



Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth
peace to people of good will.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Several years ago, a musician/comedian penned a funny parody of a traditional Christmas Classic, the 12 Pains of Christmas. The artist in the familiar melody talks about many of the things that we do around the time of Christmas: finding a Christmas tree, rigging up lights, hangovers, sending cards, five months of bills, facing one's in-laws, charities, children's nagging, finding a parking space, batteries not included, TV specials and singing carols. While this list is not exhaustive, it does give one a sense of Christmas tedium and predictability. In a more comical note, I have not done a one of them: yet!

While Christmas has become many things since the Word of God became flesh, none are more fatal to our faith than a sense of predictability and tedium. We are expected to decorate trees and houses, we are expected to visit family and friends, send cards, give to the red bucket, and so on. We also tend to have certain expectations when it comes to God. We expect God to meet us during our devotional time, (if we have one). We expect God to hear us when we light our advent candles and say our advent prayers (if we say them). We expect God to be near us when we gather together on Christmas Eve and light our half-melted candles singing Silent Night (if we go). These expectations of our God are fatal to our faith in a living God, because our Living God is anything but predictable and tedious.

I have yet to read a text that suggests Mary was waiting for Gabriel to arrive, but rather when Gabriel encountered Mary, Mary was *greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be*. I can't find any text that suggests Joseph was expecting his fiancé to become pregnant out of wedlock, yet we are told that through dreams and portents Joseph was "blown out of his socks." Can any of us think that the shepherds were expecting the fireworks in the sky or the Angelic chorus? They were floored. Which of these Christmas actions or any of the other familiar Christmas narratives speak of our Living God as either tedious or predictable?

To believe in a Living God is to believe in a God that continues to act and work. In other words, to believe in God is to be completely surprised and amazed at the new things that God, Father, Son and Spirit, is still doing amongst us. But, we expect God to fit into the boundaries and boxes we put around God. We want a spiritual experience on our terms, not a God that explodes our pre-conceived ideas and notions about Christmas or any day for that matter. We want a God of candlelight services and pre-printed devotionals, we do not want a God that challenges us or a God with authority to demand of us. We want to believe in a dead god we can control instead of the Living God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, still at work, still active, still "flooring us" and still "knocking our socks off."

Perhaps then the cure for our dead faith in a predictable, tedious, and dead god, is a wonder-filled belief in a Living and Loving God. Perhaps the only Christmas expectation we need to have from our God is to expect the unexpected. To expect the random encounter with a nervous father and very pregnant mother looking for a night's lodging. To expect the surprising good news given to the land and the poorest of the poor. To expect the unexpected Glory of God in our midst, to expect unexplainable wonders, to expect gracious reconciliation with a person lost to the ravages of time, to expect new babies or even to expect the unexpected "Angel" among us. Perhaps the only faithful expectation of God at Christmas is not the small and safe actions of a god we create but to look for the two hands of God, the Son, and the Spirit still at work in our everyday moments. Perhaps true faith involves looking for our Living God with wonder and amazement instead of controlling our dead god with tedium and predictability.

My friends, Christmas has become many things, but Jesus has not changed in any sense of our imaginations, he is still at work brokering the Peace of God, bringing the Life of the Kingdom, and inaugurating the Reign of God. This means that every day, not just Christmas day, is a day of wonder and amazement, a day of unpredictability and surprise, a day to expect the unexpected, a day to hope and believe: because God lives, Father, Son, and Spirit. Let us therefore put Christ back in Christmas, not a dead god of our own creating, but a Living, Loving and Active Lord. But most importantly let us "buckle up for the ride;" it promises to be anything but tedious and predictable, it promises to be amazing and wonder-full! Glory to God in the highest heavens and on earth peace, goodwill to all humanity!

In Christ, Rev. Mark

Merry Christmas from the Trinity Session:

Session is winding up the 2017 year.

Your elders are leading committees that are actively preparing for the advent season. How blessed we are to be able to do so much in our church and community!

