The Reformer

Lawyersville and Sharon Reformed Churches **158**

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 2014

What's Inside:

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

SUNDAY SERVICES

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. Pacia Vamvas

JESUS, OUR FULFILLMENT

Special dates

- Second Sunday of Advent, *December 7, 2014*
- Third Sunday of Advent, *December 14, 2014*
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, *December 21, 2014*
- First Day of Winter, *December 21, 2014*
- Christmas Eve, *December 24, 2014*
- Christmas Day, *December 25, 2014*
- New Year's Eve/Watch Night, *December 31, 2014*

I Love to Live the Story: A Guide to Understanding and Celebrating the Christian Church Year (by Arden Mead and King Schoenfeld)

Sunday, December 1, is the first Sunday of Advent, the beginning of the new Church Year. We will begin a cycle of more closely examining the days and seasons of the year. Here is Introduction to the booklet (there will be a couple copies to borrow):

The Christian Church Year is living history, a cycle of ancient events brought to life each year. It is history that is as alive as the Church itself.

The Christian Church Year and how it leads us to celebrate the story of our Lord as our own story.

The Church Year is an annual cycle of festivals and seasons, developed straight out of the Word of God by Christian generations before us.

Christians around the world and throughout history have shaped their faith and marked their lives by the events of the Church Year, marking this cycle as new as each new year of celebration.

In the 21st century, parishes may wonder about the value of such a tradition for communal worship and personal life. For those who want to explore the meaning of the Church's liturgical year and its use in parish life, this book offers a brief overview, plus appropriate symbols for use in the sanctuary and Christian classroom.

Why should we promote an understanding and appreciation of this ancient system?

First – looking back – the Church Year connects us with Scripture through a planned series of readings, which present its great stories and themes, especially the life and words of our Lord.

Second – looking ahead – the Church Year helps the Church, the community of believers, celebrate God's forgiveness and justice for people today, living in an unforgiving and unjust world.

Roughly speaking, the first half of the Church Year (Advent through Pentecost Day), recalls the events in the life of our Lord, making them real for us in the present. The rest of the Church Year focuses on Jesus' teaching and on discipleship – the new life in Christ in which we are living and growing.

When Christians all over the world come together to celebrate the same festivals and seasons of the Church Year, they

- learn the words and acts of God that have changed history;
- remember the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord which gives us a rebirth, new life and hope of the resurrection;
- relive these saving events through which our Lord created his Church and transformed lives.

The Church Year revolves around three great festival days – Christmas, Easter and Pentecost – and the seasons that connect them – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Pentecost, or Ordinary Time.

Colors of the Church Year

The Church's liturgical "color scheme" began in the earliest centuries simply with white, and later, red for all occasions. Apparently it was during the Middle Ages that a set of specific meanings came to be attached to certain colors for Church usage. These meanings undoubtedly came out of an ancient culture, and while not specifically Christian, were adopted and in the 16th century mandated for use throughout the Church. [There are many customs and beliefs that emerged out traditions begun by the Church, and are not Scriptural].

Green: life. Green appears during the Pentecost and Epiphany seasons. Think fresh sprouts, green leaves.

White: purity, holiness. White appears on Christmas and its season, the Day of Epiphany, Easter and its season and Trinity Sunday. White is also used for many specifically Roman Catholic holy days. Think snowflakes, and sunlight and supernovas!

Red: blood, fire, the Holy Spirit. Red appears on the day of Pentecost and several special occasions (ex. an ordination). Think flames and sacrifice.

Violet: royalty, repentance (though the association with repentance has somewhat faded over the years). Violet appears through Advent and Lent. Think kingly robes.

Blue: hope. Blue has become the color of Advent for many faith communities. Think fall skies and deep oceans.

Black: death, mourning. Used only on Ash Wednesday and/or Good Friday.

Gold: used as a substitute for any of the other colors, often on "high" festival days (ex. Transfiguration Sunday). Think jewelry, precious coins and the sun.

Rose: joy. A Rose-colored candle is used on the third Sunday of Advent ("Joy"). Think roses and bouquets.

Advent

The word Advent, which means "coming," is a good word with which to begin the Church Year, when we are tempted to ask, "What's coming?" A more correct question would be "Who is coming?" The answer, of course, is "Jesus!"

The entire Old Testament points to Jesus as the one who is coming, when God's time was right. For many centuries, prophets had foretold the coming of God's Messiah, the one whom God had promised to save God's people from their sins and teach us God's will. Some of the Scripture readings in our Advent season quote those ancient promises (note the weekly Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah during the season).

