

West Swamp News

Volume 9, Issue 10

December '20

A virtual Christmas

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FYI

- The longest night of the year is Monday, Dec. 21. In many churches, this is a time to remember those grieving the loss of loved ones, experiencing loneliness, or struggling with illness. This has been a hard year for many. May you find time on Dec. 21 to pray for those who are suffering.

.Our greatest wish this season is health and safety for our congregation, our communities, our country and beyond. And that means worshiping in new ways and finding creative ways to keep connected this Christmas. The Worship Commission is working hard at both challenges.

Here's how YOU can help:

Advent Calendar Project

Our Advent Calendar is off to a good start. Jan Wieand gave us a look at some of her Christmas decorations, including a nativity set she made over 40 years ago (it's remained intact through the rearing of three rambunctious boys!), and shared a poem about keeping Christmas all year long.

Joan Hallman reminded us to not lose sight of Jesus in the midst of all our "Get ready for Christmas" lists.

We had a story time in front of the fireplace as Sue Gwilliam read "A Cup of Christmas Tea."

We have a few more videos ready to go and a few promises of ones to come—but we need more to have at least one for every day leading up to Christmas.

And we can't end up



with too many! It would be wonderful to include as many West Swampers as possible.



ble. Posting more than one a day is no problem.

Be as creative as you like: give a simple greeting or Christmas blessing, share an update on how you are doing, talk about your favorite ornament or carol, read your favorite scripture—whatever you decide to do will be just right.

If you need help, check with a younger and/or more tech-savvy relative. Don't have a way to take a video? Contact the church office to see if we can arrange something. And if a video is completely out of the question, send a writ-

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Pastor's Corner: Two unique Sundays

In 2006, three pastors, including Chris Seay, who attended Baylor University with me, founded the Advent Conspiracy. The Advent Conspiracy is a movement to help followers of Jesus reject the materialism of Western consumerist culture and live into the true meaning of Christmas. It's built around four challenges:

- Worship Fully
- Spend Less
- Give More
- Love All

Worship Fully: The point of Christmas is that in Jesus, God has taken on humanity and become accessible to us in a new way and our appropriate response is worship. I challenge you to set aside time daily during Advent for prayer and Scripture reading, to center yourself in the love and faithfulness of

God revealed in Jesus.

The **Spend Less** challenge is to drastically reduce the amount of money you spend on Christmas gifts. Maybe this year you can only give necessary gifts like clothing or necessary household items. Make a game of seeing how little you can spend.

The **Give More** challenge is to give the gift of presence, not presents. Make a point during Advent of spending time together with members of your household. Have a game night. Make popcorn together. Check in daily with one another.

The **Love All** challenge is to, as much as you are able in these financially trying times, to take the money you would have spent on presents and give it to an organization that cares for our

neighbors in need, either nearby or far away. Mennonite Central Committee and local food banks are a couple of good places to start.

My hope for you this year is an Advent season focused on Jesus, not on waiting for delivery drivers.

Peace,

Pastor Michael



DISCO: Where did the time go!

Can you believe it's Advent already? Where did the time go! 2021 is right around the corner and I know we are all hoping it will bring some normalcy with it. I know I'm missing our Sunday School Discussion group and the whole West Swamp family. In the meantime, I hope you are able to connect with friends and loved ones whether in person or on social media or even if just by phone. We need to feel connected.

The Bible Project Sunday School class continues to meet on Sunday mornings at 9 am via Zoom.

Lynne is leading the class and we are currently studying Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. We would love to have more people join us. If you are interested, let Lynne know. If you are new to Zoom, let Lynne or Pastor Michael or myself know and we can help you.

Katie Mood is leading a small group book study via Zoom on Thursday nights. The group is reading the book *Almost Amish: One Woman's Quest for a Slower, Simpler, More Sustainable Life* by Nancy Sleeth. If you are interested in joining or have an idea for a small group

book study, please contact me.

I encourage everyone to take time to reach out to other members of our church family, whether by phone or email or even a note in the mail letting them know you are thinking about them. And I hope you are able to take time during this season to focus on your faith and the blessings you have received, whether big or small!

Wishing everyone peace, love and good health in the new year.

~Lori Farrell

Mission: Got some free time?

With this being such an odd year I am sure the way we celebrate Christmas will also be different than we may normally celebrate. The love of God for mankind is the reason Jesus was sent to earth on the first Christmas. So as believers in that baby sent so long ago, we too can show love for mankind. Hopefully we do that all throughout the year by the way we treat others—being friendly, showing kindness and being generous when we can or even when it is hard to find some extra funds.

