

# *The Spirit of Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church*

*December 2016*



Friends are always sending me “funny” religious jokes and nonsense. Other pastors seem to be the worst offenders! This morning I received a cartoon of Jesus checking his Twitter account and commenting “Cool 12 followers!” A few weeks ago it was multiple copies of adverts for a table top sized “Hipster Nativity Set”. This had a traditional stable and manger but all the participants were in modern clothes. Mary knelt by the manger, Starbucks cup in hand, while Joseph used his iPhone to take a “selfie” of the three of them. Meanwhile, the wise men arrived riding Segways, carrying their gifts in Amazon boxes. A cow was eating gluten free grain and a sheep was colorfully clad in a Christmas sweater.

I was amused. It really was a clever take on our present society without insulting the reality and importance of the event. I felt it really was an attempt to show the holy, the sacred in images which were undeniably 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The thing I liked most was that Joseph was actually involved. The proud Dad taking a photo of the family, no doubt instantly posted on social media. So often he is portrayed as being aloof, standing in deep shadow in the background, seemingly incidental to the proceedings. Mary, with a look of adoration, is as usual kneeling by the manger. Rather than a double latte with soy, she usually holds her hands in a prayerful pose, but she also sometimes looks a little surplus to requirements.

With all due respect to tradition I have to ask...Is this the body language of the maternity unit? In my experience, babies are held and cradled in loving arms. Every visitor wants their turn and counts it an honor to be allowed to hold the precious new life.

One commentator asks why “do we seem compelled to depict Mary on her knees worshipping the newborn Jesus as though he were some tiny deity that magically materialized in her face. What we need to envision is an ordinary Mary looking pale and wan, disheveled and exhausted, but with her face transformed by joy and love as she snuggles the tiny baby”

This is the true miracle of Christmas. Jesus the very God incarnate, was a real, live, ordinary, cooing, crying, sleeping, suckling baby. His greatest need at that moment was to be held and touched and loved and soothed by human hands and hearts.

We title the baby Jesus as “God incarnate”, “Emmanuel”. We say “God is with us”, yet our well-loved nativity scenes seem to deny the intimacy of a “hands-on God” taking on our flesh and blood.

As we welcome newborns with open arms and open hearts, we are also to welcome Jesus with open arms and open hearts, just as He welcomes us. This is the meaning of Christmas. - Pastor John

# Getting Ready for Christmas Day

## December 11: "Gloria" presented by the Adult Choir

The adult choir will present Gloria by Antonio Vivaldi, Sunday December 11, during 9:00 and 11:00 worship services.

Written around 1715 for the choir of the Ospedale della Pieta, an orphanage for girls, the twelve movement work is the traditional Gloria from the Latin Mass. The piece is joyous--full of vibrant rhythms and distinctive melodies. Colleen Cameron, Paula Ekstrom and Ashley Puenner are featured soloists.

Please invite your family and friends to join us in worship as we sing praises to our God and experience Vivaldi's most famous choral piece.

## December 18: "Come to the Manger" – All Church Christmas Pageant

"So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger." Luke 2.16. December 18, at 9 and 11 o'clock worship services, we will retell the familiar story of the birth of baby Jesus with an all church Christmas pageant. Everyone, adults and children will be invited to participate in telling the story, singing carols and, yes, dressing up if you wish. There are parts for Marys, Josephs, animals, and the usual characters to come up on the chancel and assume the character they want to be. This means our program might have only a few or many angels, animals and shepherds, or several Marys and Josephs. This is another opportunity to share our faith with family and friends.

## 25th Annual Cookie Walk!

Our 25th annual Cookie Walk is Saturday, December 10th and we need your help. Those of you who have signed up to bake dozens and dozens of cookies and candies, God bless you and we thank you! Those of you who have signed up to help with Decorating Fellowship Hall, Cookie drop-off, Cookie set-up and Cookie Walk day, God bless you and we look forward to your presence. Those of you who are still considering to bake or help, please sign-up on the bulletin board in the Gathering Place outside the office. This years proceeds will benefit our church budget, Fairhaven School in Egypt, PADS lunches, Living Waters and our youth mission trips. There is more information in Fellowship Hall or e-mail Nancy Blakely at [nbbalakely@comcast.net](mailto:nbbalakely@comcast.net). Thank you!