Newly elected officers will be presented for ordination and installation on December 10.

We will joyfully be transferring into membership Cheryle Chiaramonte and Edward Chiaramonte on December 17th.

Church business that has been brought to session, includes adopting a Funeral Policy for Trinity, and preparing a budget for 2018.

Jessie Smith is your Elder-on-Call for December. If you have any questions or ideas concerning Trinity, please contact her.

We ask for your continued prayers for your church leaders.

Blessings for a joyful holiday season,

Mary Belding, Clerk



Treasurer's Report for October 2017

Income	\$10,716.00
Expenses	11,162.62
Difference	- 446.62

October was a good month for our budget. Our deficit for the year is -25,348.11. That is 50% less deficit amount than what we predicted for Year to date of October 31.

Thank you to all for your generous and heartfelt giving.

Lois J. Fassett
Treasurer



Stewardship:

Stewardship has been spending time learning the true meaning of Stewardship—that of giving back to God for what He has given us. This has been done by sermons by Rev. Mong, bulletin board, Minute for mission speaker and coffee hour friendship. We are moving forward with this new approach to stewardship.

Now is the season for the Christmas Joy offering. The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930's. This offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to—related racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Through the work of this offering, we seek the living of this truth: that God's generosity is the source, the support, and the outcome of our own. We give because God has freely given.

The Christmas Joy Offering celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the truly "indefinable gift".

Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift. 2 Corinthians 9:15.

We encourage you to support this life changing—offering.

The collection of this offering will be December 24th.

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year.

Respectfully submitted

Susan Hogle



Dear Trinity Family:

The Christmas season is upon us! What a joyful time for all Christians!

This time of giving is a great time for us to show our appreciation to our pastor and to the folks who do so much for Trinity.

We will be accepting monetary gifts for our pastor. He and his family give more of their time and energy than we can imagine. If you want to contribute, please see Lynne Mukina or Mary Belding.

One more way that we can show our love and appreciation to the people who do so much of the work for Trinity will be sharing the undesignated offering received at the Christmas Eve Evening Service. This gift will be shared equally by Church Secretary Lynne Mukina, Music Director Marj Landfried, Custodian Alicia Burkhart, Treasurer Lois Fassett, and Financial Secretary David Adams.

Thank you, Trinity for all you do and all you give. We are indeed a loving and generous congregation.

Blessings for a most joyous holiday season,

Mary Belding, Clerk of Session

Thank You

Dave Peterson for filling in the gaps! After the sidewalk were put in this past summer we were left with some dangerous gaps between the driveway and the sidewalk edges. A huge shout out to Dave for finishing this project for us.

Thank you to Thomas Fence for donating the fill. We greatly appreciate your help.

Prayer for Families

Loving God,
 During this holy season of Christmas, we ask for your blessing on all families.

Let Mary's openness to your wondrous ways be an inspiration to place all trust in you.

Let Joseph's courage provide hope during times of anxiety and uncertainty.

Let Jesus' life ignite all families with a spirit of light and love.

May the grace that encircled the Holy Family widen to embrace all families.

For this we pray.
 Amen.

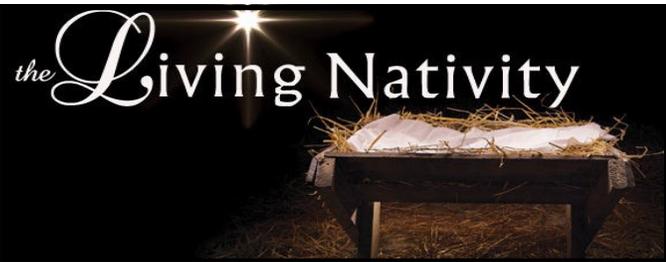



FEED THE HUNGRY

Items needed by December 18th for their holiday dinner give a way. Place items in the soup can.

