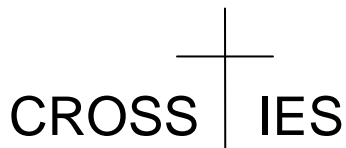


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December, 2017 – January, 2018

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## EMBRACING CHRISTMAS

**W**hen we think of the Christmas season, we most often think of the vast array of Christmas lights and decorations, along with the shopping, presents and food. The true meaning is often lost under layers of our modern-day commercial celebration.

**I**n that first Christmas, God made a radical intrusion into human history. Since the beginning, there was the reality that all of humanity was created in God's image. It wasn't just the Israelites or those who claimed this faith, but all humanity bore the mark of our Creator God. In the common desire to make our own mark, we became little gods unto ourselves, betraying our brothers and sisters for uncounted selfish reasons.

**O**ur Creator's expectations were dashed against the hard reality of human arrogance, violence and greed, so once again God intervened and brought redemption into the world, in the form of a child. Out of the darkness of the night and the times came one who would become a savior.

**T**his very act of God becoming human is unique to the Christian faith. God is no longer distant and aloof. God is present in our life - in the joy that is Christmas, in the weariness of our work, in the struggles of life, in the hopes for a better world for our children, in all the pain and pleasures of life - God is here and knows them all too well, both the heights of our laughter and the rivers of tears shed.

**S**o, as we celebrate the birth of the Savior, let's remember that redemption came for us all, both low and high, every race of humanity, every nation, every language... We are all one in Christ Jesus. Embrace the presence of God in our world and in her people. Redemption comes when we stop, reflect, and seek God's presence in the world. When we look deep enough, we can find God's image in the wonder and excitement of a child, in the expectant joy of parents, the wisdom and silent knowing of the old man or woman, in the gnarled hands of the working man, even in the outstretched palm of the beggar at the street corner.

**T**his man/God/child who is Jesus was an immigrant whose parents were fleeing his own people simply seeking peace. With only a sack-full of belongings they fled across an inhospitable desert hoping, praying that someone would have heart enough to take them in and give them shelter and a meal.

**T**he irony of history is that the arrogance, violence and greed still exist alongside the generosity and welcoming embrace of those who have seen the true light of the Christmas season. That light above all others, enough to light every town and city in this world, a light that is spread out as vast as the heavens above is the light of God's love. This is the greatest gift we are given this Christmas. This is the greatest gift we can give this Christmas. God's love. Our love for one another - all sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus.

**M**ay your Christmas be blessed with love, peace and generosity!

## DECEMBER CALENDAR



Sat	2	<b>Women's Christmas Brunch</b>	<b>10:00 am</b>
Sun	3	<b>1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>	
		Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship Service	11:00 am
		<b>Christmas Fund Deadline</b>	
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
M	4	Tutoring	4:30 pm
Tu	5	B Natural Music Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
W	6	Tutoring	4:30 pm
		B Natural Music Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
Sun	10	<b>2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>	
		Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship Service	11:00 am
		<b>Christmas Project Gifts Due</b>	
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
M	11	Tutoring	4:30 pm
Tu	12	B Natural Music Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
		Student Performances	
W	13	Tutoring	4:30 pm
		B Natural Music Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
		Student Performances	
		Session Meeting	7:00 pm
Th	14	Future Hope Single Parents' Group	7:00 pm
Sun	17	<b>3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>	
		Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Sunday School	10:00 am
		Adult Choir	10:15 am
		<b>Festival of Lessons &amp; Carols</b>	<b>11:00 am</b>
		<b>Children's Christmas Extravaganza &amp; Party</b>	<b>6:00 pm</b>
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
Th	21	Winter Begins	
Sun	24	<b>4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT/CHRISTMAS EVE</b>	
		SHARING SUNDAY	
		Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship Service	11:00 am
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
		<b>Christmas Eve Service</b>	<b>7:00 pm</b>
M	25	<b>CHRISTMAS DAY</b>	
		Church Office Closed	
Tu	26	Church Office Closed	
Sun	31	<b>NEW YEAR'S EVE</b>	
		Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship Service	11:00 am
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm

## JANUARY CALENDAR

M	1	<b>NEW YEAR'S DAY</b>	
		Church Office Closed	
W	3	Circle Meeting	10:00 am
		Choir Practice	6:30 pm
Sun	7	Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship Service	11:00 am
		Communion	
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
Tu	9	B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
W	10	B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
		Choir Practice	6:30 pm
		Session Meeting	7:00 pm
Th	11	Future Hope Single Parents' Group	7:00 pm
Sun	14	Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship	11:00 am
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
M	15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day	
Tu	16	B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
W	17	Tutoring	4:30 pm
		B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
		Choir Practice	6:30 pm
Sun	21	<u>Crossties</u> Info Deadline	
		Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship	11:00 am
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
M	22	Tutoring	4:30 pm
Tu	23	B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
W	24	Tutoring	4:30 pm
		B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
		Choir Practice	6:30 pm
Sun	28	Adult Sunday School	9:45 am
		Voices of Angels Practice & Sunday School	10:00 am
		Worship	11:00 am
		SASTO NA Group	6:00 pm
M	29	Tutoring	4:30 pm
Tu	30	B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
W	31	Tutoring	4:30 pm
		B Natural Academy Classes	5:00-7:45 pm
		Choir Practice	6:30 pm

## CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S BRUNCH** will be held on Saturday, **December 2**, at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. Women are invited to join in this celebration.

