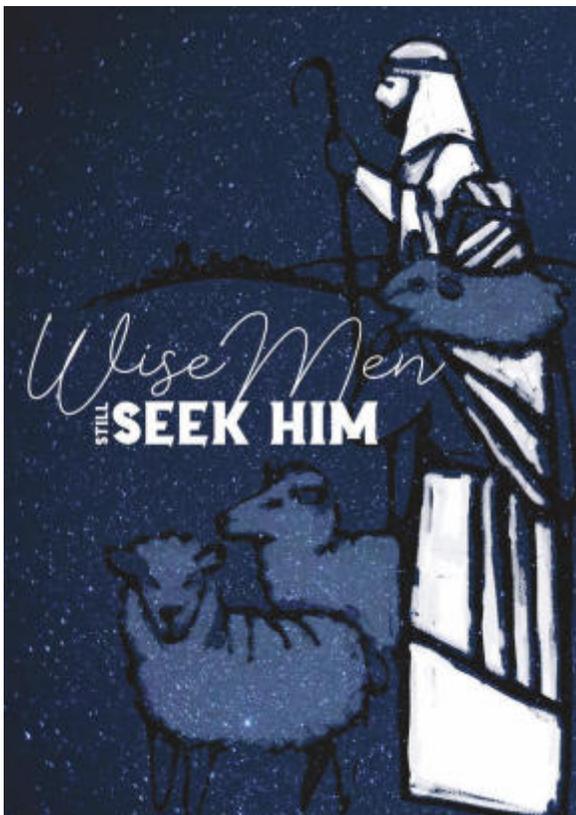


THE HISTORIC BETHANY UNION CHURCH OF CHICAGO  
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Chicago, IL 60643

\*Time Sensitive Materials\*  
DO NOT DELAY

Address Correction Requested

# The Unifier December 2020



A Newborn King,  
A New Kingdom, A New life,  
A New You!

Come! Let us adore Him who was and is and is  
to come once more. Jesus Christ our Lord.

Advent Season Began Sunday Nov 29, 2020

Sunday Worship services begin at 10:30a both  
in the Sanctuary\* and on Facebook.

Christmas Eve Service Thursday, Dec 24, 9:00p

\*COVID-19 protocols observed

# From Pastor Larry...

My Beloved Faith Family,

I miss “us” terribly! I know you miss “us” as well and all the people that make “us” “us.” Please know that I send with this newsletter my warmest affection and prayers and hope that soon and very soon we will be able to gather together again. Until that time, know that I continue to think upon each of you and hold each of you up in prayer every day to our God.

As I write this letter, I am still sitting in a strange place. Last week at this time, my Father was alive. Now I have no living parent in this world. That is a strange and stranger feeling. I want to thank all of you for your condolences, prayers, and love and for the wonderful Memorial trees that you had planted in his memory. That was very gracious and loving of you, and it means a lot to me. Thank you.

As I am typing this, I am in the midst of a text conversation with my cousin Mark, a couple of years older than me. He and his wife of 45 years, Linda, both caught COVID-19. Mark has fully recovered, but his wife Linda has asthma and has slipped into a non-responsive coma in the hospital in Michigan. The medical team caring for her, has indicated that things are looking grim. Mark is not able to be with her in the hospital due to the COVID-19 pandemic. My heart breaks for them, their families, and for all who have come to know the travesty of this COVID-19 pandemic personally. We will continue with our prayers. It has been said that if we had acted sooner and more fully, these 250,000 deaths in the U.S. did not have to happen. There is no doubt that our leadership failed us, and this crime against humanity occurred due to political malice/evil/strife—shame on us all for allowing this.

We head into a time of Advent. A time of watching and wondering and hoping that hope will come to us and be born among us and that we can be saved from ourselves and the evil and sin that comes to full bloom in death. Even as the ancients held out for hope against hope and wondered if they ever would be redeemed from the ravishing escapades of sin, so we too wonder how this COVID-19 mess will ever end and how, if at all, we will ever get a “normal” life back.