## Parent's Night Out!

December 16, 2016 5:00-8:45PM

All Children 6mos. -8th grade are invited

\*Dinner will be served



While the kids are away the parents can play! This night is our gift to you. Take some time to finish your shopping, wrap your gifts, enjoy dinner with friends/family or a nice quiet evening at home. The night is yours. Please sign up on the bulletin board by the name tags by December 11. Questions please contact Raechel Sowa at [rdsowa@yahoo.com](mailto:rsowa@yahoo.com) or 847-516-1087.



As the Worship Enhancement Team worked to prepare our sanctuary for Advent the following poem by G. K. Chesterton came to one's mind and was shared by all.

*"To an open house in the evening,  
Home shall men come;  
To an older place than Eden,  
And a taller town than Rome;  
To the end of the way of the wandering star,  
To the things that cannot be and are,  
To the place where God was homeless  
And all men are at home."*

We hope that our worship will inspire and enliven you on your Advent journey to the stable: "the place where God was homeless and all men are at home." Jesus was born on the road, his family torn from their roots by powers beyond their control. They took refuge where they could and the place where they stopped became a sanctuary, at least for a brief time, before they had to move on. May our corporate worship be a refuge and sanctuary for you so that, together, we might be a refuge for fellow travelers who need God's love wherever we meet them.

<i><b>Advent and Christmas Worship</b></i>		
November 27	HOPE	"God's Dream"
December 4	PEACE	"a girl's answer"
December 11 Adult Choir Cantata	JOY <i><b>Gloria,</b></i> Antonio Vivaldi	"Mary's Song"
December 18 Christmas Pageant	LOVE	"Come to the Manger"
Christmas Eve	Services at 4:00, 6:00, 7:30 & 9:30 pm	
Christmas Day	Worship at 11:00 am	
New Year's Day	Worship at 11:00 am	



### *Christmas Giving Tree*

The annual RCLPC Giving Tree will go up and be decorated on Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>! Each ornament will contain a wish list item for a community member in need. Please consider taking an ornament or two and return the gift to be placed under the tree in the Gathering Area by December 10<sup>th</sup> (or the date listed on the ornament). This is such a fantastic way to help make the season sparkle for someone in need this season. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Joy Martin at 815-344-2817.

### *Thanks for Supporting Fair Trade!*

There is so much more to fair trade than selling products. Essential equipment, training, and marketing assistance allow low-income artisans and farmers to design new products, find new customers, and increase their income. Artisan groups provide vital services to entire communities, including water wells, schools, environmental projects, and medical care.

Thank you to our shoppers, workers, and treat providers for helping spread hope and justice to families in need through the Gift Shop. We continue to offer fair trade chocolate, coffee, and tea. Check what's available on the Coffee Cart in Fellowship Hall, or leave a note with what you'd like to see in our next order. -- Mission Outreach Ministry



### *Scrip Cards for Christmas*

Christmas is just around the corner and you can make it easy by ordering Scrip gift cards. By ordering through Scrip you are supporting our PADS lunches. It's easy, fill out the order form (next to the Scrip poster in Fellowship Hall), checks written out to RCLPC with Scrip on the memo line and place both in the Scrip mailbox near the front door. Orders are due Sunday, December 4th. Your gift cards will be in that same mailbox on December 19th with your name on the envelope. Scrip gift cards will be for sale in between services Look for Joan Jensema and Linda Peel. Thank you for helping PADS lunches.

## *Our prayers continue for the Fankhausers...*

*"To all who sent food and cards, who called and visited, a very sincere thank you from the Fankhauser family. Your friendship and support mean so much. John is presently at The Springs rehab center in Crystal Lake and showing improvement each day. We look forward to when we can both be back at church regularly."*



# THANK YOU!

## *Big Thanks!*

Last month there was a wonderful article about all the amazing people who helped to make our CROP walk such a success. But there is one special person who made it all possible . . . MJ Towne. Her tireless effort and amazing dedication brought our entire church together. She got us to donate our time and our talents and our funds to show our huge heart. MJ did an awesome job and we all thank her for her hard work for this project.

