

WABASH CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN



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December
2020

Additional Times for Connections and Study

Sunday School

On Sunday mornings, except for Sundays that Pastor Doug has off, we are continuing to offer Sunday School via Zoom. We have been working through a study on the subject of wisdom in the Bible using A Guide for Biblical Studies from the denomination. Even if you do not have a copy of the book, you can still join in the discussions, which are always very insightful. We will soon be finishing up this book, and will provide more information on what will come next soon. To join in Sunday School, simply log into the Sunday Morning Worship Service Zoom link at 9AM. We end the session with enough time that if you would like to join in-person worship, you still can.

Tuesday Bible Studies

We are now studying the Book of Esther. To connect, <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89574172976?pwd=ZUhLRnVrZThsWGJTb3pGMVYyMW4vUT09>, or call 312-626-6799, enter meeting ID 895 7417 2976 and passcode 710386. The group meets Tuesdays at 10am.

We welcome all who are on the journey to know Jesus, who share in his love and who choose to embrace the diversity within this community of believers. As individuals we may be at different places along the path, but as a community, we are all traveling together in faith, trusting God to show us the way.



Wabash City Schools delivering lunches

In This Issue

- Pastor's Letter
- Women's Fellowship News
- Worship Schedule
- Camp Mack Corner
- District Prayer Concerns
- BLI Update
- Church Calendar
- And more!



A Different Advent Season

Pastor Doug Veal

Last year, in the December newsletter, I took time to look at the season of Advent as a season of waiting and watching, moving through the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. Advent, this season of preparation, is an important part of our run-up to Christmas each year. We look forward to our regular practices, to hearing the Christmas music and hymns, to the annual Christmas Eve candlelight service, culminating in singing Silent Night. At least, I know that I look forward to much of these things. In fact, I spent a bit of time perusing around on our car radio looking for stations that are playing Christmas music exclusively during this time.

Especially in this year that has brought so many changes to us, clinging to these traditions seems more important than ever. It is my continued expectation that, in the coming year, we will be able to safely return to a more normal way of doing things. Yet, while we continue to meet virtually, creating challenges for many of these traditions, I am committed to working on finding ways to adapt and bring these traditions into our shared experiences this year. We have already continued our tradition of Advent candle lighting, which will be a feature of our worship through Christmas. It may be pre-recorded, it may end up being folks sharing the readings over Zoom on a Sunday morning, but we will have it.

While the shape of it is still in consideration, we will be having an online worship service for Christmas Eve. More information will be coming out as that approaches.

Music shapes much of our celebration of Christmas. While in the past, we've had opportunities to join in a choir on a regular basis during Advent and Christmas, we aren't able to do so this year. I'm hoping to be able to put together a virtual choir video of "Silent Night," although it's proving to be a bit more challenging than I had expected. Still, at the very least, we will continue to use traditional Advent and Christmas music throughout this season.

While we are having to shift and transition to different ways of doing familiar things this year, we continue to wait and to watch for Jesus. This, no matter how we do it, does not change from year to year. The season of Advent continues to prepare us for Jesus' birth at Christmas, whether we gather together on Zoom, or gather together in the sanctuary. God's love does not change, and the power of God's care for us continues even in this strange and uncertain world we find ourselves living within.

In Christ,

Pastor Doug

Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Now, more than ever, we need stories of what is going on in our lives as we do our best to self-isolate and stay at home.

Have questions? See Michelle in the office, or send her a quick email.



Women's Fellowship

Knowing that we all miss seeing each other, are there alternate ways that we can sit with each other? If you have ideas, please contact Michelle in the office.



Worship Schedule—December

	Pulpit	Worship Leader	Song Leader	Greeter	Head Usher	Children's Church	Musician
6	Pastor Doug Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 "Speaking Peace"		No singing			No CC	
13	Pastor Doug Luke 1:46-55 "Rejoicing in the Lord"		Until further			Until further	
20	Pastor Doug Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 "God's Steadfast Love"		Notice			Notice	
24	Christmas Eve						
27	Guest Speaker						

Updates from Witness Commission

Outreach

From Karen—I am going to try to finish up 2 more buckets for DR. That will be a total of 5. If people still want to give money I am sure we can use it.

Don't forget to check out Brethren Press when they do their Christmas shopping!

Many Thanks!

A big thank you to Bethene for the fall mums planted in the planters at the church and to Dave and Audrey for trimming bushes and to ALL who helped get in storm windows!!!

News from the Director

Preparing for Summer 2021

In April, we made the difficult decision to cancel our in-person summer camp for 2020. There were a lot of reasons for the decision, but three of them really stood out. First, we were receiving a lot of confusing and changing information about what would be a safe way to hold camp. Secondly, we could not offer a camp experience that would give campers the kind of fun and community we believe is vitally important. Finally, we knew there was not enough time to plan for all the changes we would need to make.

