

News From The Rock

December 2021

Solid Rock United Methodist Church • Warren, Indiana

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Christmas Eve Service

This year we will be doing something different for Christmas Eve. We will be combining the two services into one. The service will be at 9:00 p.m. and will be filled with Christmas hymns and a message. As always this service will close with the singing of Silent Night and the lighting of individual candles throughout the sanctuary. Please come join us as we celebrate the anticipated arrival of the Christ Child on Christmas morning.



Christmas Eve
CANDLELIGHT
SERVICE

Christmas Program

The children of the church will present a Christmas program on Sunday morning, December 19, during the worship service. Practice for the program will be held on Saturday, December 18, at 10:00 a.m.

Please contact Marie DeWeese or the church office for more information.



Solid Rock Youth

I would like to take this opportunity to invite the youth of the church to join us on Sunday nights from 6:00-7:30. At the moment we are working our way through the Rob Bell *Nooma* series. This is a series of short films touching on issues we deal with on a daily basis. After the video there will be time to discuss how that particular video

speaks to each one of you. And yes there is also time built in for games and snacks.

Every second Sunday we are offering up a movie night. The entire church family is invited to join us.

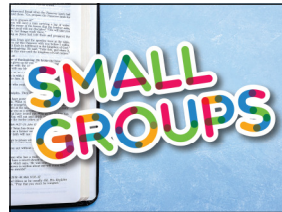
Pastor Paul

Children's Sunday school

Teachers are still needed for the children's Sunday school class (ages 4 through 4th grade). Prepared lesson plans are provided. Class helper volunteers are also appreciated. Contact Marie DeWeese or the church office.

Small groups to restart in February

It's been a long couple of years. We know that many of you have been missing the opportunity to be a part of our Small Group Ministry. We are planning on restarting small groups in February of 2022. If you are interested in leading one of these groups, please contact Pastor Paul or Gary Walter. If you are interested in being a part of one of the groups, watch for sign-up opportunities at the beginning of the new year.



Sound operator needed

Solid Rock is seeking a volunteer to operate the church sound system effective the beginning of 2022. Training will be provided. Anyone with interest or questions should contact Pastor Paul.



November 28th begins the season of Advent. During this time we journey to the manger where we experience God's presence become flesh and dwelling among us. God's good news takes human form to tell us we are not left alone in this life.

Emanuel, God with us, comes to us. It is a life-changing story that we enter at this time of year.

This year, I wonder how we will get there. It seems now with the branding of Christmas that there are many other paths to Christmas Day. For some, Christmas is now about what sits under the tree after searching at length for presents we may or may not need. Encountering God's life-transforming presence seems less interesting if it is even remembered as the story of this season.

The basic definition of Advent means the coming or arrival of a notable person, thing or event. As Christians, we know how our familiar story ends (or begins) with God arriving through poor, unknown parents in a back alley of a small city. In a poem unrelated to Advent, yet very pertinent, T.S. Eliot speaks about being in a familiar place and yet exploring it until we arrive at the same place and know it in new ways. He writes,

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started*

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*Our Vision: Sharing and experiencing the life-giving message of Jesus,
to restore wholeness and build an intentional community of hope, relationship, and purpose for everyone.*

Administrative Council

The Solid Rock Administrative Council met on November 16, 2021. Prayer requests were shared, and Pastor Paul provided devotions and opened with prayer.

The Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee reported that they are requesting the reappointment of Pastor Paul Burris for another year.

The trustees reported that the new office sign has been installed.

The Education Committee reported that the Fall 2021 Kids Club is off to a good start. The renewed children's Sunday school is also doing well, with consistent attendance since the restart. The youth group is averaging 4-5 in attendance at each meeting.

The Witness Committee reported that

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Solid Rock United Methodist Church

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Warren, Indiana 46792

www.solidrockumc.com

Worship Schedule

Sunday School at 9:00
Worship at 10:00
at 485 Bennett Drive, Warren
Church Phone: 375-3871

Church Office

Office Phone: 375-3873

Monday - Thursday
9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Closed Friday

Pastor: Rev. Paul Burris

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News deadline for the January
newsletter: December 19

the children will present a Christmas program during worship on December 19. A candlelight Christmas Eve service will be held on December 24 at 9:00 p.m.

The next meeting will be January 18, 2022.

