



The Network

Winnetka Covenant Church
1200 Hibbard Rd • Wilmette IL 60091 • 847.446.4300

December, 2014

**December
5, 12 & 19
Friday Night
Fellowship**

**December 14
Children's
Christmas
Program**

**December 21
Choir
Christmas
Program**

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Thirsty!

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God (Psalm 42:2)

But those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. (John 4:14)

I've been really thirsty lately. The band-aid on the inside of my elbow with the gauze pad underneath is evidence of an early morning blood test, to find out why my mouth is so dry. It may be a vitamin deficiency, or something more ominous, but my thirst, in the meantime, remains. It puts me naturally, organically, in touch with these common biblical metaphors of thirst and of water, of parched desert wilderness longing and of gushing spring provision. When I was in Israel three years ago, I saw for myself the desperate thirst of the rocky mountain desert where nothing could grow, and I heard that every ancient town found its home on top of a spring, in one of those few scant places where there was water. No wonder the psalmist and our Savior tapped into the metaphor that thirst is for this life, and how God's presence becomes a gushing stream.

There are great images for Advent and Christmas. Advent is the thirsty time, that moment in the year when we get deeply in touch with the longings we carry, which all lead us to a hope for God's presence in our world. Out in the wilderness of all that's desperate and incomplete, where life seems unable to last, where wars and hungers and injustices seems to gain a foothold, there in the wilderness we thirst for God! We lament what is, and cry out for help, for life, for water.

And at Christmas, in the birth of God's Son, the world gets its Living Water, a most abundant provision, grace and mercy once, and for all! In the coming of Jesus and the Kingdom of God into our world we see the real possibility of no more war, of no more hunger and thirst. There is a gushing stream of peace, and of abundance found in neighbor love and care.

Here's the point, that our dry, thirsty souls drink in the water of life, that God feeds us with God's own self, that our holy longings are met with the abundance, the fullness of God's own loving presence. God is with us, friends.

Maybe like me, though for other reasons, you are really thirsty these days. Maybe something isn't quite right in your spirit; for sure, things aren't quite right in our world. It's a thirsty time. That's for sure. But there is a spring of water, gushing up to life. Listen to the shepherds and the angels. Follow the start. Like Simeon, hold onto God for dear joy. Christ, the Savior, is born.

Alleluia! Alleluia, let the thirsty ones say.

Peter Hawkinson

Christian Formation

Sunday Mornings For Children

Rotation Sunday School is for children age 4 through grade 5 November 9 - December 14

Theme for the year: *Test of Faith*

Throughout the scriptures, people faced many challenges to their faith. From Adam and Eve to you and me, there are times when we do well and live in ways that are pleasing to God. At other times we find ourselves in need of God's grace because we have missed the mark. Through the stories of faith, we learn that God's grace is always extended to us.



Children's Christmas program practice is underway. We will take a break from the rotation format as the children prepare for the program.

9:30-10:10 a.m. Children age 4 through grade 5 practice for the Children's Christmas program in the choir room.

10:10-10:30 a.m. Children gather in room 203 for special Advent Sunday School workshops each week.

December 21, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Christmas Sunday School celebration in room 203.

Parents, please mark your calendars - The children's Christmas program "Why Chimes Rang" will be at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 14.

Sunday Mornings For Adults

Advent Sunday School - Love Blooms Bright

November 30, December 7, 14, 21

9:30-10:30 a.m. in the Upper Room

Intergenerational Advent Sunday School

Sr. High Students and Adults welcome

This is the irrational season, when love blooms bright and wild. Had Mary been filled with reason, there'd have been no room for the child.

Madeline L'engle

Advent is truly the irrational season - in the midst of winter darkness and cold, we seek and find hope, peace, joy, and love. Parents, grandparents, teenagers, friends, and visitors are invited to come and embrace "the irrational season, when love blooms bright and wild." We'll eat together, share together, enjoy music and story together, and attend to the presence of God together. Come, for love blooms bright in Advent.

Wednesday night all-church activities

Beginning with a delicious dinner, served from 5:30-6:15, all members and friends of Winnetka Covenant Church are encouraged to come each week for a night of fellowship, singing & praise, and learning. Following dinner and singing/skit time, the whole group breaks up into activities for every age group. Nursery is provided for children up to age 2, and age group activities are planned for everyone from 2 years of age and older, including adults.

