

Dear Church Family,

Back in November our Session, the board of elders who seek to lead the spiritual life of Clen-Moore, had an interesting discussion about Christmas. As we ruminated over worship plans (because Christmas Day is Sunday morning this year), we began to discuss the origins of the celebration itself. We pondered whether celebrating Christmas Eve has always been the prominent event or if the commercialization of the holiday crept into Christmas Day celebrations of the past. Others wondered about the way the early church historically recognized the birth of Christ, noting that some denominations or traditions do not emphasize Christmas the way many mainline churches do. This also led to the reality that it is HIGHLY unlikely that Jesus was born on December 25th based on context clues found within the birth narratives.

Given all of this, how did one of the highest holidays on the Christian calendar end up being celebrated at a time that we know is not historically accurate? The answer lies not in Biblical history, and instead in a broad theology of light and darkness. If you read scripture as a unit, this is a theme that repeats and appears everywhere. From the gospels we know that Jesus is the light of the world and that we are to let our light shine before others. But the expectation that a Messiah would come is as old as the Old Testament. Prophets made God-inspired proclamations like what we find in **Isaiah 60:1-2**, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you." The celebration of Christmas falls near the end of December, because of the contrast of darkness and light. In the middle of summer, light is abundant, and we can spend a great deal of time outside in natural radiance. This is not the case during the winter months. Maybe you or someone you know suffers from seasonal depression. Even if you do not, a dark, gloomy day is more likely to negatively impact your mood than a bright sunny one. We celebrate Christmas this time of year because it is when the tide of darkness made light shifts. The daylight begins to get longer. Days (eventually) get warmer. Hope is on the horizon.

In a deeper metaphorical sense, the world is full of darkness that we could otherwise name sin, destruction, or brokenness. Sometimes these problems run so deep we feel as though we will never overcome them, like the thick smoke and smog that used to engulf industrial cities like Pittsburgh, where day often appeared like night. But as the prophet Isaiah and others foretold, a day would come when the glory of the Lord would appear over us. We await in hope for the light of Christ to continue to shine on the world, as certainly as the sun will rise again tomorrow. Even when we cannot see it clearly for ourselves, we gather in these dark days to shine the light to one another, and then to the rest of the world. Our salvation, our hero is born, and we celebrate at Christmas, pushing back against the darkness with the light of Christ beaming all around us. The date may be "historically" inaccurate, but the meaning is sure: Jesus is the light of the world. Come and bask in it!

May your Christmas be both merry AND bright!
Aaron and Michael



Health Note:

Tips to Destress the Holiday Season:

"Many people find that the holidays bring as much stress as they do joy! Here are some ideas to help us cope, as taken from an article by Dr. Neda Gould, clinical psychologist at John's Hopkins School of Medicine:

1. Accept Imperfections—we can't do everything, be realistic and identify the activities that truly mean something to you, and block out the time for them.
2. Evaluate Traditions—if a family member is ill or unable to be with you this year, try to shape new traditions, rather than mourning those changes.
3. Respond with kindness—keep in mind that this time of year is very difficult for someone who is alone. Extend an act of kindness to someone you know in that situation.
4. Take Care of Yourself—commit to better sleep (at least 6 hours per night), at least 30 minutes of exercise daily, and eat better (don't skip breakfast, eat more fruits and vegetables, and keep your routine as normal as possible.)
5. Grieve/Forgive—if you are sad about a situation, allow yourself to share those feelings with others, not just "putting on a happy face." This allows you to heal."

Scripture: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!" (Luke 2:14)

Nurturing Generosity

For many years Clen-Moore has encouraged members to make an annual financial commitment via a pledge card. The intent was to help with the budgeting process, as well as to assist members in making a conscience effort to giving financially. Over the past few years, we have experienced a decline in pledging and have decided to forego this request for 2023. In exchange, throughout the year we are going to nurture generosity. The Clen-Moore church family has always been generous, not only financially, but with their time, prayers and abilities. In 2023, let's all look for, share and applaud generosity in all of its forms. And as we are generous and nurture generosity, may God receive all the glory and praise!

