

Good Tidings

The Newsletter of Brick Presbyterian Church

December 2017

A Pastor's Reflections On Advent Hymns



During advent we sing: “*O come, O come Emanuel, and ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile.*” And so, the children of God cry out to God today – as a nation of people who dwell in fear because of mass shootings and gun violence in places like Las Vegas, Virginia Tech and Newtown, Conn.; at churches in Charleston, SC and Sutherland Springs, Tx.; and because of numerous bomb threats against Jewish community centers and mosques. O come, O come Emanuel, and ransom those who live in exile; as we think of those refugees who have fled their homes because their towns has become a war zone.

We sing, “*Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free: from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee.*” O Lord, set us free once again from our fears – from the politics of fear – from our fears of those who are different from us in any of so many ways - be it their race, ethnic background, gender, social position, their economic or educational background, even their age.

We sing, “*In the bleak mid-winter, Frosty wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, Water like a stone...*” We sing knowing the bleakness of dark cold nights and shortened hours of daylight; knowing the frosty winds of political divisiveness; the hardened hearts of road rage, demeaning speech; the frosty winds of bullying in school yards and throughout the political landscape.

As we sing these songs of longing we hear yet another voice in our advent hymns. It's the voice of the prophet who called God's faithful to action as we sing: “*Prepare the way, O Zion, Your Christ is drawing near! Let every hill and valley A level way appear. Greet One who comes in glory, Foretold in sacred story. O blest is Christ that came In God's most holy name.*” And so, the prophet beckons you and I to prepare the way of the Lord.

Advent songs invite us to prepare for Christ's arrival. We are beckoned to address the causes of our fears – to address the causes of gun violence and mass shootings – melt the iron hatred and apathy and shape it into something more loving and caring – turn up the social thermostat and drive away the frosty winds of demeaning speech and bullying.

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If we heed the prophet's call to prepare the way, then will our Christ be seen drawing near. It's only as we heed and obey the prophet's voice that we can truly sing in honesty and honestly experience the reality of the words of Once in Royal David's City:

“He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and Lord of all. And his shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall, With the poor, oppressed, and lowly, Lived on earth our Savior holy. Jesus is our child-hoods pattern, Day by day like us He grew: He was little, weak and helpless, Tears and smiles like us He knew; And he feels for all our sadness, And He shares in all our gladness. And our eyes at last shall see Him, Through His own redeeming love, For that Child so dear and gentle Is our Lord in heaven above; And He leads His children on To the place where He is gone.”

May we in preparing the way of our Lord, by addressing the causes of fear, division and exile, find and know the love, hope, peace and joy that comes to us in Christ birth -- a birth that seeks to rule in the manger of our humble lives.

Christmas Flower Donations



The envelopes for the flower donations will be in the pews starting November 26th and will remain there until December 17th. If you would like to donate a Poinsettia for Christmas, please do so during this time frame to ensure inclusion in the Christmas Eve bulletin. We request that you print clearly on the envelope. Thank you for your cooperation.

Christmas Eve Services

We invite you to celebrate Christ's birth with us on Sunday December 24th at Brick Presbyterian Church. **The services will be held at 5:00pm and 8:00pm.** Our Christmas Eve Services are a wonderful way to worship the one born King of Kings. So, come and bring family and friends for a special time of worship.



The 5:00pm Christmas Eve Service is a more family oriented service. The 8:00 pm Christmas Eve Service will feature more traditional style music with our choir and soloist. Both services will feature lighting of candles at the end of the service.

There will be only *one* service on Sunday December 24th and Sunday December 31st. Both services are at 10:00. **There will be no Sunday School on either December 24th or 31st,** so please bring the children, having them remain in the Sanctuary as we enjoy *“Praising Our Lord”* and thanking him for the Gift of His Son.



A Day in Bethlehem

On Sunday, **December 3rd**, we will have **one** Communion Service at 10:00am. Following the Worship service, the Sunday School invites you to their special presentation entitled, "**A Day in Bethlehem**" which will be held in the Family Life Center.

Invite a Friend!

Soon Christmas will be upon us. Why not invite a friend to join you any time during the month to experience the joyful and worshipful experience.



Youth Group

The Youth Groups will be accepting donations on December 3rd for our "Earn Your Wings" project. For every donation made you can choose a Christmas Ornament from the Youth Group tree. We are hoping to increase the number of children we can provide Christmas gifts to 35!

We will continue to collect the coin jars which also support the "Earn Your Wings" project. The jars are located in the Narthex. When filled please return to the Christian Ed Office.