All this happened in history, of course, about 2,000 years ago. Another message of the Advent season is that the One who has come is coming again. How does the (Apostles') Creed put it? "To judge the quick [living] and the dead." How did Jesus himself put it? "To take you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14.3). So the Advent season actually deals with the two comings of Christ, one when Jesus was born hundreds of years ago, and one when he comes again in the future to reveal himself as our Savior.

Images and Words of the Season of Advent

Advent – A Latin word meaning a "coming" or "arrival."

Advent colors – Purple is the ancient color of royalty, signaling the coming of our King. Some faith communities use blue for the Season of Advent, reserving purple (which can also symbolize penitence) for Lent.

Advent wreaths – Many churches use an Advent wreath to mark the four weeks of the season. Three purple candles and one pink candle (used the third Sunday of Advent) are lit, one candle on the first Sunday of Advent, two on the second Sunday, three on the third Sunday (including the pink candle), and four on the fourth Sunday. The four candles are placed in a circle to symbolize the completeness of God's presence. An inner, white candle, symbolizing the Light of the World, is used to light the four candles.

Candles – Celebrate the Light of the World (John 1.3-5), God's Son, who overcomes the darkness and the long winter of our souls.

Advent weekly themes – The themes of each week are Peace, Hope, Joy and Love (look for those themes on each weekly bulletin).

Emmanuel (or Immanuel) – is Hebrew for "God is with us." Isaiah the prophet promised that the Lord would come to be with his people. As a sign of this promise, the baby in Isaiah 7.14 called "God is with us" is echoed in Matthew 1.23.

Messiah – is the Hebrew word meaning "anointed one", that is, the "chosen one." Christ is the Greek translation of Messiah.

Son of David – is the title of a descendant of the great Old Testament King David. From David's family (Isaiah 11.1 – Jesse was the father of David), and town (Micah 5.2) the Lord God raised up the Messiah, Jesus.

Advent Calendars – count the days of Advent in December until Christmas. The daily opening of the windows of the Advent calendar reminds young and old where our eternal hope lies – with the holy Child in the lowly manger.

Jesse Tree – Named after King David's father, the tree is decorated with symbols displaying Old Testament heroes and Christian symbols.

Christmas

Why Christmas Day is in December: among the earliest Christians in the Eastern Church, January 6 was the important festival day celebrated around Jesus' birth. Called the Epiphany ("revealing"), it marked the showing off of the baby Jesus to the Magi – foreign visitors – who represented all of us from other nations who worship Jesus. [Many Hispanic cultures have embraced this practice in celebrating "Three Kings' Day].

In the western Church, December 25 was chosen as the birthday date for Jesus as an alternative for the secular holiday declared by the Roman emperor for that day. This Christian festival day – Christmas – gradually became more important than Epiphany.

Christians today try to reclaim Christmas from the commercial world which has worked – very successfully – to turn it into a secular holiday, Xmas. Xmas means hectic activity; Christmas means time-out and quiet moments. Xmas may mean the dreaded burden of high expectations that are seldom met; Christmas means setting our hearts at peace and fulfilling our inmost longings. (Ironically, the celebration of Chanukah in the U.S. had suffered the same fate, becoming commercialized, moving away from the true celebration of the holiday).

Blue Christmas/Longest Night of the Year Prayer

"Comfort ye my people"(Isaiah 40.1). The opening words of Handel's Messiah are a familiar sound at this time of year. Yet for many of us anticipating and preparing for holiday celebrations, the need for comfort is somehow overlooked. Others are well aware of that need as they struggle through the increasing physical darkness that leads to the winter solstice, our longest night. That physical darkness is sometimes reflected in the dark, lost feelings we have as we contemplate Christmas without loved ones, a holiday made uncertain by economic concerns, or the brokenness in our lives that separates us from others. On December 21, the Longest Night of the Year, some will gather to acknowledge this darkness, to share their hurts with God, and to open their hearts to the light God has promised us in Jesus. Use this prayer if you need to be reminded of the Light that has come into the world, the Light that the darkness will never overcome. grace and peace; pacia

Holy God of Advent:
you became weak so we could find strength in moments of heartbreak;
you left the safety of heaven to wander the wilderness of the world,
holding our hands when we felt so hopeless; you set aside your glory
to hold our pain so we might be healed, even when there seemed to be no hope;
you became one of us, so we could never be alone in any moment, in any circumstance.

