



The MESSENGER

*Christmas Eve at
First Christian Church*

10:00 a.m.
5:00 p.m. candlelight, child care provided
7:30 p.m. candlelight

*The Promise of
Christmas*

401 W. Jefferson St.
Bloomington
blmfcc.com

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.
"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name
shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, "God is with us").
-Matthew 1:22-23

➤ *Christmas Greetings* – Rather than sending Christmas cards to all our church friends, our tradition is to send one card to the church to be placed in a basket in the Centrum for all to read. Enclose the amount saved on cards and postage, and this donation will be given to Camp Walter Scott. Greetings have been received from:

Al & Beverly Leight, Eddie Dill, Jim & Helen Fry, Jack & Jean Snyder, Pat Manahan, Ron & Sharron Wright, Zoe Iutzi, Tom & Barb Dixon, Herb & Duff Knudsen, Leonard & Charlene Maupin, Nichols family, Alan & Kathie Chapman, Dave & Brenda Phillis, Randy & Nancy (Gordon) Phillips, Chaney family, Pool family, Ken & Marcia Christensen



➤ *Inclement Weather* – Please listen to WJBC radio, check our Facebook page, or go to the church website for information regarding cancellations.

➤ *Congregational Meeting* – Sunday, January 21, 2018, 10:00 AM, in the Sanctuary, for the purpose of approving the 2018 budget.

Combined service in the Sanctuary 10:00 a.m.

New Year's Eve Service

2017

➤ *Bible Study* – You are welcome to come read through the short Letters of Paul (currently II Timothy) on Wednesdays at noon in the Conference Room. Jim Warren leads the study.

➤ *Gifts for Another Table* – During December we still need the following items to keep in the church office for those who stop by needing: microwaveable meals, pull-top cans of soup, cereal bars, and instant oatmeal.

➤ *Youth Mid-Winter 24 hour Retreat* –



For grades 6-12, January 20, Eureka College, \$20. Registrations due January 6. Leave FCC 12:30 PM. See Holly Irvin for more information.

➤ *Disciples Women's Ministries* – The first meeting of DWM for 2018 will be held on Thursday, January 4, at 1:00 PM in the Conference Room. We will begin our new study "Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts." This book is written by Charles V. Bryant. If you have not received your copy yet, there will be some at the meeting. New members are more than welcome. The price of the book and workbook is \$14.85. Mary Helen Haskell and Kim Rott will be leading our monthly study. If you have not already done so, please read the Forward and Introduction in the book and the Preface and Symbols of Gifts in the workbook. This will give you an overview of what this year will be about. We will start with Chapter 1 "The Meaning and Scope of Spiritual Gifts" (pages 17-24 in the book and Session 1 in the workbook pages 11-19).



Our annual Christmas luncheon at Westminster Village was delightful. Thanks to Shirley Wotherspoon for making these arrangements and to Mary Helen Haskell for setting up our musical entertainment. Dorothy Sallee, Martha Hunter, and Shirley Wotherspoon provided some very tasty treats.

Let us all look forward to an interesting year in DWM as we strive to find a balance in our lives of service and worship.

JANUARY 2018

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	Thomas/Ortiz Wedding 10:00 AM Combined Service 5:00 PM Youth Group WILL NOT MEET	 OFFICE CLOSED 10:30 AM Bridge 5:45 PM Bridge 5:45 PM Voice Lesson	9:30 AM Staff Meeting 5:00 PM NA 5:15 PM Music Connections	12:00 PM Bible Bunch 7:00 PM One and All Rehearsal	1:00 PM Disciples Women's Ministries 6:30 PM Elders' Circle 5:30 PM Private Voice Lessons		
7	Gifts for Another Table 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM One and All Worship 5:00 PM Youth Group will NOT MEET	10:30 AM Bridge 11:30 AM CCIW 5:30 PM Board Meeting 5:45 PM Bridge 5:45 PM Voice Lesson	9:30 AM Staff Meeting 5:00 PM NA 5:15 PM Music Connections	12:00 PM Bible Bunch 5:30 PM Hand Bells 6:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM One and All Rehearsal	11:00 AM Private Voice Lessons 6:30 PM CCIW	12:00 PM CCIW 6:30 PM CCIW	9:00 AM CCIW
14	9:00 AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM One and All Worship 10:15 AM Youth Sunday School 5:00 PM KFC & Youth Group - Prepare for Youth Sunday	10:30 AM Bridge 5:45 PM Bridge 5:45 PM Voice Lesson	9:30 AM Staff Meeting 5:00 PM NA 6:15 PM Music Connections	12:00 PM Bible Bunch 5:30 PM Hand Bells 6:30 PM Choir Rehearsal 7:00 PM One and All Rehearsal	5:30 PM Private Voice Lessons 7:00 PM Private Voice Lessons	7:00 PM Square Dance	Youth Mid-Winter Retreat

A long obedience in the same direction...

