



**Covenant Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)**

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“Hanging Our Hopes On Bethlehem...”

Inside This Issue

*“O, little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”*
(“O Little Town of Bethlehem” vs. 1 Phillips Brooks, 1868)

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When Phillips Brooks penned these words and the 3 verses that follow, he was half a world away from home, on a much needed sabbatical; having made his way on horseback to the tiny town of Bethlehem. While worn out and badly in need of a spiritual rebirth, after much prayer & meditation, he became filled with great awe; as if he were enveloped by the spirit of that first Christmas...“dreamless sleep...silent stars...everlasting Light...the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight...”

He recalled the gift of the Christ Child to a worn and weary world...a world without much hope. A world in need of hanging its hopes on Bethlehem...a world in which the faithful prayed, “O come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel...”

Last Sunday in worship, as we began our Advent journey to Bethlehem, we were invited to write our hopes on a sticky-note star and hang it from the stable as a prayer for God to enter our hearts yet again in hope of:

“peaceful, loving transitions..an end to our warring madness and our disrespect for others; peace within my family; employment; good health & prosperity; remembering to thank God for the gift of the Christ Child; for the healing of minds & bodies; for peace, patience & understanding; having faith in our congregation to meet the needs of our church; direction & courage in the New Year; a closer relationship with God...”

It’s said that, “the more things change, the more they stay the same. Times may change; millennia roll by; and yet the world-condition hasn’t changed all that much, has it? The world in which we live continues to be in need, no, in **great** need, of hanging our hopes on Bethlehem... So...what do you hang your hopes on?

May the faithful pray together, “O come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel...” Thanks for going the distance...it’s well worth the journey you know...May God give us strength... **Blessings, Rev. Joanne**

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And Now a Word from Our Moderator...

Like many of us, I didn’t grow up celebrating Advent. We moved straight from Thanksgiving to Christmas, and it happened very quickly. It wasn’t until a few years ago that the idea of Advent really took hold within me.

Advent is about waiting and preparing. We are all familiar with having to wait and prepare for something, and we’ve done that our whole lives: birthdays, new jobs, amusement park lines, the first or last day of school... We don’t really like to wait. It’s human nature to want to move quickly to the next thing.

The anticipation we experience during Advent is different. It’s putting the pieces of the story together one at a time—like reading a great book, chapter by chapter. It’s a time that encourages us to slow down a little, to reflect on what’s coming, and to be fully present in each moment of the season. And it builds, week by week, until we reach Christmas.

This month, there are lots of opportunities at Covenant to ground us in the meaning of the season, as we unfold the story one piece at a time in the coming weeks. It’s hard to walk the line between a commercialized holiday and a meaningful Holy Day, but we are called to live out the truest meaning of this time of year. We recognize the joy in the waiting. This time of preparing for the birth of the Christ child gives us a glimpse into our most holy selves...**Let’s wait together...Darla Baldwin, Moderator**

Come Home for the Holidays!
Come Home to Covenant Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)!

The most blessed season of Advent has begun as we prepare to celebrate anew the birth of the Christ Child into our lives. In the midst of this Advent/Christmas season it is so easy to get caught up in the busy-ness of the season and find ourselves running on empty by the time December 25 rolls around. You are warmly invited by God in Jesus Christ as together we make our way through this holy time. **(Childcare is available for all services and activities)** It's a wonderful time to invite others to experience the joy of Covenant. Plan now to take some "Holy Time Out" and share in this joy-filled sacred season:

Wednesday, November 30; December 7 & 14:

7-8:00pm Advent Study & Taizé Worship - Give your holiday stress a mid-week break and join us for a brief Advent Study followed by Advent Taizé Worship—a quiet, meditative candlelight worship filled with singing, praying & communion.

Friday, December 2: Women's Ministry

7:00p Refreshments & Christmas service project...ALL Women invited!

Sunday, December 4: Second Sunday of Advent: The candle of PEACE!