I pray you stay well, practice social distancing, and take all of the precautions they have told us to take – wearing a mask, washing your hands regularly, and staying at home. Yes, we all are tired of this and fatigued with the COVID-19 imposed isolation, but the alternative is death. Like you, I am sure you don’t want to lose any more souls to this nasty disease, especially since it is preventable. So, be kind to yourself and others. Practice health!

We will continue to worship our God and praise Him knowing He loves us and wants us to know that He loves us. Worship continues at 10:30 a.m. every Sunday in the Sanctuary and LIVE via our Church’s Facebook page. Join us! Pray with us! Worship with us until we can together be “us” in one place and time.

To God be the glory in all things,

*+Pastor Larry Cameron*

# Ha! Take that COVID-19!

Two, count them, two December holiday traditions we have always enjoyed here at Bethany Union Church of Chicago has been the Annual Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast that has been held every year, since who knows when? But COVID-19 has seemingly put the damper on this tradition that allowed great community spirit and fellowship and raise

scholarship money to help send scouts to Summer Camp each year. We have enjoyed the second tradition for several years by adopting a 3rd-grade classroom at Shoop School and providing the children with Christmas Presents. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, we will not be able to participate in this activity this year. Seems like COVID-19 wins? Ha! We beg to differ! This year we will combine these two seemingly tragic bygones and present the following creative endeavor to do good and spit in the eye of COVID-19 at the same time!



This year, Bethany Union Church of Chicago will receive special donations of money through the Christmas collection that will be used to recreate

the missing funds for the Boy Scouts Camp Scholarship program. All special gifts for our Christmas collection will be gathered and designated for Camp Scholarships for our Boy Scout Troop 607. The money the scouts would have earned during their pancake breakfast fundraiser will be offset by the generous gifts of the members and friends of Bethany Union Church. In this way, we refuse to let COVID-19 win and take away the camp scholarship program and our opportunity to contribute to the children's joy and promise. So as you give to the Christmas effort this year, you provide a child the opportunity to go to summer camp. After a long, difficult year, it is just what the doctor ordered!

So, let's gather all of our gifts together and give as the Lord calls us to do, let the heart and spirit of Christmas guide our generosity, and take joy in knowing that we are making a difference in young people's lives in this community. Please mark your gift as a "Christmas Offering for Camp Scholarships for Boy Scouts" and get it to the Church or Church office as soon as you can. We will be receiving gifts as long as they come in and would like them to be here by Christmas. To God be the Glory!



# TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Thursday, December 24, 2020 9:00p  
in the Sanctuary\* or on Facebook

\*COVID-19 protocols observed

Worship with your family of faith on this most solemn and holy night. It has been said on several occasions that even an angel of two shows up this night and slips in and sits on a pew to help us sing, pray and adore the New Born King of Heaven! Come!

## **Christmas Presence**

Amid the secular trappings of the holidays, we can lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas, until we lament with Charlie Brown, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"

These reminders call us back to where it all began — in the heart of God.

