



December 2014

*The Spirit*  
of Ridgefield-Crystal Lake  
Presbyterian Church

**Matthew 1:23(NRSV)**

<sup>23</sup> “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”  
which means, “God is with us.”

"God must have a plan for you, you were spared to do something useful." Hearing the details of my accident, a complete stranger and then a very distant relative said that to me.

Does that mean if God had no plans for me, or I was useless that I would have died? That is what is implied and that is certainly not Biblical or Christian.

This "karma", "tit-for-tat", "you are only as valuable as your usefulness" God is everywhere in our culture. It is wrong, it is demonic, it is untrue. Yet it is so prevalent and not just outside the church. Time and time again, I have heard people deny that God could possibly love them. Not after what they have done/thought/been!!

Have they not heard the Gospel promise of forgiveness? Apparently not!

Have they not heard that God loves each and every one? Apparently not!

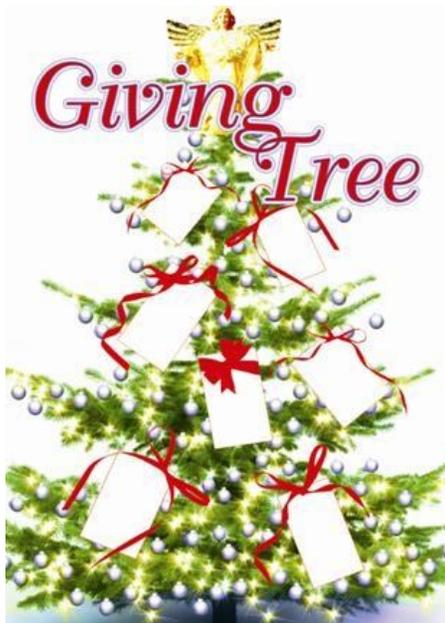
Have they not experienced God's Grace? Apparently not!

Have they never seen someone resurrected from abject pain and lose? Apparently not!

The whole promise of the Gospel is contained in the passage above from Mathew. The whole point of Christmas is in those words: "God is with us." Here, now, present, caring, loving, healing, crying with us in our despair, sharing our pain, wiping away our sins, making the sun rise (or is it Son Rise?) and the rain to fall on the good and the bad. Christmas means God cares, shares and gives new beginnings.

"God is with us." No one is useless, no one is without value, no one is disposable. God is involved, not sitting on high treating us with contempt or dis-interest. And certainly not dealing with our lives as if on the random roll of a set of dice.

Celebrate God's closeness this Season. ~ Pastor Dillon



## RCLPC Christmas Giving Tree

“What do we do with Christmas? How do we tell an old, old story that’s been told so much before? We can make room this season for what matters most!”

We make room in our hearts by sharing with others through the Christmas Giving Tree. The Giving Tree is up and ready for selecting tags from FHPC (Family Health Partnership Clinic), HOS (Home of the Sparrow), and Pioneer (which includes PADS and the Youth Service Bureau). Just follow the directions on the tag, and return the items to the tree on December 10, with the tag attached. For gift cards, you’ll find a basket behind the tree for your envelopes with the tag and gift card.

We also have a special opportunity this year. ***Room for Christmas, a children’s musical, will be presented on Dec. 14 at 3:00pm in the sanctuary.*** YOU can participate. You can choose an item from either the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) list by the tree, or the FHPC tags on the tree, and bring the gift to church by 3:00pm on Dec. 14. You’ll have an opportunity during the program to lay your gift beside the manger.

The BBBS tags are in a special envelope next to the basket on the window sill, along with a list of the recipients. Cross off the name and item you take off the list, take the tag, and enjoy a special opportunity to present the gift at the program.

Help make Christmas happy for children, adults, and the helping agencies that serve those in need. There will be room in our hearts for love, for the baby, for peace!

Joy Martin – 815-344-2817, [joymartin@earthlink.net](mailto:joymartin@earthlink.net)

~ Mission Team



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY BABY JESUS!