When we made the decision, there was hope that COVID-19 would be resolved before the end of the year, and now we know that won't be the case. In fact, it is likely that all of us will continue to make some sacrifices and accommodations through 2021 and into 2022; although, we are optimistic things will have improved a great deal.

With all that said, it is crucial to our mission that we have summer camp in 2021. Our mission is to spread the good news of God's love to all. So many of our campers depend on the activity and community of camp. We cannot lose another year.

We now have a much better understanding of how the virus spreads, and we know how to take precautions to keep people as safe as possible. Since March, when we faced a lockdown in our state, our entire staff has continued to be COVID-free. We have developed protocols to keep our staff and our guests safe, and they have worked well. There have been no suspected cases of exposure through Camp Mack. Additionally, we are continuing to learn from camps who did hold sessions last summer, and area schools are showing us effective ways to provide safe environments and interaction.

Our mission is to provide sanctuary, connection with God, experiences in creation, and Christian community. Throughout these several months, our staff has been focused on how we can make these things happen even when safety requires some physical distancing or other restrictions. We have some great ideas.

We also have time to plan. In fact, the process we are using is already happening. A committee is meeting monthly to talk about all aspects of camp and to provide feedback to operations committees and staff. The operations committees are working on program, food service, safe facilities, rental camps, and registration. All of this is to ensure we can offer the best and safest experience possible next summer.

It also needs to be said that CAMP 2021 will not be entirely like the camps of the last few years. There will be changes, and these changes will be in place as long as COVID-19 poses a threat to our campers and families. Our goal, however, is to provide the core mission. Our campers need to feel safe; they need to be in the presence of God; they need to have incredible outdoor experiences; they need to have the powerful Christian community that is Camp Mack.

Please watch this monthly newsletter to see our plans as they develop. Our goal is to give you assurance that we are working hard to provide the program you expect from Camp Mack in as safe an environment as possible. One final thing. Go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/69RZL7V>, and share your thoughts with us about next summer. CAMP 2021 is on the way! How exciting!

Gene Hollenberg, Executive Director

Community Support

Church Food Pantry

Our local pantry is looking to supplement what we get from Milford each month. Additional items needed are:

Mac and Cheese boxes
Hamburger

Baked beans

Hamburger /Tuna/

Chicken Helper

Peanut butter

Canned meat (tuna, chicken, etc.)

Jelly

Pasta

Saltines

Bread

Soups

Canned fruits and veggies

Saltines

Cleaning Supplies

TP/Tissue

Personal Hygiene items



Zak at Camp, 2016

Camp Mack Corner

December 5—Wreaths and Swags Get-A-Way Day

Are you getting in the Christmas spirit? Are you ready to deck your halls? Make a traditional Williamsburg Wreath, Christmas wreath, or a swag using greens and fresh fruit to grace your door this Christmas season. Saturday 9a–3p. Ulrich House Basement. Cost: \$30 (Lunch and all materials included). Leader: Karen Kauffman. Bring gloves.

December 5/6—Christmas Cookies Get-A-Way Day

Fill your cookie jar for the holidays! Camp provides the ingredients, measuring utensils, and mixing bowls. You bring the family or friends (or just yourself), mix the dough, sample cookies, and sip hot chocolate. Best of all, camp cleans up the mess! Choose 4 batches of cookies (each batch makes about 3 dozen cookies). Saturday 9a–1p and 12p–4p,

and Sunday 12p–4p. John Kline Welcome

Center. Cost: \$50 (lunch and all baking materials included). Leader: Jess Kreider.

Please bring an apron and containers to take home your cookies. There are three sessions to choose from—please choose Saturday a.m. or p.m. or Sunday p.m. Cookie choices:

chocolate chip, double chocolate chip, ginger snaps, sugar cookies, monster cookies, oatmeal raisin, butter cookies (this cookie will be pre-baked and ready for you to



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decorate!), peanut butter, snickerdoodles, and snowballs (a.k.a. Mexican Wedding Cookies). Additional batches and lunches are available at additional charges.

December 12—Children's Christmas Party Parents, drop off your kids at Camp Mack, and then head out for a day of shopping, dining, and relaxing while your children have the time of their lives. We provide them with two meals and a snack while playing games, singing Christmas carols, hearing the Christmas story, doing crafts, decorating cookies, and more. This is for children ages 5–12. Saturday 11a–7p. Cost: \$25 (includes two meals, a snack, and all activity supplies).

