

Newsletter of
**TRINITY EVANGELICAL
COVENANT CHURCH**
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Oak Lawn, IL 60453
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The Messenger December 2011

Over the Pastor's Shoulder

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. Isaiah 9:2*

December

Ushers

Harry Persson – Captain
Matt Panush
Melissa Panush
Clarence Rosengren

Greeters

4 Rhea Maurer and Virginia Fulton
11 Thad, Julie, Jenna, Thaddeus,
and Joseph Przybylowski
18 Ray Lewis
25 Richard and Priscilla Swanson

Nursery

4 Karen Curry, Rita Grijalva
11 Ginny Almer, Dawn Hanson
18 Nancy Mondry, Virginia Fulton
25 TBA

Counters

John Weszely
Jim Strickland
Tom Dori
Brian Crotty

Birthdays

1 Kenneth Johnson
2 Dolores Rosengren
5 Jo Ann Bergwall
5 Ray Lewis
5 Linnea Wimpenny
9 Nancy Keller
12 Kristine Schroeder
13 James Byland
15 Carol Strickland
15 Nancy Mondry
17 Joyce Karlson
17 William R. Hutchinson
19 Katie Mondry
19 Keith Mondry
20 Roger Shannon
20 David Raines
23 Luella Jackson
26 Carol Latimer
31 Rudy Chavez
31 Joyce Nyberg

Darkness comes in many forms—loneliness, pain, grief, confusion, heartache. Such emotions often become even more acute as we move further into December. I don't believe it is coincidence that Christmas falls just after the shortest day of our year. December 21, known as the winter solstice, is usually the shortest day of the year because the sun is shining directly on the Tropic of Capricorn, meaning that it is the day we receive the least amount of direct sunlight. Many of you are familiar with the term Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Periods of physical darkness can breed depression, melancholy and sadness. But at the darkest time of the year our world turns a corner. Soon our days will get longer. There will be a little more sunlight each day. Christmas reminds us that light is coming into our world in a physical sense as well as a spiritual one.

In the darkness there is a light that shines...and that light is a babe born in Bethlehem. That is the good news of Christmas. In John 8:12, Jesus says to us, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." If you are experiencing any darkness in your life right now, there is a light dawning and that light is an infant born to be our savior.

My mother died on Christmas Eve years ago. Her death cast a dark shadow over Christmas that next day and the days to follow. Twelve months later, with Christmas approaching, I found myself grieving my mother's death all over again. My mood matched the long dark days of December. Even as Charlene and I placed the final gifts under the tree that Christmas Eve my spirit was melancholy at best.

However, something happened to change my downcast spirit. Charlene and I were kneeling by the Christmas tree and the music box on the coffee table began to play. Charlene and I looked at each other, we had not touched the music box. Misty and Erik were in bed. They had not touched the music box. How could it be playing?

By the way, the music box was a gift we had given my mother years ago. My dad had given it back to us after she died. It was a fitting gift to remember my mother. The music box played my mother's favorite hymn, "Children of the Heavenly Father". The words of the song floated into my mind as the music box played:

*Neither life nor death shall ever
from the Lord His children sever;
unto them His grace He showeth,
and their sorrows all He knoweth.*

*Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
to preserve them pure and holy.*

It was as if my mom was telling me it was OK and that I didn't need to carry my sadness around anymore because she was OK. She was secure in the loving arms of our savior. My darkness lifted as the music wound down. The light and joy of Christmas once again flooded my heart.

If that seems like a miracle, remember that Christmas is a time for miracles. The light shines in the darkness. A babe is born in a manger in Bethlehem. Rejoice, your light is come!

Grace and peace,

Pastor Jim



Dates to Remember:

- Sunday, December 11 at 4 P.M.
Christmas Carol Sing-Along and Dinner
- Sunday, December 18 at 4 P.M.
Children's Christmas Program
- Saturday, December 24 at 5 P.M.
Christmas Eve Service of Carols and Candles
- Sunday, December 25 at 10:45 A.M.
Christmas Day – Morning Worship Service



Children's Christmas Program

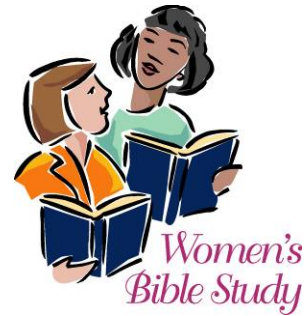
Rehearsal Schedule

- Sunday, Dec. 4 - Lunch and rehearsal (12-2:30 P.M.)
- Sunday, Dec. 11 - Lunch and rehearsal (12-1:30 P.M.)
- Saturday, Dec. 17 - 10 A.M. to 12 noon – DRESS REHEARSAL
- Sunday, Dec. 18 - Children's Program at 4 P.M.



