



The Network

Winnetka Covenant Church

1200 Hibbard Rd • Wilmette IL 60091 • 847.446.4300

December, 2013

Advent and “The Holiday Season”

Advent is perhaps the most misunderstood season of the Christian year. The disconnect between church and the secular culture may never be greater than in Advent. While the culture around us displays Christmas items and decorations in the early fall in preparation for what is called “the holiday season,” the Church awaits the coming of Christ in Advent. The mood of Advent is quite different from Christmas. It is a time of reflection and anticipation. It is a time of preparation for the joyful festival to come. It is a time of solemnity, yet a time of hope.

It seems like a lost cause for the church to compete with the commercialized culture - especially on the first Sunday of Advent. Our mailboxes, newspapers, television, radios, and e-mails overflow with urgent messages and commercials: buy gifts now! You have only 17 shopping days before Christmas! Buy gifts because you are expected to and to prove that you love your family and friends! In the midst of that Advent strikes a most dissonant chord: “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the heavens, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” (Matt. 13:24, 25) That’s pretty hard sell when the malls are filled with “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” and “Frosty the Snowman.”

The commercialized, secular world is obsessed with “now” -the materialism of the moment. But Advent points the Christian to the future hope - the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and a new heaven and a new earth.

Advent is a season of tension. We are between memory and hope as we look back in time and yet anticipate the second Advent to come. There is the tension between the “already,” of Christ having come in the flesh and the “not yet,” of the final consummation of all things in Christ at the end of time. There is both judgment and promise. Advent challenges us to rethink and confront in Word and Sacrament the meaning of Christ’s coming in human flesh, his coming to us now, and his coming again in great glory and majesty.

From our historical perspective we do know the outcome of the Jesus story. But knowing about it is different than reliving it, than experiencing it. In Advent we relive the expectation, the hope, the joy that Advent worship expresses in the narrative of Christ coming in the form of a child weak in infancy to redeem and judge the world. The wood of the cradle foreshadows the wood of the cross.

Yes, the Christian year is quite different than the Hallmark year. The introspective mood and focus of Advent is reflected in the hymnody of the season, in contrast to the jubilant carols of Christmastide. In Advent we sing “Come, thou long-expected Jesus” and “O Come, O Come Emmanuel;” in Christmas we sing “Joy to the world, the Lord is come” and “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” There is a difference. The pressure to live by the commercialized, secularized culture is enormous. But to do so may contribute to your own spiritual void.

Some centuries ago, a fellow named Paul wrote, “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without thinking (Romans 12:2, from Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*). Rehearsing each year the ancient story of God coming to earth in human form in the fullness of time and his promised return requires each of us a time to make ready, to reflect and contemplate so great a mystery. “Let every heart *prepare* him room.”

Royce Eckhardt

December 7
Lucia Festival

December 15
Children’s
Program

December 22
Festival of Carols

December 24
4:00 & 10:45
Services

Inside this issue:

Christian Formation	2
Music, December Special Events	3
Advent Devotionals	4
Local Missions, Stephen Min.	5
Women Ministries & Lucia	6
Mailbox, Men’s & Youth Ministries	7
Parenting & Marriage Courses	8

Children's Rotation Sunday School

What is it?

We're now in another great year of Rotation Sunday School. What is Rotation Sunday School? This curriculum style focuses on teaching major Bible stories and concepts through kid-friendly, multi-media workshops, such as: art, drama, music, cooking, puppets, storytelling, games, audio-visual, and woodworking. Children learn the same Bible story four consecutive weeks, rotating to a different workshop each week. Personal connection, familiarity and continuity are provided by a volunteer called a "shepherd." These individuals accompany the children each week and focus on building relationships.

2013-2014 Theme: THE WORD OF GOD

The Word of God, as passed on to us through the Bible and the lives of the faithful, is a multifaceted jewel providing for us many different ways to enter into the story of faith. It is from these words that we receive guidance and support as we travel on the journey of faith. From the ancient text of Genesis to the power of Revelation God's word continues to be relevant to our lives.

November/December Rotation Sunday School

Beginning Sunday, November 10 and going through December 15, kids age 4 through grade 5 will spend the first 40 minutes of Sunday School practicing for the Sunday School Christmas program in the choir room with Dawn Pegis. The last 20 minutes of the hour they will be in room 203 enjoying stories for the Christmas season and working on creating art for the Christmas program. Parents may pick up children from room 203 at 10:30 a.m.

