrea if your child plans to participate, and if he or she would like a speaking part or a vocal solo.

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## A JUST HARVEST COMMUNITY KITCHEN

This time of year we see and hear a great deal about the needs at local food pantries and community (soup) kitchens. While it is true that in these times, the amount of meals being served and bags of groceries given to those in need is on the rise, the need to be present and willing to serve others is a constant. There have been many celebrity photo and audio ops at kitchens lately, sharing the “breaking news” of pantries and kitchens in short supply. Those who work at and frequent these charitable missions know this to be the “norm”, not the current Zeitgeist.

We here at Winnetka Covenant have decided to up our serving of meat and potatoes slightly to help meet the winter demands. We have done this in the past as well. That’s the easy part. The more challenging aspect of our contribution to our local kitchen is in consistently bringing together enough volunteers to serve at A Just Harvest once a month. We have now been asked by A Just Harvest staff if we would be interested in serving more than once a month. It would

seem the rational response to be “no, I’m sorry, we often find it difficult to get enough together once a month, let alone twice.”

We have been invited to serve because we do it well. It’s what we do. What can we do? Together maybe we can come up with a better way of becoming more consistent in our ability to serve at A Just Harvest. If you have any suggestions I’d like to hear them. Please contact me.

In the month of December we will be preparing meals in our kitchen here at church, from 1 - 3:30 pm on the 1st with Ted Garrison and the 15th with John Anderson as contacts. We will be serving at the kitchen on the 15th. There is a sign-up outside the kitchen.

Thank you for your support of our ongoing and growing mission.

*John Anderson*

## MISSION NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES

### **WORLD RELIEF CHICAGO NEEDS**

We have received requests from World Relief Chicago for their current needs:

**Winter Coat and Boot Drive** - Usually an influx of these items comes AFTER it is already cold, so they are trying to get a jump on it this season. There is a box in the Narthex for donations of the following:

- ◆ Winter boots for children, men and women
  - ◆ Winter coats - small sizes for men especially, also women and children
- Winter gloves and hats for children, men and women

### **NORTH PARK FRIENDSHIP CENTER -**

There is an ongoing collection of nonperishable food items for the North Park Friendship Center. A box sits in the mission area of the Narthex for your donations. A suggestion: when you are at the grocery store and see a buy one/ get one free sale, why not take the second item to use as a donation.

## STEWARDSHIP NEWS – Starting the New Year Strong

The results from Stewardship Sunday are in: we’re off to a strong start, and we’re hoping to increase the number of non-pledging families so we can begin 2012 on solid footing.

Here’s the good news: on Stewardship Sunday, we heard from 117 families, getting us more than halfway to our goal. We also heard from 22 families that have never pledged before - great news! If you are among the families thinking about pledging for the first time, now is the time! Amount doesn’t matter. It’s your steady financial commitment to WCC that we need so we can carefully plan for 2012.

A reminder to families who have traditionally pledged but haven’t turned in their cards yet - this is the month to do it! We’ll present a full budget report in the next Network. Thanks for helping WCC sustain and strengthen its wonderful ministries!

## TRUSTEE NEWS

The Winnetka Covenant Church financial summary through October 2011:

We will need a strong General Fund giving in December in order to prevent a budget shortfall. Please maintain your pledges and generously provide for our wonderful mission at WCC.

▶ YTD Financials

- o General fund giving through October was \$815,521. This is up 2% from 2010. However, it is \$130,000 short of our planned budget.
- o So far, 2011 expenses are below planned budget year to date (\$ 52,611 less than budget). Therefore, we are \$34,000 short of our actual expenses YTD.
- o WCC cash position is very good, due to a strong exchange fund balance.
- o Comparisons to Prior Year and Budget:

	YTD Actual	YTD Prior	%	YTD Bud.	%
General Fund					
Receipts – Oct.	\$ 815,521	\$ 798,103	102%	\$ 945,632	86%
Expenses – Oct.	\$ 849,367	\$ 868,366	98%	\$ 901,977	94%
Cash – Oct.	\$ 216,386	\$ 178,797	121%		

	<u>10/31/11</u>	<u>10/31/10</u>
General Fund Cash	\$ (88,566)	\$ (76,431)
Building Fund	3,050	2,600
Exchange Fund	174,147	116,960
Depreciation Set Aside	40,827	40,729
Memorial Fund	86,803	94,814
Petty Cash	<u>125</u>	<u>125</u>
Total	\$ 216,386	\$ 178,797

▶ Capital Projects

- o The first floor bathrooms have been completed and the main church hallway has been painted. A special thank-you to Arvid Eiesland for his leadership and management of these projects.
- o Several small, yet significant, church repair jobs have also been completed recently. Thanks to Tom Johnson for his time and talents on these needed repairs.