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, but whoever sows generously will also reap generously."
2 Corinthians 9:6



C.2G.S.—7th-12th grade Sunday School will continue with our Bible study on the Old Testament Book of Esther. Upon completion of this, we will do some fun things with Advent and Christmas devotionals.

FlipSide—Sunday, December 18th—We will meet after worship to have lunch and prepare to go out Christmas Caroling to some of our church family members.

~Over Christmas break we will make up for our Turkey Bowling event and Nerf War with a lock-in on day TBD.



Deadline for January Messenger is December 21st.

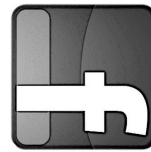
DAILY BIBLE READINGS

DECEMBER 2022

- 1 III John
- 2 Psalm 1
- 3 Psalm 2
- 4 Psalm 3
- 5 Psalm 4
- 6 Psalm 5
- 7 Psalm 6
- 8 Psalm 7
- 9 Psalm 8
- 10 Psalm 9
- 11 Joel 1.1-20
- 12 Joel 2.1-17
- 13 Joel 2.18-32
- 14 Joel 3.1-21
- 15 Isaiah 51.1-23
- 16 Isaiah 52.1-15
- 17 Isaiah 53.1-12
- 18 Isaiah 54.1-17
- 19 Isaiah 55.1-13
- 20 Malachi 1.1-14
- 21 Malachi 2.1-17
- 22 Malachi 3.1-15
- 23 Malachi 3.16 - 4.6
- 24 Luke 2.1-20 Christmas
- 25 Luke 2.21-40
- 26 Psalm 45
- 27 I John 1.1-10
- 28 I John 2.1-29
- 29 I John 3.1-24
- 30 I John 4.1-21
- 31 I John 5.1-21



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Merry Christmas

Come and celebrate the birth of our Lord Savior, Jesus Christ, at Clen-Moore Church's Christmas Eve Candle-lit service on **Saturday, December 24, at 6:00 PM**. Let your heart's rejoice at the birth of Christ the Savior!

Worship on **Sunday, December 25th**, will be at 10:30 AM. Feel free to dress casual and kids are welcome to come in their favorite Christmas pajamas. Sunday School will be cancelled for Christmas Day and New Year's Day.



We will be taking down Christmas decorations on **Sunday, January 1st**, following worship services, and are in need of volunteers to help. There will be light refreshments provided.



Stewardship & Finance



Stewardship & Finance Offering Envelopes will be available for pick-up in the Narthex on **December 18, 2022**. Please note that all 2023 contributions must be received or postmarked by **December 31, 2022**. Anything received after that date will be considered a 2022 donation. Thank you for your generosity to the mission and ministry of Clen-Moore Presbyterian Church.



Children and Youth Christmas Musical: "A Christmas Yarn" Sunday, December 4th



Clen-Moore kids and a team of adult leaders have worked hard for the last few months to help us celebrate the Christmas Season with yet another joyful, heart warming musical.

LittleBIGstuffmusic summarizes this musical in this way, "At Unique Gifts from Luxurious Yarns (U.G.L.Y.), ugly is beautiful! At the factory of the world's leading supplier of ugly Christmas sweaters, founder Sam Ebenezer pulls all the strings to make sure no stitch is dropped. With a huge order looming to get out the day before Christmas, the team of Bob Cratchit ("that's pronounced Crochet"), Tiny Tom and others weave together a plan of attack, while Sam encounters three mysterious visitors who not only help overcome some ugly obstacles, but bring the beautiful good news of Christmas! With apologies to a well-loved Christmas Carol, don your ugliest Christmas sweater, and have a dickens of a good time with A Christmas Yarn!"

So, put on our ugly Christmas sweater and please come and join us on Sunday, December 4 during our worship service as the kids use their God-given gifts of song and stage to remind us again of the true meaning of this blessed time of year.



A NOTE FROM THE OFFICE:

Annual committee reports are due to the church office no later than **January 10, 2023**. Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated!



Communion will be served on the following date:

December 11th