So come now, Child of Bethlehem, to strengthen us in these days.
May we feel your presence in a way we have never known,
not just as One born in a stable long ago and far away, but as One born
in our hearts, in our hopes, in our spirits, in our weakness.
You have promised to go before us: into our brokenness, into hospital rooms,
into empty houses, into graveyards, into our future held by our God,
and you are here, even now, waiting for each of us:
to serve us, to hold us, to comfort us,
to live in us, now and forever. Amen.

December Worship

12.07.14 Second Sunday of Advent (purple)
Sacrament of the Lord's supper
Isaiah 40.1-11 — 2 Peter 3.8-15
Psalm 85.1-2, 8-13 — Mark 1.1-8 +
Lay Leaders LRC Deacons Lisa Boss and Lola Fletcher
SRC Deacons Nancy MacFadden and Barb Mereness

12.14.14 Second Sunday of Advent (purple)
Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-11 — 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24
Psalm 126 or Luke 1.46-55 — John 1.8, 19-28 +
Lay Leaders LRC Elders Chris Hibbard and Kelly Sperbeck
SRC Elders Linda DiCicco and Dan Fiske

12.21.14 Third Sunday of Advent (purple)
2 Samuel 7.1-11,16 — Romans 16.25-27
Luke 1.46-55 or Psalm 89.1-4, 19-26 — Luke 1.26-38 +
Lay Leaders LRC Worship Team Lola Fletcher and Kelly Sperbeck
SRC Worship Team Adrienne Cullen and Laura Davenport

12.24.14 Christmas Eve (white)
Isaiah 9.2-7 — Titus 2.11-14
Psalm 96 — Luke 2.1-14 (15-20) +
Lay Leaders The Vamvas Family

12.28.14 First Sunday after Christmas (purple)
Isaiah 61.10-62.3 — Galatians 4.4-7
Psalm 148 — Luke 2.22-40 +

+ The text(s) pastor pacia plans to use for the next Sunday, for the proclamation of the Word.

The Little Season of Christmas

The twelve days of Christmas from December 25 through January 5 are our opportunity to celebrate God's greatest gift to us an the hope that he brings into a world troubled by unrest, hunger and darkness. The following saints' days are celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church: December 26 is the festival of St. Stephen, deacon and first martyr (Acts 7). December 27 is the festival of St. John, the apostle and Gospel writer. December 28 is the day of the Holy Innocents (Matthew 2.16-18), who were the boy children killed by Herod's soldiers as they searched for the baby Jesus. January 1 is the festival of the Name of Jesus. The days of Christmas end on January 5, Twelfth Night, the Eve of the Epiphany of our Lord. [The carol the Twelve Days of Christmas, is thought to have been used to teach about elements of the Christian faith - four Gospels, twelve Apostles', etc.].

Images and Words of Christmas

Christmas: a shortened form of the Old English term "Christ's Mass", the festival worship service for Christ's birth.

Luke 1 & 2 contain the story of Jesus' birth in great detail. This is what we most associate with Christmas Eve.

Matthew 1 lists a genealogy in three sets of fourteen generations: Abraham to King David, King David to the deportation to Babylon, and the deportation to the Messiah. The remainder of the chapter recounts the angel's visit to Joseph. (The angel Gabriel's visit to Mary in found in Luke 1).

Matthew 2 contains the story of the Magi, the escape to Egypt, the Massacre of the Innocents, and the return from Egypt to Nazareth.

[Neither Mark or John contain a birth account].

The stable behind the inn is remembered as the humble place for Jesus' birth. Recreating the Nativity scene has been a tradition among Christians since the days of St. Francis of Assisi.

Nativity scenes are a focus of the spiritual celebration of Christmas around the world. Also referred to as the manger, or crèche, the scene of our Lord's birth with its figures of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, angels, the shepherds, animals and the magi, is available in many versions by craftspeople of many countries (many of you have seen the dozens of scenes I have from all over the world). During the 12 days of Christmas, some introduce the figures of the magi, moving them closer to the Holy Family day by day, until they arrive on January 6, Epiphany. Some also leave the baby Jesus out until Christmas Eve.

Christmas trees and wreaths of evergreens are symbols of eternal life which Christ brings to us. Tree lights (candles back in the day) and ornaments remind us of the gifts brought to the baby Jesus by the magi.

