

Thoughts For Our Journey: December 2011

Expect a Living Sign

Signs of all sorts guide our way and inform us of our surroundings. For example, traffic signs point out limits and provide us directions. Advent is a season of signs as well: wreaths, candles, greenery and banners mark the time and its expectations in our sanctuary. Signs such as these reveal the flow and nature of this special season. However, Advent's chief sign is a living sign, a living one whom God has promised and for whom this season prepares us.

God will give you a sign (Isaiah 7:14). Israel and Syria had entered into a military alliance against Judah and threatened to attack. King Ahaz considered countering their move by allying with up-and-coming Assyria. Isaiah counseled Ahaz against such an entangling alliance. Rather, Isaiah advises Ahaz to trust in God to weather the crisis. This call to trust was accompanied by God's offer to provide a sign. In spite of the refusal of Ahaz to ask, the sign is given: a child will be born, whose name Emmanuel means, "God with Us." Then before little "God with us" was barely two years old, by the reckoning of some theological scholars, the northern kingdom Ahaz so greatly feared was reduced to nothing. The living sign of this child, born in the time of Ahaz, pointed to the reliability of trust in God.

The church does well to keep this original context in mind as we appropriate the sign of Emmanuel for our Advent expectation. Beloved, the core meaning of God's living sign is not biological uniqueness – it is divine trustworthiness. *Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20).* Matthew now records the promise of Emmanuel spoken to an apparently fearful Joseph. Unlike Ahaz, however, the sign—and the sign-giver—is trusted. Fear does not have the final word in this narrative. The final word in this passage is summed up in one word: Jesus, whose name in Hebrew means, "God saves." The living sign in Isaiah's time serves as a prelude to the living sign later to be born in Bethlehem, but Emmanuel becomes more than a promise that God will one day act in our midst. As the Gospels open up, Emmanuel becomes the mystery of God's presence in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the living sign to which our lives are drawn and then commissioned in this season of Advent. Beloved, expect the living sign of Emmanuel: in a manger's joy, in the Spirit's indwelling, in that kingdom where God will dwell with us and make all things new.

Below are a few scriptures and questions inviting us to encounter Jesus the living sign of God throughout this Advent Season.

Read Isaiah 7:10-13 If you were offered the gift of a sign from God, what would you ask, and why? In what way would trust have to do with it?

Read Matthew 1:18-25 What does the story of Joseph and today's image reveal about signs and trust? What expectations do you think influence Joseph's decision? What are the similarities and differences between the "sign" of Emmanuel in Isaiah 7 and Matthew 1?

Blessings for the Journey,

Rev. Chuck

The VOICE

"Working together to make the difference that matters."

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Advent Worship & Events Schedule

Dec. 9 & 10	Bethlehem @ Eaton (family event)		
Dec. 17	Women's Christmas Brunch	7:00	<u>Christmas Eve Service</u>
Dec. 24	Butcher's Open House	11:00	<u>Christmas Eve Service</u>
Dec. 25	Butcher's Open House	9:30	Morning Worship

North Eaton Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
35895 Royalton Rd. Grafton, Ohio 44044
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Permit No. 8

DATE— DECEMBER 2011

Minister: Rev. Charles Butcher
Christian Ed. & Youth Director: Polly Tallos
Secretary: Londa Blaine
Music Director: Miki Saito
Pathways Counseling and Growth Center: Dr. Ralph Thompson

We would like to extend a warm invitation to everyone in our NECC family to an OPEN HOUSE in the fellowship hall on December 24. We will start our open house at 6 p.m. and stop at 7 p.m. for the first Christmas Eve worship service. We will restart the open house at 8 p.m. after the first service and stop at 11 p.m. for the second Christmas Eve service. We want to say, "Thank you" to each of you for calling us to come work with you in the ministry here at NECC and to wish you and your family a blessed Christmas. Please feel free to bring your family and friends.



Jesus is the Reason for the Season,

Rev. Chuck, Carol and Micah Butcher

"Out of the mouth of babes....." In Jr. Worship we often sing songs. Sometimes they re songs that retell a Bible story, and sometimes they are praise songs. One Sunday, the children in Jr. Worship and I were singing and praising God by following along to a DVD that had the words to the song on the screen and children showing body movements. The song was "Every Move I Make". We were just belting out the song and dancing and having a great time when we came to the part of the song that says, "Oh my God, this love, how can it be?" All of a sudden Henry, Gen & Nancy Yost's grandson, stopped and started correcting us. "You can't say that. You'll be in trouble. My Mom said that saying that is bad." Henry was very serious and very worried. I explained to Henry that he is right, we are not allowed to just say, "Oh my God" unless we are really talking to God. I said that we were talking to God by singing praises to him, so it was okay. It really wasn't okay with Henry because his 4 year-old mind couldn't make the distinction, so we moved on to a different song.



