



ADVENT
SERMON
SERIES

Newsletter

Presbyterian Disciples Church

December 2017



Church Chat—December, 2017—"Happy Holidays"—John C. Swisher, M.Div.

I hope everyone's holidays are happy, as the above greeting suggests. And interestingly enough, the holy-days around the end of the year are diverse enough, finding happiness in there somewhere ought not to be too hard. Perhaps it would be helpful to outline the territory surrounding our holiday cheer in an inclusive vein, therefore.

No doubt the most familiar of the season's holidays is Christmas, but lots of the accompanying Christmas lore has many diverse roots. The Christian celebration of Jesus' birth is surrounded with many symbols, some of which come from its non-Christian, or pagan, roots. The Christmas tree (including use of Yule logs, holly, and evergreen branches), lighting of candles, feasting, and many other holiday traditions either have their roots in pagan practice or are common to many religious faiths, as well as Christianity. Even the tradition of the virgin birth is found in other stories of the time, such as the birth of Caesar, also said to be born of a virgin. The choice of the Church to place the celebration of the birth of Jesus at the end of the year, very near the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, was related to pagan celebrations, as well. For the Church wanted to bring in and "Christianize" the followers of local religions in many regions where the solstice, or other holidays were already in place. Most pagan faiths, the Roman holiday of Saturnalia, and Mithraism (a Greek mystery religion) all had holidays at or near the end of the year. Of course, the Christian symbolism of Jesus as the light of the world, coming into the world at its darkest hour (shortest days of the year), has its own symbolism. And perhaps the most widespread of Christmas traditions, gift-giving and Santa Claus, both have their roots in Christmas tradition.

Hanukkah or Chanukah, the other traditional prominent holiday falling in this season, is sometimes called "Jewish Christmas", but bears no connection to Christmas, other than being a holiday of candle-lighting and gift-giving. The historic roots of Hanukkah come from an era well before Jesus of Nazareth, a time when the Jews were persecuted by the Greek empire, and its Hebrew collaborators.

The lighting of the menorah, or hanukiah, of Hanukkah remembers a vigil kept by the Jews after they had thrown off the foreign power and reclaimed their temple back in the 2nd century BCE.

Kwanza, a modern end of the year holiday, began in 1966, started by Maulana Karenga, and is an African-American alternative celebration to Christmas. Emphasizing seven principles, unity, self-determination, collective work/responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith, it is celebrated from 12/26-1/1 and comes from the word for "first fruits".

As your pastor, I wish you Merry Christmas, and I only hope your Christmas is as wonderful as the Peanuts kids was, with the scruffy little tree, the carols sung slightly off-key, and the familiar story bringing a few tears to everyone's eyes. Peace on earth, goodwill to all!!!

Chapel Chuckle: Why did the redneck volunteer fireman who was playing one of the Wise Men in the Christmas play at church show up on the night of performance with ashes on his shoes? Answer: He'd come from a "far".



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Please join us as we celebrate with Gladys Duffett for her 90th birthday party Sunday, December 3rd from 2-4pm.



The Children's Christmas Play "A Special Delivery for Christmas" directed by Sharon Probst will be held Saturday, December 9th at 11:00am and 1:30pm in the downstairs of the Trails Regional Library. This is a FREE event and open to all.



Everyone is invited to a Community Pre-Christmas Eve Service Thursday, December 21, 2017 at 7:00pm at The LEX featuring music by "Anticipation Quartet".



The Presbyterian Disciples Church will participate with other churches in town by raising money for Salvation Army and the Community. We will ring the Salvation Army Bell at Dave's Country Mart on Friday, December 22nd and Saturday, December 23rd. This is a service project for the Youth in church to participate in as well as other members of the congregation. A sign up sheet will be at the church. Please call the office if you are interested in helping.



Confirmation class will meet during the Fellowship Meal on Sunday, December 10th.



Upcoming Community Events

Old Church Tours
12-01-2017

Location: Lexington
5:30-9:30PM Tickets \$10.00 Sponsored by

Lexington Tourism Festival of Lights Parade
12-01-2017

Location: Downtown Lexington
Parade starts at 7:00pm

Elk's Annual Free Turkey Dinner
12-02-2017

Location: Lexington Elk's Lodge 749
Turkey and all the trimmings. 11-1pm Carry-out available.

