

DECEMBER 2025

# NOTES FROM FRIENDS

The monthly newsletter of West Branch Friends Church



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Thanks to each of you for your patience in waiting for this month's newsletter! The last several days have been pretty overwhelming for me and my family. Many of you know that my mom was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and cerebrovascular dementia. She has been living with my sister for the past year. Her condition has been sliding pretty quickly (and pretty far) and it was time for Mom to move. I have spent the last nine months looking for a bed, doing paperwork, getting others to do their paperwork.... you know the drill. It was my mom's wish to move "back home" and we finally scored an assisted living bed close to my hometown of Camanche. (She's in Clinton). We have family and friends there, so Mom will have many visitors. We have spent the last few days packing up what can go and storing what cannot. Today (Dec. 2) was moving day. None of it has been easy, and Mom's current state is not great. And yet. Wonderfully positive and caring staff welcomed her and set a tone that immediately put her at ease. She relaxed as much as is possible for her right now. It was truly a joy to see. In this season, we voice our yearning for what's truly important. Hope. Love. Joy. Peace. This coming Sunday we will light the love candle on our Advent wreath. We will sing songs that give voice and spirit to our profound desire for love to rule our world. On the next page of this newsletter, I have shared the lyrics to a seasonal Peter Mayer song called "Stables". I hope you will read them. I hope you will then Google the song and listen.

"In Bethlehem a manger waits...long ago and so today...where hatred-weary people pray...Love will come and lay there..."

Love Big, Be Well,  
Chris

# Stables by Peter Mayer

In Bethlehem a manger waits  
Long ago and so today  
where hatred-weary people pray  
Love will come and lay there.

And so do countless stables stand  
In hearts as harsh as desert lands  
Rough shelters in the wind and sand  
So love will come and stay there.

Love that opens fists of hate  
Heaps up gold on beggars' plates  
Love that shows a kindly face  
to enemies and strangers.

And the walls of stables tremble so  
when the winds of fear and judgment blow  
for a stable hopes in love alone  
and knows that love's the answer

O Love, the prophet's only word  
the only lesson left to learn  
the only end of heaven's work  
and the only road that goes there

Love that sees with mercy's eyes  
Holds its arms out open wide  
Threads its loom with separate lives  
and weaves them all together

So may the lamps of stables glow  
Brightly that their light may go  
for miles in the darkness so  
Love will find its way there.