December 31–January 1—New Year's Eve Retreat "Creation Speaks" is the theme! Great fun for youth and peace of mind for parents. Why bring in the New Year sitting at home when you can have a great time reuniting with friends from summer or introducing someone new to Camp Mack? This is the place to be counting down the minutes until the ball drops at our very own "Times Square" event. This event is filled with awesome activities indoors and out, live DJs, dancing, Bible study, games, free time, and more. This event is for youth in 6th through 10th grades. If you are interested in chaperoning, contact camp. Event details will be released by Wednesday, November 25th.

Brethren Disaster Ministries



Slowly Returning

Arlene and I have been here in Dayton on the BDM tornado rebuild site for more than two weeks. Sure we had some reservations about health safety before we came. But BDM is using extreme caution as we gather, live together, eat together and work together. Partners are taking care too and we are protecting home owners while improving their living situation.

This is a very good safe way to do the ministry of Jesus in the midst of Covid.

Yes, volunteers are reluctant to come so numbers are down. But you can come with the knowledge that this is as safe as it gets. Safe for home owners too as one with a new roof said recently, "It is nice for it to rain and not have it rain into my home."

BDM sites in North Carolina and here in Dayton can always use volunteers. I need five more volunteers for the week of November 29—December 4. All I need is your registration form and your willingness to abide by the COVID protocols.

Find the appropriate forms at <https://www.brethren.org/bdm/rebuild/volunteer/> So, many things are happening. BDM needs people for rebuilding and meal preparation. BDM and CDS need folks to make masks and assemble kits. Where would you like to plug into these ministries of our church? Please respond to the email or call me at 260-982-2971.

Blessings of peace to you! Cliff Kindy

District Prayer List

December 6—Please pray with us for the On Earth Peace staff, and their missions.

December 13—Please pray with us for Wabash CoB congregation and staff and the Pacific Northwest District congregations and staff.

December 20—Please pray with us for the West Eel River CoB and the Pacific Southwest District congregations and staff.

December 27—Please pray with us for the Akron CoB and the Atlantic Northeast District congregations and staff.

Stewards Commission

Video Assistant Needed

Looking at a new and exciting way you can help the church? We are in need of a volunteer (or two or three) to help run the video streaming. A very positive outcome to sheltering in place is that we've been able to improve our ability to include family members who aren't normally able to worship with us, as well as reach beyond our community.

If you are interested, or know someone who would be, please contact Pastor Doug at pastordoug@wabashcob.org or Michelle at office@wabashcob.org.

Upper Room

November—December Edition

The Upper Room is available in the sanctuary. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please contact the office and please specify regular or large print. If you would like to pick one up the next time you are here, they are on the back table in the sanctuary.

Annual Conference News

Nominations now open

The Nominations & Personnel sub-committee of the Standing Committee is currently accepting nominations for Annual Conference positions on the 2021 ballot. For more information or to make a nomination go to: <http://www.brethren.org/ac/nominations/> or contact the S/C IN District Standing Committee Rep. Kurt Borgmann (rkborgmann89@gmail.com).

Brethren Leadership Institute

Upcoming Classes

Evangelism & Outreach

Instructor: Brian Mackie

Dates: December 5

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; 12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom

To register for a BLI course or for questions, contact the District Office (260) 982-8805, scindcob@gmail.com.

Classes are open to all: You may be exploring ministry, answering a call to ministry, and/or seeking further education. CEUs are available.

For more information on the Brethren Leadership Institute (BLI) and fees, visit <http://www.scindcob.org/BLI.html>.



Upcoming Opportunities

Junior High

July 23 – 25: National Junior High Conference at Elizabethtown College. Online registration opens in January.

Senior High

December 1: Christian Citizenship Seminar registration opens at www.brethren.org/yya/ccs. February 7, 2021: Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday. www.souperbowl.org.

April 24 – 28: Christian Citizenship Seminar 2021 (This year it will be a virtual event.)

May 2: National Youth Sunday. Theme and worship materials will be posted online by March 2021.

Young Adult

January 8, 2021: Ministry Summer Service applications due. www.brethren.org/mss

January 21: National Young Adult Conference 2021 registration opens at www.brethren.org/YAC

May 28-31: National Young Adult Conference 2021 at Montreat Conference Center (North Carolina).

Greetings Friends of GWP!

Advent Calendar

We hope this email finds you well as we move into an unprecedented Advent season.

Last year we created our first Advent "Color By Numbers" Calendar. We've created a new calendar for this year, with artwork by Debbie Noffsinger. Each day offers a different reflection prompt and sections of the artwork to color in. December can be full of messages to consume more, be more, but in this season we invite you into the slow practice of coloring and reflecting

The calendar is attached and can also be found on our [website](#). It is free to download and print! We will be posting daily on Facebook and Instagram. We invite you to do the same using #GWPAvent.

