

The Reformer

Lawyersville and Sharon Reformed Churches 176

Mission Statement: As disciples of Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to join together to worship God, to study his Word, and use our gifts to extend God's grace and love to others.

December 2016

What's Inside:

Interim Pastor's Page
Church Review
Calendar of Events
Children's Fun Page
Birthdays-Anniversaries



LRC - Church Service

9:00 A.M.

**Sunday School
following worship**

SRC - Church Service

11:00 A.M.

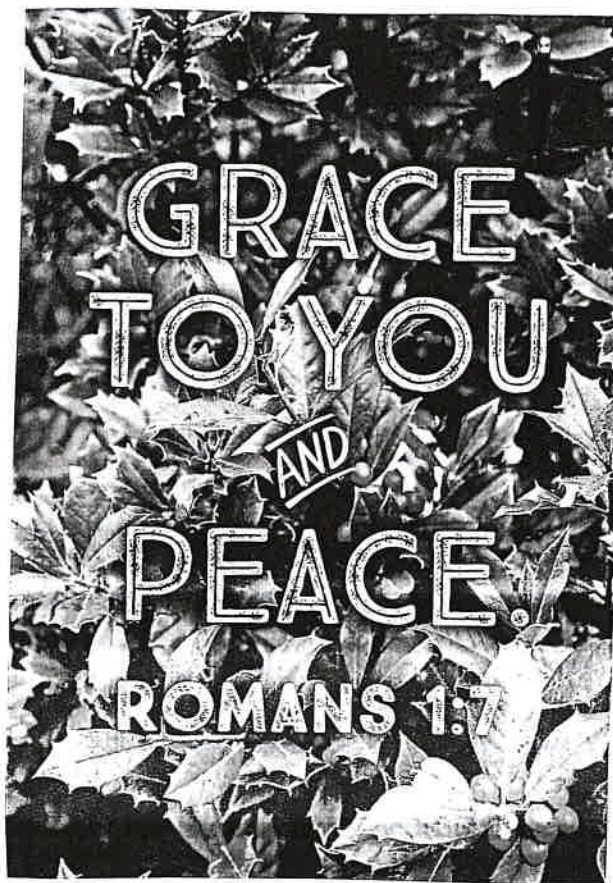
Sunday School

9:30 A.M.

Rev. Paul Ferenczy



CHRISTMAS SEASON



Special dates

- Second Sunday of Advent, *December 4, 2016*
- Third Sunday of Advent, *December 11, 2016*
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, *December 18, 2016*
- First day of winter, *December 21, 2016*
- Christmas Eve, *December 24, 2016*
- Christmas Day, *December 25, 2016*
- New Year's Eve/Watch Night, *December 31, 2016*

Why Advent?
by the Interim Pastor

Advent - a word that literally means - *an arrival* - and yet also - *a time of waiting*. For centuries Advent has been a time when people considered the birth of Christ - *waiting for his arrival*. Others who have no knowledge of what God has done through Jesus, regard Advent with a blank stare.

For many of us, Advent is that season that follows after Thanksgiving and is characterized by a flurry of activities that we call the holiday season - a season that often turns out to be the most stressful time of the year.

Consider the contrasting emotions of Advent - we are eager, yet frazzled; sentimental, yet indifferent; excited at the thought of getting together with our family and friends and then in the next moment feeling utterly lonely. It is a season of hope that is strangely mingled with dread. It is a time for anticipation but touched with despair. We sense that there is a deeper meaning to this season but we grasp at it in vain; and in the end, it is very likely that we will be left frustrated and drained.

Even those of us who do not experience such tensions - who genuinely love Christmas - often miss its point. Content with candles and carols and good food, we delight ourselves in the warmth of familiar traditions, in acts of kindness returned to us by loved ones and friends, and in the feelings of general goodwill and in the merriment of the holiday festivities.

Christ was born on Christmas Day. Now that sounds so simple and has been said so often that the words roll off our tongues with ease and through our ears with an uninspiring attitude and past our hearts like one of those weary admonitions with which parents brow beat their children. Christ was born on Christmas Day. Did you hear those words? Did you really hear them?