*Merry Christmas!*



# Don't Miss these Wonderful Events!



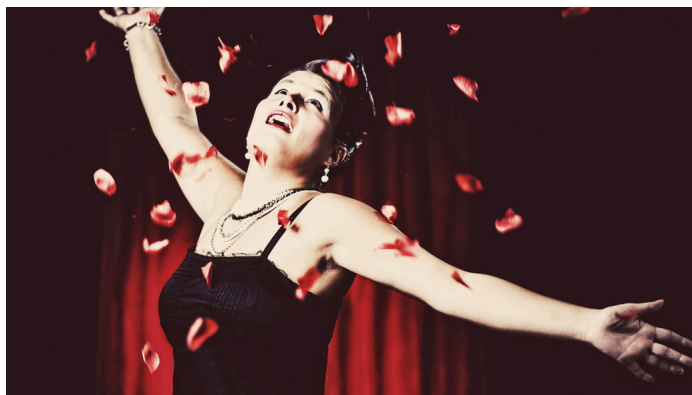
## Bell Choir Concert

*Friday, December 5, 7:00 pm at the meetinghouse*



## Christmas Free Community Brunch

*Saturday, December 6 9:00 am at the meetinghouse*



## Christmas Cabaret

*Saturday, December 6, 6:00 pm @ The Black Rose*

## Jonny's Community Christmas Sing Along

*Saturday, December 6, 7:00 pm @ The Black Rose*

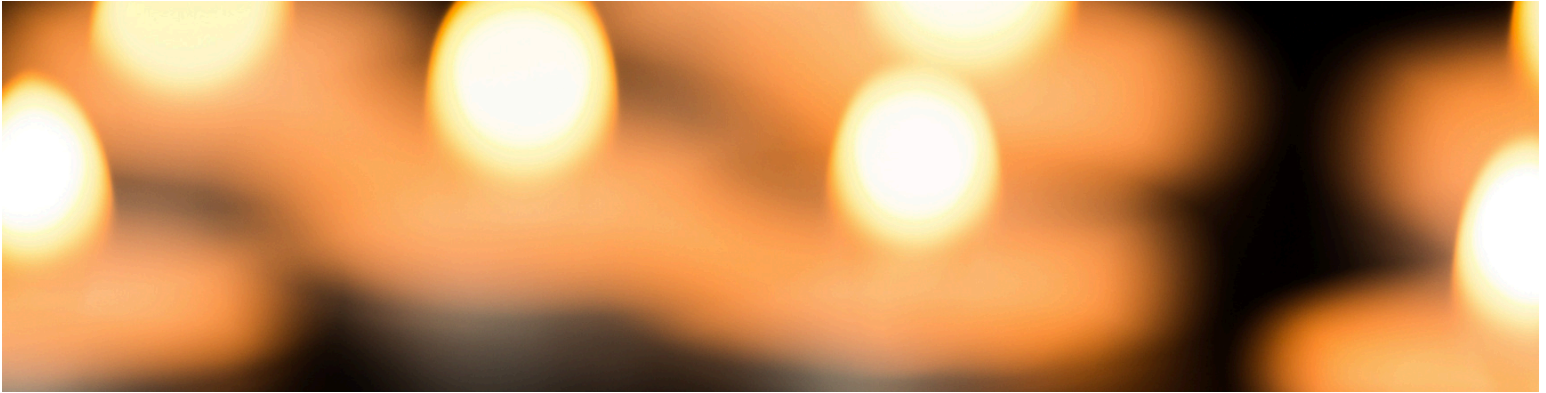


## Annual All-Church Christmas Program & Soup Supper

*Sunday, December 21, 5:00 pm at the meetinghouse*

*With the theme of bringing our gifts to the Christ child, we invite everyone to consider sharing their gifts of talent. Sing a song, share a reading, play some music, do a little dance.... if you would like to join the program, please contact Gwen at [gwensenio@gmail.com](mailto:gwensenio@gmail.com) or Chris at [christine@homeforthewildsoul.com](mailto:christine@homeforthewildsoul.com)*

# Time for Prayer



## Joys & Concerns

### Pray for Our Elders

Darlene Baum  
Pat Bradley  
Maria Denmead  
Fran Fritz  
Mary Humrichouse  
Pat Langrehr  
Donna Mortenson  
Larry Reiner  
Lois Semotan  
Nancy Stacks  
Mildred Torkelson

- *Welcoming good news in Shawn's girlfriend's medical test results*
- *Rory was accepted and played cello with the All-State Orchestra and will be inducted into National Honor Society*
- *Mary and Mike enjoying rehearsals for White Christmas the musical (Psst... go see them Dec. 5&6, or Dec. 12&13)*
- *Allan and Teresa as Allan continues with treatment*
- *Jonny's mom Nancy as she prepares for back surgery*
- *Johnny's friend Mike with health issues*
- *Mourning the death of Father Guillermo Trevino*
- *Raghu as he prepares to move and find a new job*
- *Kevin as he anticipates his release*
- *Hunger and food insecurity in our communities*

### Ecumenical Prayer Cycle for December

Nov. 30-Dec. 6: *Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore*

Dec. 7-Dec. 13: *Myanmar, Thailand*

Dec. 14-Dec. 20: *Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam*

Dec. 21-Dec. 27: *Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Mainland China*

Dec. 28-Jan. 3: *Japan, North Korea, South Korea*

Dear Lord, we pray for peace on earth this Christmas. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we ask for your blessing upon our world. Unite hearts in love, inspire compassion for one another, and grant us the strength to overcome conflict and division. Guide us to be channels of your peace in our homes, communities, and the world.



# *Testimony of the Month*

## **Integrity**

### **When Honesty Matters and Trustworthiness Is a Given**

**Care less about being perfect and more about being true to what matters. Integrity asks us to live an undivided life, manifesting consistency of character wherever we roam. When paired with kindness and truthfulness, integrity builds amazing levels of trust between parties of all sorts.**

### **Toward a Testimony of Integrity Queries for Further Reflection**

1. When I identify with the things that matter most to me, how do they reflect the priorities in my life?
2. When I consider where I contribute my time and resources, do they align with the things I say matter most?
3. What steps might I take to better bring my inner life and outer life into an agreeable alignment?
4. What kinds of situations most challenge my commitment to integrity?
5. When I think about the circles in which I live my life, what are some ways in which it is important that I speak truth and walk in truth?



## **Featured Recipe: Ginger Snap Cookies from the kitchen of Pendle Hill**

**Seasonal baked goods are the star of the show this time of year! These spicy, comforting cookies are always a welcome treat at the end of a cold day. Makes 27 cookies**

### **Ingredients:**

**2 cups butter  
4 cups brown sugar  
2 eggs  
1/2 cup molasses  
1/2 Tbsp vanilla  
2 Tbsp cocoa powder  
1 1/4 tsp cinnamon  
1 1/4 tsp ginger  
3/4 tsp cloves  
1/4 tsp salt  
4 cups flour  
1 Tbsp baking soda**



### **Directions:**

**Preheat oven to 350 degrees F and line your baking sheets with parchment.**

**In a large bowl or mixer, cream together butter and brown sugar. Slowly add the rest of your wet ingredients and mix until just combined.**

**In a separate bowl, sift together all dry ingredients. While the mixer is running on the lowest speed, slowly add the dry mixture to the wet mixture until just combined.**

**Scoop generously portioned cookies onto your lined baking sheets with enough room between each to allow cookies to spread as they bake. Optional: refrigerate dough for an hour before baking to limit cookie spreading during baking.**

**Bake for 12 minutes, or until they're crisp to your preference. Enjoy with a mug of something hot and comforting!**