

The Reformer

Lawyersville and Sharon Reformed Churches 168

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 2015

What's Inside:

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.**



God gave us eternal life,
and this life is in his Son.

1 John 5:11

Special dates

- Second Sunday of Advent, *December 6, 2015*
- Third Sunday of Advent, *December 13, 2015*
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, *December 20, 2015*
- First Day of Winter, *December 21, 2015*
- Christmas Eve, *December 24, 2015*
- Christmas Day, *December 25, 2015*
- New Year's Eve/Watch Night, *December 31, 2015*

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 is 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 during the Season of Advent 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.

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 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.

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

12.06.15 Second Sunday of Advent (purple)
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Malachi 3.1-4
Luke 1.68-79

Philippians 1.3-11
Luke 3.1-6

12.13.15 Third Sunday of Advent (purple)
Zephaniah 3.14-20
Isaiah 12.2-6

Philippians 4.4-7
Luke 3.7-18

12.20.15 Fourth Sunday of Advent (purple)
Micah 5.2-5
Luke 1. 46-55 or Psalm 80.1-7

Hebrews 10.5-10
Luke 1.39-45 (46-55)

12.24.15 Christmas Eve (white)
Isaiah 9.2-7
Psalm 96

Titus 2.11-14
Luke 2.1-20 and Matthew 2.1-10

12.27.15 First Sunday after Christmas (white)
1 Samuel 2.18-20, 26
Psalm 148

Colossians 3.12-17
Luke 2.41-52



Prayer Requests

Church

Pastor Pacia
 Lee Empie, Jr./cardiac surgery recovery
 June Slater/compression fracture
 Muriel Homes/St. Johnsville Nursing Home
 Helen Brown/Palatine Nursing Home/
 declining
 Elli Schubert/cardiac

Family/Loved Ones

Warren Comins, Heart issues/home
 Braeden/surgery recuperation
 Margaret Springstead/cancer on face
 Matt and Zawisza (Living Gospel Ministries)/
 health issues
 Sylvia-Ferrell Jones/lung cancer
 Daniel Mereness (8 years old)/stroke
 Richard Nirschl/ testing/St. Johnsville Nurs-
 ing Home
 Isaac/high fever
 Sue Jones/Marchand Manor

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.

Those homebound/in nursing

Those homebound/in nursing homes:

Helen Brown (LRC)
 Palatine Nursing Home
 154 Lafayette St.
 Palatine Bridge, NY 13428

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

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

Community

Our sisters and brothers in Christ from the Dorloo,
 Hyndsville, Mineral Springs United Methodist and
 Warnerville United Methodist Church
 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 inse-
 curity
 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

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
 Government dysfunction

Sue Jones (LRC)
 Marchand Manor
 121 Main St.
 Sharon Springs, N.Y. 13459

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

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

Christmas to-do list

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among brothers,
to make music in the heart.

—Howard Thurman

Born in our "life-barns"

I set [the Precious Moments Mary] there beside the sleeping Jesus, knowing that we have it all wrong. It isn't in the sweet pastels of life that we find Jesus, that we encounter him in a new way. He isn't born in our sterile birthing rooms. He isn't wrapped in soft, sweet-smelling fleece. He isn't in the carefully structured, pleasantly perfect places we like to create for him.

Instead, we find him in the stink, in the noise, in the out-of-the-way, hard, sticky, smelly places of life. No, Jesus is not born in our palaces, or even in our guest rooms. He's born in our life-barns. He's born in the place where nothing seems right, where nothing is as we think it should be.

That's the real Jesus.

—Marlo Schalesky, *Wrestling With Wonder*

Welcome and attached

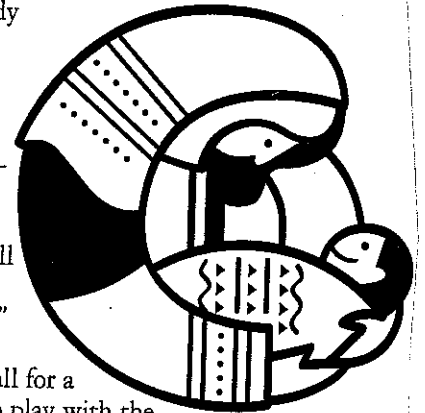
According to research conducted by the Barna Group, the holidays are tough for people who aren't connected to faith communities or other civic groups. They feel isolated by experiences that bring others joy, such as giving gifts, singing carols and attending religious services and parties.

"In past decades," writes George Barna, "there was an assumption that the holidays were a time when outsiders might explore church life. These days, however, churches and other religious institutions are not seen as safe or value-adding places by most outsiders. They see little reason to attend seasonal events, especially since those events often highlight their outsider status."

This Christmas, how can you help someone feel welcome and "attached" at your church?

Small packages, big things!