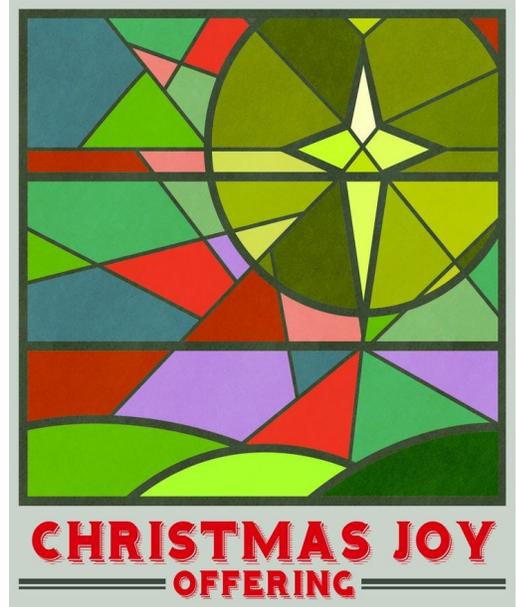
Ages six months to 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
December 19, 5:30 – 8:30 PM  
RCLPC Fellowship Hall

Parents, Grandparents, Friends!! We are having a wonderful evening to celebrate baby Jesus’ birthday with a fun party at church. We will have games, crafts, pizza dinner, storytelling, and so much more. Please bring your children, grandchildren, neighbors, etc. It will be a wonderful evening for the children and you can have an evening for shopping or dinner or a quiet time at home to prepare all those Christmas gifts. Please sign up by December 17 in the Connecting Link.

## *Christmas Joy Offering*

Please give to the Christmas Joy Offering this season to continue helping those who have dedicated their lives in service of the church, locally, nationally, and around the world. Your offering also supports leadership development and education at Presbyterian schools and colleges. The Christmas Joy Offering has been a Presbyterian tradition for nearly 80 years. Support Christmas Joy Offering!

~ Mission Outreach Team



## *Fair Trade Coffee Cart*

For your holiday shopping and enjoyment, a new supply of fair trade coffee, tea, and chocolate is in stock. Recent arrivals are the Single Serve Cups for use in Keurig coffeemakers. Hot cocoa canisters are available, as well as a new box of dark chocolate mint bars.

By purchasing fairly traded products through the Presbyterian Coffee Project -- the products you find on the Coffee Cart in Fellowship Hall, you are directly supporting the Presbyterian Hunger Program's essential relief and development work around the world. Payment is cash or check to RCLPC, placed in the small box on the cart. Thank you!



## *Food Give-Away*

Thanks to the folks of RCLPC for sharing their time, treasure, and talents with our hungry neighbors. On a very cold day, an energetic crew sorted and bagged the produce in less than an hour and were delivering it to cars by 8:45am. We included a flier with information about why local food is important and a few recipes to put the produce to good use.

Fifty families and 25 seniors received bountiful fresh produce, as well as a food gift card. Von Bergen's Country Market in Hebron and Brook Farm in Harvard provided the vegetables and apples to us at reduced prices. One guest's words of appreciation came to the church office: "I am looking forward to having that butternut squash with the beets. Butternut squash is my very favorite." Again thanks. ~Mission Team

# GIVING

## *End of the Year Finances*

Just a reminder from the Finance Team to get your pledges up-to-date for this year and perhaps consider an additional gift. We, of course, welcome your usual generosity to the Christmas

Offering, but don't forget to help out the General Fund as well. We have cut the budget, and held it steady for three years now, but giving is down and we hope we can continue with our current staff and programming. Thanks and have a Blessed and Merry Christmas.

~ The Finance Team.



