

Madison  
Wisconsin  
January  
2017

# Arbor Covenant Newsletter



Last Christmas, Tamsin and I were at the hospital. It was a long few days spent waiting for and then welcoming the birth of our son Theodore. Theo's was a rather complicated delivery. It wasn't easy for his mother or for him. And while, I had the easiest of all the jobs, it was still the hardest few days of my life.

Labor is never easy. It always requires vulnerability. It always puts the participants' souls on the line, always forces them to be open to new possibilities, to transformation, to unimagined, unanticipated hopes. It is always a risk.

Christ entered the world, through his own complicated birthing process — in a stable, far from home, to parents inspired by visions and embroiled in controversy. Christ entered the world as an infant, completely dependent and utterly reliant. From his first breath, he needed his mom for warmth and nurture and nourishment. In the incarnation God became vulnerable. And as if to intensify that vulnerability, Matthew's gospel account of Christ's birth tells us that in the days that followed, Jesus' whole family was forced to flee the country and a tyrant bent on the newborn child's destruction. These events foreshadow danger and rejection that ultimately lead to his death on a cross. Birth and life for Jesus were risky, daring propositions that faced a precarious path pocked by danger, terror, and distress.

It seems that vulnerability was and is the cost of Incarnation. Venturing risk was and is an essential component for how God's Word dwells among us. It cannot remain abstract or distant. It must not be aloof or detached. It cannot stay above the fray of a scarred human condition, or immune from the perils of a creation that includes decay and death. Removed from these realities, God's Word — any 'word' (...idea, hope, dream...) for that matter, remains a disembodied, irrelevant utterance that can never be fully related or embraced, like a bubble floating that will inevitably pop. To become real a Word/word has to be lived.

The story of Incarnation expresses to us God's willingness to become vulnerable that the world might relate to and embrace God's hopes and God's vision for creation. But the nativity isn't just a display of God's vulnerability on creation's behalf, it is also an instructive invitation. Quaker author and Madison resident Parker Palmer writes, "Christmas is a reminder that I'm invited to be born again and again in the shape of my God-given self, born in all the vulnerability of the Christmas story."

To fully engage the world as our truest self — without the armor of cynicism, despair, or whatever tool of detachment we might employ — we have to risk vulnerability reminiscent of the Christ's incarnation. We have to heed the invitation to be born into the world with all our best intentions, all our best hopes, all our passions and commitments, all the gifts we can contribute. We have to have courage to daringly venture all that we can offer to benefit the communities of which we are a part, risking the comfort of complacency and some of the same perils Christ did.

God's hopes for the world weren't limited to the Incarnation of his Son, they are also invested in us. We have to risk the vulnerability required to share them with the world. We too have to risk incarnation.

Pastor Peter Morris



## Just Some Thoughts About New Year's Resolutions

It's that time of year when I and many others have visions of revising the way we live our lives. There is always something to improve. Is it the proverbial losing weight, eating better, staying in more consistent contact with my friends and family or finally getting organized? Or, in regard to my spiritual life, is it the year I read the Bible from cover to cover? (No skipping of the lists of "begats" and difficult to pronounce names and towns).

At the start of many a year, I have found myself in a bookstore buying a book on how to lose weight, eat better or get organized and I notice that I'm not alone! Then I might head over to the office supply for new, perfect file folders to organize my home files or search the internet for the newest software or app to finally get my life in order. When I have all the tools I feel I need to accomplish my goals, I decide to start my new routine tomorrow or Monday, whichever comes last.

When I finally start to reinvent my life for the next year, my good intentions last about 3 days and then LIFE gets in the way! As I get older this starts to become humorous. RESOLUTION: You're going to lose 20 pounds - fat chance! RESOLUTION: You're going to eliminate all the clutter from your home – "How can I give away this broken something that my great uncle Bill gave to my Mother at least 65 years ago?" This is not to say that these are not worthy goals but to recognize that good intentions are easier to have than to truly accomplish.

So, what are my resolutions this year?

Maybe this year I can focus more on listening for God's direction on how to live my life rather than following the advice of the latest popular self-help book or article.

Maybe I can learn to stay in the present to connect with my friends and family right now instead of waiting for the perfect time in the future.

Maybe I can become more cognizant that I am not in control but God is and He will always be there for me.

Happy 2017!

Jan Gietzel

## Damp Mops Only.... Please! ..... and Some Hopes for 2017

Great topic for the first Newsletter of 2017, eh? Well, it does come with some good news. Arbor has a new kitchen floor as of December 28, one that was badly needed. And it looks great to this biased observer. And I am serious about the damp mops only. Wet mopping could cause problems with materials expansion. And this surface never gets waxed!