We thank the congregation for all your continued support throughout the year, without your support we would not be able provide the many needy children in our community with the gifts.

Little Hats, Big Hearts

Calling all knitters and crocheters with a big heart!

The American Heart Association and The Children's Heart Foundation are looking for volunteers who can create tiny red hats for babies born in February, designated as American Heart Month.

The deadline for these hats is December 20th. Go to:

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Affiliate/Little-Hats-Big-hearts_UCM_487734_SubHomePage.jsp for more information and patterns.

An Opportunity to Learn about and Grow through Grief

Brick Presbyterian Church is offering an opportunity to learn, share and grow together through grief as supportive community member. We will have a short time of presentation, an opportunity to participate and share through a time of lively discussion, encased in prayer at the beginning and end of each meeting. **These classes will be held Tuesdays from 3 – 4 p.m. at the church, starting on Tuesday, Dec. 5th.** For more information or to make your reservation please call the church office at 732-477-0676. All religious affiliations and non-affiliated persons are welcome. **Bring a friend!**



Fundraising Committee

Thank you to everyone for your support of our latest fundraising efforts: Christmas wreaths and poinsettia plant sale, holiday pie sale and our **4th annual craft and vendor fair.**

Pre-ordered Christmas **wreaths and poinsettia plants** will be available for pick-up on **Sunday, December 3**, and can be paid for at that time.

Lifetouch has added an extra day to our Photo Directory appointment calendar. If you haven't already done so, please make an appointment for **December 6, 7, 8 or 9**. You can make your own appointment online or our committee is available to make it with you. Please don't be left out of our new directory – it won't be complete without you!

The Fundraising Committee will be **wrapping gifts** for donations at **Boscov's** in Ocean County Mall in December. The store supplies all the wrap, tissue, boxes, and bows. We do need a little help so if you can spare even a small amount of time to join us, please see our sign-up sheet.

Remember with the approach of the cold weather **Stream Energy** can save you money on your energy bills and please use **AmazonSmile** for your Christmas shopping.



We Celebrate God's Love with Our Pledges

On November 19th, we dedicated our pledges of prayers and support during the service. As we consider the coming year, we remain committed to sharing God's love and carrying out the example set before us in the mission of Jesus Christ, recognizing that each one of us has a vital role to play.

If you were not able to join us, it's not too late to submit your pledge. You may return the pledge card via mail or by placing it in the offering plate at any church service. If you have already returned your pledge card, thank you for doing so!

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING
Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!
—2 Corinthians 9:15



The Christmas Joy Offering, a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s, celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the truly “indescribable gift,” as well as the gifts of church leaders—past, present, and future. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Through the work of the Christmas Joy Offering, we seek the living of this truth: that God’s generosity is the source, the support, and the outcome of our own. We give because God has freely given. We give to support the needs of our church leaders—past, present, and future—and God amplifies and extends those gifts through the ministry of those leaders. Their gifts of ministry extend and amplify as well, “overflowing” in thanksgiving to God, and the entire environment of generosity bears witness to God’s grace, a truly indescribable gift. A church worker in a time of need receives the generosity of the church in the same way they have been generous in their service to it—then turns around and makes a gift himself to help other church leaders in need. A student at Presbyterian Pan American School receives the generosity of the church and responds by dedicating his life to serving the church.

Quick Facts:

- *\$1.1 million of gifts from 2016 are being used to provide critical financial support and grants for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in their times of need.*
- *Income supplements from the Board of Pensions helped nearly 291 households, assisting retired church workers and surviving spouses with the means to provide for themselves.*
- *Housing supplements from the Board of Pensions helped more than 211 households remain in their homes, afford assisted living, or long-term care.*
- *Shared and Emergency Grants from the Board of Pensions helped more than 110 households facing times of great financial need or uncertainty due to unforeseen circumstances.*
- *\$1 million of gifts from 2016 are being used to provide education and leadership development skills at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges.*
- *Many of the students attending Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges are the first in their families to enroll in higher education.*

The work of the Offering is compounding generousities, with unending expansion and ceaseless increase. ***In gratitude to God for the gift of Jesus, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) invites congregations to join this celebration of God’s presence with us by supporting those in need of help and hope. On December 17th, the Christmas Joy Offering will be taken.*** Offering envelopes will be available in the pews on December 10th and in the bulletin on December 17th.

Please give generously to this life-changing Offering.