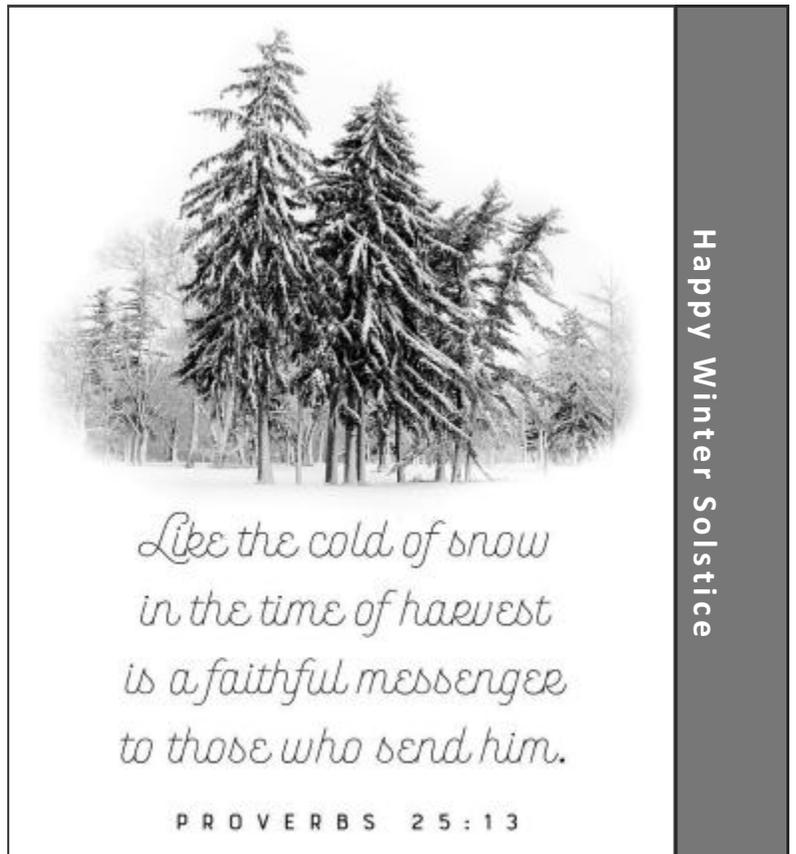
"The giving of gifts is not something [people] invented. God started the giving spree when he gave a gift beyond words, the unspeakable gift of his Son."

—Robert Flatt \*\*

\*\*NewsletterNewsletter 12/2020

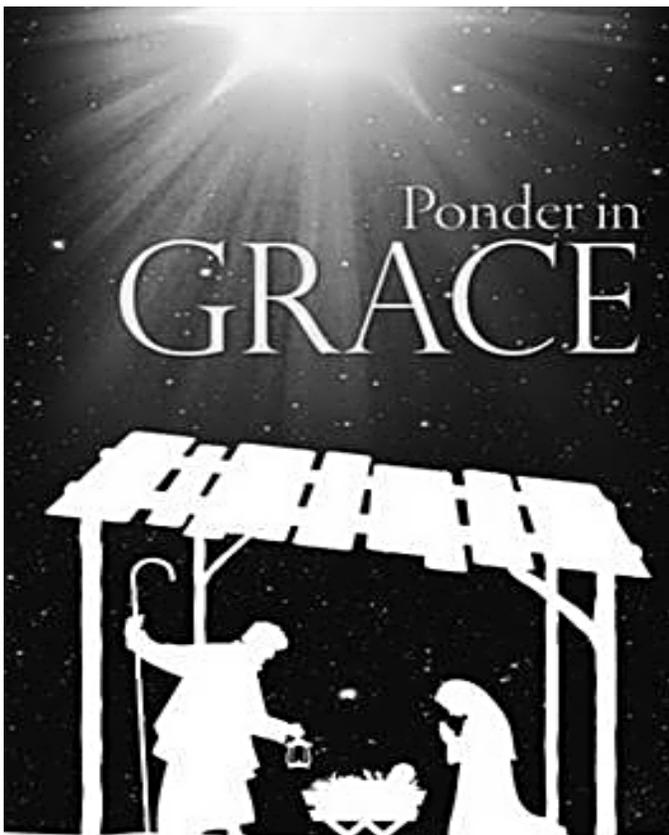
## a sacred summary

The simple shepherds  
heard the voice of an angel  
and found their Lamb;  
the wise men  
saw the light of a star  
and found their Wisdom.  
—Fulton J. Sheen\*\*



## COVID-19 Denies Our December Traditions

While COVID interrupts our activities, it will not put a damper on our memories of Bethany Union's Christmas traditions. We will only put them aside for a little while.



\*The First Sunday of Advent – the Church would have been decorated so beautifully – didn't happen.