Christmas Bazaar
12-02-2017

Location: Lexington High School
8:00am-3:00pm

Victorian Christmas
12-09-2017

Location: Elks Building
Sponsored by Historical Association and includes Dinner & Speaker

The Lexington Wind Symphony
Christmas Concert
12-10-2017

Location: United Methodist Church
3:00pm
Refreshments to follow

Chorus of Friends Christmas Cantata
12-15-2017

Location: United Methodist Church
7:30pm
Refreshments to follow

Pre-Christmas Eve Service
12-21-17

Location: The LEX
7:00pm
Featuring the Group Anticipation Quartet

Lectionary Readings for December

03— Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37
10— Isaiah 40:1-11 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15; Mark 1:1-8
17— Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28
24— Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)
31— Isaiah 61:10—62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40



Church Board will meet again on Sunday, December 3rd following worship.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01 – Michael Summerlin
 05 – Gladys Duffett
 06 – Landon Meierer
 07 – Janelle Braden
 08 – Jewel Meyer
 09 – Doug Cox, Elizabeth Brock
 12 – Bob Mitchell
 13 – Travis Waddell
 15 – Wilda Nevels
 17 – Angie Chapman
 20 – Julie Osman, Gabriel Moore
 25 – LaVonne Hulver, Jesus
 27 – Jill Oetting

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

18 – Bill & Laveda Cross



We Pray for:
 Mary Williams, Anne Brubeck, Betty Swisher, Linda & John Larry Marchetti, Lela Bryant, Doris Bradley, Larry, Kathy, & Matthew Neil, Jake Means, Robert Smith, Chris & Stephanie Christenson, Steve Sellers, Chris & Stephanie Christenson, Roy Marchetti, Bill & LaVeda Cross, Lois Coulter, Bev Waddell, Gloria Hutton, Cassius Cole & Family, Steve Harlow, Bryant Family, Bill Blass, Doak Family, Lil Lynn, Claudia Garber, Alvera Johnson, Carson Eby, Disaster Victims & Emergency Workers, Children in Belize, Linda Hull, Bob McDonald, Prison Staff & Inmates, Military Families & Future of our church, Children in Belize

The Board has voted and decided that there will be **NO MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE on Christmas Eve Day.** We will worship together on **Christmas Eve night, December 24th at 7:30pm** for our annual Christmas Eve Candle Lighting Service.



Please Pray for the Families of Those That Have Passed:
 Lexie Tallie, Tommy Walton, David Wallace, Joe Beretta Lois Forsha, Wade Ensor, Justin Delane Robert Walquist, Sue Ann Lynn, Dearthour Brooks, Virginia Peterson, William Marsick, Jimmy Case, Thomas Neece

The children of the church will be presenting their Christmas program “Emoji Christmas” on Sunday, December 10th during worship service. Please come and worship with these talented youth as they celebrate the Birth of Jesus. Dress rehearsal will be held Saturday, December 9th at 4:30pm. A Big Thank You to Brittney Bayne and Candy Myers for helping with the program. Also a Huge Thank You to the youth participating in the program: Aiden Bayne, Audrey Bayne, Miranda Braden, Camden Goodloe, Remington Hager, Ainsley Hamacher, Ardyn Hamacher, Madison Markley, Taylon Morgan, Zade Myers, Zenden Myers, Brody Neece, Seth Sims, Nolen Wrisinger



Our Servicemen:
 Nathan Wrisinger, Bobby Maze, Bo Maze, Derek Morgan, Eric Morgan, MJ Myers, Mark Brubeck, Ryland Sims, Johnathan Lefholz, Jimmy & Brittany Register

There will be a Fellowship Meal on Sunday, **December 10th** following the Children’s Christmas Program. Please bring a dish or two to share with your Church Family.

The Kansas City Boys Choir and the Kansas City Girls Choir will entertain us again this Holiday Season on **December 17th at 4:30pm** in our sanctuary. Cookies and punch will be served following the concert.

