

First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

33 N. Arlington Ave., Niles, OH 44446

News and Events Around
Your Church



Mission Statement:

We celebrate the Good News of Jesus Christ by witnessing, loving, growing, and serving from our doorsteps "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

VOL. LXIV No. 11

November 29, 2017

How do you approach the Advent Season? What do you anticipate this time of year? For some of us, it's the shopping. Finding that perfect gift that represents what the recipient means to us. For others, it's the lights. The decorations, tinsel, and twinkle that reminds us that a new season of growth is right around the corner. Maybe it's the songs, the rituals, the familiar traditions that speak to you. From the Mistletoe to Bing Crosby, the small things that happen year after year bring a sense of comfort. For many of the faith, though, Advent is the season of anticipation for one thing primarily, the incarnation.

Whether you define the concept through traditional orthodox theology, through creedal doctrine, or like most Disciples of Christ, with a smattering of different theologies all tossed in a pot and reduced in a simmer, Advent is the anticipation of God in and amongst humanity. No matter how you internalize the Christ Event, here we celebrate. No matter how you celebrate, Christ is the object of our worship.

So the question is raised, are some traditions better, worship more powerful, or gifts better representative of the focus of our worship than others? In the mix of this post-modernized culture where everything is perspective, perhaps we can find some concrete direction in the Infancy Narratives, the oldest tales of the Incarnation that we possess. In Matthew and Luke we see revealed to several different groups of people the nature of God in the infant Jesus. And in every person, every group, to hear the good news, their immediate reaction is one of worship. Though the worship of these different people are very different, each react in complete adoration, in fullness of love.

There were those who had little to give. Mary, an unwed, uneducated, unsure teen mom, who has little to give but hope and praise. She does so in fullness of spirit through the magnificat: "And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

(Luke 1:46-55) Mary's worship was found in what she had to give, praise and song.

Or the shepherds, despised as social outcasts, untrusted, and ritually unclean, who are bombarded by an angel army shouting and singing. Though they have little to give, in voices that are disregarded by the masses they go out and proclaim this good news. They leave their livelihood, search out an infant, and continue to carry the burden of announcing all that they had witnessed. And those that listened were amazed! The Shepherds worship was found in homage and proclamation!

What about those who had much to lose? Like Joseph, who must have had to face down the scorn and ridicule of a family and a neighborhood who was questioning his decisions to keep going with a seemingly unfaithful wife? Who, because he was a kind hearted person refused the option of honor killing this fiancée, and instead was considering dismissing her quietly. But in the simple words of Immanuel, "God with us," found the courage and fortitude to stand up against narrow-minded folks and carry the difficult burden that was placed on him. Joseph's worship was in caring action, in doing the right thing despite the pressures of society.

Or the Magi, however many there actually were. Men of prestige, honor, and wealth who traveled a treacherous path, stood against a despotic and possibly insane king, and gave willingly of their affluence to an infant of an artisan, from a different culture. These gentiles, from a society which wielded greater power than these lowly Hebrews, humbled themselves in a powerful way to honor this one born king of the Jews. The Magi found worship through their offerings of wealth, power, and prestige.

Even the highly religious folks, Simeon and Anna, the church mice that never left the temple realized that their traditional worship was lacking. They saw the culmination of their worship, perhaps even their last act of praise, in this child, the revelation of the Gentiles, the redeemer of Jerusalem. These who found their worship in every moment, experienced a pinnacle of their religious lives in the worship of Christ.

And, I suppose, if we are naming all who experienced the revelation of the Incarnation, Herod needs thrown into the mix as well. Herod, who heard the good news through the Magi and who was moved to worship, just like everyone else. But Herod's worship was not one of adoration of Christ, but rather through lifting up himself even further. His instinct was not joy but fear, not love but hate, not peace but violence. Herod had killed his own family members to secure his rule and was not about to let anyone else encroach his power. Herod found worship in this moment by not looking past his own needs, desires, and propagation of power.

So how do you find your worship? In praise and singing? In proclamation? In lifting up those considered less than? By sacrificing wealth, power, or prestige? By reaching a pinnacle of an already hallowed life? Through the determination of seeing through justice despite what society might say? Or do you find your worship in the windows of malls, through the contented padding of a comfortable lifestyle, or in the search for ever bigger and better presents?

We have wonderful footsteps to follow in this Advent. They won't be found in Coca-Cola commercials, or in the Toys 'R Us Big Book of Toys. They are found met around the manger, gathered to worship something that was almost missed, but changed creation to its core. May we gather together as well, not around the decked out tree, not in the mall food court, but in those places that go unnoticed in this time of distraction. May we meet where we may once again find God in and amongst us. Immanuel, God with us. Pastor Chris

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17th, Chrissy Stonebreaker-Martinez, member of FCC and co-director of the InterReligious Taskforce on Central America will be providing a **FAIRTRADE BOOTH** after service. If you are interested in supporting Chrissy's non-profit, buying fair trade gifts for Christmas, or simply wish to learn more about how your consumption of goods can be more ethical and just, we invite you to stick around after service!

Blue Christmas Service Monday, December 11, 7 p.m.

Christmas Eve Advent morning Service: 10:45 a.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight evening Service: 7 p.m.