October Financial Update

General Fund Receipts\$15,486
General Fund Expenses.....\$18,281

Bible Study

Just a reminder that even though your daily/weekly schedule will fill quickly with holiday activities, now is the time to schedule in some time with our Lord. "Feasting



on the Word" Bible studies will still meet in the church kitchen at 7:00 p.m. each Monday in December

(that includes December 27)! We will continue in the Advent season readings and work toward the New Year. Please note the following schedule for your reading and participation.

- December 6: Luke 3:15-22 (Remember Your Baptism); Joe Haney, leader
- December 13: Luke 1:39-45 (Coping in a Fallen World); Jorita Banter, leader
- December 20: Matthew 2:1-12 (Standing at a Crossroad); Ann Spahr, leader
- December 27: John 1:1-18 (The Joy of Restoration); Joe Haney, leader

When Jesus invited us to "take his yoke upon yourself; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light," I believe that comment is a means to make our Christmas Season a bit more joyful. Come walk with the Lord!

Joe Haney, Coordinator

Small Package

Our salvation comes from something small, tender, and vulnerable, something hardly noticeable. God, who is the Creator of the Universe, comes to us in smallness, weakness, and hiddenness. I find this a hopeful message. Somehow, I keep expecting loud and impressive events to convince me and others of God's saving power; but over and over again I am reminded that spectacles, power plays, and big events are the ways of the world. Our temptation is to

be distracted by them and made blind to the "shoot that shall sprout from the stump" [Isa. 11:1].

—Henri J. Nouwen

If only ...

There are many of you ... who think to yourselves: "If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!"



Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time, you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. ... Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself.

—Martin Luther

Joy amid suffering

Only Matthew records the holy family's "flight into Egypt," linking Advent with Lent and Christmas with Good Friday. In an article titled "Joy to the World/Pain in the



World," James I. Cook expresses gratitude that Matthew documents the slaughter of the

innocents: "I turn to it again and again, when someone I know loses a loved one at the height of the Christmas season. It helps me — and I hope it helps them — to remember that theirs are not the first tears to fall on Christmas; to recall that there has never been a Christmas of pure peace and happiness; [to recognize] that 'joy to the world' has always been sung to the accompaniment of much 'pain in the world.'"

—adapted from *Homiletics*

- "God goes to those who have time to hear him — and so on this cloudless night he went to simple shepherds."
—Max Lucado
- "All the Christmas presents in the world are worth nothing without the presence of Christ."
—David Jeremiah
- "Invisible in his own nature, [God] became visible in ours. Beyond our grasp, he chose to come within our grasp."
—Leo the Great

(Continued from page 1)

And know the place for the first time.

—T.S. Eliot

We know the destination of Christmas, but what path will we take in our travels through Advent to the manger and Christmas Day? Jesus' own words in his Sermon on the Mount can be helpful: seek and we will find. We find God's way in the midst of searching for it. We find God's dream for us when we follow the Way of hope, peace, joy and love.

What if we take that path, a path less traveled this season? Let's search for the manger using God's Way of hope, peace, joy and love as if they are points on a compass and we are seeking ways to live authentic and faithful lives to a story that has transformed us and wants to do so again. What might we see in an otherwise routine and annual story? What unexpected turns will we take? What stops will we make along the way?

I'm looking forward to our journey together and what God will reveal to us along the way and on Christmas Day. I'm looking forward to searching for God's Way this Advent and the ways God will make us living examples of God's presence in the world.

Traveling Mercies.

See You Sunday,
Pastor Paul



solidrockumc.com



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The Moment You Never Noticed In A Charlie Brown Christmas: Just Drop The Blanket

A Charlie Brown Christmas debuted on national prime time television on December 9, 1965. After 56 years, the beloved animated show is a classic and watching it has become a tradition for many families.

There's one moment in this show that went seemingly unnoticed for many years.

In a world where the latest greatest technology is outdated in a matter of months, and social media trends come and go in a matter of days, 56 years of anything

becomes quite meaningful. I am a fan of all things nostalgic and all things Christmas, and so when the two are combined I am hooked, and the Charlie Brown Christmas special falls squarely into that category.

A School Play

I was in the first grade back when they still performed Christmas pageants in schools (less than 50 years, but still a very long time ago), and our class performed a version of the Charlie Brown Christmas. Since I was kind of a bookworm and already had a blue blanket, I was chosen to play the part of Linus. As Linus, I memorized Luke 2:8-14, and that Scripture has been hidden in my heart ever since.