Christ was born to take away the indifference and loneliness that invades our Advent and holiday season and our life. Christ was born to take away the dread and despair which comes to discolor our Christmas season and every season. Christ was born to change the moods of frustration and emptiness by helping us to grasp and understand the love and mercy of God that is there for us every day. Christ was born to fulfill the promise that God has made to us - that we will have a Savior - that love will win out over hate - that peace will come - and that the day is coming when all people will have goodwill toward each other. Now *that* day — is worth waiting for, not matter what happens. That is why we have Advent - to remind ourselves of the arrival of that wonderful event for which we are waiting.



Prayer Requests

Church

Lewis Ward/pace maker/new home
 Jean Wormuth/stroke/home
 Muriel Homes/St. Johnsville Nursing Home
 Jan Liberti/chemo treatments
 Ron Tryon/health issues
 Allen Proctor/heart surgery recovery
 June Slater/surgery recovery

Family/Loved Ones

Margaret Springstead/operation
 Ava Baker/2 year old/brain tumor
 Nelson Castro/bone cancer
 George Eiholzer/aggressive facial esophageal cancer
 Linda Slater/cancer
 Prayers for the Kablean Family
 Donald Bennett/cancer
 Rehberg Family/health issues
 Nadine/diabetes complications
 Betty Revis/blood clot in thigh/therapy

Those homebound/in nursing homes:

Helen Holmes (LRC)
 153 Hansen Rd.
 Cherry Valley, NY 13320

Muriel Holmes (LRC)
 St. Johnsville Nursing Home
 7 Timmerman Ave.
 St. Johnsville, NY 13452

Josephine King (SRC)
 418 Ridge Rd.
 Broadalbin, NY 12025

Richard Nirschl (SRC)
 St. Johnsville Nursing Home
 7 Timmerman Ave.
 St. Johnsville, NY 13452

Community

All Teachers and students
 Family situations impacting students' performances in school
 Grand-parents serving as guardians for their grand-children
 All families impacted by alcoholism and/or substance abuse
 Increased heroin addiction in our county
 All families and marriages in crisis
 All children suffering from physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse
 All God's children impacted by hunger and food insecurity
 All soldiers (esp. those deployed) and their families

Nation and World

Crisis of refugees and migrants
 Extremists' intolerance and violence
 Persecuted Christians
 The global economy
 All unrest in God's world
 Local, state national and world leaders
 Peacemaker groups
 Healing from election results/coming together as a great nation

Please let me know of any updates or additions so we can direct our prayers to them.



Holy
 IS
 HIS
 NAME.

Food donations

Thank you to all who contribute donations of Food for the Food Pantry, held at the Baptist Church. We know, due to the economy, that there is an increase in requests. Some who have donated in the past find themselves in need of help. Please continue to give as you are able. Thank you for participating in this ministry of care. First Sunday of each month.



Office Phone #: 234-2387
Web Site: Ircandsrc.org



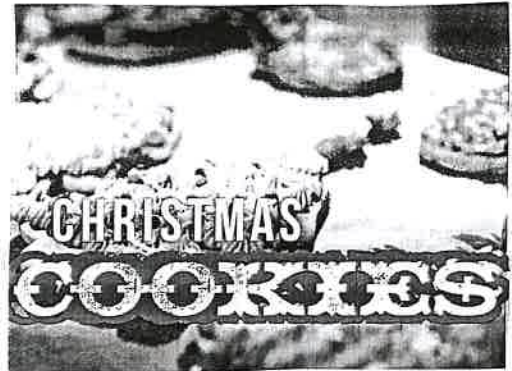
Editor: Lola Fletcher, 756 Loonenbergh TPK., Sharon Springs, NY 13459.
Phone: 518-234-2283
E-mail lola756@wildblue.net
Deadline: December 21st Thanks to all for your information and contributions.

MEMO BOARD

December
4,11,18,25

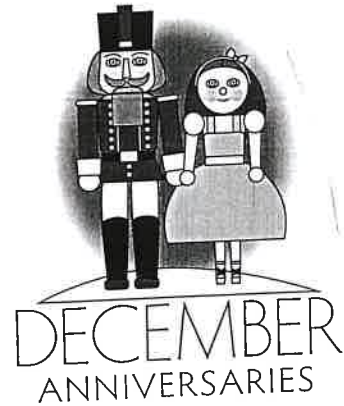
LRC Worship 9:00 A.M.
Coffee hour following church
SRC Sunday School for all ages 9:30 A.M.
SRC Worship 11:00 A.M.
Coffee hour following church
LRC Christmas Bazaar 9 A.M.—2 P.M.
Luncheon 11 A.M.-1 P.M. Home made sandwiches & soups \$5
Help needed to set up on Nov-Mon 28 & Tues 29
Baked cookies needed on Dec 3rd for luncheon

3



LRC Christmas Eve Service @ 7:00 P.M.