Much like Jesus being born in such humble conditions that it was hard to think this baby could be the Messiah, we may think, “How can my small donation do any good with so much need in the world?”, especially this year. That is why I would like to encourage you to look into donating through MCC this holiday season to hopefully bring some true joy this Christmas. Many people doing something can go such a long way.

Following is an example of how MCC is meeting needs and sharing the love of Jesus to those in need.

After two hurricanes within two weeks flooded several countries in Central America twice, MCC is providing emergency food and supplies and making longer-term plans to help with recovery.

More than 100,000 people were evacuated, sometimes twice, from their houses in Nicaragua and Honduras to

shelters set up in schools and churches or to family members who live on higher ground. Farmers lost entire crops that were almost ready for harvest.

César Flores and Lizette Miranda, MCC area directors for Latin America and Haiti, live in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, where in lower-lying parts of the city, flood waters covered rooftops after both storms.

“As Anabaptists, we say service is our practice. Now is the time to serve,” said Flores. “This is the moment to serve with the Central American people – just loving those who are in need in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Congregations of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña (IEMH; Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church) quickly responded by providing three shelters for about 200 people in or around San Pedro Sula who had to evacuate.

MCC is partnering with IEMH and with Comisión Social Menonita (Mennonite Social Action Commission) by providing emergency food assistance and cleaning and hygiene supplies to people as they return home and COVID-19 masks for people at shelters.

In remote areas of Guatemala where houses and communities were flooded,

the Q’eqchi’ Mennonite Church conference provided shelter and distributed blankets, relief kits and hygiene kits that MCC provided to people living in the Alta Verapaz area.

Miranda said she sees a “loaves and fishes” effect taking place, referring to a Bible passage where Jesus fed a multitude with five loaves of bread and two fish.

Let God use *your* “loaves and fish” to be multiplied to help many.

Check out the MCC website for yourself to see other stories and donate to an effort that will bring some hope and joy to those in need. Simply type Mennonite Central Committee on your search bar or write

MCC U.S.
21 South 12th Street
PO Box 500
Akron, PA 17501-0500

Email: mailbox@mcc.org

And blessings on your Christmas celebrations, whatever they may look like!

~Rod Rush



Showing compassion to asylum seekers

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ten message and a picture and we'll turn it into a video for you.

The Advent Calendar videos are posted as "Unlisted." That means only those who are sent the YouTube link can view them. This is a project by West Swamp members, for West Swamp members.

Sunday Services

We are doing our best to include as many people in our worship service videos as we can. Would *you* like to read a scripture or another of the readings? We've been doing some "shoulder-

tapping" through email, but it is a blessing to have someone call or email to volunteer! (We *do* take "no" for an answer, but hope we don't get too many of them.)

Christmas Eve

Out of necessity to keep everyone safer through this pandemic, our Christmas Eve Service will be virtual too. And once again, we want to include as many people as possible. Please help us make a montage of the Christmas story. Here's how and, yes, it involves more videos:

Read or tell a part of the Christmas story. You can use your own

words or your favorite Bible translation. You can use figures from your nativity set if you want. Doing several short pieces works great. Doing one long video is fine too. The more pieces we get, the better the montage we can put together!

Seeing your face

All three of these things help just a little with keeping us connected. Thanks to all who have been and who will be making videos.

We miss being together, we miss *seeing* each other. We'd like to see *you*.

Showing compassion to asylum seekers

Time to get out your favorite cookie recipes, heat up the oven and get baking! West Swamp will once again take part in the annual **Christmas Carnival**, held on Saturday, Dec. 12. This carnival is held in support of low income families in the Quaker-town area.

The format of the carnival will be different this year, of course. Instead of the usual indoor stations, things will be conducted as a drive-through experience.

60 families have signed up for the event. That means we need 120 dozen cookies!

Cookies need to be dropped off at church between 4 and 6 pm on Friday, Dec. 11, where they will be boxed up for distribution on Saturday..

If you can bake or can help box cookies on Friday, please let Nancy Jacobs know.

A family theme:

Paul Heimbach and daughters Karen and Jan sport identical Christmas decorations. (Karen definitely wins "Best Shadow Cast"!)