## *Women's Bible Study*

Beginning in January 2017, there will be a women's Bible group available at RCLPC. So many have asked for this offering, and we are excited to be able to begin this study. We will be meeting the second and fourth Thursdays at church, 10:00 AM to 12:00. Our first study will be "Broken and Blessed" by Jessica LaGrone and will be the study of Genesis. We will be ordering books by the end of December, so be sure to sign up at church soon. You can also contact the group coordinators, Kathy Rabe & Deb Steele. Please join us!



## *The House of Christmas*

*G.K. Chesterton*

"To an open house in the evening,  
Home shall men come;  
To an older place than Eden,  
And a taller town than Rome;  
To the end of the way of the wandering star,  
To the things that cannot be and are,  
To the place where God was homeless  
And all men are at home."



## *This Christmas...Keep the Water of Life Flowing*

The sign over the Living Waters display in Fellowship Hall reminds us of the ongoing work in Guatemala with Jerez and the new project in La Felicidad. The Advent display offers the congregation a chance to learn more about Living Waters and an opportunity to sponsor a part of the water purification system for La Felicidad, give a Christmas gift of 5-

gallon bottles to be used to distribute clean water, or purchase two replacement filters for the system in Jerez. What meaningful Christmas gifts for family or friends.

From February 5-9, 2017, a small group from RCLPC will visit the Belén Presbyterian Church in Jerez to encourage and celebrate the work there, providing for the sustainability of the system. We will also begin our partnership with another Presbyterian church, Ciudad de Refugio, in nearby La Felicidad. Through the covenanting process, this church and RCLPC agree on the steps to be followed leading up to implementation in early 2018.

Several more members of our church will be going to Clean Water U this spring to get certified and to enlarge the leadership team. Are you interested in joining a future RCLPC team? Talk with anyone from the 2016 team, and they'll probably tell you it changed their life. We welcome your support, participation, and prayers for this mission.

“...but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.” John 4:14

## *Stronghold Christmas Concert in the Castle with Barb Sorensen*

On Friday, December 16 Stronghold is pleased to host singer/songwriter Barb Sorensen for 2 shows (5:00 & 8:00 pm). The one hour concert will feature German, English and Norwegian Christmas songs sung in their native languages, with stories and history of their origin, along with a few of Barb's original Christmas songs.

Barb Sorensen is based out of Palatine, IL and has performed for the White House Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Please join Stronghold for this special, warm, intimate celebration in the Castle Great Hall. Tickets are \$20.00 for the 5:00 show and \$35.00 for the 8:00 show. Tickets for children 12 and under are \$10; children under 6 are free. Call Stronghold reservations at 815-732-6111 ext. 613 for more information and to purchase tickets. Call now - seating is limited!



*Don't forget - January  
Spirit deadline is  
December 30th*

## *What's in a name?*

Well... lots! Please take a moment on Sunday mornings to pick up and wear your nametag. Nametags are located in the drawers of the grey sign-up desk in the gathering place (just outside the office).

## Session Highlights

November 28, 2016

Rev. John Dillon Moderator

Approved Session Meeting Minutes from October 24, 2016

Approved Joint Session Meeting Minutes from October 23, 2016

Approved Raechel Sowa as 2<sup>nd</sup> Elder on Nominating Committee

Discussed April 23, 2017 Human Race Event road closer

Discussed Blackhawk Presbytery Meeting November 8, 2016

20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of partnership with Kenya Presbytery

Kenya trip January 10-25, 2017 – Ann Legg attending

Church World Services Donations

School Kits – 1,653 (RCLPC -50)

Hygiene Kits – 541 (RCLPC – 10)

Cleanup Kits – 34

2017 per capita

Blackhawk - \$24.80

Synod - \$3.81

GA - \$7.50

Total \$36.11

Reviewed October financial report

Reviewed 2017 Preliminary Budget

Approved membership roster changes

Next meeting December 19, 2016