On December 22,

kids and adults of all ages will join together in the Upper Room for a special intergenerational Advent Sunday School time including refreshments, singing, and activities to help us prepare room for Christ.

Sunday School Christmas Program

Please join us for "Christmas Around the World," this year's Children's Sunday School Christmas program on December 15 at 5:00 p.m. A reception will follow in the Narthex. If you have a Nativity scene, especially of a particular national or ethnic character, and would be willing to share it for display from the afternoon of December 7 through Epiphany, January 6, please contact Dawn or the office.

Advent Sunday School - Prepare Him Room

Intergenerational Advent Sunday School
High schoolers and adults in the Upper Room
December 1, 8, 15, 22
9:30—10:30 a.m.

Join us as we prepare room in our hearts and our lives for the savior to be born anew in us. Pastor Jenny Williams writes, "There was no room for the holy family at the inn because the world's activities (the census) packed the place full. If our schedules are filled with worldly activities, will we have room in our own lives to give to Christ?"

Our time together during Advent is time to prepare him room. The gifts of Advent offered to us, and that we offer to others, are hope, peace, joy, and love. Parents, grandparents, teenag-

ers, friends, and visitors are invited to come and make room for Christ together during this Advent season.

We'll eat together, share together, enjoy music together, and attend to the presence of God together.

Come, and let your heart prepare him room.



Music Notes

Let there be music, music filling all the air

Children singing carols everywhere.

It is Christmas, Christmas, Christmas around the world.



Our children are already enthusiastically singing these opening words for their December 15 program. In the midst of the multitude of preparations for the season, it is the hearing of choirs proclaiming the gospel that grounds me and truly brings joy!

It is a season of giving, receiving, and preparing for God's greatest gift: Emmanuel - God with us.

Our Advent anthems are very bold this year. We begin December 1 with Craig Courtney's rhythmic and vivacious "Let There Be Light" amplifying Isaiah 2:5, "O house of Jacob, come let us walk in the light of the Lord!" and Romans 13:12 "...lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

John cried in the wilderness for repentance to prepare the way of the Lord; while the psalmist declared, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel ... may his glory fill the whole earth." On December 8 we sing the resounding "Let All the World in Every Corner Sing. My God and King!" Vaughn Williams' classic setting of George Herbert's declaration.

December 15 features "Christmas Around the World" at 5:00. The children will sing AND add accompaniment to carols from many traditions with bells, Orff and other instruments. In the morning, women sing Paul Tate's "Magnificat" with strings.

December 22 "Festival of Carols" moves this year to the 10:45 worship time. It will be a glorious service full of music, from Michael W. Smith's "Emmanuel" to glorious new settings by Dan Forrest and others. A heart-lifting time for all.

The Christmas Eve 10:45 service will feature Marti Crow's text "Divinity in a Manger Bed" skillfully set by Royce Eckhardt and newly published by Carol Stream. Again we will reprise the meditative reading of the Christmas story interspersed with carols.

May your Advent preparations of the heart fill your life with the grace and wonder, joy and splendor of this marvelous season.

Joyfully, Dawn

Special Events in December at Winnetka Covenant

Saturday, December 7 - Lucia Festival (details on page 6)

Sunday, December 15 - Children's Sunday School Christmas Program (details on page 2 & above)

Saturday, December 21 - Friendly Towers Christmas Party (details on page 5)

Sunday, December 22 - Choir Festival of Carols in the morning worship service (details above)

Christmas Eve services:

Early service, 4:00 p.m.

Candlelight service, 10:45 p.m.

Sunday, December 29 - Worship service at 10:45 a.m. (No Sunday School)

Tuesday, December 31 - New Year's Eve Service of Holy Communion at 6:00 p.m.

Once again this year the youth of the church will sponsor a Christmas Card Post Office. Please bring your fully addressed cards to church and they will be sorted and then available each week for pickup following the morning service, beginning on December 1. Or if you prefer, you can bring one card to be posted for the entire congregation. You can then donate what you would have spent on postage to the youth group, to be used to help fund a summer mission trip. Any cards that aren't picked up will be mailed out after Christmas.