24



December

- 1 Jeffery Sperbeck**
- 4 Fran Putnam**
- 9 Cheryl Mickle**
- 10 Kelly Sperbeck**
- 19 Jeremy Parsons**
- 19 John Stanton**

December

**18 Jeremy & Kathy
Parsons**



**YOU
HAVE SO
MUCH TO
LOOK
FORWARD
TO!**



**"First Church will do anything to steal
our Christmas pageant surprises!"**

Overcoming despair

Christmas can be a difficult time for people who are hurting or grieving. In the 1860s, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had reason to despair: America was at war with itself, his son was severely wounded in battle and his wife died in a fire. The first Christmas after his wife's death, Longfellow wrote, "How inexpressibly sad are all holidays."

Three years later, on Christmas Day 1864, Longfellow penned a poem that later became the song "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." The lyrics move from despair to hope — and, thanks to Jesus, so can we.

And in despair I bowed my head.
There is no peace on earth, I said!
For hate is strong, and mocks the song
of peace on earth, good will to men!

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
with peace on earth, good will to men!

Advent traditions

"The way you celebrate Christmas can be a gift in itself," said Fred Rogers, "handing on traditions that will give your child a feeling of continuity, comfort and joy in all the Christmases to come." In American homes, common Advent traditions include wreaths, calendars and logs. Did you know about these European traditions?

- In Normandy, children used to set fires in fields during Advent. The flames killed caterpillar eggs and drove away rodents. The tradition reflected good conquering evil, just as God's perfect Son rescues us from sin.
- On December 13, Scandinavian countries honor Saint Lucy (or Lucia), a third-century martyr who, according to legend, brought food to people in the catacombs during winter. For light — and to be able to carry as much food as possible — she wore a wreath of candles on her head. On St. Lucy's Day, the oldest daughter gets up early and brings sweet rolls to family members. The tradition reminds Christians that Jesus is a gift of light and love for our dark world.

Blind faith

Eighteenth-century British evangelist George Whitefield once asked a coal miner what he believed. "I believe what my church believes," the man answered, respectfully and confidently.

"And what does your church believe?" Whitefield followed up.

"The same thing I believe," the man said.

"And what do both of you believe?" the preacher asked again.

"We both believe the same thing," the man assured Whitefield.

Belonging to a Christian church — and knowing exactly what it teaches — is vital but doesn't guarantee salvation. That's between each individual and God.

As Romans 10:9 (ESV) says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Close to God

I can take my telescope and look millions and millions of miles into space. But I can lay it aside, go into my room, shut the door, get down on my knees in earnest prayer, and see more of heaven and get closer to God than I can assisted by all the telescopes and material agencies on earth.

—Isaac Newton

Chapter and verse

In its original format, the Bible contained no chapter and verse divisions or numbers. Those are entirely a human convention, intended to make reading easier.

The first modern system of dividing Scripture occurred in the 13th century. Interestingly, the New Testament was first separated into verses in 1551 — by the son of a French printer, as he rode on horseback!

Disciples needed

The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as "Christians" will become disciples — students, apprentices, practitioners — of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the kingdom of the heavens into every corner of human existence.

—Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*

Christmas transformation

The earth has grown old with its
burden of care,
but at Christmas it always is young,
the heart of the jewel burns lustrous
and fair,
and its soul full of music breaks the air,
when the song of angels is sung.



—Phillips Brooks

[image above: HARP_14983, HARP_14983C]

Jesus is the Word

To say that Jesus is the Word is another way of saying he is God speaking to us. While we struggle with our clumsy words, God needs only one Word to perfectly communicate the depth and mystery, the passion and the overwhelming grace of who he is. By that Word, Light became a living being. Manna became man. Wisdom became a person. In him, Life came to life; all that God is came to us in that One Final Word we call Jesus.