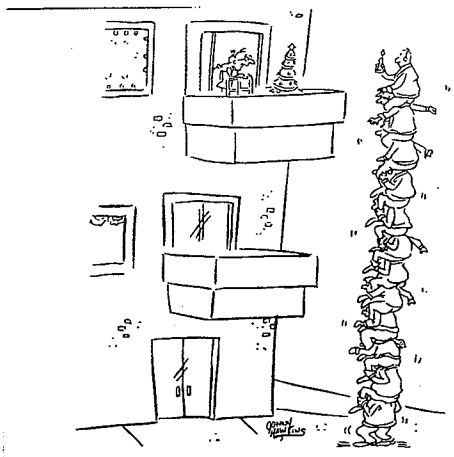
Christmas traditions around the globe

Although Americans celebrate the holiday with candlelight services, piles of gifts, large feasts, lights and trees, people in other countries mark Jesus' birth in many interesting ways:

- Nine days before Christmas in Mexico, Las Posadas processions reenact Joseph and Mary's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem.
- Instead of decorating trees, Italians place fruit on small wooden pyramids.
- On Christmas Eve, the streets of Caracas, Venezuela, are blocked off so people can roller-skate to church.
- Ukrainian Christmas trees often feature an artificial spider and web. According to a folk tale, a poor woman who couldn't afford decorations awoke one Christmas morning to find that spiders had "trimmed" her children's trees with delicate webs.
- In Brazil, the gift-bringer is known as Papai Noel (Father Noel), who lives in Greenland, according to legend. When he arrives in Brazil, he wears silk clothing because of the summer heat.
- It's considered bad etiquette to send red Christmas cards in Japan because funeral notices are customarily printed in red.

Wanted

WANTED: Choir members — whereabouts unknown
LAST SEEN: Hiding out in the congregation
DESCRIPTION: Male and female, young and old, musical and cheerful, may be armed and desperate for a robe
REWARD: "Give and you shall receive."
SURRENDER TO: Your friendly choir director



Cass Park Church's carolers were always ready to make necessary adjustments.

Prayer Requests

Church
Muriel Homes/St. Johnsville Nursing Home
Helen Brown/Palatine Nursing Home/ declining
Tom Slater/increased dialysis
Vivian Empie/Tarpon Springs Nursing Home/on Hospice
Elli Schubert/cardiac
Rena Cooper/surgery recuperation
Barb Mereness/shingles & double vision
Richard Nirschl/in Marchand Manor

Family/Loved Ones
Danielle/multiple surgeries
Sue Jones/in Marchand Manor
Kat/colon cancer/surgery
Adnan Buxamusa/cardiac
Mike Bautochka/rehab
Jared van Wagenen/healing
Peggy Wood//hospital/health & family issues
Cindy Shuart/stroke/some improvement
Joan and Mason Springstead/strokes
Ron Tryon/continued healing
Logan Hayes/diabetes/insulin pump
Heather Bivins/symptom control
Donald Bennett/return of cancer
Jenna/new cancer/radiation/family issues
Paul Gordayer/cancer
Bob Speidell/retinopathy
Scott Speidell/leukemia/chemo
Dodi Chechniki/ALS
Chuck Ferrell/employment

Updates on those on the prayer list are needed, so that we know how best to pray. Inactive requests will be taken off the list.

I want to thank everyone for their prayers and concerns before, during and after my surgery. I am recuperating nicely, but slowly. I can feel all the love and prayers that has and still continues to surround me.
Peace and blessings,
Rena Cooper

Community
All Teachers and students
College students and professors
Grand-parents serving as guardians for their grandchildren
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 those impacted by Irene, Lee and Sandy
Schoharie Area Long-Term Recovery (SALT)
Concerns about the economy, unemployment and foreclosures
All soldiers (esp. those deployed) and their families

Nation and World
Extremists' intolerance and violence
Persecuted Christians
Hatred and violence in the hearts of God's children
The global economy
All unrest in God's world
Local, state national and world leaders
Peacemaker groups
Government dysfunction

*There is a group of pray-ers who receive prayer requests. If you would like to be added to either list (phone or e-mail), simply contact pastor pacia (234.9811 or PASTORPACIA@LRCANDSRC.ORG).