Advent devotionals for you

Advent is a time to listen again for the voice that brings a word of hope to weary world and aching hearts. There is a voice in the wilderness and it calls to you with the sure promise that, despite all evidence to the contrary, God is coming. An Advent devotional is one way in which the voice will come to you through the coming weeks. This is a gift to you from Winnetka Covenant Church. Five different devotionals are available for you to choose from, each with a different focus or approach, with options for children, youth and adults and families. Pick up one for yourself or your family in the narthex to help you listen for God's voice during this season.

For families:

Waiting for Jesus in a Hurry-Up World

Daily Family Devotions for Advent

By Jennifer Christ

Time is at such a premium in our fast-paced lives that we never seem to have enough of it to accomplish all that we want, especially in our families! At the same time, children “can’t wait” for Christmas to arrive. As a mother and now grandmother, Jennifer Christ knows firsthand the pressures on contemporary families who strive to put meaningful prayer into their lives in the weeks before Christmas. These daily activities and prayers offer families a practical way to step back from the rush and remember the One for whom we are waiting.

For children:

Prayer and Promises

Activities for Advent

This Advent activity book and poster includes daily Devotions, puzzles, sticker fun and things for young children to make.

For youth and adults:

Elements of Advent (includes web link to a song for each day)

Daily Devotions for the Season of Advent

By Ron Glusenkamp with music by Peter Mayer

Like many seasons in our lives, the season of Advent is comprised of many elements that work together to provide a particular tone, structure and environment for Christians who are preparing for the birth of the Savior. Each day of Advent, explore the meaning behind elements such as candles, music, story, promise and readiness that enrich our experience of bonding with our Lord during this busy time. Then connect those elements to songs by Christian musician Peter Mayer, which readers can listen to through a web link listed with the devotions.

For adults:

Faithful Facts for Advent

Daily Devotions for the Sacred Season

By Paul L. Maier

Respected Christian historian, professor and theologian Paul L. Maier helps readers travel back in time to the first Christmas in these daily devotions for Advent that utilize facts from history confirming our faith in Jesus. Each day readers will learn something new about the prophecies and fulfillments of Jesus' birth that can then be applied to our faith today, bringing home the reality of Christ's presence with us at this time in history.

Good News! Great Joy!

Devotions for Advent

By Robert Hereth

To help sort out the jumble, stress and even pain that many experience around the Christmas holiday, Robert Hereth's devotions tie our daily concerns to the astounding promise that holds everything together: the Lord is coming! Touching the traditional bases in Advent—Isaiah, John the Baptist, Mary, the Second Coming—Hereth brings home the truth that our loving God was behind it all, just as he is present in our lives today.

Local Missions

Friendly Towers Christmas Party

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

Here is the procedure:

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.

Please make a new tag for your gift. 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. If you must use the same tag that was on the tree, please cover over the printing that says what is inside.

All gifts should be wrapped and returned to the tree by Sunday, December 15. 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 Saturday, December 21, at 4:30. We are grateful for your generosity. For our friends, this is the high point of their year.

A Just Harvest Holiday Project

The Gifts and Blessings of Stephen Ministry

From a Stephen Ministry "Care Receiver"

From the outside, it looked like I had it all together. On the inside, I was feeling hopeless and alone. Many challenges and changes had come like waves for me, and it seemed like as soon as I could get my head above water, another wave came. Many weeks I attended church only to feel more isolated standing in the narthex with a plastic smile pretending I was fine. I found myself not wanting to go to church at all.

One Sunday, I finally realized I didn't have to do this alone. I reached out to a Stephen Leader and was connected to a Stephen Minister and we set up a first meeting. At first, I filled my Stephen Minister in on all I had recently gone through. It felt so good to unload, and I was listened to with-

"Hunger is No Game: Catching Coins"

Kids are going hungry in America, and it's not a game. Your coins will help A Just Harvest bring nutritious meals to kids who might otherwise go hungry.

A Just Harvest provides meals to 40-60 kids per day, some in our Community Kitchen and many others by supplying the food to a local after-school program.

Almost 1 in 5 young people live in homes where the parents don't earn enough money to put nutritious food on the table every day. Kids who don't get enough healthy food to eat have trouble in school, and the consequences can last a lifetime.