Christmas Day Hymns and Carols Service: 10 a.m.

2017 CHRISTMAS SPECIAL OFFERING - Through our giving to the Christmas Special Offering, we are supporting valuable and indispensable ministries in the Ohio Region. **All the money received through this offering is returned to the Ohio Region.** This special offering will be received on the Sundays of December 3, December 10 and December 17. Mark your check "Christmas Special Offering" and place your envelope in the offering plates or mail it to the church office. Thank you. See attached letter from the Regional Office for more information.

CLEVELAND CHRISTIAN HOME speaker Katharine Johnson Vinciguerra will be presenting information about the work and ministry of their organization this Sunday, December 3 at 2 p.m. here at First Christian. A reception will follow. Please join us.

ORDER FORMS FOR RED CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS will be included in the bulletins the next two Sundays. Deadline for placing your order is **Sunday, December 10th**. Cost is \$8 per plant, payable at time of order.

COMMUNITY MEALS conclude November 30 from 4:45 to 5:45 p.m. in fellowship hall. Thank you to those who contributed to this community service.

A CHURCH WOMEN UNITED TEA will be held this Friday, December 1 at 1 p.m. here at First Christian, hosted by Lydia Circle.

LYDIA CIRCLE CHRISTMAS COOKIE ORDERS DUE THIS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3. Please contact Martha Hellam (330.856.5768), any Lydia Circle member or use order form in narthex to place your order.

BIBLE STUDY will go on hiatus in December and resume January 9th.

DISCIPLE WOMEN'S JAIL MINISTRY TEAM will be conducting worship services on the Mondays of December 4 and December 18 at 6:45 p.m. at the Trumbull County Jail.

FCC VOLUNTEERS will serve a dinner **Tuesday, December 19** from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Rescue Mission of the Mahoning Valley, 962 Martin Luther King Blvd. in Youngstown, coordinated by Becky Carpenter. Desserts need to be to the church **by 11 a.m.** using buzzer and door closest to the library parking lot.

2018 OFFERING ENVELOPES will be available in the narthex. Your offering number has been stamped on the envelopes, but please write your name on them also.

CHI RHO YOUTH GROUP will meet Sunday, December 10 following worship in fellowship hall. Chi Rho is for youth in grades 6 to 8.

CHRISTIAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP for grades 9-12 will meet Sun., December 10 following worship in the CYF Room. On Friday, December 15 they will host another 'Parents Night Out' with babysitting at the church from 6 to 9 p.m. Activities will include an indoor snowball fight and a craft. Dinner will be provided. CYF Christmas Party is Sunday, December 17 at noon in the CYF Room. CYF will enjoy a New Year's Eve Slumber Party here at church.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

Dec. 1 Adalyn Sprague	Dec. 8 Tracy Ledsome	Dec. 19 Joe Prox	Dec. 24 Colin Poling
Dec. 6 Kyra Franklin	Dec. 10 Jeff Crowley	Dec. 21 Seth Jornigan	Dec. 31 Avery Kellerman
Dec. 7 Lynn Gombos	Dec. 10 Nancy Davis	Dec. 22 Peggy Watkins	
Dec. 7 Carol Pecchio	Dec. 11 Patricia Mount	Dec. 24 Zoa Lykins	

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES to Chalee and Justin Secrest on the birth of a baby boy, Gavin Michael, born on November 1st.



ANYONE WISHING to have pledges and/or contributions credited to their 2017 giving statement must have it to the church office no later than **Sun., Dec. 31, 2017**. Thank you.

CHRISTIAN ED MISSION PROJECT - Christian Ed is sponsoring families from the Beatitude House in Youngstown for Christmas. Labeled ornaments for students/families to choose from are available on the small Christmas tree in the narthex. Please help with this project! All gifts should be **new/unused**. Gifts **can be wrapped** as long as **tag is attached**. Deadline is Sunday, December 10th.

THANK YOU to those who donated various winter items for Missions. Eleven hat/glove sets, 13 hats, 25 pairs of gloves and 57 scarves were collected and distributed between three local agencies.

PASTOR CHRIS STARK CONTACT INFO: cell phone 330.442.2558; email address pastorchrisstark@gmail.com.

PLEASE REMEMBER to keep your email addresses current with the church office so that we can communicate most effectively. Thank you.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER ITEMS is Fri., December 22 by 11:30 a.m.



DECEMBER NEWSNOTES **Thanksgiving Special Offering** total received to date is \$150.00 **Elders** will meet this Sun., December 3 following worship in the library **Disciples Men** will meet this Sun., December 3 at 8 a.m. at Perkins **Stewardship** and **Finance** will meet Sunday, December 10 at 9 a.m. **TMH Psych Unit Worship Services** will be held Sunday, December 10 and Sunday, December 31 at 2 p.m. **Lydia Circle Christmas Party** will be held Tues., Dec. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at Woodland Chase Clubhouse **Ohio Women's Ministry** (OWM) is collecting **assorted food** (people's choice) for Niles Community Services during the month of December. Donations may be placed in the cabinet in the main hallway New address for **Bob Brothers** is Shepherd of the Valley, 4100 N. River Rd. #318, Warren, OH 44484

NEWS & EVENTS
is a monthly publication of
First Christian Church, Niles, Ohio
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