

THE MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2020

WE HAVE SEEN HIS

STAR

WE HAVE COME TO

WORSHIP

HIM

MATTHEW 2:2

NEW COVENANT
COMMUNITY CHURCH

1587 W. EXCHANGE ST.

AKRON, OH 44313

COVENANTAKRON.ORG

*The Word awoke us from the lethargy which had robbed us of our hope.
The Word became a path in the jungle,
a decision on the farm, unity among workers,
and a Star for those few who can inspire dreams.*
— from Julia Esquivel, “Those Who Saw the Star,”
*Threatened with Resurrection: Prayers and Poems
from an Exiled Guatemalan,*
(Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Press, 1982).

Life-giving Lord, through Your grace, You blessed our world with a Word, with *the* Word, with the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us.

But somehow, at this exceedingly significant season of the year, it seems that Your Word has been uttered as a whisper.

Do not allow Your Word of hope to be muffled by the pain of a pandemic, or by the pandemonium of politicians, or by the thundering silence of loneliness.

Guard us from the artificial words of advertisers enticing us to purchase particular products . . . and protect us from words that are employed only to hurt and inhibit, to intimidate and manipulate.

Instead, as we prepare to celebrate Your birth, invade every area of our lives with Your Word.

Open our ears to hear Your Word, so that we may recognize Your voice in the hymns that we sing, through our quiet moments in prayer, and through the cries of the suffering.

Broaden our vision to see Your Word, so that we may discern Your presence wherever love triumphs over hatred, wherever hope overcomes despair, and wherever peace prevails over hostility.

Awaken us with Your Word, so that we may reflect Your light in every corner of the world’s darkness . . . so that we may join You in beating swords into plowshares . . . And so that we may pursue the day where all creation will live in harmony.

Inspire us through Your Word, so that we would dare to join the shepherds in making the journey to see what You are making known to us.

Refashion us through Your Word, so that Your Word would permeate our conversations, influence our actions, and empower us to participate in the work of the Wonderful Counselor and the Prince of peace.

Transform us through Your Word,

so that we may share Your grace and love with all people . . .

and if we cannot share Your grace and love with *all* people, then let us seek to widen our circle and love a few more people than we did before

and if we can’t even do that all year long, then help us at least to do it in this Advent season, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May God bless you with an extraordinary encounter with the Word,
tom



“Tis the Season to be Jolly. . . ”

Jolly? Really! How can we be jolly when COVID is out of control, when we couldn't see family at Thanksgiving, when people have lost jobs and are going hungry, and while we can't travel anywhere safely? Christmas celebrations don't look much better either.


Yes, all of the above may be true; however, Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love are right before us during this season of Advent when we await the birth of a tiny baby on Christmas— certainly reason enough to be jolly.

Turning to us at NCCC, we have many reasons to be jolly. You members have helped us balance our budget for the year, and several of you have upped your pledges for 2021. While COVID remains a challenge, vaccines are on the horizon. Distribution remains a challenge, but we can look ahead to the new year to the time when we can all meet again. Keep in mind the wonderful job Pastor Tom has done connecting us to YouTube with timely sermons and well-thought out services we can view either on the church website or on YouTube. Credit goes to our amazing tech crew that works each Saturday morning to make Sunday viewing possible. Don't forget ZOOM, a wonderful tool for Board and Committee meetings as well as informal chats.

To continue—Contributions for our parking lot renovation exceeded our Governing Board's expectations. We on the Board were asked to contribute first and then state our case to all of you. You responded.

Our office manager, Reesá, has kept you informed with timely, well-composed, colorful bulletins each week along with our monthly Messenger, full of many worthwhile items going on. Hopefully, you are all reading these and printing out if possible. The church website is almost complete. Now, items can be posted each week so the outside world knows what we're doing.

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On the mission side, the postponed spring Portage Path Book Fair succeeded this fall with your monetary assistance again in purchasing 244 books, which were recently delivered to the school to be handed out to the K-5 students. You also have once again donated to the Akron Interfaith Immigration Advocates program, providing needed clothing items for 50 immigrant families in the North Hill area. (You can still donate on December 1 & 3 at the church between 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.) In addition, you have the opportunity to provide money for a needy family at Case CLC for items for a family with three children and one on the way. The mother had to quit her job in order to conduct remote learning for her children during this pandemic. When asked if NCCC would take part in the school's Adopt-a-Family program, our Mission Committee stepped up and volunteered. Now they have issued a call for shoppers from our church to purchase items the children want and need this Christmas. (Their lists and more details about the program are on page 5.)

Also this month, a gift of \$45 will help in the purchase of 30 Acme gift cards (in place of Christmas baskets) to be delivered to the family names given to us by Gennesaret.

For all your generosity, we offer a huge THANK YOU. These are enough reasons to be jolly, making December a time of joy. We are grateful for your efforts on behalf of our church and others during the 9 months of COVID. "Tis the season to be jolly" and thankful for the blessings of our church family and for the birth of a baby born in Bethlehem so long ago.

With peace, joy and love to all,

Nancy Williams,

Governing Board President



THANK YOU



Portage Path CLC Book Fair 2020

The Mission Committee, with the help of Tim Meyer, got together Sunday, November 15th, and put the name of each child, into the book the student requested.