- Packages of scalloped potatoes
- Large cans of sweet potatoes
- Jiffy muffin mix
- Cans of fruit
- Cans of vegetables
- Packages of cookie or brownie

Experience the Joy of that First Christmas



the Living Nativity

December 13th and 14th from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm.

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

If you can help, please sign up in the fellowship hall.

One Call Now

We as a congregation are using a computerized calling system to convey information to the congregation quickly and accurately. We are able to record an unlimited number of messages each month concerning anything the congregation needs from prayer concerns, to activities, to church closings. If you are interested in receiving these automated recorded messages from the church, and have not already signed up, all we need from you is your name and phone number you want the message to come to. Please call or e-mail the church office to leave your information and you will be included in our system. Please see Lynne or Mark if you have any questions.

THERE IS *Nothing* TOO GREAT OR TOO SMALL **FOR PRAYER**

Marilyn Anderson, Meredith Ayers, Ken Babcock, Margaret Barb, Lynda Bennett, Dee Fassett, The Family of Don Maginnis, Nancy Maginnis, Carol Rich, Martha Strong, Christie Stroud, Fran Wilson

LAST MINUTE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING NEEDS....

Heartmade Boutique, Accessories, gift shop, women's clothing, Owner, Melody Shiflet

Bridge Street Art Works, collective works of four local resident artist, Becca Stowell

Rev. Mong will be on vacation from December 26th through January 2nd. Please contact Lynne or Mary Belding if necessary. Hobart Shiflet will be leading us in Worship on December 31st.

Liturgist : Donna Shiflet

Ushers: Hogle Team

December 2017

Deacon on Call: Shirley Howland 998-6935

Elder on Call: Jessie Smith 992-1634

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 WOODMAN 10:00-2:00 New Members Class 9:00-11:00 am
3 COMMUNION 1ST Sunday of Advent 9:00 Choir 9:15 Adult Bible Study 10:30 Worship 10:45 Faith Builders	4 Poinsettia Order Deadline	5 8:00 Al Anon	6 10:00 Adult Bible Study 6:30 Deacons Mtg. 6:30 Card Ministry	7 10:00 Prayer Group 10:30 Thursday Ladies 6:30 Bell Practice	8 10:00 Brown Bag Ladies—lunch packing Bethlehem Experience 6:00—8:00 pm Ashtabula Towne Square	9 FIA 9:00-11:30 Breakfast w/Santa Rowe 1-4 Party Bethlehem Experience 6:00—8:00 pm Ashtabula Towne Square
10 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:00 Choir 9:15 Adult Bible Study 10:30 Worship 10:45 Faith Builders 6:30 Youth Group Stewardship Mtg.	11	12 8:00 ROMEOS @Deb's 11:30 Game Day 8:00 Al Anon	13 10:00 Adult Bible Study 6:30 Card Ministry Living Nativity 6:00 -8:00 pm	14 10:00 Prayer Group 10:30 Thursday Ladies 6:30 Bell Practice 7:30 Prop/Fin. Mtg. Living Nativity 6:00 -8:00 pm	15	16
17 3rd Sunday of Advent 9:00 Choir 9:15 Adult Bible Study 10:30 Worship 10:45 Faith Builders 6:30 Youth Group	18	19 8:00 Al Anon	20 10:00 Adult Bible Study 6:00 Comm. Outreach 6:30 Card Ministry 7:00 Session Mtg.	21 10:00 Prayer Group 10:30 Thursday Ladies No Bell Practice	22	23
24 4th Sunday of Advent 9:00 Choir 9:15 Adult Bible Study 10:30 Worship 10:45 Faith Builders 7:00 CHRISTMAS EVE	25 Merry Christmas Church Office Closed No CE Meeting	26 11:30 Game Day 8:00 Al Anon	27 No Adult Bible Study 6:30 Card Ministry	28 10:00 Prayer Group 10:30 Thursday Ladies No Bell Practice	29	30
31 Worship Leader Hobart Shiflet 9:00 Choir NO Adult Bible Study 10:30 Worship 10:45 Faith Builders NO Youth Group						