

Arbor Covenant Newsletter

Madison Wisconsin

December 2016



Hark! The Herald Angels Sing Glory to the Newborn King

Advent Metanoia

Advent is a time of preparation and wakefulness, when we embrace with anticipation the arrival of the Christ child. It's four weeks when we retell the story of Israel's longing, their patience, a people's "hopes and fears of all the years" finally met in a little, insignificant town born unto them in a stable, because his family couldn't find a place anywhere else.

It's also a season when we reflect on our own hopes, on our own fears, on our own longings. When we anticipate that God can and does show up to decisively respond with meaningful movement towards the things for which we all yearn — peace, justice, mercy, unity. It's a season when we boldly proclaim that the hopes and fears of this year might also be met by a loving, grace-enacting God who enters our world to draw us nearer to God's Kingdom.

But part of the process goes beyond retelling Israel's story and beyond reflecting on our own hopes and fears. Part of Advent is the work of repentance.

Repentance as conveyed in scripture isn't the simple tasks of feeling regret or remorse, it's not merely being awakened to our faults and feeling resolute that we can do better and pledging our best efforts to do just that. This might be the way that most of us understand it, but it's not really what scripture means when it refers to repentance. Instead, repentance, or metanoia (the Greek word translated as repentance) refers to the gospel command to change our mind, to renew our perspective, to open our eyes to new possibilities that we never before imagined, to wrap our heads and our hearts around the new thing God is doing in the world.

This was John the Baptist's message as he prepared the people for Christ's ministry. "Repent for the Kingdom of God has drawn near (Matthew 3:2)." This was Jesus's first preaching message as well (Matthew 4:17) - an invitation to change the way we see the world, to change our minds about the ways we experience it, to open our hearts to the new possibilities that God creates.

Accordingly Advent, with its emphasis on repentance should be a time of uncommon openness when we are willing to let our perspectives shift, our opinions be revised, our thoughts and ways of thinking altered. In a culture of ideological entrenchment and ultra-adamant opinions, this is a season to be receptive of new evidence, new displays of God's goodness.

My friend, Gavin Dluhosh, a chaplain in Portland Oregon wrote this invitation to Advent, "When was the last time someone or something completely changed your mind - not when you were sitting on the fence, or indifferent, but when you had a certain idea or notion or belief to which you held fast - until someone or something or some event made it impossible to keep clinging to that thing?"

"This is what Advent is all about: making room, letting go, humbling ourselves so that we can receive Jesus in all the ways he comes to us each day, in his very presence, in prayer and people, in words and deeds, each an offer to us to be changed by a life that exists right in front of us, not to change it, not to figure it out, not to tailor it to our needs, but simply to embrace it and thus to be saved."

Are we willing to let Jesus change us, to change our minds, to change our hearts? This is a question worthy of our reflection, and an invitation worthy of our welcome.

Pastor Peter Morris

DECORATE THE CHURCH



On Saturday morning December 3, everyone is invited to come and help decorate the church. While you may not think you can make a difference, it truly is light work when many come to help. Come when you can and stay as long as you are able. We will begin at 9:00 AM.

ANNUAL ARBOR CHRISTMAS SMORGASBORD



Christmas at Arbor has always included food!! On Saturday December 10 we will gather at 2:00 PM in the fellowship room to share our favorite holiday foods. Bring something that you like – and share it with everyone. It may be something you remember from your childhood or it may be something that you like to eat today. It can be an ethnic favorite or it can be your own Christmas tradition. There is a list on the bulletin board where you can sign up for what you want to bring. It will also allow you to see what others are bringing. However – no matter what you bring or when you decide what you will bring, plan to COME and share a meal with your Arbor family.

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AT THE GIETZELS



Take a break from Christmas preparations and join us at our condo at 360 W. Washington Avenue, Unit 402 on Saturday, December 17 for our Holiday Open House. Starting at 6:00 pm, come to enjoy good conversation, holiday goodies and maybe even the singing of Christmas carols. All ages are welcome and we are handicapped accessible. The tree is up, the house is clean and the food is prepared. All we need is you! Hope you can make it!
Merry Christmas,
Chuck & Jan

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



Somehow Christmas doesn't arrive until you see the joy in the faces of the children as they present the Christmas story. Plan to be in worship on Sunday December 18 to hear the story one more time. You will be blessed!!