—Michael Card,
Immanuel: Reflections on the Life of Christ

Gift-giving solutions

Trying to find gifts for certain people — or letting others know what *you* want — can be quite challenging. After all, most of us don't need anything.

Realizing that the best gifts aren't material items offers a new perspective on giving and receiving. Consider these insights from author Charles Swindoll:

"Some gifts you can give this Christmas are beyond monetary value: Mend a quarrel, dismiss suspicion, tell someone 'I love you.' Give something away — anonymously. Forgive someone who has treated you wrong. Turn away wrath with a soft answer. Visit someone in a nursing home. Apologize if you were wrong. Be especially kind to someone with whom you work. Give as God gave to you in Christ, without obligation, or announcement, or reservation, or hypocrisy."

THE
REASON
WE
Celebrate



Proper perspective

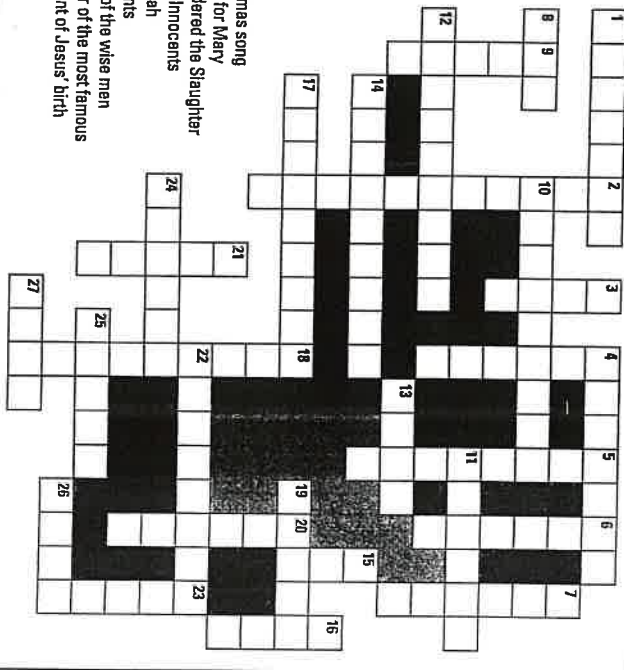
Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love.

—Reinhold Niebuhr

Puzzle!

Enjoy solving this Christmas crossword.

- CLUES**
1. He has a red nose
 2. Red plants
 3. A novel
 4. (across) The Anointed One (down) Crib
 5. Keeper of sheep
 6. Season that means "coming"
 7. He was a carpenter
 8. 12th month (abbr.)
 9. Northern little helpers
 10. Enlivened
 11. Messiah composer
 12. Of Ephraim
 13. Gabriel came to her
 14. A form of holly
 15. B&B
 16. Wise men
 17. Tree decorations
 18. Patron saint of children (2 words)
 19. Head-suited man
 20. Heavenly singers
 21. Christmas song
 22. Home for Mary
 23. He ordered the Slaughter of the Innocents
 24. Messiah
 25. Presents
 26. A gift of the wise men
 27. Author of the most famous account of Jesus' birth



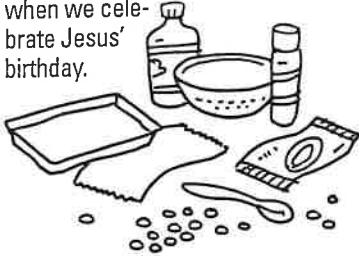
Answers: 1. Rudolph, 2. poinsettias, 3. star, 4. (across) Messiah, 4. (down) manger, 5. shepherd, 6. advent, 7. Joseph, 8. Dec, 9. elves, 10. incarnate, 11. Handel, 12. Bethlehem, 13. Mary, 14. mistletoe, 15. inn, 16. Magi, 17. ornaments, 18. Saint Nick, 19. Santa, 20. angels, 21. carol, 22. Nazareth, 23. Herod, 24. Christ, 25. gifts, 26. gold, 27. Luke

Did you know this? The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ. -Two turtle doves are the Old and New Testaments. -Three French hens stand for faith, hope and love. -The four calling birds are the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John. -The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of ...the Old Testament. -The six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation..... -Seven swans a-swimming represent the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit--Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy. -The eight maids a-milking are the eight beatitudes. -Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control. -The ten lords a-leaping are the ten commandments. -The eleven pipers piping stand for the eleven faithful disciples. -The twelve drummers drumming symbolizes the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed. So there is your history for today. **MERRY CHRISTMAS!!** ♥ yes, I said **MERRY CHRISTmas** because Christmas is not without **CHRIST!**

Kid's Page

birthday bark

Make this yummy treat to give to family and friends at Christmas, when we celebrate Jesus' birthday.