The Giver

Many Christian families struggle with what role — if any — Santa Claus should play in their Christmas celebrations. No matter what you decide, it's fascinating to know the history of the real-life St. Nicholas.

Born about 270 A.D., Nicholas was a bishop in Myra, or modern-day Turkey. In the year 325, he was part of the Council of Nicaea, which produced the Nicene Creed.

Nicholas, known for his generosity, often gave away his money anonymously. According to tradition, he secretly provided dowries for the three daughters of a bankrupt merchant. Nicholas threw two bags of gold through open windows and placed the third in a stocking hanging by the fireplace to dry. Thus began the Christmas tradition of placing gifts in stockings.

St. Nicholas is quoted as saying, "The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic God's giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves."



Christmas Wonder

I want to see into the heart of a thing ...
I want the God-given way of seeing life,
not to possess and to control, but to
stand back in wonder and gratitude.
—Esther de Waal

God With Us

God comes to us across this brief and
wondering season, tracing the ways of
pain and song. Sharing beyond all
rhyme or reason, this long year's dark-
est days. 'Til we can face his radiant
bearing in the stable place of peace.
—J. Barrie Shepherd

A Holiness Invasion

"Advent" means "coming," of course,
and the promise of Advent is that what
is coming is an unimaginable invasion.
The mythology of our age has to do
with flying saucers and invasions from
outer space, and that is unimaginable
enough. But what is upon us now is
even more so — a close encounter not
of the third kind but of a different kind
altogether. An invasion of holiness.
That is what Advent is about.
—Frederick Buechner,
The Clown in the Belfry



As Good As Done

Upon the birth of the one who'd become known as John the Baptist, his father, Zechariah, praised God. Zechariah broke his nine-month inability to speak with these words: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" (Luke 1:68-70, NRSV).

Notice how Zechariah describes God's actions as if they had already happened! In Good News of Great Joy, John Piper writes, "Nine months earlier, Zechariah could not believe his wife would have a child. Now, filled with the Holy Spirit, he is so confident of God's redeeming work in the coming Messiah that he puts it in the past tense. For the mind of faith, a promised act of God is as good as done."



Greatest Worth

He came a babe of lowly birth.
He was God's Son of greatest worth.
We, like the angels, sing with mirth
because God sent his Son to earth
to ransom us and claim our worth.
Praise God this babe of lowly birth!
—MaryAnn Sundby

The Perfect Gift

Do you stress about finding just the right gift for everyone on your Christmas list? Does it make the season more a hassle than a joy? Pastor Mike Slaughter reminds us that Christmas isn't about perfect presents for people, as if it were their birthday — or ours. Christmas is about the perfect presence of Immanuel, God with us, through the birth of Jesus; it's his birthday, after all!

In Christmas Is Not Your Birthday (Abingdon), Slaughter writes, "How funny that it can be so hard to find gifts that will please certain family members or friends — the people who seem to have everything — and yet it is so clear what the Lord of lords and King of kings wants for his birthday. God wants you — your time, your talent and your treasure — used in service to others."

The Great Date Debate

In Lessons of Christmas (Xulon Press), Daniel Armah notes that ancient scholars expressed more than 130 opinions about Jesus' actual birthdate, covering every month of the year. "Even with a debatable date," he concludes, "the blessing of Christmas is obvious."

Likewise, our Christmas celebrations aren't diminished by the possible timing of Jesus' birthday with secular festivals. "If December 25th was chosen to rival other pagan worship activities ... for want of a real date," Armah writes, "then that decision has been successful. Indeed those ancient pagan festivals have all been swallowed up, and Christianity has been growing since."



Everlasting Joy

In a Chicken Soup for the Soul sampler, Karen Asire tells of a particularly difficult Christmas after her husband left and began divorce proceedings. As Karen and her three young children set up their tree, she fought tears and secretly tucked aside certain ornaments, such as one announcing "Our First Christmas Together."

Several days later, a neighbor stopped by with a gold decoration proclaiming JOY. "We've hung this ornament on our tree for several years," she explained, "but this year we wanted you to have it." When Asire hung it on the tree and stepped back, "all the other ornaments seemed to fade into the background, and all [she] saw was the shimmering gold of the JOY ornament." She allowed herself to cry then, grateful for the reminder that amid grief and heartache, God's love shines.