But while working so diligently to learn those lines, there is one important thing I didn't notice then. And didn't notice until now. Right in the middle of speaking, Linus drops the blanket.

Why It's Important

Charlie Brown is best known for his uniquely striped shirt, and Linus is most



associated with his ever-present security blanket. Throughout the story of Peanuts, Lucy, Snoopy, Sally and others all work to

no avail to separate Linus from his blanket.

And even though his security blanket remains a major source of ridicule for the otherwise mature and thoughtful Linus, he simply refuses to give it up. Until this moment. When he simply drops it.

In that climactic scene when Linus shares "what Christmas is all about," he drops his security blanket. And I am now convinced that this is intentional. Most telling is the specific moment he drops it: when he utters the words, "fear not."

Looking at it now, it is pretty clear what Charles Schultz was saying, and it's so simple it's brilliant.

Set Free

The birth of Jesus separates us from our fears.

The birth of Jesus frees us from the habits we are unable (or unwilling) to break ourselves.

The birth of Jesus allows us to simply drop the false security we have been grasping so tightly, and learn to trust and cling to Him instead. The world can be a scary place. And most of us find ourselves grasping to something temporal for security, whatever that thing may be. Essentially, 2021 is a world in which it is very difficult for us to "fear not."

But in the midst of fear and insecurity,

this simple cartoon image from 1965 continues to live on as an inspiration for us to seek true peace and true security in the one place it has always been and can always still be found.

—Jason Soroski

A shoot brings life

Last year, Israeli scientists harvested dates from seeds that had been dormant about 2,000 years. The seeds, recovered during archaeological digs, were nurtured in incubators and several thrived. One (named Methuselah!) became a 10-foot-tall palm tree.

Horticulturists joked about marketing "dates that Jesus ate," but there's another scriptural connection. Isaiah 11, a traditional Advent reading, prophesies: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (verse 1, NRSV). Jesus is the tender shoot that emerged from the humble peasant origins of Jesse, father of King David.

From a dynasty that went dormant due to Israel's sins sprouted a mighty tree, who will someday usher in a reign of peace (see verses 6-7).

Some people and churches celebrate Christmas with a Jesse Tree, remembering how God sent Jesus to sprout life out of death and bring new hope and joy to the world.

—adapted from *The Wired Word*



The example of Mary

"We must look to Mary's example to know how to deal with the glorious impossibilities of God," writes Calvin Miller in *The Christ of Christmas*. "Look how she turned the world upside down by making one simple statement."

Jesus surely could have come to earth without Mary's aid. But God seems to prefer partnering with people to accomplish miracles such as salvation and healing. So God chooses Mary to carry the Savior. Later, Jesus often declares people's own faith crucial to their healing. And today, God works justice through us, not apart from us.

God doesn't force us into collaboration. Yet, notes Miller, "God needs only a little of our agreement in order to work mighty wonders." Like Mary's humble assent: "I am the Lord's servant. ... May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38, NIV). And like yours — for whatever partnership God invites you into. God will do the heavy lifting, for certain, but he hopes you'll say yes.

Strange Christmas traditions

The Christmas spider

In addition to the usual decorations, Ukrainian Christmas trees are also adorned with an artificial spider and web. Its origins lie in the tale of a poor woman who couldn't afford to decorate her tree. When she awoke on Christmas morning, she discovered a spider had covered it in a wonderful sparkling web.

KFC Christmas Bargain Buckets

Up until the 1970s, those in Japan struggled to find a whole turkey during the festive season – that's when KFC stepped in with an irresistible campaign. Now a Christmas tradition, the chain suggests customers in the country place orders up to two months in advance.

Night of the Radishes

Every December, thousands of residents in Oaxaca, Mexico, flock to the main plaza to see an exhibition of sculptures – including characters from the nativity – carved from radishes. Yes, radishes.

—goodhousekeeping.com

Christmas Prayer of Praise

Lord God, heavenly Father, we give thanks that in your great mercy and compassion you allowed your dear Son to become incarnate and through him redeemed us from sin and eternal death. Enlighten our hearts by your Holy Spirit that we may always be thankful for such grace and be comforted in all trouble and temptation, and at last, obtain eternal salvation; through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.



—crosswalk.com

