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# THE HERALD

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*Listening to God's Heart From the Heart of the City*

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Waiting can be difficult, especially as we are anticipating the arrival of Christmas. However, we are called to wait during this season of advent. Look inside to find stories of hope, as well as ways to encourage others in hopeful waiting...

## From the Pastor's Desk

Many of you know that Eema and Patience moved with their mother to Idaho at the end of June, as their mother took a new position at a university there. It has been long time since I've seen my children. They will be here December 16th through December 29th. I am excited to see them; I am nervous about seeing them. Mostly, though, there are days that I can't wait. It's been almost six months, and I just can't seem to contain my excitement. I don't want to wait until then – but I must.

Waiting is a difficulty for many of us. In an age when text messages, Instagram, or Snapchat have come to dominate our lives, everything happens instantaneously. We're almost conditioned to want things, and want them now. We wait with anxiety while we listen for the sound of the phone with pathology results. We want things now!

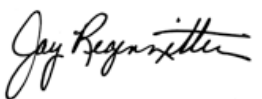
And yet, the church has an opportunity to speak into this instantaneous culture. We've been bombarded with stores telling us, even before Halloween, that Christmas was here. We have a culture, all around us, that says "Don't wait! Come and make cookies, fudge, and other delicious treats. Come celebrate with Santa and reindeer and angels and stars and trees and....fit in one more holiday party. We'll even celebrate your Jesus. But come on, it's time to do it now!" Everything spins and swirls, and kids come home for meals...before we know it, we've missed what this holiday (holy-day) means.

That's why the church – our church – encourages us to wait with hope. The business that our culture forces upon us (if we choose to accept it) is stopped in its tracks by the season of Advent, where we explore Scriptures and hymns of prophets who told of a Savior who would come and clear the clutter and chaos from our lives. Somehow, we need some clutter and some chaos stripped away, so that we might find hope once again.

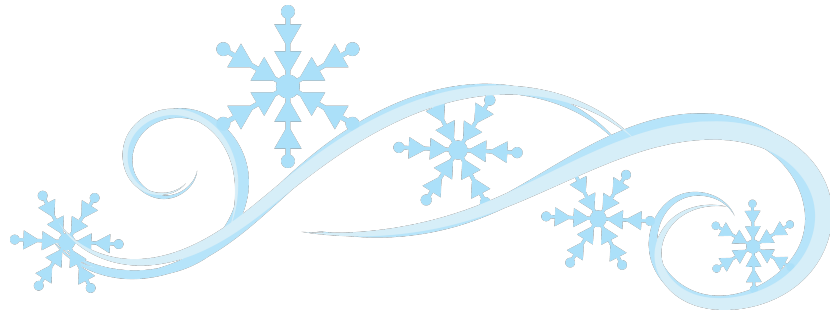
And so, we wait. We watch. We hope. Because, even if the world wants Christmas to come, the church says "No, not yet." Let's pause. Let's get ready for a household of children. Let's make sure our hearts have room for the Christ Child. Then, we'll find that sweet release as we join in worship on Christmas Eve, and we'll know that the wait was worth it, for what we most deeply desired – the baby Jesus – has come once again.

Watch and wait with me – in sure and certain hope. We will have much to celebrate!

Grace and peace,



Pastor Jay



## **Caring For Those Who Wait... That We Might Give Hope**

Colder temperatures have fallen on us, and we are beginning to hear stories from our NOW households about a lack of heat. While we can't bring fuel to each person who needs it, we can provide some amount of warmth. For a child who waits, not for the eager anticipation of a toy, but for the opportunity to be warm, we can meet that need. We want to encourage you to provide a set of mittens/gloves, a hat, and a scarf for our NOW kids. A tree is available in the education building entryway. If you would place your offerings on or under it by December 13, we will distribute them to the kids in their bags on December 16. Our goal will be 120 sets. Thank you for offering the hope of warmth to those who wait with great anticipation!

## **Hope for Those Who Hunger**

The Ark of the Covenant Soup Kitchen provides a great deal of hope to those in our community who are hungry. They regularly provide a home-cooked meal two Thursdays each month. Many of those meals are carry-out meals, taken to those who are shut-in and unable to get out for food. As a means of providing hope for them, we are looking to provide the soup kitchen with #10 (commercial sized) cans of fruit and vegetables this month. You can pick up those in the commercial section at Wal-Mart, your local grocery store, Sam's Club, or Gordon Food Service. Please place your donations under the NOW tree in the entryway.

## **Standing (and Singing) with Those Who Wait**

On December 6, youth (and anyone else interested) will board the church bus and head to our local assisted living and nursing home facilities to sing Christmas carols and visit with residents. Residents, some of whom have few visitors, appreciate the opportunity to interact with young people. If you're interested, please meet at the church that day at 6:00 pm. We will carol until 7:30 pm, then return back to the church for cookies and hot chocolate.