Congregational Meeting following 9a & 11a worship

12:15-1:15p Children's Play Practice

5:00-7:00p CHI RHO Christmas Party at the Evett's

Wednesday, December 7

10:30a Staff Christmas Brunch

7-8:00p Advent Study & Taizé Worship

Saturday, December 10:

8:00a Men's Ministry Breakfast

9:00a CYF at Food Bank

10:00a Cantata Practice

1:00p Christmas Play Practice

Sunday, December 11: Third Sunday of Advent—the Candle of JOY!

11:00a Covenant's Christmas Cantata, "Sing the Songs of Bethlehem" by K. Lee Scott

12:15p Christmas Play Practice

5:00p CYF Party

Wednesday, December 14

7-8:00p Advent Study & Taizé Worship

Saturday, December 17

3:00p Christmas Play Practice & Party

Sunday, December 18: Fourth Sunday of Advent—the Candle of LOVE!

5:30-7:30p Holiday Tasting Party & Christmas Play

Wednesday, December 21: The Longest Night

7:30p Service of Healing & Remembrance

Saturday, December 24: Christmas Eve

6:30p Lessons & Carols & Candlelight Communion Service

Sunday, December 25: Christmas Day!

NO 9am Worship; NO Sunday School;

11:00a Informal Worship with Blessing of Toys & Gifts

"Sing the Songs of Bethlehem," by K. Lee Scott
A Christmas Cantata for the Choir & Congregation
Sunday, December 11, at 11am

During 11am worship, Sunday, December 11, the choir and the congregation are invited to join minds, hearts and voices expressing our great joy for the hope, peace and love that is ours in the birth of the Christ Child. Come let us gather around the manger in Bethlehem, and from there, move out to claim God's promise of always being here to live among us and fill our days with new life. **Alleluia!**

Come, Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Welcome to our newest members: Derek Edmisten & Stan Crowe: 106 Shady Creek Trail, Cary, 27513; 651-9175. Their Shepherding Elder is Renié Palmer.

Please extend your warm Covenant welcome to Stan & Derek

Sunday, November 27, we celebrated the Parent-Child Dedication of **Ian Matthew Qiu McHarg**, son of Rev. Kevin & Karen McHarg and big brother, Nate. Rev. Gerry McHarg, Kevin's father, shared in the service.

Congratulations to: Mike & Jenny Nystrom who are expecting their first baby. Andy Nystrom & Debbi Layko are the proud grandparents

Recent: Shirley Kennedy; Bettyann Christopher; Sharon Garrett; Lillie Grace Path; Mr. Benjamin;

Continuing Prayers: Art & Hazel Brothers; Al Palmer; Mary Toney; Sharon Garrett; Mary Lou Jackson & family

Parents: Phama Larsen-Johnston; **Mothers:** Ann Hall; Vicky Vanderford; Don Brooks; Teresa DeMartin;

Fathers: Jeff Miller; Jeremy Hopkins; Debbie Miller; **Daughters:** Hoffman's; **Grandmothers:** Dèjá & Dionna Francis; Jasmine & James Cowan; Vicki Wilkinson; **Grandfather:** Dana Kropf; **Granddaughter:** Kennel's;

Grandson: Sally Shelly **Brothers:** Don Brooks; Jim Hartman. **Sisters:** Kathy Smith; Marilyn Williams;

Aunts: Vicky Vanderford; Jeff Miller; Melanie Bunn; Ann Washington; **Nieces:** Patricia Mills; Terry White;

Great Niece: Nancy Jones; **Nephew:** Terry White. **Great-Nephew:** Barishes. **Cousins:** Vicki Wilkinson; Jerry Hall; Elaine Fry; Mary Lou Jackson; Terry White; **Sister-in-Law:** Terry White; **Son-in-law:** Misty Mowrey.

Remembering Others: Margy Maret; George Strickland; Karen McHarg's co-worker; Al Aguilar; Amber Holt; Adam Rubin; Don Davis; Sherwin Chua; Cheyenne Craven-Crozier; Rev. Dr. Kay Northcutt; Christine & Sara Bronson; Kelly Canady; General & Regional Church Leaders; NC DoC new church starts...

Let us Pray...