Our Adult Sunday School will be led by Ray Lewis on December 4, 11, 18 (no class on December 25). "Evil - what is God doing about it?" based on N.T. Wright's books, "Evil and The Justice of God" and "Evil" (with video presentation).

Please join us in the Fireside Room on Sundays at 9:30 A.M.



Women's Tuesday Bible Study

Our December schedule gives reason to celebrate the joys and festive activities of the church, family and fellowship as we review Max Lucado's "One Incredible Moment" and enjoy an artist's view of this moment given by our Bible Study participant Rita Quaid.

- December 6 - Fireside Room - 9:30 A.M.
 - December 13 - Barb Johnson's home
9712 S. Kolmar Ave., Oak Lawn- Brunch, Lunch, Fellowship - 10:30 A.M.
 - December 20 - No Bible Study
 - December 27 - No Bible Study
- Resume winter schedule: January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31.

Barbara Johnson



Family Night

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, December 21, for our next Family Night! We plan to go caroling.

Dinner (catered from Chi Tung) will be served from 6-7 P.M. in Peterson Hall, offered at an affordable price (\$5/adult, \$1/child).

RSVP by December 18 to the church office at 708-422-5111.

Trinity Cookbooks

Remember to purchase your Trinity cookbooks as hostess gifts, shower/wedding gifts and Christmas gifts. Teachers would love one along with a batch of something made from one of the recipes inside. Be creative. Get your cookbooks from the church office. They are only \$10 each!



Christmas Carol Sing-Along Sunday, December 11 4 P.M.

Invite a friend and please join us as we celebrate the Advent season with this special Christmas Carol Sing-Along. Admission is free to the program, but there will be a free-will offering taken.

Following the concert there will be an Advent Dinner. The cost will be \$5 per adult, \$2 for children. Reservations for the dinner are required by Wednesday, December 7. Call the church office at 708-422-5111 to make your reservation.



Trinity Men's Christmas Card

The Christmas card project sponsored by Trinity men is moving forward.

Donate to the 2011 fund and help both others and yourself. You'll be able to greet friends at church and save on buying more cards, stamps and the time to address and mail. Two-thirds of the money will be used for Trinity families in need and one-third will go towards a newly-established fund for an electronic sign.

Donation envelopes are available at church on the table in the narthex. Or just mail your donation to church noting that it is for the Christmas card project. The deadline is Sunday, December 11.



Delightfully, I am happy to report that Dawn Ferrell has volunteered to also become a member of the Crossroads Leadership Team. Dawn has attended several meetings and gave her first presentation to the group a few weeks ago. Her topic was *"Writing Resumes that Generate Results."* This topic is of primary interest to so many as the resume is the first marketing tool to sell oneself to a prospective employer. Style, content and functionality were discussed and many questions were asked and answered. I am so pleased that Dawn will be sharing her expertise and catchy enthusiasm with the Crossroads group. Thank you, Dawn!

Tom Panush continues to provide local job leads and now is even personalizing them to individual members! If you don't know by now, Tom is the quintessential greeter! He greets everyone with genuine interest and remembers each one by name and job interest. He also brings various bits of information to the group with gusto such as federal and local programs like LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) – a useful program for those needing help with their heat and electric bills and CEDA (Community and Economic Development Association) providing new initiatives and support to the needs of the communities such as children and family services, employment and training, health and nutrition and housing, etc. Tom's knowledge of these programs is immense and he is passionate about making sure everyone knows about what is available to eligible individuals.

Dennis Parney continues to provide sound advice in all types of employment situations. He has also quietly worked with several members on an individual basis to help put them on the right road. He always displays concern and sincere interest in each and every person he talks with. When talking with Dennis -- you get his full and undivided attention. Priceless!