**PCC CHRISTMAS FUND** deadline is Sunday, **December 3**. These donations will provide funds for various seasonal expenses such as poinsettias, treats for children and our special members and friends. If you would like to designate your donation in honor or in memory of someone, please include a note with the name(s). All donations will be acknowledged in the Festival of Lessons and Carols bulletin on December 17.

**CHURCH PROJECT** again this year is to adopt a couple of families and help provide a nice Christmas for them. A basket in the church vestibule has cards with items listed on them for members of the families. Please select one or more cards, purchase the item(s) and return to the church office – **unwrapped** and with the **card attached** – by Sunday, **December 10**. If you have any questions, call Joanne Miles or Jane Manley.

The tradition of the **ADVENT WREATH** will continue this year, with the children in the congregation taking part and lighting the candles, one being lit during the 11:00 am service each Sunday in Advent – **December 3, 10, 17, 24** – and also during the **Christmas Eve Service** at 7:00 pm.

**FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS** will be during the worship hour at 11:00 am on Sunday, **December 17**. Our choir has been hard at work on the choral music, and the congregation will have lots of opportunities to sing some of the well-known carols. We need some people to volunteer to be readers. Please call Gray Clark or the church office if you are willing to help.

Our **CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA** is on **December 17** at 6:00 pm which will showcase our children as well as some of the students in our B Natural Academy of Music & the Arts. While details aren't pinned down, it looks like we may have a group of dancers, some drummers, and a couple of piano students participating as well as our annual unrehearsed Christmas Pageant. ALL CHILDREN who attend (Bring friends!) are welcome to participate and we are hoping for a good group to help. We ask that children come to the fellowship hall at 5:00 pm. And as for ADULTS...you need to be here, too, to support and lift up our children. There are some group parts for our audience. And you don't want to miss this chance to experience what is happening in our music academy.

Following the children's program, **Santa** is planning to make an appearance so bring your cameras for this photo op. You are asked to bring a simple finger food/snack to share on the **refreshment** table. This should be a night to remember!

The culmination of all of our services and parties will occur the night of **December 24** at 7:00 pm – our **CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE**. Yes, this is often a very busy night with dinners and parties with families and friends, but instead of letting that keep you from worshipping, let it be something to which you invite your family and friends to attend, to sit back and recall what this season is about. Bring them with you, then return to your celebrations with renewed meaning. It is a quiet time to reflect on God's love and speak to your friends here at PCC.

## SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

We will start the New Year celebrating Communion on the first Sunday of the year, January 7, during the 11:00 am worship service. Please be in prayerful preparation.

## FUTURE HOPE SINGLE PARENTS' GROUP

If you are a single parent and need help or want fellowship, come be a part of a unique support group. This group meets for dinner, fellowship, and Bible study on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month (December 14 and January 11). Activities are planned for the children while parents have a Bible study.

Contact Pam McCormick at 336-324-5817 to find out more.

## TRANSITION TEAM UPDATE

On October 11, 2017 the Session approved a contract for Gray to provide part-time/interim pastoral services to PCC as we navigate the next chapter of our faith journey as a church. We have been blessed by his service and leadership for eight years and are thankful for his willingness to continue to serve this congregation beyond his retirement. Gray was recognized at the November 14 Presbyterian Meeting. Elaine Morehead, our delegate at the meeting, shared with the Session how proud she was of Gray for all the accomplishments of his ministry that were acknowledged as well as the genuine and generous outpouring of love and respect expressed for him as a good man and a faithful servant.

Additional updates will be forthcoming.

## SCHEDULED MINISTERS

December 3	Bryan McFarland
10	Vicki McCain
17	Gray Clark, Festival of Lessons & Carols
24	Vicki McCain, 11:00 am
24	Gray Clark, Christmas Eve Service, 7:00 pm
31	TBA
January 7	Gray Clark

## PLEDGES AND DONATIONS

- If you would like a statement of what you have donated to PCC prior to the end of the year for planning purposes, please call or email Merrie Shelton in the church office.
- Assigned offering envelopes for use in 2018 will be available to pick up at church in mid-December. If you have not previously had a set, we will be glad to provide one for you. Just contact the church office.
- 2017 giving statements for use with filing your income tax will be ready in mid-January.

## IT'S GOING TO BE BEAUTIFUL!!

Many thanks to **Jack and Jane Manley** and **Kelly Patterson** for planting a bed full of pansies in the courtyard which is going to bring the courtyard to life when Spring rolls around!