The incident reminded me of the fact that we are supposed to be like children with our faith. We should all strive to be just as convicted in our beliefs as Christians as little Henry.

Stewardship MomentBy Polly Tallos, CE & Youth Director

In this day and age when schools cannot afford to keep all their extra-curricular activities up and running without asking the students to do two or three fundraisers a year or when community youth sports teams have to sell candy bars to get basic equipment, I am privileged to be able to tell the youth of North Eaton Christian Church and their parents that the youth groups are fully funded by this congregation. There are no dues or fees to be a part of Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF), Chi Rho or Jr. Youth Fellowship. North Eaton cares so much about the youth who enter our doors that they have made sure our budget includes them and someone to lead them.

The youth are expected to help cover the cost of extras like Laser Tag, corn maze, retreats, camps and mission trips. But it has always been North Eaton's policy that no youth be left out of youth group events and happenings due to a lack of funds. And yes, we do fundraisers, in case you hadn't noticed.

Our fundraisers are to help earn money that is then used to help others: Mission Trips to repair homes, gifts for the Cleveland Christian Home, the NECC Food Baskets, Dunham Ave. Christian Church, and Wondimu Magndesh, a little boy in Ethiopia the youth sponsor through World Vision.

What you give back to God on Sunday mornings in your offering is what supports our Youth so they can go out into the world and be God's hands and feet, reaching out in faith to share the love of God with his hurting children.

WANEW RETREAT Friday-Sunday, January 20-22 @ Camp Christian

The CHI RHO and CYF will be meeting with youth from area Disciples churches at Camp Christian for a weekend of study and fun. Any youth interested in attending should see POLLY TALLOS to get Medical Release forms as soon as possible.



Birthdays & Anniversaries-DEC.

- 3 Donna Burdick
- 4 Cindy Thompson
- 5 Leslie Klein
- 9 Ken & Cindy Hicks
- 11 Gerry Piscola
Marty & Sally Belf
- 12 Randy Kuhn,
Diana Tyler,
Buz Bokman
- Robin Galvin
- 13 Brandy Burdick
- 14 Sandy & Jim Hales
- Nicholas Rodak
- 15 Antonia Spector
- 17 Ralph Thompson
- Glen Thompson
- 18 Helen Walkden
- Jeff Brunger,
- Doug Blaine
- Bob Burdick
- 19 Tony Piscola
- 20 Holly Hill
- 21 Stephanie Szuch
- 23 Joseph Klein
- 24 Barry Daniels
- 25 Jan Brooks
- 26 Nolan Gamble
- 29 Debbie Cihla

If your birthday or anniversary has not been on the church calendar, PLEASE call the church office and let us know. THANK YOU!

Bethlehem @ Eaton "The Birth Story of Jesus Christ"

Friday, Dec. 9 — 7-10 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 10—1-8 p.m.
(Continuous 1/2 hr. tours)

We are also taking donations of nonperishable food items for our food pantry. FREE admission — Wheelchair accessible.



Serving In DECEMBER, 2011

8:00 Mel and Marie Ternes
9:30 Floyd Chapman, Bill Chapman, Royce Klein,
Mary Bengough, Dave Carpenter, Paula & Mike Krasnevich,
Jim & Robin Galvin, Amy Stafford



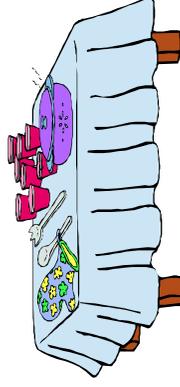
ELDERS: Stu Hicks, Ralph Thompson

They're back!

POTLUCK DINNERS are being planned for the fourth Sunday of each month at 12 p.m. (noon) in our fellowship hall, beginning in January.