Pain fades in time, while God's Christmas gift — Jesus — brings joy that lasts forever.

Angel Tree Distribution will be held Wednesday, December 20th at LUMC and Christmas Basket Distribution will be held Friday, December 22nd at PDC.



Happy New Year. Hope everyone has a wonderful and happy 2018!! Let God guide your steps and you will not fall!!



To keep connected with the Northwest Area Disciples of Christ, please contact Rev. Bill Rose-Heim at br_h@nwareacc.org or (816) 632-2237.

To keep up to date on current events and to see what visitors are seeing when they check out our town on the internet, go to the following websites:

- www.lexingtonmo.com
- www.historiclexington.com
- www.visitlexingtonmo.com
- www.lafayettecountymmo.com



For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.
—Heb. 2:11, ESV

**+Christian Symbol+
Branch (Tree) of Jesse**

Isaiah used the image of a new tree growing from what appears dead to foretell God's redemption of Israel: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1, NIV). During Advent, this prophecy assures us of the coming of the Messiah, descended from King David, and thus his father, Jesse.



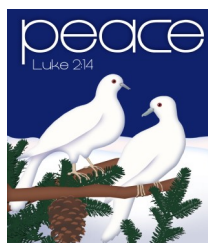
Our Greatest Need
If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator.

If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist.

If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist.

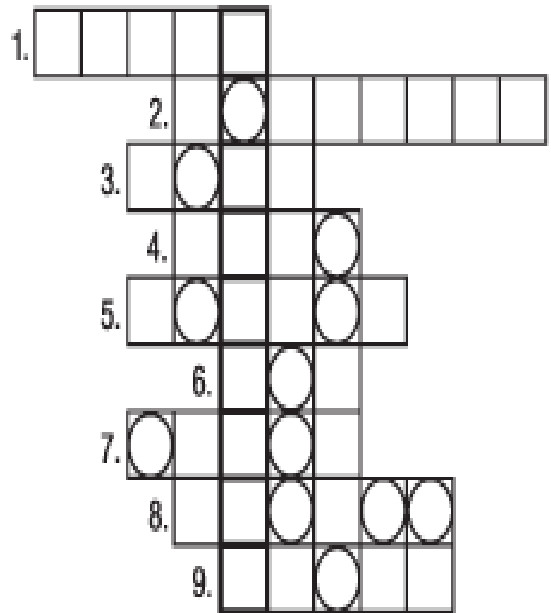
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer.

But our greatest need was forgiveness and acceptance, so God sent us a Savior.
—Author unknown



Puzzle!

Use the clues to fill in the blanks. Then write the word from the boldface vertical column. Also unscramble the circled letters to reveal a seasonal phrase.



1. Carolers and instrumentalists make this
2. What happens at malls
3. The angel Gabriel appeared to her
4. You'll find this under a Christmas tree
5. He was a carpenter
6. Joseph had to pay this in Bethlehem
7. The "ship of the desert"
8. Cattle eat out of this
9. Shepherds tend this

Bold word: _____

Seasonal phrase: _____

Answers: music; shopping; Mary; gift; Joseph; tax; camel; manger; sheep; Christmas; peace on earth