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE



Each year the church fills with friends and families as we prepare to welcome the Christ Child. We hear the story, sing the carols, and then light candles and sing Silent Night. Plan to be in church at 5 PM. Share the Good News that Christ is Born in Bethlehem.

CHRISTMAS DAY WORSHIP SERVICE



We will gather together for worship on Sunday morning, Christmas Day, at our customary time. 10:30 AM. Plan to be a part of this meaningful time to celebrate the birth of the Newborn King.

World Relief Offering



“Covenant World Relief is the humanitarian aid ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church. We participate in God’s transforming mission in the world through disaster relief and community development among the most vulnerable. We work with Covenanters and other partners around the world to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable who suffer from extreme poverty, hunger, disease, and injustice. Our mission is to join God in loving, serving, and working together with the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized.” (Mission Statement)

Covenant World Relief has provided a means for us to give to those most critically in need for over 60 years. At Arbor, we traditionally collect for Covenant World Relief this time of year. For many years, we all had “soup cans” on our tables to encourage us to give whatever we had in our pockets. If you wish to donate, please place your contribution in the offering, clearly designated for Covenant World Relief.



What's on Your List?

No, I wasn't thinking of that list. I'm thinking about the “to do” list that comes with the end of the calendar year in the work of the church. Thankfully, we have a community with various members stepping up to arrange special music, Children’s Christmas Program parts, an open house, welcome neighbors for an Arbor Neighborhood Meeting, and the Christmas Eve Service.

An open item on my “to do” list is setting up a 2017 budget drafting meeting for a few members of the Leadership Team to prepare for the Leadership Team meeting later this month. After the Leadership Team works on the budget further, it will be presented to the Congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting in January. The task of budgeting has become easier in the last few years as we have been meeting budgets and have built a small surplus through the faithful giving of the members and friends of Arbor Covenant Church. THANK YOU!

Now here's something to think about for Your List related to the work of Arbor. What do you hear God calling us to do next year? Is it something that needs to be added to the budget to enable it to happen? Perhaps it's something that supports outreach in the community that will introduce new people to life at Arbor. Or maybe there is a class that could be taught. A few months ago, after a book study on The New Jim Crow, Susan Corrado suggested there might be opportunity to work with a person leaving prison to re-enter society. Perhaps there might be some work opportunity on the Arbor building and grounds. We could stand to refinish the window frames and get to some other projects.

Whatever comes to mind from the still, small voice, please see a member of the Leadership Team or Pastor Peter in the coming weeks with an item from your list. If it needs budget consideration, see us soon. We need your imagination and courage in continuing to pour out God's love in a world that needs God's love.



Mark Hanson



*9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them,
and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid.

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

*11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you;
he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

12 This will be a sign to you:

You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

*13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel,
praising God and saying,*

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Luke 2:9-14

WHAT DO WE AT ARBOR COVENANT SUPPORT?



It's hard to believe that 2016 is nearly over but 2017 is truly right over the horizon. It is that time of year that we often think of what we would like to gift to non-profits that are important to us.

At Arbor, generosity is constantly in evidence as we support our church's general spiritual and physical needs. Beyond that, we support Luke House, Good Neighbors Personal Essentials Pantry (GNPEP), the Deacon Fund, Global Development Network (GDN), the Randy Levin Camping Fund, Madison Urban Ministry, Porchlight, Merge Ministries, Bread for the World, Covenant World Relief, the Central Conference and the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Below, each mission is briefly described and a website is linked to each so we can get more information. Browse the list and if you are moved to support any of them this year end, you can put your clearly designated gift in the offering plate or donate online to any that provide a donation button.

LUKE HOUSE: Arbor is part of the Community

Meals Program at Luke House and provides and serves a monthly meal to those who are homeless and/or in need of a hot, homemade meal.



<http://www.lukehousemadison.org>

GOOD NEIGHBORS PERSONAL ESSENTIALS PANTRY (GNPEP): Four churches participate

cooperatively to staff and provide personal and household hygiene products free of charge to those in need particularly in our neighborhood. It is open every Friday in the Fellowship Room of Arbor Covenant, a safe and welcoming place.

<http://www.gnpep.net/>



THE RANDY and JEANNETTE LEVIN

CAMPING FUND: This fund assures that any Arbor Covenant or neighborhood child who wants to attend Covenant Point or Covenant Harbor camps can do so.