## Looking Forward With Hope

2015 has been, so far and for lack of words appropriate for a church newsletter, a year of challenges. Everyone has had challenges this year but I can only describe mine. It starts with a sore throat, a visit to the doctor and a diagnosis of leukemia. 10 months, 70 days in the hospital and 50 days of chemotherapy and I am now in remission.

As I reflect on my experience I am surprised how many thoughts and conversations included the “I hope...” Sometimes the use was about the past. (“I hope my kids are ready for the future.”) Often they were vain. (“I hope my behind is not hanging out of this gown.”) Mostly they were about the future. (“I hope my doctors know what they are doing.” “I hope I get the chance to do the things I have not taken the time to do.” “I hope I don’t die.”)

Throughout it all I found a lot of comfort in a common and simple prayer commonly referred to as the Serenity Prayer. Most of us know the short version –

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;  
 Courage to change the things I can;  
 And the wisdom to know the difference.

It worked great for me – I have cancer (can’t change that), I can get better (that can change), and I know those two things are at the opposite ends of my life for now.

It wasn’t until I discovered the rest of the Serenity Prayer that I fully understood hope.

Living one day at a time;  
 Enjoying one moment at a time;  
 Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
 Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;  
 Trusting that He will make all things right as I surrender to His Will,  
 That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy  
 With Him Forever in the next.

There sure is a lot more to the story! There was a great deal there for me. It didn’t matter that I was sick – today is another day to be lived and enjoyed. Everyone has a tough time. Mine was illness – I have to deal with it and move on. Finally, He is in charge. No matter what burden - Hope is what causes me to appreciate today and look forward to tomorrow.

- Jay Holtzhouser



## Trapped in My Body

I've often heard "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

I had an opportunity to test this old adage in February 1987. That was the year I contracted Gullain-Barre Syndrome. Also known as French Polio. From the onset of symptoms to total paralysis took less than 2 days.

My official diagnosis came after a spinal tap at the I.U. Medical Center in Indianapolis. I didn't know for sure what lay ahead for me but having some knowledge of the Syndrome I knew I had a chance for recovery. I also knew that recovery was a long way off.

GBS only affects the peripheral nerves so the central nervous system is totally functional. The pain associated with this syndrome is constant and all consuming. I was not given narcotic pain medication since it would depressed my already compromised breathing. I had to endure the pain.

The long days and nights of waiting stretched into weeks.

My family stayed with me until the first sign that I had begun to turn around. I was able to move my big toe after about 3 weeks. Small signs of improvement followed each day. The pain had subsided by then and I was able to see hope. The waiting continued however. It would be months and lots of physical therapy before I could walk on my own.

The constant prayers of friends and family as well as my own kept me in a peaceful state. I have lots of memories of the many kindnesses that I enjoyed. I especially remember Joy Anderson coming to visit with a delicious loaf of friendship bread.

I don't know why I had to experience this horrendous illness. What I do know is that it changed my life. I approach every situation with the attitude of a servant.

God gave me a second chance and I strive to make every day count.

- Thelma Gifford

## Youth Ministry

Youth will be going caroling on Sunday, December 6, beginning at 6:00 pm. We will be done by 8:00 pm.

On Sunday, December 20, the youth will be having a progressive dinner. We will begin at 5:30 pm at the Veenstra home (602 N. Cross) for appetizers. We will be at the Oxford home (9341 E. 1050th Ave.) at 6:30 pm for dinner, and we will end at the parsonage (804 Scott Drive) for dessert at 7:45 pm. Please bring "White Elephant" gift (a funny gift, gag gift, or something you'd like to re-gift) to exchange at the parsonage. We will be done by 8:30 pm. Please let the church office know if you plan to come by December 18, so that host homes can have food prepared.

The annual youth ski trip (weather permitting, with snow on the ground) is scheduled for Monday, January 4 at Paoli Peaks. Please let the church office know if you plan to attend by December 30, so that transportation can be arranged.

## Prayer Requests

Charlie Clark; Donita Holmes; Jerry Phillippe; Vicki Lewis; Bernie Limper; Margie Moore McNamara; Sam Mitchell; Taya Harmon; Jim Currie; Greta Rich; Eleanor Laswell; Debbie Doom; Peg, John, Jeremy, and Greg Markello; Ruth Rice; Nora Busby; Ashley Reed; Tom Carrow, Carolyn Enlow Nickum; Jay Holtzhouser; Ken Martin; Jennifer Null; Tom Willey; Carol Wolf; Pete Stubbs, Bea Brinkman; Brenda Graham; Wilma Johnson, Bev and Elmer Harness; Charlie Young; Betty Boyd Hippler; Neema Mutayaba, Kay Bonnell; Heather Johnson; Lynn Ewin; Richard Youngs

If you have any prayer requests, please contact Shirley Treadway at [gwtsea@hotmail.com](mailto:gwtsea@hotmail.com), so that the request can be shared with the prayer chain.

## Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve services will be December 24 at 4:00 or 7:00 pm. The two services will be identical, and will offer carols, candlelight, and communion. If you are willing to usher or greet at those services, please contact the church office.

Also, a word from the worship committee about poinsettias. This year, we have decided to move in a missional direction for our special flower Sundays. You may still make a donation of \$12.50 (the cost of a poinsettia) in honor or memory of a loved one. However, rather than having individual poinsettias, we will have two large representative poinsettias in the sanctuary for Christmas Eve and the Christmas season. In future years, all funds collected beyond the cost of these two poinsettias will go toward a local mission project; this year, the worship committee would like to put those extra funds toward additional decorations for the sanctuary. Order forms will be in December bulletins. Thank you for helping us expand our reach and celebration to offer hope to others.



## December Birthdays

12/5 Joy Anderson, Kevin Black  
 12/7 Tyler Devonshire  
 12/9 Kate Imhoff, Sandra Hale  
 12/11 Stacie McMillan, Wesley Parker, Lucas Taylor  
 12/12 Nancy Brigham  
 12/15 Jim Wallace  
 12/16 David Null, Grant Oxford, Katie Pippin, Mary Etta Whitmer, Andrew Hays  
 12/18 Julia Albin  
 12/19 Bonnie Wright  
 12/23 Jean Decker, Nita Bradbury  
 12/24 Ken Mattsey  
 12/25 Susan Inboden  
 12/26 Suzanne Wallace  
 12/28 Kay Albin, Nancy McCracken, Kristy Veenstra  
 12/30 Kirtina Carter, Elliott Veenstra  
 12/31 Rita Diel, Joyce Maurer

## December Anniversaries

12/9 Steve & Patty Lycan  
 12/18 Jon & Joy Anderson  
 12/22 Don & Alice Taylor  
 12/23 Dave & Sharon Freeland  
 Amy & Mark DeDoming  
 12/28 Mike & Mary Jane Parker

## Young Adult Gathering

Tyler and Kristy Veenstra have graciously offered to open their home for the next young adult gathering on Wednesday, December 2, at 6:30 pm. Please bring a snack/dish or beverage to share.


## FCA

We will be hosting the Fellowship of Christian Athletes on December 16th. We are in need of food and drinks for roughly 100 students. The sign up sheet will be located at the welcome center.

## Offering

December 27th is the last day we can accept contributions for 2015. After that, it will be deposited towards 2016. If you want it to count for 2015, give by the 27th! Thanks!

December 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 <b>6:00 pm</b> Disciple II	2 <b>3:00 pm</b> Kids' Club <b>5:00 pm</b> Trustees <b>6:30 pm</b> Finance <b>6:30 pm</b> Foundation	3 <b>9:30 am</b> Disciple II <b>4:30 pm</b> NOW bagging <b>6:00 pm</b> Jail Ministry <b>7:00 pm</b> Handbell choir	4	5
6 <b>8 am</b> Handbells <b>9:00 am</b> Worship <b>10:15 am</b> Sunday School <b>11 am</b> Chancel Choir <b>2-4 pm</b> Crawford County Tour of Homes <b>6:00 pm</b> Youth Christmas Caroling	7	8 <b>6:00 pm</b> Disciple II	9 <b>3:00 pm</b> Kids' Club	10 <b>9:30 am</b> Disciple II <b>4:00 pm</b> NOW bagging <b>6:00 pm</b> Jail Ministry <b>6:00 pm</b> Church Council <b>7:00 pm</b> Handbell choir	11	12
13 <b>8 &amp; 11 am</b> Chancel Choir <b>9:00 am</b> Worship <b>10:15 am</b> Sunday School <b>2:30 pm</b> Heritage Health Service <b>4:45 pm</b> Dinner for the LTC Concert <b>6:00 pm</b> LTC Holiday Concert	14	15 <b>6:00 pm</b> Disciple II	16 <b>3:00 pm</b> Kids' Club <b>4:30 pm</b> NOW Bagging <b>7:30 pm</b> FCA in Asbury	17 <b>9:30 am</b> Disciple II <b>6:00 pm</b> Jail Ministry <b>7:00 pm</b> Handbell choir	18	19
20 <b>8 &amp; 11 am</b> Chancel Choir <b>8:40 am</b> Kids' Club warm up <b>9:00 am</b> Worship <b>10:15 am</b> Sunday School <b>5:00 pm</b> Youth Progressive Dinner & Christmas Party	21	22	23	24 <b>Office open from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm</b>  <b>Christmas Eve Services at 4 pm and 7 pm</b>	25 <b>Merry Christmas!</b>  <b>Office Closed</b>	26
27 <b>No Choir Rehearsals</b>  <b>9:00 am</b> Worship <b>10:15 am</b> Sunday School	28	29	30	31 <b>New Year's Eve Office Closed</b>		

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