- "Faith is to believe what we do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what we believe."
  —St. Augustine

- "Are you spending your time on the right things? Because time is all you have."
  —Randy Pausch

- "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why."
  —Mark Twain

DECEMBER

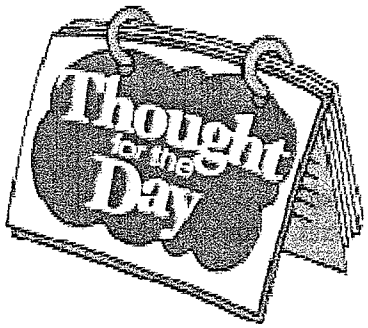
1 Jeffery Sperbeck
4 Fran Putnam
9 Cheryl Mickel
10 Kelly Sperbeck
11 Samantha Van Aller
15 Patricia Wainwright
19 Jeremy Parsons
21 Nichole Clark
31 Veronica Clark

DECEMBER

18 Jeremy & Kathy Parsons
31 Wil & Martha Ivins

A great purpose

There is no circumstance, no trouble, no testing, that can ever touch me until, first of all, it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But I refuse to become panicky, as I lift up my eyes to him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart.



I WILL FOLLOW MY I NNER GUIDANCE, TRUSTING THE MESSAGES I RECEIVE FROM GOD AND THE ANGELS

LRC ENVELOPESİ
IF YOU DON'T GET ENVELOPES AND WHAT THEM, CONTACT LOLA OR CHRIS.
IF YOU GET ENVELOPES NOW AND DON'T WHAT THEM ,CONTACT LOLA OR CHRIS
CALL LOLA @ 234-2283 CHRIS @ 339-0695

Reminder: The Reformer will appear on the website, and can be viewed there. In order to practice good stewardship, to reduce the amount of paper and ink used, and to reduce Lola's time making the Reformer happen, it will be mailed only to those who make the request. To continue to receive a mailed copy, please contact Lola (234.2283, lola756@wildblue.net). The plan is to make the December issue the last issue mailed to the masses.

Kid's Page

"Away in a Manger" PLATE

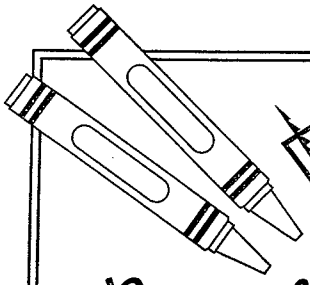
Make this special plate as a gift to give this Christmas.

What you need:

- Clear glass plate
- Acrylic craft paint
- Paintbrush and water
- Black permanent marker

What you do:

1. Turn plate upside-down on table. Paint one of your palms brown, and press it on the center of the plate.
2. Rotate the plate so fingers point down. Using yellow paint, make a straw bed in the palm.
3. Mix white and brown paint for Jesus' face. Use white paint for a swaddled body.
4. Paint a yellow star above Jesus and a yellow border around the plate rim.
5. When paint is dry, turn plate over. With the marker, draw dots for Jesus' eyes and write the words of Luke 2:12 around the plate rim.



PUZZLE

Born king of the Jews

Matthew 2:1-2 says that after Jesus was born, wise men came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" Complete the puzzle to discover what they found in Bethlehem.

Directions: In the grid below, draw lines by starting at the first number in each list and stopping at the last.