Donations can be placed in the offering plate – clearly labeled for the Levin Camping Fund.

BREAD FOR THE WORLD: Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's leaders to end hunger at home and abroad.

www.bread.org



MERGE MINISTRIES: Arbor has partnered with MERGE in planning and carrying out Mission Trips to Mexico and Guatemala for our high school students and in supporting MERGE camping experiences.

<http://www.covmerge.org>

EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH: Arbor Covenant is an active member of this denomination

<http://www.covchurch.org/>



THE DEACON FUND: A source of money for crucial, immediate needs of any of our Arbor members or friends.

Examples might be gas, groceries or rent assistance. /

Offering is collected after church in the narthex following worship on the first Sunday of the month.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK: This organization is committed to establishing a sustainable platform for addressing the needs of at-risk communities in Thailand. Several Arbor members are on the board of GDN.

<http://www.gdnc.org/>

MADISON URBAN MINISTRY (MUM):

As an interfaith organization, MUM seeks to live out the call across faith traditions to care for our brothers and sisters, to welcome the stranger, and to work for justice

<http://emum.org/>

PORCHLIGHT: The largest provider of housing for those in need in Madison.

<http://porchlightinc.org/>

COVENANT WORLD RELIEF: Through disaster relief and community development, Covenant World Relief partners in the transformation of individuals families, and communities.

<http://www.covchurch.org/relief/>

CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH:

Arbor Covenant is part of this regional area of the Covenant Church

<http://www.centralconf.org/>

Parish Notes

Last month **Sherri Schroeder**, mother of CJ Hutchins, died after a valiant fight with cancer. Please remember CJ and Emma (Keillor) Hutchins as they grieve.

Please keep **Judy Douglas** in mind. She is at Oak Park Rehabilitation Center in hospice. Her address is 718 Jupiter Drive, Madison 53718. She appreciates all cards, calls (663-8788) and visits although she is not able to talk for long. See Elrene Lund if you have questions.

December Birthdays

December 10	Ian Mora
December 11	Matthew Fledderjohann
December 18	Harriet Anderson
December 18	Ann-Britt Keillor
December 25	Theodore Ford Morris
December 28	Annika Keillor



December Anniversaries

December 29	Tamsin Ford and Peter Morris
December 30	Sue and Harry Engstrom



Personal Essentials Pantry Item of the Month- Body Lotion (approx. 10 oz)

Volunteer Responsibilities

	Host	Nursery	Children's Church	Lay Reader	Projector
December 4	Ann-Britt Keillor & Rod Johnson	Joyce Boggess	Mark Hanson	Joyce Boggess	Chuck Gietzel
December 11	Hannah Lund & Fabio Mora	Matthew Fledderjohann	Fabio Mora	Michelle Stachowiak	Sue Pecotte
December 18	Lissa & Josh Turner	Debby Meyer	Lissa Turner	Reba Turner	Michelle Stachowiak
December 25	Jan & Chuck Gietzel	Deb Levin	Ruth Hallblade	Jan Gietzel	Chuck Gietzel
January 1	Deb Levin			Rod Johnson	Debby Meyer

December Calendar

				1	2	3	
					10:00AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	9:00 AM 	
2nd Sunday in Advent	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9:15 AM -10:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25 Gathering Music 10:30 AM Worship Communion Deacon Fund Offering World Relief Offering 				7:00 PM Small Group at Meyers	6:30 PM Leadership Team	10:00AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	2:00 PM-5:00 PM <i>Christmas Smorgasbord</i> 
3rd Sunday in Advent	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Worship 					10:30 AM Community Meals at Luke House 5:30-7:30 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	10:00AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	6:00 PM <i>Gietzel's Open House</i> 
4th Sunday in Advent	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Worship <i>Children's Christmas Program</i> 				7:00 PM Small Group at Meyers		4:30 AM-7:30 AM Homeless Shelter @Grace Episcopal * 10:00AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	5:00 PM <i>Christmas Eve Service</i> 
CHRISTMAS DAY	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
10:25AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Worship 						10:00AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	
NEW YEARS DAY	1						
10:25AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Worship Communion Deacon Fund 						<i>*Shelter Volunteers: Glenn Hanson and Dan Meyer</i>	