Prayers of health and wellbeing to each of you!

Blessings,

Sarah Neher for GWP

Instructions are on the next page, and the calendar is on the last page.

Special Offerings

December—Advent Offering

This is a denominationally sponsored offering that supports many different missions and ministries throughout our global community.

January—Supportive Community Project

Works with congregations to help them to become more open, affirming, and welcome.

December is full of "consume more!" messages, but Jesus comes to show us abundant life. Let's turn, together. While meditating on the day's theme, color in the shapes labeled with the day's number and color listed in the reflection (or pick your own). With gratitude for your luxuries, send your taxes to: GWP c/o Kim Hill Smith, 5315 36th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55417 (write checks to GWP).

1 (DARK BLUE) Advent = coming. Jesus comes to set the oppressed free! Who is oppressed in your community? Pick a specific person/group to pray for during Advent. *Luke 4:16-21*

2 (LIGHT BLUE) GWP is rooted in the Church of the Brethren, with volunteer Steering Committee members sharing leadership since 1978. Not all in the US are rich (and not all rich live in the US), but GWP's education about luxuries is focused on the US as our own social and cultural context. Our empowerment is intrinsically linked to that of women and men around the world. Send a thank-you to a woman in your life. *1 Thessalonians 3:9-13*

3 (LIGHT BLUE) Cultural Academy for Peace (CAP), a GWP partner project, holistically supports their community in Kerala, India. "Everything they owned was held in common.... There was not a needy person among them." Check your Christmas lists: what could you borrow/lend rather than buy? *Acts 4:32-37*

4 (DARK GREEN) We celebrate Mary's courage to bear God-in-flesh, even though she was young and unmarried. Human trafficking is a pervasive issue in India affecting at least 23,117 people annually, though, these statistics are likely low due to underreporting. *Isaiah 1:13-17* | Tax: \$0.50 for each year you haven't been trafficked. _____

5 (BROWN) CAP initiated a program to distribute vulnerability kits to the families of Korangotta Island, an island surrounded by surplus water while there is scarcity of drinking water. | Tax: \$0.25 for each glass of water you drank today. _____

6 (LIME GREEN) 74.8% of rural women in India are agricultural workers, but only 9.3% own the land. *Jeremiah 31:15* | Tax: \$5 if you've ever owned property. _____

7 (LIGHT BLUE) In India, under-age marriage is a prominent cause for girls not attending school. 13% of girls are married before they turn 17. | Tax: \$2 for each member of your family with a high school degree. _____

8 (PURPLE) Travel has a potent impact on climate change, and climate change disproportionately impacts countries like India close to the equator. | Tax: 1% of the cost of your last trip. _____

9 (SKIN) CAP offers a short stay home to help women in distress and need. The shelter includes a safe and secure stay for women and girls below the poverty line. | Tax: \$0.10 for each year your household has been above the poverty line. _____

10 (DARK BLUE) Kerala is the best performing state in India, with 96.6% of urban poor children attending school (UNICEF). | Tax: \$0.10 for each year you attended school. _____

11 (YELLOW) Buying presents this Christmas? Support women-owned businesses. Find a list at womenownedlogo.com. *2 Corinthians 9:6-12*

12 (RED) 3.4% of live births in India result in death before age five. | Tax: \$1.50 for each fatality-free birth in your family. _____

13 (SKIN) Babies are beloved and bring hope, though pregnancy and child-raising are a burden for many women, families, communities – and our planet! Meditate on this complexity. *Psalms 139:1-18*

14 (DARK GREEN) 32% of girls in urban India ages 15-17 work as unpaid family laborers (UNICEF). | Tax: \$0.10 for each year pre-18 that you did not work to support your family. _____

15 (RED) CAP has an initiative training women to be auto rickshaw drivers, empowering them to support their families financially with steady income. | Tax: \$0.50 for each year of postsecondary education you have received. _____

16 (ORANGE) The US leads the world in calories, protein and fat per person. | Tax: \$0.50 for each indulgent food/drink you enjoyed during the past 24 hours. _____

17 (RED) In India, one in every three children is malnourished. If you do the math, that's 46 million kids exhibiting symptoms of malnourishment, such as anemia and stunted growth (World Food Program). | Tax: \$0.10 per item in your fridge. _____

18 (DARK GREEN) If women farmers had access to the same resources as men, 150 million more people would have enough food to eat (Heifer Int'l). *Matthew 13:33*

19 (SKIN) People without privilege have to creatively persist to feed their families. *Luke 18:1-8* | Tax: \$1.80 if you've ever gotten a loan from family, friends or a bank. _____

20 (GREEN) Check your kitchen, pantry, basement and freezer. Estimate how many days' worth of food you have on hand. *Matthew 6:25-34* | Tax: \$0.30/day _____

21 (YELLOW) Does your state pay restaurant workers minimum wage + tips? (Only 7 do.) *Jeremiah 7:1-7* | Tax: \$0.75 for each time you tipped less than 25% in the past week. _____

22 (DARK BLUE) Women produce 80% of the developing world's food yet make up 70% of the world's poor (Heifer Int'l). Research Community Supported Agriculture in your community & consider buying a share offered by a woman.