Throughout December there will be a large jug in the Narthex for you to put your spare change for this project. The change that's just making your pockets heavy, when combined with the change from the pockets of others, can add up to make a real difference for hungry children and youth.

WCC Community Kitchen Preparation Days

Thursday, December 5 - 1:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 19 - 1:00 p.m.

WCC Community Kitchen Serving Day

Thursday, December 19 - 4:30 p.m.

Family Promise

We will be hosting our Family Promise guests in early January (schedule still being finalized). Please be watching for announcements and the opportunity to sign up to help with this important ministry.

out judgment and I was surprised at how quickly I felt supported. My struggles were normalized and I could vent and process and share the ugliest of my thoughts and feelings. For many weeks, we met and the hours flew and I felt listened to and cared for. It is also wonderful to know I am being regularly prayed for. Now, we meet just every few weeks, and even though my circumstances have not really changed, I feel better able to handle them. It is wonderful to know that, as Christians, we are never alone.

You don't need to have experienced a great tragedy to consider a Stephen Minister - just the need for a caring, Christian companion to be with you through a difficult time is enough. And, it's strictly confidential.

If you'd like to know more, contact one of our pastors at 847-446-4300 who will direct you to a Stephen Ministry leader.

Women's Ministries Notes

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

Quilters, Knitters, etc. & Sharing Group Luncheon -

The Quilting and Sharing Groups joined together for their annual Holiday Luncheon in November. Both groups take the month of December off.

Stitch and Study -

Stitch and Study, combining Bible Study, prayer, conversation, and craft/needlework projects, meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the home of Marilynn Nelson at 7 p.m. We are using the texts for the coming Sunday as a resource for the study. New participants are always welcome to come for the study and conversation, with or without a project. **The December meeting will be on the 17th.**

Thursday Bible Study -

Thursday afternoon Bible Study has concluded their current study and will not meet in December. They will resume meeting in January with a new course of study.

Tuesday Morning Bible Study -

Tuesday morning Bible Study class will resume after Thanksgiving break on December 3 with "Thankful," Isaiah Chapters 11 & 12, page 59. Our last meeting for 2013 will be on Tuesday, December 10. Class will resume our study in Isaiah on Tuesday, January 7 with page 65, "Surrounded by Enemies" (Chapter 17:12 - 23:18), and the questions as they apply to those verses.

Women's Retreat

The date set for our **retreat** is **January 31-February 2, 2014**, held at Geneva Bay Center at Covenant Harbor. This year we are pleased that we will have our own **Judi Geake as the speaker** for the retreat. The official registration deadline has passed, but spots remain available if you are still considering going.

6-week moms' Bible study in the works for January and February - Help with child care needed

A group of moms with kids up through 5th grade is interested in having a small group Bible study, and we're looking for some other women to help with child care. Might you be interested in helping make this time of formation possible for them?

We're looking at starting 2 groups, both meeting for six weeks - one on Monday evenings, and another on Friday mornings. Both will meet at church so that children can be cared for in the preschool and nursery rooms.

The Monday evening group will meet January 6, 13, 20, & 27, February 3 & 10.

The Friday morning group will meet January 10, 17, 24, & 31, February 7 & 14.

Please contact Pastor Andrea if you have interest in helping with child care, or if you are a mom of a young child and would like to participate in the group.

Lucia Breakfast, Pageant, and Boutique - Saturday, December 7

Our Lucia Festival is almost here! As of this writing (November 22), there are still reservations available for the Breakfast. If you are interested in reserving, please contact Kathy Messina or the church office.

The schedule for the morning is:

9:00 - Swedish breakfast (reservations needed)

10:30 - Lucia Pageant in the sanctuary. All are invited to come after the breakfast for this beautiful program.

11:15 - Boutique opens following the pageant. Deli items, baked goods, and other unique items will be available for purchase. One of our favorites from past years, caramels, will be sold again this year. If you would like to pre-order, please contact Greta Bailey.

Needs that we still have:

- Bakers - both cookie bakers for pepparkakor and spritz (recipes and clean tins available in the kitchen), and bakers for items for the bake sale.
- Table decorating on Thursday evening and table setting on Friday morning. Please contact Inger Eiesland-Schultz to volunteer.

