



NEWSLETTER

December 2015 Volume 29 Issue 12



Covenant Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

2911 S.W. Cary Parkway, Cary, NC 27513

Phone: 919.481.4715 Fax: 919.238.4019

E-mail: office@covenantcc-cary.org

Website: www.CovenantChristianChurch-Cary.org

— FEATURE ARTICLES —

A Word from the Pastor
by: Rev. Chris Furr

Dear Friends,

Recently I read about a survey conducted by Think Finance which gauged responses from Americans of across varied income brackets about their holiday expenses (a link to the article follows this letter). 45% of them said that the holiday season brings so much financial pressure that they would prefer to skip it altogether. Nearly half of them said that their level of stress around the holidays was either high or extremely high. And, not at all coincidentally, 45% said they did not have money set aside to cover their holiday expenses.

We can all agree that the consumerism of Christmas is out of hand. This year, Black Friday sales began at retail stores on Thanksgiving Day, meaning store employees were asked to be at work instead of at home with their families. Of course, retail executives would not have set those hours if they weren't reasonably sure shoppers would take advantage of them, and take advantage they did. Millions lined up outside stores, presumably while their families gathered around Thanksgiving tables, to get the best deal they could on electronics or some other item. There is something seriously wrong when the day we have set aside to give thanks for all that we have is followed so closely by such a frenzied clamor for more, more, more. Some of us are better at resisting the tug of consumerism than others, but there are few whose lives are not touched by it in some way.

each other really matters. Still others of us have grown cynical and disillusioned by this exchange of stuff, rightly realizing that we have wandered far from the meaning of Christmas and lost sight of the kind of lives Christ has called us to live. But if Christmas is about the joy of knowing the depth of God's love for us, revealed in a baby (and that is what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown), then neither hurried overspending or self-righteous grouching seems like an appropriate way to celebrate. All the power anything ever has over us is the power we give it. This is the life of freedom Christ has made possible for us. One by one, Christ disarmed the powers of the world that had held the spirits of the people prisoner for too long—Caesar and the long arm of the Roman Empire, possessions, privilege, violence, discrimination, death. He defied the power of each with his life, and through his resurrection, revealed to us the truth about what has ultimate power over us . . . and what doesn't.

So the question that remains is this--why have we let our joy be so easily muddled by things that should have no power over us? 45% of people--and I'm going to guess that every single last one of them once looked forward to Christmas as children, not because of the stuff they got (OK, maybe that was part of it), but because of the awe and wonder and dreams it inspired in them--have had that joy robbed by something that need not have power over them. The people in your life that you truly love and who truly love you will not be disappointed if your gift to them this Christmas is not something that you fought someone for on Black Friday (or any other day). Who made you feel like you had to break the bank? Likely, there is no one person to point the finger at. The power of cultural persuasion has its grip on you. Tell it "no" this Christmas. Christ has made that possible, as well as your liberation and ultimate joy.

Cynicism and frustration do not exactly compliment joy, either. Even the most righteous anger is still anger, and Christ did not give his life so that we can walk around imprisoned by our frustrations with the world. He gave it so that we could offer a joyful alternative to the world's false hopes. Weary shoppers seduced by the commercialization of Christmas do not need a lecture about the reason for the season. What they need is someone so in touch with that reason that His light shines from within them. This is the joy of Christmas, the gift of the Christ Child to us. If you want to give it to someone else, it must first be truly yours. Ask God to give you more of it and less angst about the ringing cash registers.

What will hold power in your life in this season? Thanks be to Jesus Christ, we need not be resigned to that which we would rather be free from. Whatever it is, my prayer is that it will not rob you of the complete joy that God has given each of us in the Christ child. May it fill you and yours this Christmas.

Peace,

Chris

From the Moderator

by: Karen Nippert

Stay Tuned For Next Month's Message



Advent and Christmas
at Covenant Christian Church

Reflective Advent Worship Service
December 8 at 7pm
Good Shepherd UCC
1050 N^W Maynard Rd

Musical Performance of "Silent Night: the
Birth of a Carol" and Tasting Party
December 13 at 5:30pm

Covenant Christian Church
2911 S^W Cary Parkway
Cary, NC 27513
covenantcc-cary.org
919.481.4715