God with Us and for Us



Have you ever tried to picture the night Jesus was born? There are basically two ways we can imagine the first Christmas. One way is to focus on the reality of the night. Scripture tells us that Jesus was born in a stable, a "barn." There's some speculation that his birthplace might have been a small cave. Regardless of whether it was a stable or a cave, it was a place that included animals.

So think of the sights, sounds, and smells that accompanied Jesus' birth. Mary was said to have ridden a donkey, so surely the donkey was there, along with camels, perhaps cows, and then sheep when the shepherds show up. I can hear quite a racket from all of those animals, and their smells...ew!

Add to that a newborn baby, which, as we all know, adds its own sets of sounds and smells.

And what you have is a cacophonous and odiferous smorgasbord of noise and aromas. This was the setting where Mary gave birth. This is what the first Christmas must have been like.

God decided in Jesus Christ to come right into our human messiness. God eschewed royal palaces and important cities, instead choosing a barn, surrounded by noisy, smelly animals, in a dusty, out-of-the way village, as the site for entering our world.

And God keeps doing the same thing. God keeps appearing in the midst of our human messiness. God keeps showing up in a world where violence and war are never far away, where powerful men betray and abuse women, and where hunger and poverty are worldwide problems. There is no place where God cannot be found. That's what we learn when we focus on the chaos that accompanied Jesus' birth.

The other way we can imagine the first Christmas is to revel in its divinity. There are angels singing a heavenly chorus more sublime than any humans have ever produced. A mother and father glow with the excitement and delight that a newborn brings. Shepherds kneel in awe, kings worship in humility, a star shines with a holy light, animals pause in silence, and a baby smiles serenely. This idyllic nativity scene evokes a sense of wonder among all who contemplate it.

Picturing this idealized tableau reminds us that God came among us in Jesus' birth. We can access, even touch, God through Jesus Christ. God's heavenly host proclaimed that now God is with us, and all of creation has received its savior and redeemer. Jesus, the Son of God, is born!

Sometimes, when we're caught up in the messiness of life, we need a reminder that there is more beyond what we immediately experience. God is both with us in the realities of life, and beyond those realities, offering us another, greater way of being. God is more than we can begin to comprehend.

Christmas means that God is with us, in the everyday realities of life, and God is beyond us, inviting us to experience the divine here and now. Jesus points us to God, in the messiness of His birth and in our lives, and in the transcendence of the divine all around us.

Through everything that's happened to Sharon over the past couple of months, sometimes I've needed to know that God is in the midst of the pain I've experienced around me, and sometimes I've needed to hear God calling to me from beyond the pain. Christmas offers both.

How do you most need to experience God today? Do you need to find God right where you are, in whatever you're going through? Or do you need to be inspired by God's divine calling, reminding you that there is something better, something more, than what you're experiencing?

Christmas means that God in Jesus Christ is here with us and for us. Thanks be to God! Merry Christmas!

-- Jim Warren

Witness of the Faithful

Attendance: 12/10: 218, 42 12/17: 173, 30

Offering: \$39,286

Contributions for 2017 must be received in the church office or postmarked by December 31, 2017.

2018 General Fund Pledge Campaign Update:

139 pledges = \$467,490. Pledge cards are available in the attendance pads in the pews or by calling the church office.

Prayer Concerns

Shirley Ryan AbilityLab: Sharon Warren

(Room #2236, 355 E. Erie Street, Chicago, IL 60611)

Aftercare: Bob Corbett, Lori Craig, Dave Eyman, Jackie Hux, Duke Kopp, Connie Lindenbaum, Peggy O'Neal, Brenda Phillis, Mary Smart, Greg Summers, Don Wey

Hospice: Harold Goyen, Marilyn Thompson, Virginia Warren

Assisted Living: Alma Samuels (Taylors' home)

Nursing Homes: Blm. Rehab -- Marilyn Thompson; Heritage,

Blm. -- Paul Cope, Merle Murray, Harry Schultz, Virginia

Warren; Heritage, El Paso -- Sonna West; Heritage, Nrm. --

Mickey Armstrong, Harold Goyen; Liberty, Clinton -- Corena

Meyer; Martin Health -- Dave Dungan, Marlyn Mahannah,

Lois Murray, Barbara Thatcher; Sugar Crk -- Roberta Blomgren

Military: Chris Kavanaugh (Marines, CA);

Harley Scott (Phillis niece/Navy, VA)

Sympathy to: ... Ron Elliott family on the December 9 death

of his wife, Juanita ... Debbie Stumm family on the December

10 death of her great-niece, Kaeleigh Tennant, of Florida

... Jennifer (Kevin) Kiesewetter family on the December 19

death of her uncle, "Bud" Howell

Wedding: Andrea Bohlmann & Gary Fugitt were married Dec.