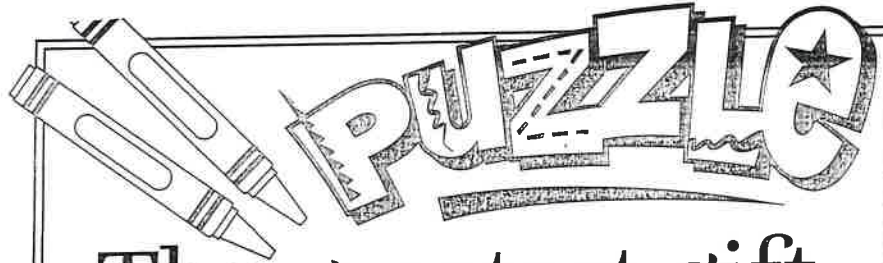


What you need:

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 3 cups chocolate chips
- Microwave-safe bowl
- Spoon or spatula
- 2 Tbsp. shortening
- Baking tray lined with wax paper
- Red and green M&M's (or sprinkles)

What you do:

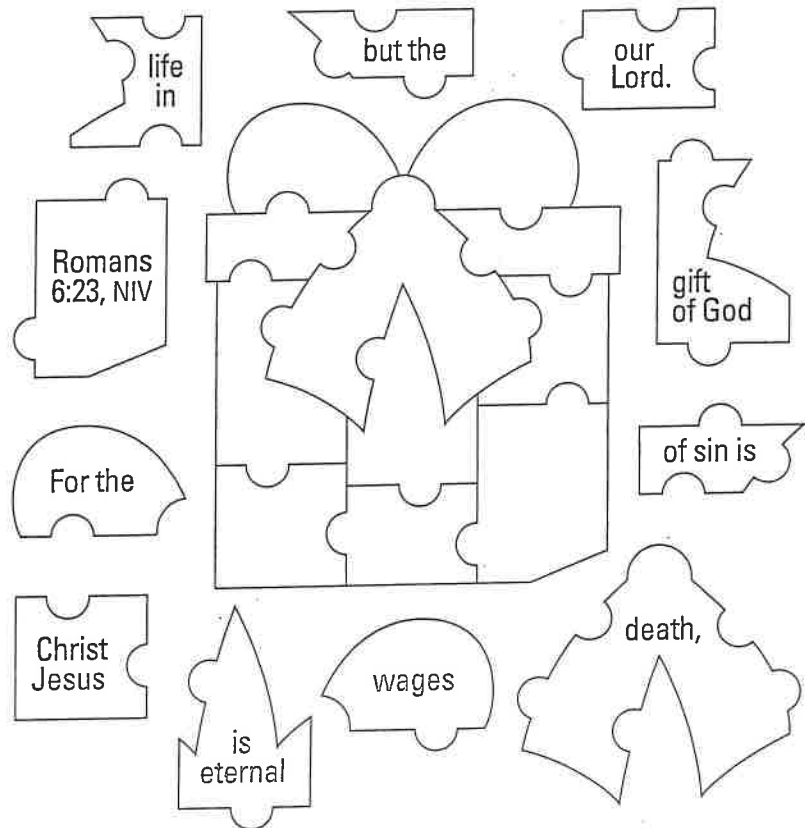
1. Lightly spray bowl and wax paper.
2. Microwave chocolate chips in bowl for one-minute intervals until chocolate is melted. (Stir after each minute.)
3. Stir in shortening. Heat in 10-second intervals, stirring until smooth.
4. Pour chocolate onto tray and firmly press in M&M's or sprinkles.
5. Refrigerate until firm. Remove bark and break into pieces.



The greatest gift

Gift-giving is a fun Christmas tradition. What very special gift has God given to you?

Directions: Write the words from each puzzle piece on the matching blank piece of the gift-shaped puzzle.



Answer: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23, NIV