Bring yourself and bring a friend to join in the fun.

On December 10 we will be having our traditional Julbord dinner. It's a night not to be missed.

Advent Devotionals

Advent devotionals, both for families with children and for adults are available to pick up in the Narthex.

These are a gift from the Christian Formation Board for you to use throughout your Advent journey.

Music Notes

Another Christmas is here. O people, be of good cheer.
Give love, give joy to praise the Boy,
And maybe this year the Christmas chimes will ring.



This is the opening verse of “Why Chimes Rang”: “What gift can I bring?”, the musical (with subtitle I added) the children will present December 15 at 5:00.

Depending on what has happened in our lives the last 12 months, we have widely varying enthusiasms and ways of ready-ing ourselves for “Another Christmas.” For me this year, it is a joy to re-center and focus on the enormous wonder of “The Gift of God’s Grace” - the theme I’ve chosen for our musical focus on December 21.

I’m overwhelmed by the joy and energy of our children to learn the story anew in music. Meanwhile, as Advent prepares us, the adult choir will sing many classics foretelling Christ’s coming: Bach’s “Sleeper, Wake!”; “Lift up your heads ... and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts.”

We have an array of anthems to feature in worship December 21, from the beloved “Coventry Carol” in a new arrangement with flute and piano (Cindy Buettgen and Nancy Magill), to the hearty “Fum, Fum, Fum” with 4-hands piano (Donna Kuhel and Mary Beth Molenaar). The newest anthem, a Christopher Wills arrangement, uses “Whiter Than Snow” in a touching setting with cello and piano titled, “He Sends the Snow”:

... So God gives us His only Son, the purest, precious holy One;
Like snowfall to a darkened world, to cover ev’ry sin.
Such beauty surprises, a night so cold and dark,
And the light of the moon catches ev’ry fragile part.
Though the gift seems small, a closer look shows all.
The careful plan of the Creator who loves us so
He sends the snow. Allie LaPointe and Jason Webb

Dawn Pegis

December at Winnetka Covenant Church

Saturday, December 6 - Lucia Festival

9:00 a.m. - Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall (reservations needed)
10:30 a.m. - Pageant in the Sanctuary (open to all - no reservations needed)
Following the pageant, boutique in the Narthex

Sunday, December 14, Children’s Christmas Program, “Why Chimes Rang”

5:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary, followed by a reception in the Narthex

Saturday, December 20, Friendly Towers Christmas Party

4:30 p.m., details on page 4

Sunday, December 21, Choir Christmas Concert

10:45 a.m., during the morning worship service, with high coffee following in the Narthex

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24

4:00 p.m., Early service
11:00 p.m., Traditional candlelight service

Throughout the Christmas season, the *Christmas Card Post Office* will be in place.

Bring your fully addressed Christmas cards for members and friends of the congregation to the mailbox in the narthex, along with a check made out to Winnetka Covenant Church for the amount you would have paid for postage.

The youth will sort the mail and have it ready for pick-up after the service.

Or, you may choose to send one greeting to the entire church for a donation and this card will be posted in the narthex.

All money raised will help support our students’ attendance at CHIC 2015.

From the Concerns Group

The Concerns Group has been meeting on Wednesday nights with discussions about how to serve the needs of our community. Our church has so many wonderful organizations that we already support, so the Concerns Group is seeking to enhance those service opportunities and to bring them to the congregation's attention. For example, we were overwhelmed by the donations of items to support our Family Promise families a few weeks ago as you tore off those slips and filled our boxes. Thank you!

At the present time we have two projects to bring to your attention. First, soon Gladys will bring out the Christmas Tree with names of residents from Friendly Towers and their gift requests. While Gladys does all the work, we want to be sure to spread the word to encourage you (or a group of you for those larger items) to take a name or two off the tree and make Christmas a reality for these seniors at Friendly Towers on Wilson Ave. Mark your calendars for the party on December 20 when gifts are presented and a meal is served. Details about the giving tree and an invitation to the party are at the bottom of this page.

Second, do you have any musical instruments lying around that you would consider donating to Old Orchard Jr. High, where Polly McClellan teaches? I know my parents bought Peter (Nelson) a nice, shiny saxophone once upon a time, only to have him give up playing after about three months. The saxophone, however, remained in our home for many years! There are a few kids at OOHJ that are unable to join the band or orchestra because they cannot afford the rental fees of the instruments. The school has a few instruments to loan, but having a few more on hand would make a tremendous difference in a few kids' lives. Please contact Polly McClellan with questions or donations. Thanks so much!