Join us as we gather each Thursday from 7-7:30p to pray at the church. We need YOU to be united in prayer with us even if you can't meet with us in person. So pray wherever you are at 7p. Time doesn't work for you? Then pause for a few moments of prayer during your lunch break each day. Let us be in prayer regularly as a community of faith for the joys and concerns listed below and as we unite our spirits together to discern God's leading for our congregation...

Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting THIS Sunday, December 4 Following 9a & 11a Worship to consider the 2012 Operating Budget

Our Gifts & Expenses

	<u>Monthly Needs</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>
General Fund	\$19,700	\$18,270	Info available in 12/11
Fund Raisers	<u>1,100</u>	<u>\$ 4,059</u>	bulletin
Total	\$20,800	\$ 22,329	

Year to Date Actual:

Total Income through 10.31.11	\$172,765
Less Expenses through 10.31.11	<u>\$203,905</u>
General Fund shortfall through 10.31.11	(\$ 31,140)

Prayerfully consider what you can do to help reduce this deficit as you continue to support the ministries of our church family...there's power in pooling our resources.

Questions? Comments? Contact: Kathy Smith, Treasurer: 363-6313; ekathys@gmail.com

The \$25/25 Anniversary Fund Continues!

If you missed out on supporting The Anniversary \$25/25Fund...it's never too late! You put your donation in one of the special envelopes in the back of the sanctuary chairs and place it in an offering basket; or mail it to the church office. Earmark your check, "\$25/25."

Thanks, Your 25th Anniversary Committee; Pam Deardorff & Marian Hartman, Co-Chrs

Outreach Ministry News

Angel Tree Project

All the Angels have found a home! Thanks for helping to brighten a child's Christmas! **Remember:** Your **UNWRAPPED** gifts are **due NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4**. Questions? Contact Ruth Jordan: 609-1335.

Habitat for Humanity Abraham Build Interfaith Project

The first Abraham Build sponsored Habitat for Humanity house is located at 515 Parnell St. in the Long Acres community in southeast Raleigh. On your volunteer days please plan on carpooling to the build site. You need to park your cars at Mt. Peace Baptist Church, 1601 MLK Blvd. You go down Western Blvd thru downtown. You turn left onto Raleigh Blvd. and right into the parking lot. Once you enter the parking lot, look to your left and you will see a bunch of cars parked a little ways down. They ask us to car pool from that parking lot.

The next date on which we will participate is December 3rd. Three members of Covenant have also signed up to volunteer on that date. We will partner with St. Paul's CC, UU and CSJ to do some tar paper work, back framing and shingling. Covenant will also be providing lunch for the volunteers on that date.

There is still time to sign up to help with construction OR to provide lunch for some hungry volunteers on December 3! Contact Renié Palmer: 481-2121 or rpalmer123@nc.rr.com

Urban Ministries Food Bank

Urban Ministries is still in need of non-perishable food items-especially food to complement a holiday meal. Please bring your food to the church each Sunday. Wallet sized grocery lists of the needed items are available on the entryway table.

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Women's Ministries News

All Covenant women, members & guests are invited to join us for our first evening ***Dessert & Service Project Gathering, Friday, December 2, 7p-8:30p at the church.*** Bring a favorite dessert to share and enjoy conversations & fun with the women of Covenant. After dessert, we will prepare gift baskets to be delivered to women at a local nursing home. See you there!

RSVP to Renié Palmer, Coordinator: 481-2121 or rpalmer123@nc.rr.com

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Disciples Men Planning Big!

After a very busy October and November with the Fund Fair and Covenant's 25th Anniversary Celebration, the Disciples Men will meet at the church for **Breakfast at 8:00a, December 10** to do some planning for 2012. There are several programs already planned as well as a study series to be planned plus elections. Come on out for guaranteed good food and fellowship. Ted Glasener and Bob Kennel promise you won't be elected to anything if you are present.