16-17
3-14-25
2-3-4
40-51-62-39

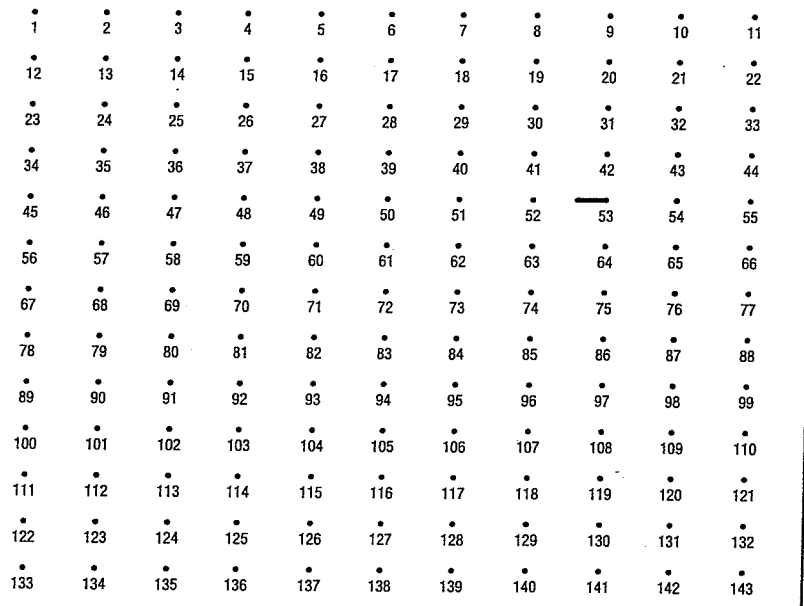
28-17-6
36-47-58
5-16-27
37-47-59

61-50-39
104-105-106
19-18-29-30
105-95-84-96

8-7-18
38-49-60
69-79-89

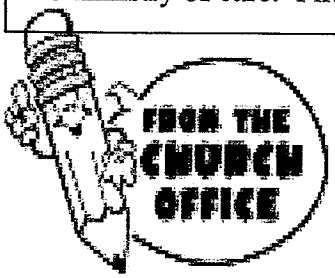
106-96-85-97-107-106
89-100-111-123
80-92-103-104
124-125-126-127-128
129-130-142-141-129

42-41-52-63-64-53
107-108-109-120-130
125-135-134-124-123-133-134
69-80-91-102-103
141-140-128-129



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: lrcandsrc.org
Pacia's e-mail:
pastorpacia@lrcandsrc.org.

Editor: Lola Fletcher, 756 Loonenbergh TPK., Sharon Springs, NY 13459.
Phone: 518-234-2283
E-mail lola756@wildblue.net
Deadline: December 17th

MEMO BOARD

November

29-30	LRC Hall open to bring items for Christmas Bazaar

December

3,10,17	Lectionary Bible Study 9:00 A.M.; Evening Study Group 7:00 P.M. @ the Parsonage (large white house across the Park from LRC, next to JWS Automotive); **No Study 24 or 31 December**
3	LRC—set up for Christmas Bazaar @ 9: A.M. all help needed
6	Winter Fun Day (SRC) 10:30 A.M.
6	Christmas Bazaar & Luncheon (LRC) 9:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M. Luncheon 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Homemade soups, sandwiches, drinks & cookies
7,14,21,28	LRC Worship 9:00 A.M. SRC Sunday School for all ages 9:30 A.M.; Worship 11:00 A.M.
9,23	Men's Fellowship 7:00 @ the Parsonage
13	SRC Fundraiser @ Mac Fadden's Auction
13	Christmas Program (SRC) 6:00 P.M.
17	**January 2015 Reformer Deadline (note earlier date)**
21	Christmas Eve Choir Practice 10:30 @ LRC
21	**Special Offering (SRC)**
24	Christmas Eve Worship 7:00 P.M. @ LRC
12.30.14 – 01.05.15	pastor pacia on vacation

LRC CHRISTMAS BAZAAR AND LUNCHEON
DECEMBER 6TH ~ 9:00 am – 2:00 pm
LUNCH SERVED 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Homemade soups and sandwiches

A Christmas challenge

In many countries, December 26 is Boxing Day. The name might come from the alms boxes set out in churches to collect money for the needy, especially on St. Stephen's Day, which is December 26. The name also likely comes from the old British custom of employers giving "Christmas boxes" to servants or tradesmen the day after Christmas. The boxes might include money, presents and leftovers from a Christmas feast. Because servants and others would have worked on Christmas, they were given the day after as a holiday to spend with their own family.

In 1994, the year apartheid ended in South Africa, the country renamed December 26 "Day of Goodwill." Writes Martie Coetser at HubPages (2013): "Just a day after Christmas, when friends and relatives exchange gifts of all sorts and Christians celebrate the gift of ... Jesus Christ, the Day of Goodwill comes like a challenge. ... What are you willing to give not in order to get rid of the things you don't want, or to kill your feelings of guilt, but to show goodwill coming from the depth of your heart?"

A special baby

Mark Lowry, who wrote the lyrics to the Christmas song "Mary, Did You Know?" says he's always been amazed by Mary's silence at the cross, as her son was being crucified. Maybe she was remembering back to that first Christmas, he wonders, when she counted Jesus' fingers and toes.

"I wonder if she realized then that those were the same fingers that had scooped out the oceans and formed the seas. I wonder if she realized those were the same feet that had walked on streets of gold and been worshiped by angels. Those little lips were the same lips that had spoken the world into existence. When Mary kissed her little baby, she wasn't just kissing another baby; she was kissing the face of God."

Mary silently watched her son die 33 years later, Lowry notes — not just for the world but also for his own mother. "The baby boy she had delivered on that first Christmas was now on a cross delivering her."