Mailbox

Dear Winnetka Family,

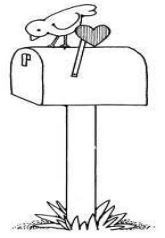
Soon after my friends' premature twins, Michael and Annabell, were born, I asked for prayers. You prayed for them through many complications and years of therapy. Thank you so much. The twins are now 2 years old and they are healthy and happily running around. Just one more sign that our Lord hears our prayers.

Thank you again, Ingrid Papanek

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for the many cards and kind expressions of condolence on the recent passing of my Dad. The flowers from the choir were exceptionally beautiful and so appreciated.

Dawn



Family News

Congratulations and best wishes to **Rodger White and Sarah Johnson**, who were married here on Friday, October 25. Sarah is the daughter of Tim & Kris Johnson.

Men's Ministries News

Opportunities for service and fellowship occur throughout the year, some on a regular schedule, others periodically.

Men's Fellowship - The group usually meets on the first three Saturdays of each month at 8:00 a.m., in either the Upper Room or the Prayer Room. All men are invited to participate. We will help with cleanup after Lucia on December 7. On December 14, Gary Isaacson will lead a discussion on "A Stance of Unknowing." Bill O'Malley will guide us on "Defeating Dualism with Imagination" on December 21.

Men's Work Crew - Painting parties, carpentry projects, and service projects are a regular part of the Men's Ministries. Workers will be recruited as the needs arise.

Men's Share and Support - If you're expecting a medical procedure, test, treatment, or new medication, get connected to someone who's been there and done that. Pastor Hawkinson will try to link you to someone with experiences to share and who can help turn anxiety into anticipation. Men who are willing to share and support please contact Pastor Hawkinson.

Men's Retreat - Please save March 14-16, 2014 for the annual Men's Retreat at Covenant Harbor.

Youth Ministry Dates

Sr. High League - December 1, 8, 15 (North Side Youth Collision), and 22 - 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Junior High Youth Ministry - December 4, 11, and 18 during Wednesday night activities

Coffee (High School) - December 4, 11, and 18 - 3:30 p.m.

December special events:

December 8 - Senior High Progressive Dinner

December 15 - North Side Youth Collision Advent Night

December 22 - Senior High Christmas Party and Reunion

December 18 - Junior High Christmas Party

North Park University and Seminary
Students and Faculty from WCC
You are invited to Christy's on December 5
any time from 1 - 5 for a study break

It has been several years since our last photo directory was made and we are badly in need of a new one. We are looking for several people who would be willing to form a committee and oversee the production of a new photo directory. This is a short-term commitment but a very important one. If you like to organize, then this is the opportunity for you!

Winnetka Covenant Church provides a subscription to the Covenant Companion to each member family in the congregation. If you would like to reimburse the church for the cost of your subscription, the cost is \$18 and can be given by check (with Covenant Companion on the memo line) or online.

Winnetka Covenant Church Network

1200 Hibbard Road
Wilmette, Illinois, 60091

847-446-4300

www.winnetkacovenant.org

Our Mission

To be a Christian community and to proclaim
the gospel, Worshiping together in love,
Nurturing people in faith,
serving others as Christian disciples,
And 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.



Save the Date!

The Marriage Course is coming again!

Fridays, 6:30-9:00 p.m., January 10 - February 21.

More information and registration will be available this month.

Watch your e-mail and tell your friends!

The Parenting Children Course

A ten-week course on Wednesday nights,
beginning January 15, 6:45 - 7:45 p.m.

Family life is under great pressure today and parents face bewildering choices about how to parent effectively. Children do not arrive with an instruction manual! And no role we undertake is more important than parenting. Discovering we are not alone in the challenges we face and picking up ideas from other parents can make a huge difference. We can all learn how to make even the happiest family better.

The Parenting Children Course is for parents, step-parents, prospective parents, or care-givers of children aged 0-10 years. Each week participants view a short DVD segment and engage in small group discussion. Cost: \$10 per person for the whole course, includes guest manual. Register on-line at www.winnetkacovenant.org

Help make Parenting Course possible for interested parents! Volunteers are needed to help with our Wednesday night children's programs during these 10 weeks to make it possible for some parents to attend the Parenting Course. 2-3 adults are needed for child care in the 2's & 3's room and nursery. 2 adults are needed to serve as "Guides" in grades 3-5. If you'd like to help, please contact Pastor Andrea.