Ted Glasener, President; Bob Kennel, Secretary



Covenant's SCRIP Update

As of the end of November, Covenant has earned over \$2800 with the SCRIP program! Thank you to everyone who continues to use the SCRIP program for their households! In the next few months there will be Christmas, holiday parties, family vacations, teacher's gifts, end-of-year customer appreciation gifts, winter clothing needs, school supplies for the new semester; December and January birthdays and anniversaries – not to mention regular grocery, medicine, gas, and other household needs –gift cards from the SCRIP program can be for some of those needs.

Not sure what SCRIP is? SCRIP is a fundraising program where you purchase SCRIP (substitute money) in the form of gift cards and gift certificates from hundreds of local, national, and online retailers. While you pay face value for the gift card, Covenant works with the Great Lakes Scrip Center to purchase the cards at a discount and Covenant keeps the difference.

Want to know more?

- Check the SCRIP poster across from the office – it has more information, as well as what retailers are running current specials
- Visit the SCRIP volunteers – located in the hallway across from the office after each service.
- Contact Robin Miller at doghowse@msn.com or 852-3986 if you have any questions about the SCRIP program or if you want help figuring out how you can use SCRIP in your household.

Robin Miller, SCRIP Coordinator

It's Christmas Time...



Who's ready for an EXTREMELY unique take on the Christmas Story? If you answered yes... you won't want to miss this year's Christmas play extravaganza! This year's play has been written, produced, & directed by Covenant's very own Ellin, Emily, & Hannah (The Porterfield-Winstead family).

Play practices have already begun but there is still time to be included if your child/ren would like to participate. Here's the remaining rehearsal schedule:

Sunday, December 4: 12:15p
Saturday, December 10: 1:00p (notice change in time -NOT 10 AM)
Sunday, December 11: 12:15p
Saturday, December 17: 3:00p with pizza party immediately following this rehearsal
Sunday, December 18: 5:30-7:30p Tasting Party (5:30p) & Performance (6:30p)

For more information or if you have any questions please contact the church office at (919) 481-4715 or e-mail Rev. Randy: randy-ccc@bellsouth.net or Ellin Porterfield: dramaweaving@aol.com

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Youth News - Calendar!

CHI-RHO (6th-8th grade)

Sunday, December 4– Chi Rho Christmas Party! (5 – 7 PM) – Home of Sam & Ginny Evett

Sunday, December 18– Christmas Play & Tasting Party! (5:30-7:30p)

Thursday, December 22– Help prepare Luminaries for Christmas Eve Service! (3-4p)

Saturday, December 24 – Set out Luminaries for service & light candles (5:15p)
Christmas Eve Service@ 6:30p.

Date TBD (Early Jan.) – Soup Kitchen Mission. Keep your eyes peeled.

Sunday, January 15–Program@church "Islam, What do they believe?" 5:30-7p Bring \$4 & a friend!

TBD – Ski Trip! Keep your eyes peeled.

CYF (9th -12th grade)

Saturday, December 10 – CYF Mission Experience – Food Bank of CENC (9a-12p)

Sunday, December 11 – CYF Christmas Party (5-7 PM) – Destination unknown

Sunday, December 18 –Tasting Party & Christmas Play! (5:30-7:30p)

Thursday, December 22– Help prepare Luminaries for Christmas Eve Service! (3-4p)

Saturday, December 24– Set out Luminaries for service & light candles (5:15p)
Christmas Eve Service @ 6:30p

Sunday, January 8 – Program @ church – "World Religions" 5:30-7p Bring \$4 & a friend!

Sunday, January 22– Bowling Trip! Buffalo Lanes in Cary. Meet @ Bowling Alley @ 5:45p

TBD – Ski Trip! Keep your eyes peeled.

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Children's Worship & Wonder News!



If you've always "wondered" where our children are going right after the children's moment every Sunday – now's your chance to see! The Children's Worship & Wonder program needs volunteers (AKA – Greeters & Storytellers)!

As a Storyteller or Greeter you will be right in the middle of all the action! Your commitment is minimal – training for both are provided and a scheduled rotation for Sunday mornings makes life easier for all! If you are interested in becoming a story teller or greeter, or want more information, please contact Rev. Randy: 919-481-4715 or randy-ccc@bellsouth.net