Choir Cantata
"The Wondrous Story"
December 20 at 11am

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 24 at 7pm

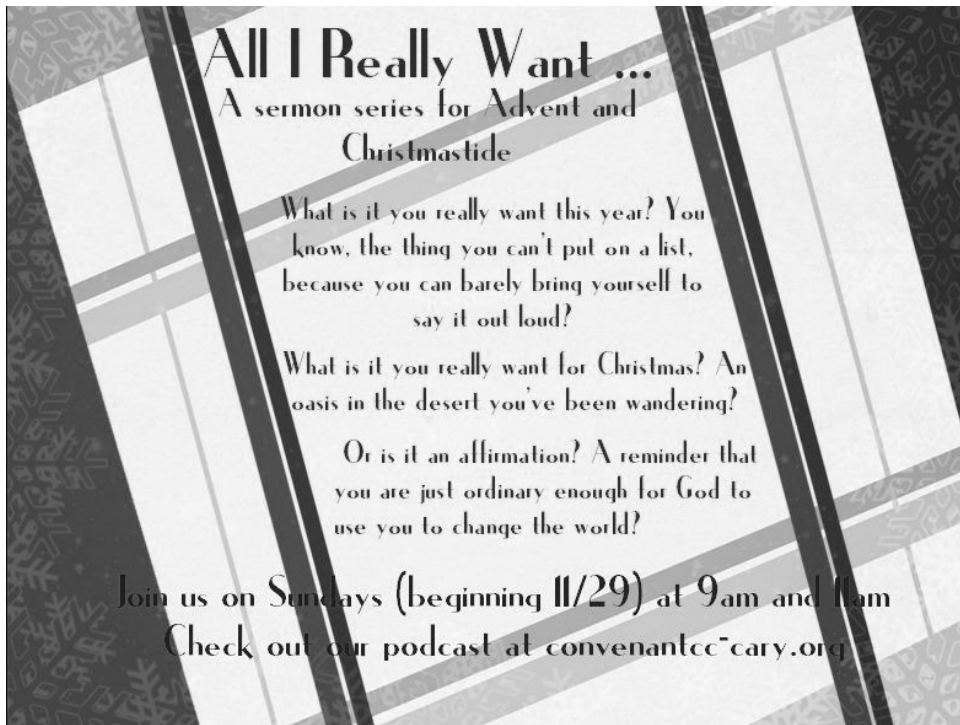
A Reflective Advent Worship Service

When, in the midst of the ringing cash registers
And full shopping bags
You feel the need to be silent awhile . . .

When, as Christmases past cast shadows
On who and what is missing in this season
And you need a place to remember, with thanks . . .

When, as the calendar fills
You find yourself wondering where the Christ child will fit
And you need to be still and know . . .

Join Us for a Reflective Advent Worship Service
December 8 at 7pm at Good Shepherd UCC
1050 N^W Maynard Rd



The Worship Ministry invites you to join us for an informal time of fellowship as we work to prepare our church for Advent and Christmas. We'll hang wreaths, decorate the tree, set up nativity scenes, and get our church ready to welcome members and guests alike this holiday season. Refreshments will be provided.



Hanging of the Greens
Saturday, December 5
9:00am-10:30am



All of Covenant is invited to an open house at the Furrs on Saturday, December 12. You are invited to come with your shepherding group during the times listed below:

Darla Baldwin and Nathan Harwell's Shepherding Groups: 1-2pm
Derek Rutledge and Susan Addams' Shepherding Groups: 2-3pm
Mona Harrison and Renie Palmer's Shepherding Groups: 3-4pm
Jeff Miller and Kathy Smith's Shepherding Groups: 4-5pm

No need to bring anything--just yourself, for a casual time of holiday fellowship! The Furrs live at 103 Akiry Ct in Cary. Maps/directions will be available in the church foyer.

A Note From Mary Lou...

Updated Membership Directories are always available via email... just let me know and I will send you the attachment...or you can pick up a copy on the table outside the church office or in the entryway to the Sanctuary.

Attendance Counts! We need to know when you're here for worship; Sunday school; meetings and events here at Covenant...Please remember on Sundays to sign the attendance registry and pass it down your row even if the Worship Leader forgets to ask you to do so... The names of our guests are important to Invitation Ministry!

We are selling...BUTTERBRAIDS!!!



We know it's been a while, however, the youth feel it necessary to revive an age-old tradition - selling Butterbraids. During the first 2 Sundays of December (6th & 13th) youth will be in the hallway, between 9:45am & 11am handing out FREE samples to all. We will also be selling coffee for those who are interested. Butterbraids are \$14 per pastry and they have a new flavor Double Chocolate which appears to be DELICIOUS! All proceeds of the sale of Butterbraids and coffee will benefit the youth's trip to the UCC/Disciples National Youth Event in the Summer of 2016. Our scheduled drop-off for the Butterbraids is December 18th @ the church, just in time for Christmas!