23 (YELLOW) Have you celebrated a holiday with an empty stomach? Be thankful with each bite you eat today. *Isaiah 55:1-2* | Tax: \$0.50 per meal you ate distracted yesterday (in the car, with a screen, at your desk...) _____

24 (RED) Even after a feast, we get hungry again. Savor the mindfulness and spiritual practice you've feasted on with this Advent calendar and know that you will be hungry for more. Did you pray for that person/group all month? What now? *Isaiah 55:3-8*

25 (ORANGE) Celebrate God-in-flesh with your own body, family and community. Merry Christmas from Global Women's Project! *Isaiah 55:9-13*

TOTAL TAX _____

Artwork by Debbie Noffsinger

Step Out: Seeking New Paths

2021 Workcamp Options



In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Workcamp Office has developed alternative workcamp options for summer 2021 workcamps. Our top priority is the health and safety of workcamp participants and the communities we serve, and we hope to offer workcamp options that reflect this priority while also providing a meaningful workcamp experience. We are grateful for those who participated in our informational survey; your feedback has been valuable as we continue planning for next summer! At this time, we would like to officially announce that we will be offering four different options for 2021 workcamps. This fall, we'd like to begin planning with individuals and groups who are interested in attending a workcamp next summer. If you are interested in participating in 2021 workcamps please be in

touch with us with your Tier preference by December 1, 2020. You can either fill out this preference survey and we will contact you or you can contact us directly by emailing cobworkcamps@brethren.org or calling 847-429-4337. This will allow us to best plan for your group but will not constitute your workcamp registration. 2021 Workcamp registration dates will be announced soon – stay tuned!

The four 2021 workcamp options, and their cost, are as follows:

Tier 1 – \$75: In this tier, participants will serve in their local communities during the day, either individually or with other members of their congregation. In the evening, participants will gather virtually for devotions and activities. Participants will be expected to bring their own lunch while serving. The Workcamp Office will work with individuals and congregations to coordinate service opportunities within their local context. The Workcamp team will also provide leadership during the virtual evening meetings.

Tier 2 – \$235: In this tier, participants will serve in their local area with other members of their congregation during the day. In the evening, they will gather together physically, in a socially-distant manner, for dinner, devotions, and activities. Participants will return home to sleep each night and be expected to bring their own lunch while serving. The Workcamp Office will work with the congregation to plan local service and will provide leadership and participate in-person during the week.

Tier 3 – \$285: In this tier, participants will serve locally with other congregations in their region during the day. In the evening, they will gather together physically, in a socially-distant manner, for dinner, devotions, and activities. Participants will return home to sleep each night and be expected to bring their own lunch while serving. The Workcamp Office will work with each congregation interested in participating to plan local service and will provide leadership and participate in-person during the week.

Tier 4 – \$350: In this tier, participants will participate in a “normal” workcamp. Workcamp participants from around the country will travel to a workcamp location, stay together in local housing accommodations (church or camp), and serve together for the week. The Workcamp Office will plan and lead all service work, meals, devotions, and recreational activities.

***Please note that Tier 4 workcamps are presented as an option pending the distribution of a safe vaccine in Spring 2021. We expect to make a decision about Tier 4 workcamps by February 15th, 2021.

Please note: Tier 1-3 workcamps will start on a Sunday evening and run through Friday evening. Tier 4 workcamps will begin Sunday evening and run through Saturday morning.

This year, all workcamps will be intergenerational and open to individuals who have completed 6th grade and older. As usual, adult advisors are required to attend with groups of youth and are expected to fully participate in all aspects of the workcamp. Advisors will register at the same time as their youth and pay the same registration fee.

The Workcamp Office asks that congregations send at least one adult advisor for every two to four youth participants, keeping gender in mind (i.e. if youth are all male, there should be at least one male advisor). All adults who attend a workcamp will be required to go through a background check administered by the denominational office.





Advisory Board Meeting

Advisory Board meeting has been cancelled since April. We will be looking to reconvene when the Stay at Home order has been lifted. In the mean time, we have been communicating via email to see how we can best serve.

