

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. — John 3:16

Christmas has Changed

I still remember looking at the pile of presents under the tree grow as Christmas came closer and closer. I remember the empty stocking hanging there and just imagining what I would find in it on Christmas. I remember FINALLY getting to open all the carefully wrapped presents on Christmas morning. But what I don't remember is the look on my parents face as I opened the gifts into which they put so much love and for which they sacrificed. I started thinking that way because Christmas has changed for me. Instead of being so excited about what I'm going to get, my focus is different now. (Don't get me wrong, I still like presents – *hint, hint.*) Now I still get excited about Christmas presents, but it's an excitement for giving gifts to my kids. I love searching for and finding things I think they'll love. I can't wait until Christmas morning to see the look on their face as they tear off the paper and their eyes open wide, seeing another longed for treasure. Somehow, I've really come to enjoy giving, seeing the joy that it brings.

But I'm just giving toys. There's a Father who has given a Gift whose worth could never be measured. On that first Christmas we often focus on the Baby in the manger, Mary treasuring her new child, shepherds hearing from angels, and wise men seeking the newborn king. Those are all beautiful images of that amazing night. But what about the Giver of the Gift? I picture God in heaven so excited to see us find our Gift. God just waiting to see the looks on our faces as we see what we have been given. God waiting for us to look to Him with our eyes open wide, simply amazed that He would give us such a gift. God so thrilled that He sends angels to sing and a star to flame in the sky. God knowing what He's sacrificing, but still rejoicing that He can give us hope and salvation through His son. I ask you that as celebrate this year, do what I never thought to do as a child. As you rejoice over the Gift, remember to look at your Father to see the love and the joy He finds in giving His best for you.

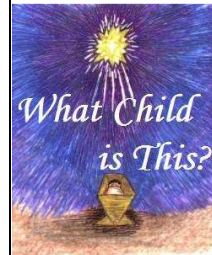
Merry Christmas!!!!

-Pastor Matt

December Highlights

- ★ *Lottie Moon Foreign Missions Week*
November 29-December 6
- ★ *Church Missions Dinner*
Sunday, December 6 @ 5pm
- ★ *Bibles and Blankets Gifts Due*
Sunday, December 20
- ★ *Christmas Musical Worship Celebration*
Sunday, December 20 @ 11am
- ★ *Candlelight Christmas Eve Celebration*
Thursday, December 24 @ 6pm
- ★ **MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!**
Friday, December 25
- ★ *New Year's Eve*
Thursday, December 31

Christmas Musical Celebration



Each year we celebrate and worship with special music for Christmas. This is always a great opportunity to invite a friend or neighbor with you to share the true gift of Christmas. Maybe this is the year when they accept the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ. Join us Sunday, **December 20th at 11 am** for our Christmas celebration.

In Our Prayers

Louise Barone	Diana Heald
Diane Benjack	Veronica Hutt
Bhutanese Refugees	Jim Lupole
Joshua Bostain	Virgil Manning
Charlotte Churchill	Lori Needham
Joanne Curtis	Candee Pascarella
Violet Draves	Steve Sallis
Sarah Griffin	Beverly VanSlyke
Michelle Wilkinson	

BIRTHDAYS

Say **Happy Birthday** to:

Amanda Cumberbatch - December 9
Lynda Evans - December 9
Lois Guckert - December 9
Linda Sallis - December 17
Chris Lupole - December 18
Sarah Bradstreet - December 26
Jeremy Reed - December 30
Glenn Igleheart - December 30

ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulate:

Paul and Lenore Dudzick - December 18
Doug and Paula Dodd - December 21
Lance and Sarah Bradstreet - December 22
Steve and Linda Sallis - December 23

Christmas Eve Celebration

Please join us for our Candlelight Christmas Eve celebration as we stop, reflect, and rejoice in what God has done for us in sending His Son. The celebration is on

Thursday, December 24th
@ 6pm. We'll see you there!!!



Bibles & BLANKETS for Christmas

Wondering how you can make a difference in someone's life this Christmas?

Here's your chance.

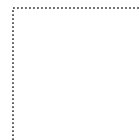
Many of the Bhutanese refugees are arriving in Syracuse with no cold weather clothing. You know what Syracuse winters are like and wouldn't want to face them without blankets, socks, winter hats, gloves, and scarves. Let's help our new neighbors stay warm by donating these winter items. Keeping them warm is not all you can do. You can also have an eternal impact. Many of the refugees are not literate and most are not Christian. With your help, we are providing audio bibles so that seekers and new believers can hear and grow in the word of God. Ten dollars will sponsor the New Testament on CD and twenty dollars will provide a personal Bible player that can be taken anywhere. For more information, contact the church office at 458-5824.



Let's help warm bodies and hearts with the Gospel this Christmas.



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If you know of someone who would like to receive this newsletter or if you wish to be removed from this mailing list, please email your request to pastormatt@bellewoodchurch.com.