Other presentations I have developed and delivered were *"Mastering the Telephone Interview"* and *"Body Language – Do's and Don'ts at the Interview."* We had an especially fun time with body language and the subliminal and not so subliminal messages with the way one presents himself on an interview. Those non-verbal cues mean so much.

Finally, now that we have been meeting for several months, it was time for us to evaluate all that we have done and discuss our plans for future months including the frequency of our meetings. We have decided that beginning in January 2012, we will replace our weekly meetings with bi-weekly meetings, i.e., meeting every 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month, excluding holidays. Each of us on the Leadership Team will share primary responsibility of presiding over a meeting and include the use of outside speakers. Plans are underway to possibly include presentations by local employers and neighborhood businesses.

Please continue to spread the word about Crossroads. Hope and encouragement continue to abound as our God works through us in helping others. Many who come to us are locals, but we have had some from areas that are far away. Pray for *them*. Pray for *us*. We can't do this without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Denise Krueger

Notes from Crossroads Participants

Thanks for the reminder, Denise. Also, that Jeremiah 29:11 scripture is so encouraging to me at this time. You just do not know how encouraging that is to me. I will plan to see you November 28. Be blessed!

Patricia

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Thank you Denise, your e-mail is an inspiration to me and yes I will be there on Nov.14. See you then.

Vicdalia Delgado

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Thank you very much for the information you have sent to me. I appreciate your willingness to assist others. Thank you. Have a great day!

Angela Morris

Collecting for Worth Township

Please help the "Christmas Care Program" by donating new and gently used coats, jackets, scarves and boots (see table in overflow room). We will decorate our "Mitten Tree" in the narthex with new hats and mittens. There will be a box for new, unwrapped toys only (collecting through Dec 8).

Gift certificates or monetary contributions to enable the Township to purchase new clothing and toys are also accepted. Please make your check out to "Town of Worth", with a note on the memo portion indicating "Christmas Care Program." We will collect items through Friday, December 23.

Helping Together We Cope

On Sunday, December 4, we will be collecting non-perishable food items of your choice to help Together We Cope, a homeless prevention agency in Tinley Park. For our January 4 collection you are encouraged to bring in soup or peanut butter.

Church Chuckle

The Bible through the eyes of children...
During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Republicans.



Thank You Notes

I needed to take an additional moment and thank each and every one of you that has helped with book collection and donations. As you can imagine, my class has been a busy place. A wonderful change has slowly taken place. I have students that are calling me over to share something that they have just read. Students are turning to share something with each other.

A student called to me, so eager to say that he couldn't stop reading the book that he was in and finished it. I have been slowly moving these students forward and I could not have done it without your help. Please pray now for their continued growth and excitement. Thank you so much from myself and the staff at Coolidge Middle School.

Karen McShane

Covenant World Relief

It is such a pleasure to write you this letter about the wonderful ways we are making a difference together in the lives of the poor, the powerless and the marginalized through Covenant World Relief. This year we have responded to disasters in China, Congo, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Japan, Libya, Mexico, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and the U.S. Our community development projects have served in a variety of areas in more than 20 countries. Please make sure you watch the 2011 highlights video to learn more.

This year's theme is "saving lives, transforming communities." Many people know the ways CWR saves lives through disaster relief, but we are about much more than relief. The majority of our time, money and resources go to long-term holistic community development. Community development actually reduces the risks associated with disasters and will provide for long-term change.

We are deeply thankful for your ongoing support of Covenant World Relief - both for disaster response and community development. Because of you, lives are being forever changed around the world.

David Husby, Chrissy Palmerlee, Kellynne Meyers
Covenant World Relief

We, at Trinity, will collect our World Relief offering at the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. Check your mail (church box or U.S.) for the Pastor's Advent letter which will have the World Relief Offering envelope enclosed.



Pryme Tymers

Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 8. Returning for the sixth consecutive year, the Evergreen Park High School Madrigal Singers will be dressed in Renaissance costumes and surely gladden your holiday season.

At noon we will enjoy a ham luncheon prepared by Mrs. Pittluck and her crew.