Global Prayer Update

Nigeria

There has been considerable unrest in Nigeria over the past week. It began Oct. 20 with the police shooting of civilians at an #EndSARS protest near Lagos, in the south of Nigeria. The movement using the hashtag #EndSARS is seeking to abolish a federal police unit called the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) that is accused of multiple abuses. "Amnesty International said it has recorded 82 cases of SARS abuses over the past three years, including beatings, hangings, mock executions, sexual assault, and waterboarding," reports the Washington Post.

This sparked more protests and looting around the country, and 24-hour curfews have been put in place in 20 states across Nigeria (including Plateau State – where Bethany student Sharon Flaten resides, and Adamawa State – the headquarters of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren In Nigeria).

Reports from Rev. Yuguda Mdurvwa, director of EYN Disaster Relief Ministry, said warehouses across the country which contained COVID-19 relief supplies had been broken into, items taken, and buildings destroyed. While the rural areas have not experienced this looting and destruction, they remain targets of Boko Haram attacks and many locals are afraid to sleep in their villages at night. Flaten reported from Plateau State: "The first curfew was relaxed Friday morning but then people discovered several large warehouses that were full of palliatives that (we think) were meant to be distributed as aid months ago for COVID-19 relief. On Saturday thousands of people went to these warehouses to take any/all food that they could carry. As a result, the governor reinstated the 24-hour curfew which we are still under now. And while it seems that many people are obeying the curfew, some still are not. As for me, I'm doing okay, I am just so thankful for this house, and this compound, and the people who live here. I was able to find some small food stuffs close to the compound here on Friday and one of my closest friends helped me on Saturday to get some supplies. Today we are waiting to hear what will happen next." Please pray for Nigeria and the members of EYN.

Reading through the Bible in a year: Daily readings for December

1 Malachi	9 Acts 21-22	17 3 John	25 Christmas Day—none
2 Acts 19-20	10 2 John	18 Deut. 29-31	26 Deut. 32-34
3 1 John 4-5	11 Deut. 26-28	19 Esther 1-5	27 Esther 6-10
4 Deut. 23-25	12 Nehemiah 10-13	20 Psalms 146-148	28 Psalms 149-150
5 Nehemiah 5-9	13 Psalms 143-145	21 Song of Sol. 5-6	29 Song of Sol. 7-8
6 Psalms 140-142	14 Song of Sol. 3-4	22 Revelation 12-17	30 Revelation 18-22
7 Song of Sol. 1-2	15 Revelation 7-11	23 Acts 25-26	31 Acts 27-28
8 Revelation 1-6	16 Acts 23-24	24 Jude	