▶ Technology

- o We are continually impressed with the content and capabilities of the new and updated WCC website. Thank-you Roger Schmitt for your continued leadership, patience and time.
- o Online giving is an option, log in and check it out.

▶ Columbarium Update

- o Project is complete except for the Wall Memorial
- o Additional work will be done on the roof gutter and air conditioner sound screen

▶ 2012 Budgets

- o The church committees are developing their budgets for 2012. Please contact a church committee chair or a Trustee member if you have some ideas for WCC in 2012.

The WCC Board of Trustees develops monthly financial reports with further details. These can be referenced in the church office and will be summarized at the quarterly business meetings. Please contact Scott Hall, Treasurer or Roger Schmitt, Financial Secretary for any questions.

### CHRISTMAS SEASON SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 11 at 5:00 - Choir Concert

***Pause ... Ponder ... Praise ... the dear Christ enters in.***

Sunday, December 18 at 5:00 - Sunday School Christmas program

***Handel's Messiah (youth version)***

Saturday, December 24 at 3:00 - **Family Christmas Eve Service**

Saturday, December 24 at 10:45 - **Candlelight Christmas Eve Service**

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## WOMEN'S MINISTRIES NEWS

Following are ongoing groups for the women of the church. They all welcome new participants at any time.

**QUILTERS, KNITTERS, ETC.** and **SHARING GROUP** will join together for their annual Christmas luncheon. We cordially invite all WCC women to join us on December 8. We will gather at noon at Graziano's (5960 W. Touhy Ave., Niles), where there is adequate parking. You'll enjoy the fellowship! Please make reservations with Esther Johnson or Marian Eckhardt.

**STITCH AND STUDY** - Stitch and Study, combining Bible Study, conversation, and craft/needlework projects, **meets on the first Tuesday of each month** at the home of Marilyn Nelson at 7 p.m. We meet in December on the 6th. We continue to use our own Covenant Hymnal as a resource for the study. New participants are always welcome to come for the study and conversation, with or without a project.

**THURSDAY AFTERNOON BIBLE STUDY AND FELLOWSHIP** - Thursday afternoon women's Bible study **meets each Thursday at 1:00 in the library.** We are in the midst of a Beth Moore study: "Believing God: Experience a Fresh Explosion of Faith." This is a 10-week study which will conclude December 8. A new study will begin on January 5. Please contact Claire Macfarland for more information or with any questions.

**TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY** - Tuesday morning Bible study has completed its study of Nehemiah. A new study, The Book of 2 Corinthians, will begin in January. New students are welcome! Please call Sue Abram with any questions.

**2012 WOMEN'S RETREAT - February 3-5, at Covenant Harbor Bible Camp in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.**

**"Grace Happens at the Table"** Confessions of a foodie who believes that God meets us in profound ways as we share food around the table. This is the theme of the 2012 Women's retreat, centering around the verse "For He satisfies and thirsty and fills the hungry with good things." (Psalm 107:9) Our speaker will be Bonnie Sparrman. There is still limited opportunity to register - please call the church office and speak with Joan.

**LUCIA BREAKFAST AND PAGEANT - December 3, 9 a.m.**

If you would like tickets for the breakfast, please call Kathy Messina and she will let you know about availability. All are welcome to the Lucia program at 10:30 in the sanctuary. No tickets or reservations are needed for the program or the boutique which follows in the Narthex.