Though we weren't able to hand out the books in typical book fair fashion, Shelley Kennedy, the school counselor who worked with us throughout the project, made sure each book made it to the child who requested it. As you can see from her thank you note, the fair was a success.

*New Covenant Community Church,
Thank you so much for providing a
book for each student at Portage
Path CLC! During such a difficult
time for many of our families, your
acts of kindness have brought smiles
to many faces.*

*Your generosity is greatly appreciated
by all of the students and staff at
Portage Path!*

Thank you!

CASE CLC—ADOPT-A-FAMILY PROJECT

While the Mission Committee was not able to host a book fair at Case CLC this year, NCCC has been asked to adopt-a-family for Christmas. Our family has three boys and a baby girl on the way. Now, we hope four volunteers will shop for the family. If you'd like to order something online or buy it in person, here are their wish lists:

Robert, 8 years old, 3rd grade, Wants Pokemon watch or headphones, needs a Pokemon full-sized comforter and clothing size 10/12.

Jaffontae, 6 years old, 1st grade, would like anything to do with the Power Rangers and needs clothing size 7/8, shoes size 1

Jay'Vaughn, 3 years old, anything Blues Clues or Mickey Mouse, needs T-shirts/clothes size 4/5

baby girl, needs blankets, long sleeve onesies, diapers, anything for a newborn

We need to deliver the gifts to Case CLC by 12/6. If you want to shop for a child or buy something on the list please call Lev at 330-666-1977 or 330-328-8302.

Got the Mittens, Lost the Kittens

We're close to the deadline for dropping off donations for the Akron Area Interfaith Council's drive to collect scarves, hats, gloves, mittens, socks and hoodies for the children of immigrant families in Akron. You can drop off items in Fellowship Hall next week. The doors will be open Tuesday and Thursday, between 11:00 a.m.– 1:00 p.m. Someone from AAIC will pick up the

items the weekend of 12/6. If you don't want to do a lot of shopping, please consider giving a gift card to Walmart, Target, Burlington Coat Factory or Dollar Tree.



You can also leave bagged items by the door before 11, and Reesá will get them.

If you have questions, please call or email Nancy Williams.



The donation boxes in Fellowship Hall are filling up with gloves, hats, hoodies and scarves for immigrant children. But, we still have room for more.




ICCC MEET AND GREET

Tuesday,
December 1,

International Council of Community Churches Zoom into the holiday spirit with our ICCC brothers and sisters. The upcoming Zoom event will allow you to connect with friends at 7:00 p.m. The connection information is at www.icccnow.org/headlines/.

Taping of the Sunday Service

Saturday, Dec. 19, at 10:00 a.m. is the next opening for two people to come watch the taping of the Sunday service. Cathy King and Nancy Williams have been calling members and inviting them to participate, but don't wait for us....you can call and schedule a time. Comments from those who've attended range from, "It feels like I am back home," to "The service was so meaningful; thank you for inviting us to attend." Availability to observe the Christmas Eve and 12/26 tapings are TBD, but there are plenty of available times in January. Give Cathy or Nancy a call.



A PRAYER FOR THE First Sunday of Advent

God of light and life,
give us hope as we wait
for your coming again.
When we are tempted
to be grateful to have found you
while others are lost,
send us out into the darkness
in search of those
who need you most.
Amen.

On Sunday we will observe the beginning of Advent with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. And on Christmas Eve, we will rejoice in the gift of our Savior as we share the Eucharist through the gifts of the bread and the cup.

Mark your calendars so you will have some bread and a juice ready to partake of the elements.

Due Dates & Items to Remember

1. Please turn in your **pledge cards** for 2021, which are due **11/29**, so the budget for 2021 can be finalized before the next Governing Board meeting on December 17.
2. We have enough responses to formally declare the new Governing Board members to be Nancy Clem and Susie Stevenor. Their three year terms of office begin January 2021. In addition, the Nominating Committee of Jackie Horton and Cathy King was approved for a period of two years.
3. Acme Community Cashback ends **12/23**. Turn in your receipts.
4. Christmas Joy Offering, usually taken up on Christmas Eve, will be accepted anytime in December. The money is for the Retired Presbyterian Ministers Fund.
5. **Zoom chats** to resume on Tuesday, **December 8** at 4 pm (new time). We hope the new time will bring us more people.
6. AAIC Meeting, Tuesday, **December 1**, 12-1:30 pm. The agenda is still being set, but it will include interfaith responses to the pandemic and racial injustices. Guiding principles will be discussed. For those interested in attending, via Zoom, ask Nancy Williams to email you the link when she gets it.

The background of the slide features a close-up, warm-toned photograph of several hands reaching out towards the center. The hands are positioned at different depths, creating a sense of movement and connection. The lighting is soft and golden, highlighting the skin tones. The overall composition is centered and balanced, with the hands framing the central text area.

HOLIDAY ANNOUNCEMENTS

*“There is no
exercise better
for the heart
than reaching
down and lifting
people up.”*

- John Holmes

NOVEMBER 23, 2020