Also, we would like to encourage people to begin signing up for 2015 for serving at A Just Harvest and the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Watch for signup sheets in the Narthex to begin filling in those volunteering opportunities early.

Our group is rather small on Wednesday nights. We are quite friendly, and we could use some more brains, feet, hearts, and ideas! Please join us anytime! In addition, if you have some ideas of how we can show concern for the communities around us, let us know. Feel free to talk to Polly McClellan, Art & Laurel Nelson, Steve & Mollie Sudhoff, Kelly & Colette Quackenbush, Reuben Hanson, or Val Hausman.

Friendly Towers Christmas Party - Saturday, December 20, 4:30

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 Sundays in December. 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.

GIFT TREE INSTRUCTIONS - 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.

If you are bringing a gift certificate, please put it in a gift bag or 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. **It is preferable to make a new tag.**

All gifts should be wrapped and returned to the tree by Sunday, December 14. 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 20 at 4:30. We are grateful for your generosity. For our friends, this is the high point of their year.

Gladys Johnson

The Winnetka Covenant Church financial summary through October 2014:

As of the end of October 2014, our financials remain healthy compared to last year. Given historical giving patterns in the final months of the year, we should be able to meet our general fund commitment with your help. Thank you for your continued financial support.

YTD Financials

- o General Fund Giving and Receipts through October 2014 - \$818,737
We are about \$53K short in General Fund giving.
- o Expenses are running at 2014 planned budget.

Comparisons to Prior Year and Budget:

	2014 Actual	2013 Actual	%	2014 Bud.	%
General Fund Receipts	\$ 818,737	\$ 777,335	105%	\$ 887,993	92%
Expenses	\$ 892,889	\$ 898,659	100%	\$ 887,318	100%
Net Operating Income / (Loss)	\$(74,152)	(\$ 121,324)			

	<u>10/31/2014</u>	<u>10/31/2013</u>
Cash -General Fund	\$(90,488)	\$(121,913)
Building Fund*	0	3,050
Exchange Accounts	87,688	106,097
Depreciation Set Aside*	0	40,878
Petty cash	125	125
Memorial/Bequest Funds*	<u>21,120</u>	<u>249,536</u>
	\$18,445	\$277,773
Investments*- Memorial/ Bequest Funds	\$189,807	\$65,885
General Fund	<u>12,225</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	\$235,556	\$65,885

** Investments consolidated into NCP DIA investment funds.
Includes \$22,303 for Andrea's Fall 2015 sabbatical grant.

Capital Projects

- o Additional Fall landscaping projects completed
- o Cleaned Sanctuary and Narthex carpeting
- o The Trustees are starting the budget planning for 2015. If you have any suggestions or input, please contact a Trustee or the Church Office.

Local Missions and Other Opportunities

A Just Harvest - December 4 and December 18 at 1:00, cooking in our kitchen. Ted Garrison is the contact person for the 4th and John Anderson is the contact person for the 18th. Many thanks to Ted and John for the faithful way they lead this ministry month after month. On the 18th we are also asked to send a crew to the Kitchen to serve the food. They will meet at church to depart at 4:30 and return about 7:00. There is a sign-up on the bulletin board by the kitchen.

Family Promise - An easy opportunity to help

1. Jewel is running a program through the end of the year where they are giving stamps with purchases to be saved for cookware. If you shop at Jewel but don't need the cookware, please take the stamps anyway and donate them to Family Promise. They will be used to help provide the families with what they need as they move into independent housing. A basket is in the office for the stamps.

Coins for Christmas

Again this year we will have a glass jug out throughout December to collect coins for A Just Harvest. Look for it on the missions display area and, if you have a pocketful of change when you are here at church, why not empty it out and watch the collection grow.

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

Quilters, Knitters, etc. and the Sharing Group will combine and meet for their annual Christmas lunch on **December 3 at 12 noon**. The location is Hackney's on Lake and the cost is \$22. Contact: Jackie Hodlick.

Stitch and Study -

Stitch and Study, combining prayer, conversation, and craft/needlework projects, meets on the **third Tuesday of each**

month at the home of Marilyn Nelson at 7 p.m. New participants are always welcome to come for the prayer and conversation, with or without a project. The **December meeting will be on the 16th**.