Thought to Ponder

Count your age by friends, not years. Count your life by smiles, not tears.



Pacesetters

Save the date - December 31 (New Year's Eve). At 7 P.M. join us at church for appetizers followed by dinner, socializing and a time of sharing. RSVP by December 18 to Bruce & Char Sladek, Ray Lewis, Diana Eigenbauer, or Pat Anderson.

South Suburban PADS

Many of the South Suburban PADS shelters for the homeless are still in serious need of second shift (10:45 P.M. to 3 A.M.) and third shift (2:45 A.M. to 7 A.M.) volunteers. Please consider volunteering to serve at a PADS shelter during one of these shifts. The commitment is once each month now through April.

If you are interested in serving South Suburban PADS, please contact Dawn Thrasher, community resource coordinator at 708-754-4357, ext. 107 or by e-mail at dawn@sspads.org.



A Christmas Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible:

I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess my ever-lasting need of God: The need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I believe in God who gives us the best of himself.

I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world.



A New Year Prayer

Holy Father,
God of our yesterdays, our today, and our tomorrows.
We praise You for Your unequalled greatness.
Thank You for the year behind us and for the year ahead.
Help us in Your new year, Father, to fret less and laugh more.
To teach our children to laugh by laughing with them.
To teach others to love by loving them.
Knowing, when Love came to the stable in Bethlehem, He
came for us.
So that Love could be with us, and we could know You.
That we could share Love with others.
Help us, Father, to hear Your love song in every sunrise,
in the chirping of sparrows in our backyards,
in the stories of our old folks, and the fantasies of our children.
Help us to stop and listen to Your love songs,
so that we may know You better and better.
We rejoice in the world You loved into being.
Thank You for another new year and for new chances every
day.
We pray for peace, for light, and for hope, that we might
spread them to others.
Forgive us for falling short this past year.
We leave the irreparable past in your hands, and step out into
the unknown new year knowing You will go with us.
We accept Your gift of a new year and we rejoice in what's
ahead, depending on You to help us do exactly what You
want..
I say it again, we rejoice!
In Jesus name,
Amen.



Better to Return than to Receive

I hate being in department stores anytime two weeks within Christmas Day. The clamor of buying the gifts that you hope are significant is replaced by the chaos of returning those gifts on December 26th. Many have looked at this and soured towards the whole season, much to their detriment. Yet, as I am preparing to teach a unit in Sunday School about money and God, I am a little ruffled by the Christmas race.

I can't help but think of all the wealth and privilege that goes into these Christmas shopping and returning routines and I understand how some can become cynical. I confess that I have been caught up in the pursuit of suits and the creation of the newest computers and I want it all. I know that these are not needs, so I can restrain myself, but I worry about the lost joy that comes from the gift that is simple and freely offered.

What to do? For me, rather than sour on the season or place restrictions on gifts given and received, I will hope to be surrounded by a people that can rejoice in the *call* that comes with blessings: during this rapturous season, be willing to creatively consider the calling of your blessings this season. In God's kingdom, the blessings of the community are to be passed on rather than to insulate the group. In a recent sermon, we were reminded that we should not think of ourselves as giving but as returning that which God has given us. So friends, in this season of thanksgiving and rejoicing, I wish you many happy returns.

Pastor Zach

**Articles for the January
Messenger are due on
Sunday, December 11.**



Noah's Ark Preschool

December Newsletter 2011

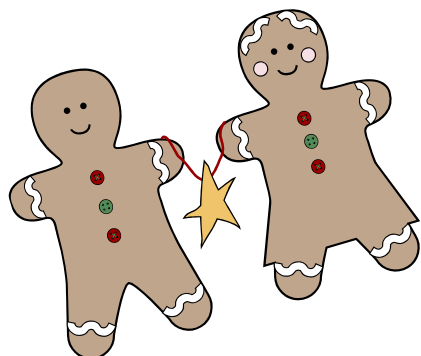


Christmas is forever, not for just one day,
for loving, sharing, giving, are not to put away
like bells and lights and tinsel, in some box upon a shelf.
The good you do for others is good you do yourself.