## *Kits for Church World Service*

*From Blackhawk Presbytery Meeting on November 11:*

A Generous offering of kits for Church World Service came from 49 participating churches. In total, we sent off 2,557 kits! This included 373 hygiene kits, 35 baby kits, 84 emergency clean-up buckets and 2,065 school kits. What a FABULOUS harvest! Thanks to RCLPC for participating in this Presbytery-wide effort. ~ Mission Team

# Cookie Walk

*December 13th*

*9 a.m. – noon!*



## **CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS**

With the Advent season upon us, children's Sunday school is preparing for the birth of baby Jesus. Each classroom has an advent wreath with candles and starts each Sunday during December with a short advent service. On December 21<sup>st</sup> the preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms will come together to celebrate Jesus' birthday with a story, birthday cake and games.

During the month of January, preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will briefly take a break from the classroom routine and come together each Sunday for a mission month. Each of the three Sundays in January will have a mission theme and end with some fun bible games. Of course there will be snacks!

**Please note** that there will be **no** Sunday school on December 28<sup>th</sup> and January 4<sup>th</sup> in observance of Christmas and New Years! Sunday school will resume on January 11, 2015.

*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests. Luke 2:14*

## TIPS ON GREENING THE HOLIDAYS

Amongst all the festivities and good cheer this holiday season, there are also many simple things you can do (or not do) that help lighten the impact on our planet. Consider the following tips:

1. Consider buying a locally-sourced live (uncut) tree that you can plant outside come springtime. Live trees can be kept inside for a few weeks and should be watered regularly, like houseplants. Because the tree is live, you will lose less needles than on a cut tree. Once the holidays are over, find an area outside, protected from the wind, to shelter your evergreen until spring. If it doesn't snow, you will need to water it (use ice cubes). Evergreens will remain dormant until it gets warmer. Plant in the ground as soon as possible in Spring, prior to developing new growth shoots.
2. If buying a cut live tree, buy a locally grown tree from one of the many Christmas tree farms in McHenry County. Consider leaving the tree outside after the holidays as a shelter for birds and wildlife in the winter. When ready to discard the tree, make sure the tree is chipped for mulch. Check with your local municipality for places to recycle your tree:

### CHRISTMAS TREES

Remove all tinsel, garland, decorations, and lights! Check with your waste hauler or municipality about pick-up for chipping. Reuse Christmas tree as a shelter for birds in the winter.

#### \* Algonquin Township Road District ~CLK

(847) 639-2700 X6 [www.alqtwsp.com](http://www.alqtwsp.com)  
Accepted December 26 - January 31.

#### Dorr Township Highway Department

12322 Davis Rd., Woodstock  
(815) 338-1060

7am - 3:30pm to Jan 31st. Dorr Township residents only.

#### Fox River Grove residents

(847) 639-3171 [www.foxrivergrove.org](http://www.foxrivergrove.org)

#### Huntley residents

Call Park District for Drop Off Sites at  
(847) 669-3180

#### \* McHenry County Conservation District ~RGWD

(815) 338-6223 [www.mccd.org](http://www.mccd.org)

Christmas Tree Drop-Off to Jan 15th signs at  
Glacial Park's Hart Road parking lot and Rush  
Creek horse trailer parking lot.

#### \* Nunda Township Road District ~CLK

(815) 459-4410 [www.nundatownship.com](http://www.nundatownship.com)

7am-3:30pm M-F 8-noon Sat. through March at  
3518 Bay Road, Crystal Lake  
Nunda Township residents only.

#### Woodstock residents

Call Public Works at (815) 338-6118



3. If you find that many of your string lights need replacing this season, consider replacing them with LED string lights. LEDs use up to 90% less energy than typical incandescent string lights and last much longer too. According to one U.S. Department of Energy study, if everyone replaced their conventional holiday light strings with LEDs, we could save at least two billion kilowatt-hours of electricity in a month – enough to power 200,000 homes for a year! And don't throw those old string lights in the trash – recycle them through your local municipality or businesses such as these:

4. When choosing gift wrap, re-use wrapping from previous gifts if possible. Or at least purchase gift wrap made with recycled content – or use old newspapers. (comics work great!) Make gift tags out of old greeting cards. As for the gifts themselves, consider items with minimal packaging. And when shopping for gifts, think twice about taking a bag for each of your purchases if you don't really need one. Or carry a re-useable nylon bag instead and forego the shopping bag altogether!