Tuesday morning Bible Study -

The Tuesday Morning Women's Bible Study will meet on December 2nd and 9th followed by a Christmas break. Our study in the Gospel of John resumes on January 6. Plan to join us in the New Year. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." John 1:14a. Christmas Blessings!

Lucia Festival - December 6

Preparations for the annual Lucia festival are underway. The breakfast begins at 9:00 in the Fellowship Hall - please contact Kathy Messina if you still need to reserve a spot. The pageant will begin at 10:30 in the Sanctuary and this is open to all, with no reservations needed. Following the pageant you are invited to shop at the boutique in the Narthex.

As always, we welcome baked goods for the bake sale. These should be dropped off at church on Friday, December 5. We also welcome bakers who are willing to bake cookies (spritz and pepparkakor) both for the breakfast and for sale in the boutique. Recipes are available in the church office and clean cookie tins will be available in the kitchen.

MOPS Comes to Winnetka Covenant

The Winnetka Covenant Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) group started in September and will continue through the year. The theme of this year's MOPS group is entitled *Be You, Bravely*.

It meets the first Friday of each month from 9:30-11:00 and is open to mothers and their children, ages birth to 5 years. For more information about MOPS you can contact Elizabeth Schwartz or visit mops.org. Childcare will be provided while mothers in the community connect and better equip themselves for the journey of life. If you would like to volunteer for childcare, please contact Elizabeth. Cost will be \$50 for the year.

Women's Retreat—February 6-8, 2015

It seems a long way off, but the women's retreat will be February 6-8, 2015 and we are pleased that Judi Geake will be our speaker again this year, with the theme "Happiness Is a Choice." The official registration period has closed, but we have a good amount of flexibility and would love to add more women to the list of participants. Think about someone you can personally invite to attend the retreat with you, especially someone newer to the church. Call the church office and talk to Joan if you are able to register.

Men's Ministries News

Men's fellowship meets the first three Saturdays of each month at 8:00 a.m. Men, watch your e-mail messages and the bulletins and Network for details. Men's fellowship will not meet on the morning of Lucia (December 6) but all who are able to help with the cleanup are asked to come and pitch in.

Watch also for information on opportunities to participate in work projects and for singing together. If you would like to be included on an e-mail list for notifications of events, please contact Paul Christmas.

Basketball News -

Traditionally at this time of year we gather for our Men's Basketball Christmas party. We will meet at Meier's Tavern. When: **TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2014** (after hoops at 8:30 p.m.). All men are welcome, even if you decide not to play beforehand. We hope to see many of you.

Mailbox

Dear Winnetka Covenant Church friends,

Thank you all, our wonderful church family, for the outpouring of love and concern for us during the recent illness and death of Reuben's twin sister, Ruby. The many, many cards we received were most appreciated and your prayers so meaningful to us. We are so grateful to God for taking her to heaven in such a peaceful way. We love you all.

Marji and Reuben Hanson

Dear friends,

Thank you so much for your prayer support during our daughter Kristen's battle with breast cancer - six months of chemo, surgery, and three weeks of radiation - which ended two weeks ago, and she is doing very well. She experienced "the pillows of prayer" that supported and encouraged her during that difficult time. We thank

our Lord Jesus for all your prayers and concerns - and for the good outcome.

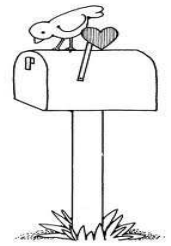
Peter and Eleanor Milbratz

Dear friends,

Once again I want to express my thanks to all of the many friends who did numerous kind things during the weeks that I was in and out of the hospital. This included pastoral visits from Andrea and Peter and calls from Art. The orange begonia plant from the church was such a beautiful color. Many people provided meals for several weeks which was most appreciated.

Most of all, I felt your prayers and want you to know how thankful I am for them. How fortunate I am to be part of such a caring, compassionate church family.