15. Parents of the bride are Julie Robinson and Dave Phillis.

Thank You

Notes posted on the Centrum bulletin board have been received from: Bob Corbett, Gene Fowler, Brenda Phillis (health/cards), and Regional Alternative School (donations).

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Bloomington's Oldest Continuing Congregation - Founded 1837

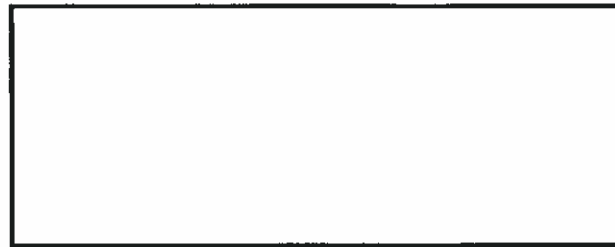


401 West Jefferson Street
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

Return Service Requested

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Permit #41

Bloomington, IL 61701



Serving Sunday, December 24

Acolyte: Jeremiah Hall **Worship Leader:** Susan Cleaver
Advent Wreath Lighters: 10:00 Damery family 5:00 Kosier family
Child Care: Trish Logan, James Nussbaum
Deacons: 10:00 Libby Nussbaum, Matt Davis
5:00 Todd & Corin Chapman, Ryan Newton, Heather Damery
7:30 Libby Nussbaum, Valerie Fisher
Jr. Deacons: 10:00 Jaden Eft, Madison Varner
5:00 Teagan Gramley, Seth Newton
Drivers: Ryan Newton, Gary Thompson
Elders: 10:00 May Jackson, Marla McElroy
5:00 Chip & Patti Jamerson, Becky White, Naomi Kosier
7:30 May Jackson, Brenda Phillis
Homebound Elders: Naomi Kosier, Kathie Chapman
Fellowship Host: Julie Robinson **Recycle:** Frank & Lois Lipscomb
Fill Candles: Marla McElroy, Kathie Chapman
Greeters: 10:00 Alan & Kathie Chapman, Vicki Hall
5:00 Darrell & Teri Arvik, Matt & Naomi Kosier
7:30 Ron & Nancy Gramley, Jim & Carolyn Hepperly
Information Center Host: Mary Helen Haskell
Scripture: Art Taylor **Time for Children:** Patty Thompson
Sound Tech: Brian Metz **Video Tech:** Chip Jamerson
Worship & Wonder Greeter: Chip Jamerson

Mailed: December 20, 2017

Serving Sunday, December 31

Acolytes: Carson Damery, Campbell Damery
Child Care: Trish Logan, Corin Chapman
Deacons: Ryan Newton and Justin or Kim Cox or Valerie Fisher
Jr. Deacons: Sadie Newton, Sabrina Campos
Drivers: Ralph Lehmann, Darrell Arvik
Elders: Art & Camille Taylor **Fellowship Host:** Rita Fisher
Homebound Elders: May Jackson, Marla McElroy
Fill Candles: Marla McElroy, Kathie Chapman
Greeters: Shirley Wotherspoon, May Jackson
Information Center Host: Pat Bozarth **Recycle:** Frank & Lois Lipscomb
Scripture: Bob Trefzger **Time for Children:** Matt Chapman
Sound Tech: Brian Metz **Video Tech:** --
Worship & Wonder Greeter: Naomi Kosier

Sunday Traditional Worship 9:00 AM
One and All Worship 10:15 AM
Sunday School 10:15 AM
Sunday Youth Group 5:00 PM

Senior Pastor

James Warren.....212-6873
jwarren@blmfcc.org

Minister Emeritus

John Trefzger

Music

Holly Irvin, Dir. Music & Youth Ministries
hirvin@blmfcc.org.....1-864-921-4874

Lou Ann Fillingham, organ/piano

lafillingham@comcast.net

Bill West, One and All Music Coordinator

billwest211@gmail.com

Communications Coordinator

Jenifer Petri.....808-1181
info@blmfcc.org

Office Administrator

Dawn Craig
office@blmfcc.org

Financial Secretary & Editor

Deborah Stumm
dstumm@blmfcc.org

Custodian

Wally Calvert
calvert62@comcast.net

Child Care Coordinator

Trish Logan
tllogan4@hotmail.com

Office 829-9327

401 W. Jefferson, Bloomington, IL 61701

M-F 8:00-4:30; Closed Noon-1:00

FAX.....829-2865

Website & Calendar.....www.blmfcc.com