(Written by Norman W. Brooks)

As the cold wind starts to blow and the snow begins to fall, a beautiful winter wonderland appears. The smell of holiday cookies fill the air and family traditions are shared. With the holiday season quickly approaching, let's be thankful for what we have. However, let's also keep in mind those who are less fortunate than us. This holiday season we will be collecting new and gently used toys and clothing, which will be donated to the Toy Box Connection. These items will then be distributed by the Toy Box Connection, to needy children and families throughout the surrounding area. Any donations will be greatly appreciated.

This month we will be working on the letters Cc and Rr and the sounds they make. We will learn about our 5 senses and review numbers 0-5. The colors of the month are Red and Green. We will also review our past letters and shapes learned.



Taking a look back...

During the month of November, the children learned about the Indians, Pilgrims and Turkeys. We had a wonderful Thanksgiving feast with our family and friends. We gave thanks for all of our blessings and made Thanksgiving Day place mats. The children and their families completed our Thankful Turkey Mural by decorating a feather and thanking God for all of our blessings.

Thank you to Pastor Zachary for teaching us about Jesus' Love and to give thanks to God for a wonderful world.



Dates to Remember

Sunday, December 18th - Children's Christmas Program 4:00 P.M.

We will be participating in the Children's program through Trinity Evangelical Covenant Church; More information to come!

Tuesday, December 20th - 3's Holiday Party

If you would like to volunteer for the Holiday Party, please let me know

Wednesday, December 21st - 4's Holiday Party

If you would like to volunteer for the Holiday Party, please let me know

Thursday, December 22nd - No School

Winter Break Begins

Monday, January 9th - School Resumes



Thank You!

Your very generous donations and support for our 1st Annual Dominos, all you can eat pizza fundraiser was such a success! With your support, we have raised enough funds to purchase a listening center for our preschoolers. The listening center will give the children the opportunity to aid them with reading skills.

The children are very excited to use the listening center and cannot wait till it arrives!



To help celebrate Jesus' Birthday, we will be creating a Christmas Mural. The children will be given a paper ornament to decorate at home. On the ornament, the children will tell us their gift they would give to baby Jesus.

I would like to thank Miss Martinez for her hard work and dedication at Noah's Ark Preschool. As of January, Miss Martinez will be furthering her education and therefore will not be with us. Wishing you much luck in the future!



*Wishing Everyone a
Very Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and
a Happy New Year!*



Please color and return to church office. The church staff will pick a winner. A prize will be awarded.

December 2011

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Notes:

- Dec. 3: Men's Prayer Breakfast at Jedi Garden (8 A.M.)

- Dec. 3: Jul Fest Crafts (10:15 A.M.), Program (11 A.M.)

- Dec. 6: Women's Bible Study at Trinity (9:30 A.M.)

- Dec. 6: Prepare Dinner for Ronald McDonald House (4:30 P.M.)

- Dec. 8: Grief Support Group (10-10:45 AM)

- Dec. 8: Pryme Tymers (11 A.M.)

- Dec. 11: Christmas Carol Sing-Along and Dinner (4 P.M.)

- Dec. 13: Deacons (6:30 P.M.), Trustees & C.E. (7 P.M.)

- Dec. 13: Women's Bible Study at Barb Johnson's (10:30)

- Dec. 18: Children's Christmas Program (4 P.M.)

- Dec. 21: Family Night (6 P.M.)

- Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Service (5 P.M.)

- Dec. 25: Christmas Day - Morning Worship (10:45 A.M.)

- Dec. 31: Pacesetters' New Year's Eve (7 P.M.)

On-going Ministry

- Sunday Mornings
 - 9:30 Adult S.S.
 - 9:30 Confirmation
 - 10:30 Kingdom Kids
 - 10:45 Worship

- Noah's Ark Preschool – Mon-Fri 9-11:30 A.M.

- Crossroads Career Ministries – Mon 7 P.M.

- Women's Bible Study – Tues 9:30 A.M.

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Reverend Dr. James R. Sandberg

Senior Pastor

Reverend Zachary Lovig

Assoc. Pastor: Minister to Youth and Families

Carol Raines

Director of Music

Betty Aardema

Organist

Christina Palazzolo

Director – Noah's Ark Preschool

Charlene Sandberg

Secretary

Phil Cavallone

Custodian