Mary Nilsen



Youth Notes

Junior and Senior High Youth Groups are having a fun and busy fall/winter season of activities. A full fall calendar has been communicated to the students and their parents but here are some of the highlights:

1. **Sunday School** - There are offerings for jr. and sr. high (separately). The High School class is currently meeting with the adults in the Upper Room (see page 2), and the Jr. Highers are in the youth room upstairs from 9:30-10:30 on Sunday mornings before worship. Sunday School has a different feel than youth group gatherings - hope the students can be part of this time. There will be no Sunday School on the 28th.
2. **Youth Group Meetings** -
 - Sr. High** - December 7 will be the Progressive Dinner.
December 14 is Covenant Youth Collision - interactive Advent night.
December 21 is a Christmas Party & Reunion, inviting college students to join with us.
Gathering for coffee on Wednesdays, December 3, 10, & 17 (not the 24th or 31st)
 - Jr. High** - regular meetings on December 3 & 10, Christmas Party on the 17th (no meeting the 24th or 31st)
3. **Retreats** - We look forward to our winter retreats: Junior High (Deep Freeze) at Covenant Harbor is Jan. 16-18.
High School (One Life) at Covenant Point is Feb. 13-16
4. **Looking Ahead to 2015-**
Friday, January 23 - 3rd Annual "Chummy Awesomeness" High League night with North Park Covenant Church, which we are hosting.
We host Covenant Youth Collision for the high schoolers on February 8 for our second annual Open Mic Night.

Christy Bouris

Winnetka Covenant Church Network

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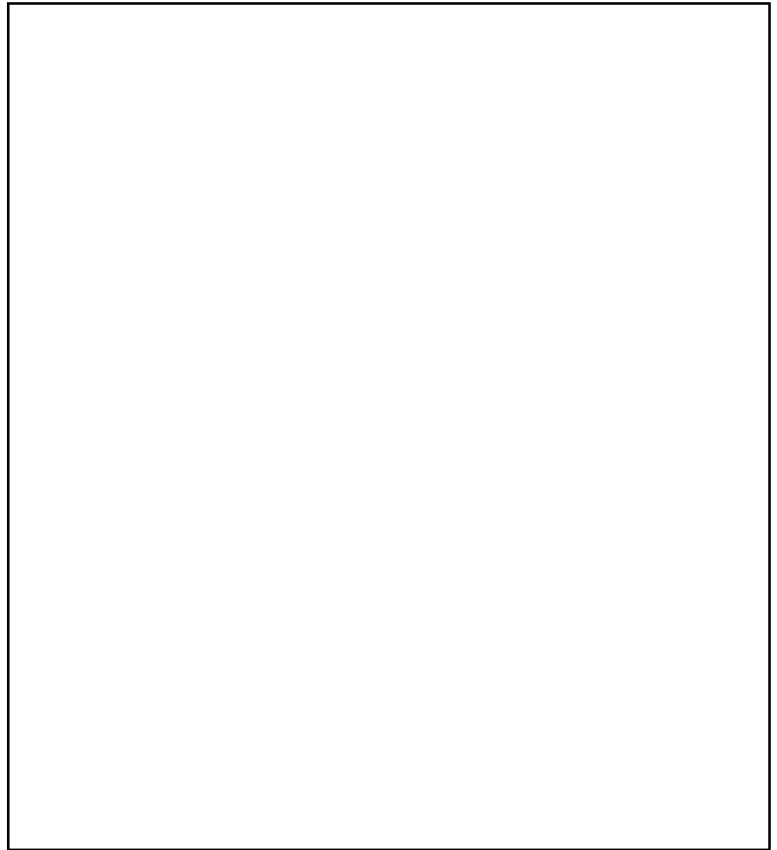
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www.winnetkacovenant.org

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.



Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Friday Night Fellowship

September 12, 2014 through January 30, 2015 - 7:30 p.m.

Come and fellowship with your Church family! Get to know new friends, and enjoy dessert! Each week a gathering will take place in someone's home. The host provides coffee and lemonade, and the rest of us bring a dessert to share. There will be time for informal conversation, and we will gather together for a time at the end for group conversation and prayer for the Church and for one another. Here's the best part ... no RSVP needed! Just come and join us when you can. Hosts are listed on the calendar included in this publication. We still need hosts for the January Friday nights.

Christmas Camp at Covenant Point

December 27 through January 1 at Covenant Point Bible Camp, Iron River, Michigan

Our own Pastor Peter will be the camp pastor this year. Register today (www.cpbc.com) to get in on this fantastic week to linger in the season of Christmas together, enjoy great food, adventure in the snow, and savor spacious time with friends and family.