Trail Thoughts—Trekking toward God's adventurous future

Quarterly Letter from Paul Munday, Moderator Empathy

GREETINGS IN THE STRONG NAME OF JESUS! Division continues to advance. Whether it's division in our body as we fight-off COVID-19, division in our country as we fracture over a contentious election, or division in the church as we label each other rather than cherish each other, we are tearing apart. Recently, historian Jon Meacham reflected on cultural division. Surprisingly, he remarked: "division is part of the oxygen of democracy." The problem: most are unwilling to learn from "the other," typecasting "the other" as an enemy rather than a companion. But we are companions. Thus, Meacham calls for respect, for "democracies depend on empathy. If we can't see each other as neighbors, we're not going to make it." 1 So too for churches; if we can't see each other as neighbors, we're not going to make it. Thus, among life choices, we must opt for understanding, electing empathy. It's striking that most of the Apostle Paul's letters were written to Christ-followers in conflict. Rather than surrendering to rancor, Paul sought reconciliation. Mind you, such peacebuilding didn't expunge differences; that's unrealistic. But Paul tempered difference, amplifying humanity over hostility. "[D]on't let the passion of your emotions lead you to sin! Don't let anger control you or be fuel for revenge, not for even a day...And never let ugly or hateful words come from your mouth, but instead let your words become beautiful gifts that encourage others...Lay aside bitter words, temper tantrums, revenge, profanity, and insults. But instead be kind and affectionate toward one another..." (Ephesians 4:26-32 TPT). Such self-control emerges as we view difference as strength, bolstering life. Recently I hiked Half Moon Mountain in the George Washington National Forest. As I trekked, I was engulfed in stunning autumnal beauty, remembering that a prime reason for the glory was the wide variety of species all around me—all kinds of different mammals, leaves, trees, insects, birds. Eager to know specifics, I researched the forest, discovering that surrounding me on that fall day were 40 species of trees, 2,000 species of shrubs and herbaceous plants, 78 species of amphibians and reptiles, 200 species of birds, 60 species of mammals, and 100 species of freshwater fishes and mussels.² Without such variety and difference, the beauty that apprehended me would not have occurred. But there's more. The variety surrounding me needed to learn to co-exist in a respectful, balanced ecosystem, creating, in the words of National Geographic, a "bubble of life." Continuing, National Geographic observes, "Every factor in an ecosystem depends on every other factor, either directly or indirectly." 3 For example, animals depend on plants for food and shelter, and plants depend on balanced temperature. So too for us: we need a sense of dependence, valuing each other, differences and all. The Apostle Paul underscores this: "Just as the human body is one, though it has many parts...so too is Christ. For by one Spirit we all were immersed and mingled into one single body. And no matter our status—whether we are Jews or non-Jews, oppressed or free—we are all privileged to drink deeply of the same Holy Spirit... Think of it this way. If the whole body were just an eyeball, how could it hear sounds...A diversity is required, for if the body consisted of one single part, there wouldn't be a body at all!" (1 Corinthians 12:12-19 TPT). The takeaway: a diversity is required to create a bubble of life. Thus, Biden supporters need Trump supporters, and Trump supporters need Biden supporters. Episcopalians need Pentecostals, and Pentecostals need Episcopalians. Younger adults need older adults, and older adults need younger adults. Such mutual respect is a stretch, but needed, for God desires a day, Isaiah reminds us, when "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together...They will neither harm nor destroy...for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9 NIV). It's important to note that affirming diversity does not preclude discernment. Openness to others is not synonymous with openness to abuse, immorality, and apostasy (e.g., the flat-out denial of Jesus as "Son of God, Savior of the World and the Head of the Church, according to the Scriptures" 4). But openness to others does mean openness to new ideas, broader perspectives, and untraveled terrain. Thus, greater diversity often equates greater discomfort (for all the right reasons) as we plumb the depths of God's Creation, discovering in persons different from us a texture and breadth stretching us toward all God intended us to be. It's interesting to note the value God places on diversity as he addresses the seven churches of Revelation (Revelation 2-3). As God does, it's evident. Eugene Peterson notes that "No single congregation exhibits the wholeness of Christ...[thus] one phrase is repeated without variation [to all] seven churches. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" 5 We too need to hear what the Spirit says as it speaks through diversity, for no one of us exhibits the wholeness of Christ. Thus, we have much to learn from "the other" as we empathize with those different, even those with whom we're "over-against." In 2008, J.K. Rowling, of Harry Potter fame, gave the commencement address at Harvard University. She had two main points: the benefits of failure and the importance of imagination. Persons assumed that Rowling would speak of imagination from the perspective of her creative writing. Not so. Rowling advanced the necessity of imagination from the perspective of stretching toward persons different and divided from us. "Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not...In its...most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared." 6 And so, I call us to imagination, stretching toward those far from us, envisioning redemptive breakthroughs beyond our most entrenched assumptions. That happens as we dare to engage with those varied and different—opting for understanding, electing empathy. In doing so, "divided we'll stand," transforming division into oxygen and life, not just for us and our tribe, but

Council Meeting,
November 2020

This year, we held council electronically, with ballots sent via email or post to our moderator, Bob Gross. By unanimous vote, the Slate was passed. They were as follows, Board: Bethene Gill, Audrey Hahn, Laurie Kieffaber Cornett, Sharon Larrowe, Barb Miller and Karen Odiorne, all for 3 year terms. And the following Delegates: Annual Conference 1 year term, Laurie Kieffaber Cornett, District Conference 2 year term, Karen Odiorne. Also by unanimous vote, the budget for 2021 was passed.

for all of God's children. With expectation,



Discussion Starters/Question

1. Jon Meacham contends democracies require both division and empathy. Why are both elements needed? 2. Reread Ephesians 4:26-32. What aspect(s) of Paul's counsel do you struggle with? 3. Reread 1 Corinthians 12:12-19. Paul observes, "If the whole body were just an eyeball, how could it hear sounds...A diversity is required." Paul's analogy (e.g., the body's diversity) hits home, but often we struggle to affirm diversity in other aspects of life. Why? 4. Moderator Paul contends: "affirming diversity does not preclude discernment. Openness to others is not synonymous with openness to abuse, immorality, and apostasy." Where have you experienced too much diversity, contributing to ill and not gain? 5. J.K. Rowling contends that imagination is "the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared." Who can you imagine empathizing with who is not currently part of your relational network/world?