As we look ahead to 2017, there are some more important things to attend to in addition to new floors. One item that will be coming up early in 2017 is a performance evaluation for Pastor Peter along with a performance evaluation for Arbor Covenant. Performance evaluations are standard fare for any organization, and we are overdue. The Leadership Team and Pastor Peter will be taking a broad look at how we are doing, and what goals and visions we want and have for the future. You'll hear more about this in January including at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 29<sup>th</sup>.

An essential topic will be seeking ways to maintain our mission to our neighbors wherever that may be and welcome all into a vibrant, thoughtful, and loving congregation of believers. We are opening new channels with our social media outreach. There is every reason to invite others to join with us in following in the footsteps of Jesus in world that needs that way of living.

Mark Hanson  
Chair, Leadership Team



## Parish Notes



Kyle and Heather Hanson welcomed Kaelyn Marie into their family. Kaelyn has two older brothers, Hayden and Carson. **Deb McGill and Glenn Hanson** are her proud grandparents.



**Paul and Peggy Kent** became grandparents for the first time. Their son and daughter-in-law Chris and Sarah welcomed twins, William (Liam) Christopher and Eleanor (Ella) Grace to their home. Blessings to all!

**Judy Douglas** is still in Oak Park Place. While visits may not be that easy, cards are welcome. Judy's address is posted in the fellowship room.

**Tom Collins** appreciates any communications – He is now at home in a hospital bed. He truly appreciates contact from friends.



**Bad News:** **Rod Johnson**, former Arbor pastor and longtime member, had a major heart attack on December 18.

**Good News:** Rod's family was immediately available to help him and the paramedics were very near.

**Bad News:** He spent 11 days in ICU on a ventilator with multiple broken ribs and a cracked sternum.

**Good News:** If CPR is done correctly, there will be broken ribs.

He is now off the ventilator.

He is now responding appropriately –holding regular conversations although in a weak voice.

He is no longer in ICU – but in a regular room in the cardiac unit.

He has begun physical and occupational therapy.

Visitors, prayers, and cards are welcome and appreciated.

Our God is an awesome God!

### Personal Essentials Pantry Item of the Month

Body Lotion (approx. 10 oz.)

If you can donate lotion to the pantry, please leave it in the box in the narthex. Thank you.

**January Birthdays**

1/12 JD Turner  
 1/23 Michelle Stachowiak  
 1/24 Dan Meyer  
 1/31 Kristina Keillor

**January Anniversaries**

January 2 Dick and Ardeth Lindgren  
 January 11 Doug and Sheri Keillor

**Volunteer Responsibilities**

	<b>Host</b>	<b>Nursery</b>	<b>Lay Reader</b>	<b>Children's Church</b>	<b>Projector</b>
<b>January 1</b>	Deb Levin	Deb Levin	Jan Gietzel		Debby Meyer
<b>January 8</b>	Sue and John Pecotte	Debby Meyer	Michelle Stachowiak		Mark Hanson
<b>January 15</b>	Tamsin Ford and Peter Morris	Ulrika Swanson	Ulrika Swanson		Sue Pecotte
<b>January 22</b>	Janis and Mark Hanson	Matthew Fledderjohann	Ann-Britt Keillor		Michelle Stachowiak
<b>January 29</b>	Amanda and Matthew Fledderjohann	Elrene Lund	Sue Pecotte		Chuck Gietzel

### Children's Christmas Program at Arbor

Christmas always includes a children's program and last year it was wonderful. Thanks to those who helped organize the kids and thanks to the kids for making Christmas perfect. Thanks to Amanda F. for the pictures.





# January 2017



<b>Happy New Year!</b> <b>1</b> 9:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25 AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Call to Worship Deacon Fund Offering	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 10:00 AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> 9:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25 AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Call to Worship Communion	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 6:30 PM Leadership Team	<b>13</b> 10:00 AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> 9:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25 AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Call to Worship	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> 10:30 AM Community Meals @ Luke House 5:30 PM-7:30 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	<b>20</b> 10:00 AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25 AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Call to Worship	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 4:30 AM- 7:00 AM Homeless Shelter @ Grace Episcopal 10:00 AM-1:00 PM Personal Essentials Pantry	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 9:15 AM Adult Study Group 10:25 AM Gathering Music 10:30 AM Call to Worship 11:30 AM Soup/Subs lunch/ <b>Annual Meeting</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>				