5. When getting the home in the festive spirit, try soy or beeswax candles for cleaner burning, longer lasting, and gentler on the environment.

With some creative planning and making small changes to our holiday traditions, we can enjoy and celebrate the holiday season while treading lightly on the Earth. Please consider these tips as you celebrate this holiday season. Happy Holidays! From The RCLPC Earth Care Team



# Action Alert

From the Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness

Compassion, Peace, and Justice Ministries

Raising A Prophetic Voice through the Social Justice Policy of Presbyterians since 1946

## **Call on Congress to help end the violence and foster a just Peace for Israelis and Palestinians.**

Violence in Israel and the occupied West Bank is escalating, leaving Israelis and Palestinians dead and injured and fanning the flames for even more violence. Tensions on the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount complex have led to violence and threaten to further erupt. Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem expressed concern in a November 6 [statement](#) in which they called for protection of sites and preservation of access.

At the same time, land confiscation, settlement expansion, and home demolitions continue in the West Bank, with Israel resuming its [practice](#) of demolishing homes as a punitive measure. And in Gaza, while some restrictions have been eased, the crippling blockade continues.

**As people of faith who believe in the value of every human life, we must speak and act to preserve life and prevent further suffering. We must condemn all violence and all calls for revenge. To prevent even more loss of life, it is crucial to address the underlying causes for the violence.**

### **Contact your members of Congress and ask them to:**

- \* Condemn all violence against civilians and calls for revenge by any person or party;
- \* Oppose settlement expansion and other actions and policies that perpetuate the occupation;
- \* Recognize the role of US aid to Israel in enabling the Israeli occupation and take action to ensure that this aid is used in compliance with US law and policy.

Greetings,

On August 14, 2014(16 weeks ago), Pastor John experienced an accident inflicting physical injuries that have impeded John from providing most pastoral care activities for RCLPC. Since the accident, John has been a resource contact and provided direction for RCLPC pastoral care. John continues his healing process. The Session, Deacons and Worship Team have provided congregation care, pulpit supply and administrative direction to continue the operation of RCLPC.

This communication is to inform the congregation that John's Long Term Disability Insurance coverage has been activated. Like many organizations, the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church carries a Disability Insurance policy for clergy. The policy provides financial relief to congregations facing the situation we find ourselves experiencing. RCLPC has provided John's salary, housing, pension, health insurance and dental Insurance per our approved call. At the same time, we filled the pulpit each Sunday with staff provided by the Blackhawk Presbytery and compensated by RCLPC. With the activation of the Board of Pension Disability Insurance, the insurance will cover 67% of John's effective salary, Health Insurance Premiums, and Pension Premiums. RCLPC will continue to cover John's Dental Insurance, Medical co-pay, and up to 33% of John's effective salary.

John will continue to have limited involvement, as he is now, and we will continue to provide and compensate pulpit supply. Rev. Phyllis Mueller has agreed to be our Temporary Pulpit Supply each Sunday, starting in January 2015, and her presence will provide continuity with Sunday services. The Session and Administration Team have worked out responsibilities between RCLPC and Phyllis while John is recovering. We expect in the next few months as John's injuries continue to heal, John will begin to insert himself (bit-by-bit) back into his full-time role as RCLPC Pastor.

In summary, the Disability Insurance provides for some temporary financial relief while Pastor John continues to heal. RCLPC will continue on with all our services, programs and mission work. We look forward to your continued support and if you have any questions, please contact either Lee Ekstrom or Cindy Theobald. Enjoy the Advent Season and be thankful of our many blessings.

Peace to you,

Lee Ekstrom  
Clerk of Session

Cindy Theobald  
Elder Administration Team

John Dillon  
Pastor