\*Our Shoop Angel Tree—with children not in school, we will not have a giving tree this year.

\*The Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20<sup>th</sup>, should have been:

◇ "Build-A-Manger" service where the story of our Lord's Nativity comes to life before our eyes as members of the worshipping community that morning don costumes and become a member of our Christmas pageant as the Holy Story is read and carols are sung. Pictures of this beautiful visual of the celebration of the New Born King were recorded.

◇ Our annual Christmas fun day. A great potluck and gift exchange.

◇ Caroling on the Corner has also been a part of this day's tradition. We gathered on the corner of 103<sup>rd</sup> and Wood Streets and Christmas carol to all those blessed enough to drive by at that time.

## Our Adopted Bolivian Daughter, Mary Contreras



Mary Contreras, 18 years old, our Compassion International adopted daughter, graduated from the Compassion program at the end of October! A letter of congratulations was sent. Over the last four years, Mary has completed her school studies and is in the University. Compassion and her Church work together to “release children from poverty in Jesus’ name” through evangelism to restore a child’s relationship with God and through a process of discipleship supplanting lies that hold them in poverty with biblical truth. “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11). God bless you, Mary, in all you do. Let us continue to keep our adopted daughter in our prayers.

enjoy every moment

**BIRTHDAYS**

**ANNIVERSARIES**

1 Eric Diddia  
1 Norma Miller  
5 Bestie Hale  
5 George Rumel  
18 Chelsea Dunlap  
**25 Jesus**  
27 Jamie Peirce  
27 Tiffany Smith

29 Joan and George Rumel

**BELETED 90th Birthday Congratulations, Jack Voigt!**

### A Fresh Look

Just when everything is bearing down on us to such an extent that we can scarcely withstand it, the Christmas message comes to tell us that all our ideas are wrong, and that what we take to be evil and dark is really good and light because it comes from God. Our eyes are at fault, that is all.

God is in the manger, wealth in poverty, light in darkness, succor in abandonment. No evil can befall us; whatever men may do to us, they cannot but serve the God who is secretly revealed as love and rules the world and our lives.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God Is in the Manger*\*\*

\*\**Newsletter Newsletter 12/2020*

## Annual General Budget for 2021

The team who will be constructing a general budget proposal for the 2021 year wants to thank all of you who so timely and graciously turned in your pledge cards. We are waiting for a few members to turn theirs in, and then we can begin putting a budget proposal together for the Board of Trustees. The Board will pass on their version and any amendments to the General Council. The Council will present their version to the entire Congregation with their recommendations; the whole membership will approve or decline to accept at the Annual Meeting,\* Sunday, January 31, 2021. Please turn in your giving card, if you haven't already, so we can complete our budget. Thank you.



## End of Year Reports Due January 4, 2021, by Noon

Even though there was not a lot of activity this year, all committee heads, team chairman's Officers, and Staff need to have their 2020 year-end reports into the office electronically by Monday, January 4, 2021, at noon, so they may be put into our printed annual report and distributed two weeks before the Annual Meeting,\* Sunday, January 31, 2021.

## Why Advent?

Waiting can be hard, and not just for children. But I do love Advent: this four-week time when the Christian church prepares for Christmas.

Maybe I like Advent so much because it involves active waiting, not thumb-twiddling. It is a gift the church offers the world, to be active (which isn't the same as busy) in ways that open our hearts — and the hearts we touch — to the true meaning of Christmas.

Mother Teresa said, "At this Christmas when Christ comes, will he find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving others with God's own love and concern."

When I take time during Advent to remember in prayer and with gifts of money and time those who have less food than I do, those who are lonely, those without a home; when I pause to share love with a child or an elder, or gratitude for a healthcare worker, pastor or teacher; when I wait for justice to replace oppression but, while I wait, find ways to work for that result ... the Spirit's warmth fills my waiting heart. I am ready to welcome Jesus.

—Heidi Mann\*\*

\*\* Newsletter Newsletter 12/2020

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