The first Sunday in December we will begin with an advent reflection entitled, The Uncluttered Heart. If you are interested in having a copy of the book we are using for advent, please let Katie or Laura know so that we can order one for you.

Thanks!

-Education Co-Chairs, Katie Furr and Laura Holste

Sexuality and the Bible

Early in 2016, Covenant has a tremendous opportunity. Rev. Dr. Toby Holleman, retired UCC pastor and member at Good Shepherd UCC, will be with us for 6 weeks, leading us through key passages in the Bible related to sexuality. This is an opportunity to think deeply about how we see the Bible, to learn about the historical context and various interpretations of key Scripture passages, and to dialogue with one another. All are encouraged to come with open minds and open hearts. This conversation will contain mature content, so parents should use discretion about the participation of children/youth. The class will begin January 10 during the Sunday School hour, and continue each week through February 14. A sign-up sheet is located in the church foyer. Please plan to be part of this important opportunity at Covenant!



Christmas Play – "Silent Night: The Making of a Christmas Carol"

Who's ready for snowflakes, hot apple cider, caroling, and Christmas pageants? If you love this time of year, you need to join us for annual our Christmas Play. This year we are performing an original rendition of "Silent Night: The Making of A Christmas Carol". A play written to appeal to all audiences. If you are interested in joining us, we are looking for children/adults of ALL ages, come on out and see what is happening. Our fearless directors this year are Suzannah Cannon & Master of Music – Robin Miller. The Christmas play is slated for Dec. 13th (5pm) at Covenant Christian Church. For more information or if you have any questions please contact the church office at (919) 481-4715 or e-mail Randy at randy@covenantcc-cary.org

Christmas Play - Practice Schedule:

December 6th (12:30-2p)
Dress Rehearsal & Pizza Party:
December 12th (10:30a – 12:30p)



Musical Moments

* On Dec. 6 all are invited to go Christmas Caroling with our friends from Good Shepherd UCC. We will break into groups and sing to members of each congregation, and some of our local assisted living facilities.

* And the Choir will present the Christmas Cantata, The Wondrous Story at the 11:00 am worship service on Dec. 20. If you like to sing and would like to be part of the cantata, even if you aren't a regular member of the adult choir, please contact me and let me know. I am also looking for a few readers to be a part of that cantata. Again, if you are interested, please let me know.

Robin Miller, Interim Director of Music Ministries
robin@covenantcc-cary.org



Covenant's SCRIP Update

If you want to purchase physical gift cards in time for Christmas, the last day we can accept an order is Sunday, December 13. Those orders will be available to pick up Sunday, December 20. If you are ordering ScripNow products, you have until about fifteen minutes before you want to give it to order those, as long as your account is set up and you have completed the PrestoPay process. And remember, if you are giving an e-gift, you can set what date you would like that gift delivered when you purchase it, up to a year ahead of time.

Now is also a great time to start planning how you can use SCRIP to help with your household purchases in 2016. Gas, household supplies, medicines, school and office supplies, shoes and clothing may all be able to be purchased with SCRIP. If you have any questions, please contact us at scrip@covenantcc-cary.org.

Robin Miller, SCRIP Coordinator

Children/Youth News - Calendar!

Youth Calendars

JYF (3rd-5th Graders)

December 4th - JYF Christmas Party (6-8pm). Bring \$10 gift, food item, & friend.

December 13th - Christmas Play & Tasting Party. Bring the whole family! 5pm

January 10th - JYF Game Night (4-5pm). Bring your favorite board game!

CHI RHO (6th-8th graders)

December 12th - Youth Christmas Party (6-8pm). Bring \$10 gift, food item, & friend.

December 13th - Christmas Play & Tasting Party. Bring the whole family! 5pm

January 10th - Covenant Youth Bowling Night (6-7:30pm). Bring \$15 for food/bowling

January 17-18th - Justice Lock-in @ Hillyer! (7pm - 12:30pm). Registration coming soon!

CYF (9th-12th graders)

December 12th - Youth Christmas Party (6-8pm). Bring \$10 gift, food item, & friend.

December 13th - Christmas Play & Tasting Party. Bring the whole family! 5pm

January 10th - Covenant Youth Bowling Night (6-7:30pm). Bring \$15 for food/bowling

January 17-18th - Justice Lock-in @ Hillyer! (7pm - 12:30pm). Registration coming soon!