PUZZLE

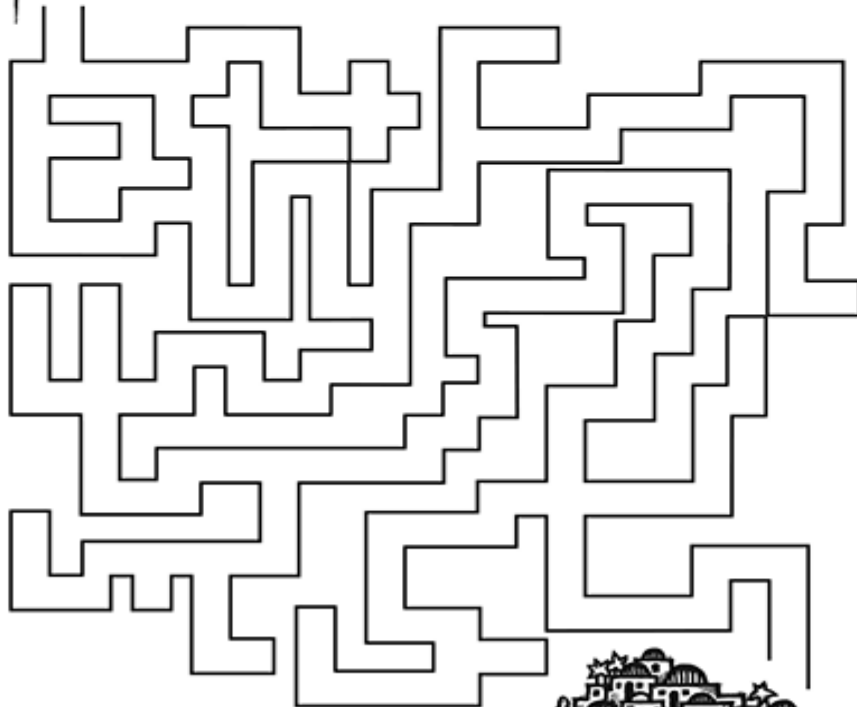
JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM

In the Christmas story in Luke 2, an angel tells some shepherds to go see baby Jesus in Bethlehem.



START

Directions: Follow the maze to arrive in Bethlehem.



BETHLEHEM

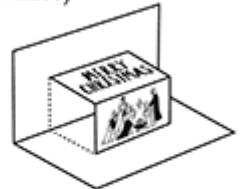


POP-UP CARD

Share the good news of Jesus' birth with this creative Christmas card.

What you need:

- Construction paper (two pieces, including one white)
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Pens
- Glue stick



What you do:

1. Neatly fold the white paper in half, short side to short side.
2. Draw two parallel lines (at least 2 inches apart) from the fold to about halfway to the edge. Cut along the lines.
3. Fold the cut section back and forth so it pops up.
4. Push the section up so it pops up inside the folded paper. Draw a nativity scene on the pop-up box.
5. Fold the colored paper in half, short side to short side. Place the white paper inside it and glue the white paper down, being careful not to glue the pop-up box.
6. Write a Christmas message and give or send the card to someone.



Bible Quiz

After Mary learned she was pregnant with God's Son, what relative — also miraculously pregnant — did she go visit?

- A. Esther
- B. Elizabeth
- C. Anne
- D. Anna

Answer: See Luke 1:39-40



December 2017

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

					1 9-11 Food Pantry 5:30-9:30pm Historical Churches Tour 7pm Festival of Lights Parade	2 8am-3pm Christmas Bazaar-LHS 11-1pm Elks Free Christmas Dinner
3 12pm Board Mtg 2-4pm Gladys Duffet's 90th Bday Party	4	5	6	7	8	9 10am Al-Anon Mtg-LUMC 11am & 1:30pm Children's Christmas
10 10:45am Children's Play Fellowship Meal 3pm Wind Symphony Concert-LUMC	11	12	13	14 10am DRP Christmas Party	15 1-3 Food Pantry	16 10am Al-Anon Mtg-LUMC
17 4:30pm KC Girls & KC Boys Choirs Perform	18	19	20 Lexington School District Last Day of School Angel Tree Gift Distribution-LUMC	21	22 Salvation Army Bell Ringing Christmas Basket Distribution-PDC	23 Salvation Army Bell Ringing 10am Al-Anon Mtg-LUMC
24 NO MORNING WORSHIP 7:30pm Candlelight Service	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26	27	28 8:30-11:30am Commodities	29	30 10am Al-Anon Mtg-LUMC
31 New Year's Eve						



Presbyterian Disciples Church
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Rev. John Swisher

Worship Service 10:45am - 12:00pm
Childrens Church 11:00am-12:00pm
All Are Welcome



Minister- Rev. John Swisher
Organist- Perry Beam
Secretary- Candy Myers
Treasurer- John Morgan
Custodian- MJ Myers
Children's Church- Brittney Bayne