## FRIENDLY TOWERS CHRISTMAS PARTY - Thursday, December 22, 4:30 p.m.

Again we will be hosting our annual Christmas party for senior residents at Friendly Towers, 920 W. Wilson, in the uptown neighborhood in Chicago. Our sharing tree will be in the Narthex on Sundays in December. For many of these seniors, this is the only Christmas gift they will receive. Join with another family, your Sunday School class, or koinonia group to buy one of the more expensive items if you would like.

The process: choose a gift request. As you remove the tag from the tree, it is most important that you sign your name on the lower half of the tag, detach it, and paste it on one of the lists on the table near the tree. We ask you to do this because we carefully check that we have a gift for each resident. If we do not have all of the gifts, we must purchase those that are missing.

Suggestions: If you are bringing a gift certificate, please put it in a gift bag or a box. Just a plain envelope can easily be lost. Also, if you use the same tag that was on the tree, cover over the printing that says what is inside.

All gifts should be wrapped and returned to the tree by Sunday, December 18. If you intend to bring your gift directly to the party, please be sure to notify Gladys Johnson. You are invited to join us at the party on Thursday, December 22 at 4:30. We are grateful for your generosity. For our friends, this is the high point of their year.

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## WINNETKA MAILBOX

Dear Friends!

The Eiesland family would like to thank you all for prayers, cards, and visits during Olav's recent operation! He is doing very well and will be back to normal life in a few weeks. Thank you all!

The family of Olav Eiesland

Sincere thanks to the many who have expressed concern and who have been praying for my sister, Carolyn-Jo Donnan, diagnosed with multiple myeloma. The news is good. She had anticipated a stem cell transplant about which she was very conflicted because the chemo that she had received had essentially reduced all the markers in her blood samples to remission levels. She also was feeling very good. When she shared her misgivings with her oncologist, he embraced her reluctance and wanted to consult with a number of other physicians. The net result is that a decision has been made to pass on the stem cell transplant at this time and, instead, to monitor her blood results each month. Chemo has been suspended. At this time, her cancer is in remission.

Carolyn asked me to share her deepest thanks to the congregation for the prayer support she has received. She is praising God for this current remission and is trusting the Lord for the future. We are grateful for your support and prayers.

Carl Balsam

I want to thank Winnetka Covenant Church for all your thoughts and prayers as I went through my 30 days of radiation treatment for the brain tumor that reoccurred. I am hopeful that this treatment did work and that I will not have to undergo further surgery. We will know the results after another MRI is performed around Christmas time. I also want to give a big thanks to John Anderson, Peter Hawkinson, Steve Olson, and Cal Isaacson who were able to drive me numerous times to and from the hospital during these treatments.

Bob Clausen

Winnetka Covenant Church,

Thank you for so willingly re-arranging your schedule so we could have our retreat here. This place has been a blessing and God has done great work here. We are grateful for your generosity.

NPU Women's Retreat

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### **WINNETKA COVENANT PRESCHOOL NEWS**

Registration is now open for the 2012/13 school year. We are now offering more program choices, including extended day options for the 2012-2013 school year. We very much appreciate if you can tell friends and relatives about our program, as they are making choices for their children.

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#### **Two quick reminders -**

- ◆ Winnetka Covenant Church participates in the every member plan for the Covenant Companion. It's a wonderful magazine and helps us stay connected to the larger Covenant denomination. We appreciate donations of \$18 per member family to help defray the cost of these subscriptions.
- ◆ If you would prefer to receive your monthly Network by e-mail, please let Joan know at [wccjoan@juno.com](mailto:wccjoan@juno.com)

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In case you ever wonder about where we get the beautiful flowers in the sanctuary each week, they come from Edwards Florist in Winnetka. They give us a very good price for the size of the arrangements and we appreciate them very much. If you are ever in their shop, please mention how much we enjoy their work each week.

## OUR MISSION

*To be a Christian community and to proclaim the gospel,  
Worshiping together in love,  
Nurturing people in faith,  
And serving others as Christian disciples,  
Building a world of justice and hope in the name of Christ.*

## GUIDELINES FOR LOVING RELATIONSHIPS

We hold grace as our highest value.  
We practice honest, open, direct communication.  
We speak the truth in love and listen in love.  
We believe the best about each other, valuing others above ourselves, as Christ does.  
We allow room for mistakes, acknowledging that mistakes are part of the growth process.