Start the new year out with us on JANUARY 22. Let's relax, have some great food (a pot of beans or Aunt Betty's goulash), fellowship and then head home. Bring your favorite casserole, salad or dessert to share. Beverages and table service will be provided. "Praise God and pass the potato salad!" In FEBRUARY we will have our annual Chili Cook-off in place of the potluck dinner.

This event is sponsored by EVE CIRCLE. If you have any questions, contact Pat Ables.



Women's Christmas Brunch

Sat. Dec. 17. 10 a.m.
TICKETS: \$5.00

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...."
Come! Find the joy, peace and glory this holy season. Take a moment to reflect and be renewed. Please join us.

Guest Speaker: Diane Judy

Invite your neighbor, grandmother, mother, daughter and friends.

Tickets available after worship or call the church office, 748-2230.



NECC 2011 CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

Winners of Raffle drawing:

- Stained Glass Ornament Karen Arseno
- \$25 Cash (Eve Circle) Gary Mitchell
- Afghan Nancy Yost
- Sparkle \$50 Gift Certificate Don Binnie (Donated back to NECC Food Basket)
- \$50 Cash (Rebekah Circle) Fran Early
- \$100 IGA Gift Certificate Sue Goins
- Pink Quilt & Pillow Deborah Ervin
- Roberta's Quilt Delores Haupt

The monies brought in for all the different areas of the Bazaar totaled **\$2,755.83**, which is about \$250 less than last year. It was a great day of fun and friendship for all who came.

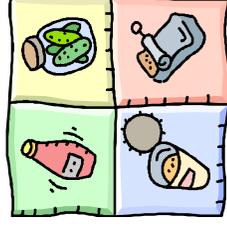
I would like to thank the set-up crew and take-down crew: Fran Early, Marge Houston, Londa Blaine, Robin Galvin, Cindy Thompson, and all of Eve and Rebekah Circle for helping put the bazaar together; also, our thanks to Carol Busche for taking pictures and Jan Brooks for decorating the Christmas Tree. But it would not be a success if you, as members of NECC, did not respond with a "Yes, I would be happy to!" when called upon to work a shift, bake or donate to the bazaar. And a big, "Thank you" to Roberta for making her 27th quilt for the bazaar. Even though she is hundreds of miles away, she will always be in our hearts and minds just as she keeps NECC in her heart and mind.

- Laura Kuhn

YOUTH GROUPS Food Scavenger Hunt Thank You!

"Thank you" to everyone who answered our knock at the door on Sunday, November 6. The youth spent an hour out on the road looking for non-perishable food items to add to the NECC Food Pantry. Fifteen youth and adults headed out in three different cars, in three different directions, to collect donations. They were able to bring back over 240 items. The winning team was Maggie Carpenter and Samantha Galvin, driven and navigated by Jim Galvin and Glen Thompson.

With the addition of the many items ALSO collected by Cub Scout Pack111, the Food Pantry shelves are looking a little fuller, for the moment, ready to assist any congregation member, their family or the surrounding community.



Consecration Sunday Results--- November 20, 2011 (more cards are coming in daily at this point)

A total of **50** giving units (husbands and wives or single persons) completed Estimate of Giving Cards this year.

A total of **16** of these giving units increased their financial commitment **above** their last year's amount

A total of **50** giving units present to fill our Estimate of Giving Cards today committed a total of \$ **164,720.00**

Based on last year's giving records, we can expect to receive **\$ 49,219.00** during the coming year from people who have consistent giving patterns during the past twelve months but are not present today.

Based on the average total of loose offerings during the past three years, we can expect to receive **\$6,763.00** during the coming year from that source.

Church income from non-donor sources such as interest, rentals and fees are estimated at **\$800.00**.

This gives us a grand total of **\$ 222,481.00** anticipated income for the next twelve months.

The total income for our general operating budget during the last twelve months was **\$227,898.00**.

2011 Christmas Offering — "Good News of Great Joy"

"But the angel said to them 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people...." Luke 2:10

Sometimes **we** get to be the angels who sing out Good News of Great Joy:

"I've been so inspired by changes afoot at my church!" "Help is on the way!"

"I'm going to Camp Christian this summer!" "There really are people who care!"

"We've just called a new pastor!" "I've decided to become a minister!"

"We are a covenant network of congregations in mission!"

We glean from regional activities, challenges, ideas and friendships that strengthen us in our ministries all over OHIO.

Use the enclosed special envelope or add your gift to your regular offering (marking it clearly).

Stephanie Tyler, Outreach