Greetings from the Deacons

Thank you very much to the congregation for all your generous contributions to our food pantry. We were able to provide more than **50 baskets** to folks in our community for their Thanksgiving celebrations. Now, we need to replenish our supplies for the upcoming Christmas holiday. Please continue to bring in your donations of non-perishable food items. All contributions are greatly appreciated and gratefully accepted.



Thank you for your recent donations to our Active Military Program during the month of November, in recognition of Veteran's Day. Items are accepted year-round, and especially during the holidays. Please continue to remember our active military with your generous donations. For a list of suggested items for donations, please visit the church web site and click on the Deacon's tab. ***Thank you and Happy Holidays to all!***



Leave a legacy of love. Make your faith in Jesus Christ a legacy of love by remembering Brick Presbyterian Church in your will.

ONLINE GIVING

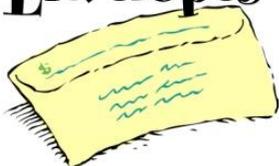
Did you know that you can give to the church electronically? Many people today opt to pay bills online, as it seems to make life a bit easier. You can send your offering to the church using your bank's online Bill Pay feature. While all banks are a little different, almost all should have a way where you can set up your donation to be sent to the church as you pay your other bills. Most banks will even allow you to setup a recurring payment, so you don't forget about it!

Typically, most online billpay systems will ask you for an account number (or identifying information), and the address of the recipient. For the account number or identifying information, be sure to put your name and offering number. This will insure that the church is aware of who donated. If you have any questions relating to paying online, please reach out to Vic Erickson

Even if your schedule doesn't permit you to be at church every Sunday, having the online giving option available gives us the opportunity to insure that the important work of the Church never stops.

OFFERING ENVELOPES

Offering Envelopes



The **2018 Offering Envelope Boxes** with your name on them will be in the Narthex starting **Mid-December** for you to pick up. If you are unable to pick up your box and wish to receive it, let me know. Also, if you do not find a box with your name on it and would like one, let me know. Please be sure to submit all your 2017 donations by 12/31/17 (the last Sunday in December), as I will be printing the 2017 statements after that date. Anything received after January 1st will be posted to your 2018 statement. If you have a change of address, be sure to contact me or the church office with your information. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. **Karen Ellis** <mailto:financialsecretary@brickpresby.com>
Thank you.

This year's confirmation class will begin with registration and a parent student meeting on **Sunday, January 7th**. Classes for the students will begin on **January 14th** between worship services. We are hoping to have youth Sunday this year on April 29th and to have the Confirmation Dinner and Session examination of our students on Saturday, May 19th with Confirmation taking place on Pentecost Sunday, May 20th. Please make note of these dates. *If you have questions or concerns about this year's confirmation class, please call Pastor Doug at the church office at 732-477-0676*

Confirmation Class



THANK YOU AGAIN TO OUR WALKERS AND TO OUR SPONSORS!

The total raised by Brick Presbyterian Church for the **CROP Hunger Walk** held on **October 15th** was **\$1,058**. According to Alan Reifenheiser, the Ocean County Crop Walk Hunger Coordinator, "That is by far the largest amount your church has ever raised." He added, "Among other things, Jesus told us to feed the hungry and with a great deal of help from people like you, we certainly did that with this year's CROP Hunger Walk. Thank you so much."

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND DONATIONS TO THE PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS SPECIAL OFFERING

From time to time, we close our services with the song, "Let There Be Peace on Earth." The **Peace and Global Witness Special Offering taken on October 8th** was an opportunity to express through our prayers and our financial donations that we believe working for peace and reconciliation is important and part of our life as Christians. *As of October 31st, donations in the amount of \$784 were received. \$588 has been forwarded to PCUSA and the balance of \$196 has been retained for a mission event/project to be sponsored by our church in 2018.*

Thank you for supporting this special offering.

YOUR GENEROSITY IN RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS HAS BEEN A TRUE BLESSING TO THOSE IN NEED OF HOPE AND HELP!



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

Over these past months, we regularly and frequently received word of a natural disaster. Thank you for your responses to these disasters. As of the beginning of November, a total of **184 hygiene kits** were donated by our congregation to Church World Service via the invitation of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

As of October 31st, October donations of \$635 were forwarded to PDA for Hurricane Irma relief, \$1,389 were forwarded to PDA for Hurricane Maria relief (\$225 from our congregation and \$1,164 from the Presbytery meeting); and \$100 were forwarded to PDA for Wildfire relief.

Thank you to all who contributed in the face of these tragedies. Your kindness brings the spark of hope to those in need.