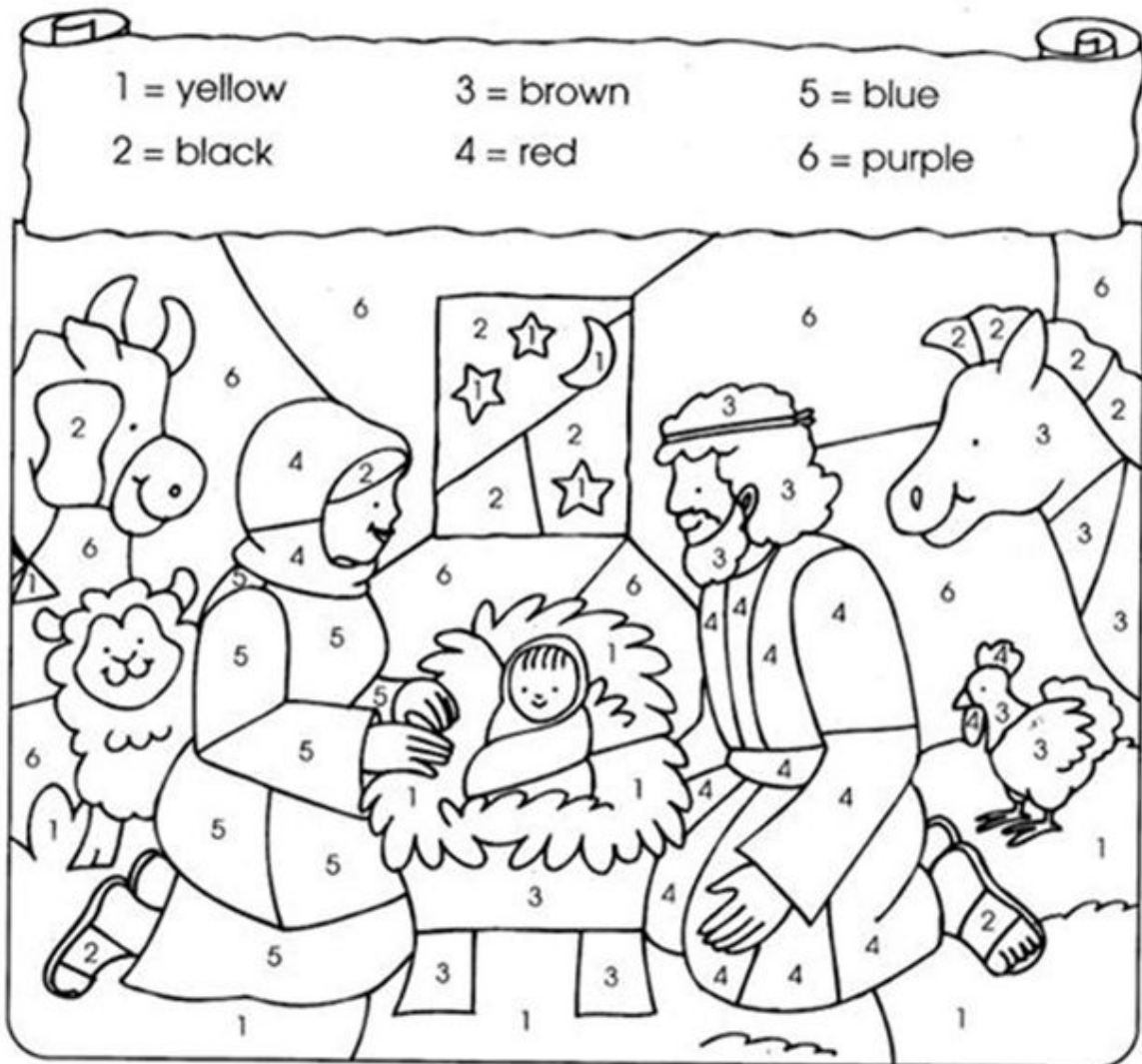
Kid's Page

God's Son Is Born

(Luke 2)

Mary and Joseph decided to stay in a stable. During the night, a wonderful thing happened! Mary gave birth to Jesus—God's own son. She wrapped Him in a cloth and placed Him in a manger.

Use the code to color the picture.





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Reflecting God in our
living, loving and serving

Shepherd on the Search

Join Katie Mood each day as she follows the shepherd around the farm as he searches for the newborn King. A video link is sent along in the Advent Calendar email.

Special thanks to Katie for taking on this Advent journey!



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|-------|------------------|-------|---------------------|
| 12/1 | Pauline Stelmach | 12/17 | Madison Mood |
| 12/4 | Dennis Wieand | | Evan Wieand |
| 12/7 | Debbie Bauman | 12/19 | Bill Grube |
| | Wayne Moyer | 12/20 | Ossie Myers |
| 12/9 | Betty Lou Green | 12/21 | Kim Witt |
| | Penny Rice | 12/23 | Barb Moyer |
| 12/11 | Jasper Riley | 12/24 | Elliana Kirkpatrick |
| 12/15 | Louise Butcher | 12/26 | Glenn High |
| 12/16 | Sue Gwilliam | 12/27 | Bob Leber |
| | Brent Rice | | Elaine Propst |
| | Seth Rice | 12/29 | Charles Spiess |
| | | 12/31 | Kevin Huff |