Remember that candy commercial declaring, "Big things come in small packages"? The prophet's message to tiny Bethlehem is similar: "Though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel" (Micah 5:2, NIV).



We've all felt too small for a certain role: too little to play with the big kids ... too skinny to make the football team ... short on the skills needed for a choice assignment. Perhaps we fear our gift of money is too little to make a difference, or the small amount of time we can volunteer isn't even worth it.

But God brings big things out of "small packages." From a newborn baby — merely six to eight pounds of helplessness — God brought salvation for the whole world. Rest assured, he'll do big things through you, too.

How far to Christmas?

How far is it to Christmas Day?
The journey's just as long
as taking time to listen
to a joyful angel song.
It's just as far as one can go
in doing a loving deed
that helps someone feel better
or that meets their special need.
For Christmas is a journey
that the heart makes every year.
It starts right with your family
and those you hold so dear.
It travels on to strangers
'round the world to everyone
with the message that God loves us
and that's why he's sent his Son!

—Peggy Ferrell

Angels among us

"When God wants to speak and deal with us," said Martin Luther, "he does not avail himself of an angel but of parents, or the pastor, or of our neighbor." Never underestimate how powerfully God can use you in the life of a child, a church member, a friend or a stranger.

The Hebrew word for *angel* also means "messenger." You may be specially chosen to deliver to someone the message of God's love or guidance. Listen intently for what God would have you share with others, then do so faithfully and caringly.

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.



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Deadline: December 21st. Thanks to all for your information and contributions.

MEMO BOARD

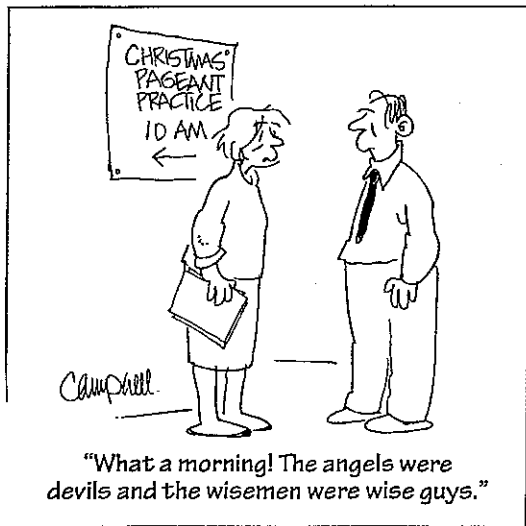
December

- 5 LRC Christmas Bazaar 9:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.;
Lunch served 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.
Homemade soups, sandwiches, drinks and cookies.
(snow-date 12.12)
- 5 SRC Winter Fun Day 10:30 A.M.
- 6,13,20,27 LRC Worship 9:00 A.M.
- 6 SRC Sunday School for all ages 9:30 A.M.;
- 6 SRC Worship 11:00 A.M.
- 6 * ** LRC Community Breakfast 8:00 A.M.; all welcome! *
- 6 Collection for Living Gospel
Ministries Christmas gift (LRC)
- 6 Elks Memorial Service, in LRC sanctuary,
immediately following Worship
- 20 **Special Offering (SRC)**
- 21 **January 2016 Reformer Deadline**
(note earlier date)
- 24 Christmas Eve Service 7:00 P.M. @ LRC



| DECEMBER | |
|----------|--------------------|
| 1 | Jeffery Sperbeck |
| 4 | Fran Putnam |
| 9 | Cheryl Mickel |
| 10 | Kelly Sperbeck |
| 11 | Samantha Van Aller |
| 19 | Jeremy Parsons |

| DECEMBER | |
|----------|------------------------|
| 18 | Jeremy & Kathy Parsons |
| 31 | Wil & Martha Ivins |



**HE WILL
FEED HIS
FLOCK
LIKE A
SHEPARD**

God with us

Faith isn't about knowing all of the right stuff or obeying a list of rules. It's something more, something more costly because it involves being present and making a sacrifice.

Perhaps that's why Jesus is sometimes called Immanuel — "God with us." I think that's what God had in mind, for Jesus to be present, to just be with us. It's also what he has in mind for us when it comes to other people.

—Bob Goff, *Love Does*

The wonder of Christmas

At Christmas, shivers in the spine have nothing to do with climate. Songs are sung not with the lips but with the heart. And light comes not from utilities but from the heavens.

- "Christmas is not an event within history but is rather the invasion of time by eternity."
—Hans Urs von Balthasar
- "When we were children, we were grateful to those who filled our stockings at Christmas time. Why are we not grateful to God for filling our stockings with legs?"
—G.K. Chesterton
- "Expectancy is the atmosphere for miracles."
—Edwin Louis Cole
- "Christmas is not as much about opening our presents as opening our hearts."
—Janice Maeditere