To Dig Deeper

Lauren Casper. Loving Well in A Broken World. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2020. Miroslav Volf. Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996

1 <https://www.today.com/video/-we-ve-always-been-divided-historian-jon-meacham-says-95306821678> 2 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/gwj/about-forest> 3 <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/ecosystem/> 4 <https://www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991-religious-pluralism/> 5 Eugene Peterson. Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination. New York: Harper One, 1988, p. 47. 6 <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/06/text-of-j-k-rowling-speech/>

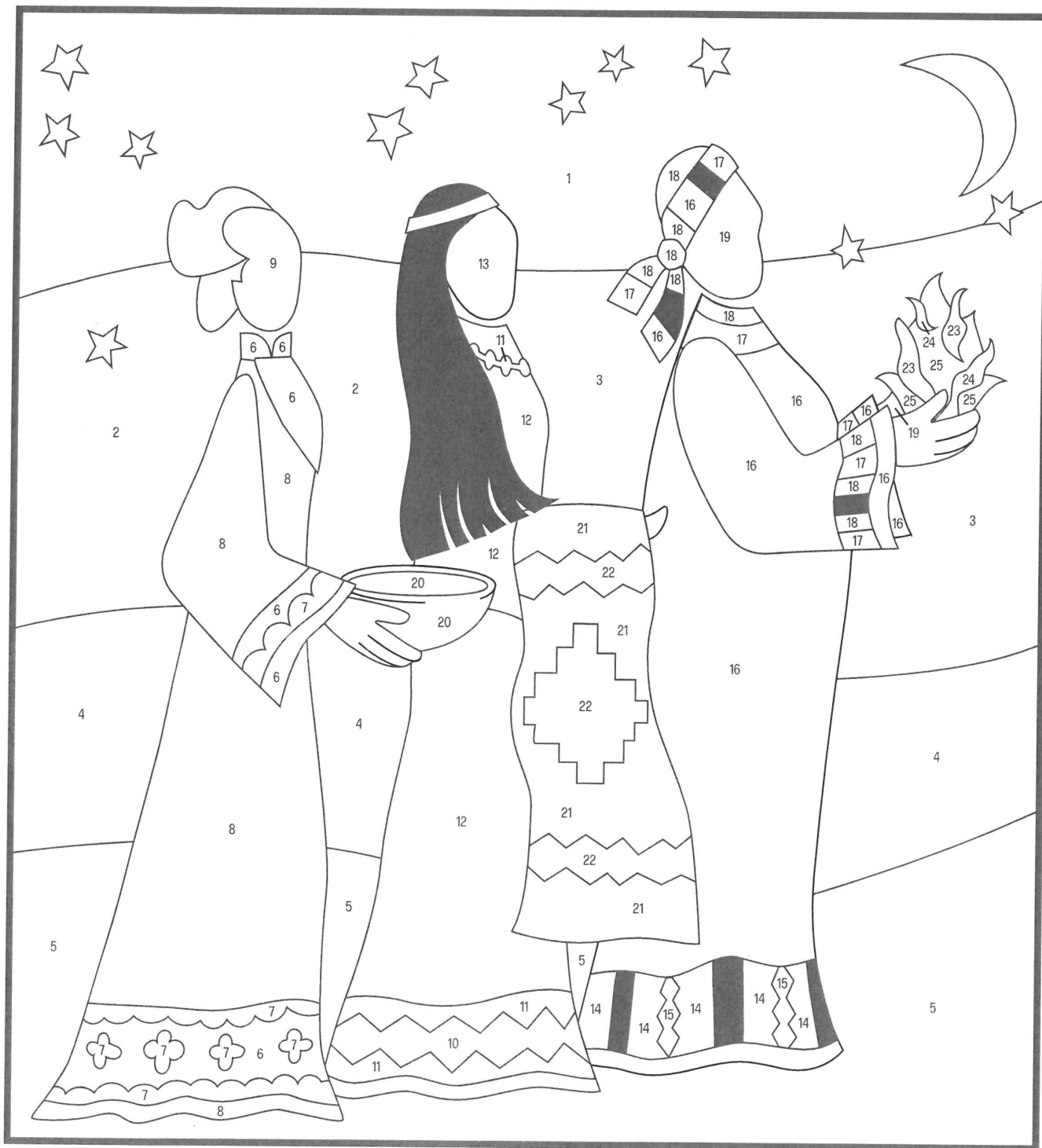
In Loving Memory

Many thanks, from the Arlo Short family

We appreciate the outpouring of support we received during Dad's short illness, hospital stay and passing. The words of encouragement and stories on social media and the caring bridge site from those near and far uplifted us during a time when we needed to make decisions regarding his care. We all felt the prayers and are grateful for such a supportive church family and community. Thank you for the cards, gifts and acts of kindness being done in his memory.

With Appreciation,

The Arlo Short family



GLOBAL WOMEN'S PROJECT ADVENT CALENDAR

