



December

A Note from the Pastor

I write this after hearing of 8,000 cases and the governor's new orders. This news crushed me. I appreciate the concern and caution. I also know the longing and loss. This Thanksgiving-Christmas season has always been one of gathering, celebration, and catching up. Even with the constant cancellations, I had held out hope. Now, I find myself crying out to God and even wallowing in grief over the mounting losses. I am glad we are taking measures to physically distance, but I miss seeing my church family all together. The thought of Christmas without...Christmas without...and it hit me. Christmas. The advent of Jesus in the flesh can never be a without – it is a permanent God with us.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

This light is much needed. These past few weeks have been heavy. Coronavirus cases increasing to where all now have personal stories to grieve. An election exhibiting some of the worst parts of American dialogue/vitriol. I find myself yearning for a time beyond these days when there is no more sickness and we can trust fully all those in power and the direction they led us.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Amen. This Prince and this Peace rules over all of the coming month. We must re-member this whatever may come. Though the gathering darkness may overwhelm at times, the light will overcome it. With every advent candle lit, whether in our homes, in our sanctuary, or together online – the light will grow from week to week. The truth still stands today. Together we will get through this pandemic. Together, we can shine light on a hope-filled tomorrow which is not yet.

Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

I do not know how and when we will gather over the coming months, but we will move whatever terrain we can to ensure we are connected to one another and our God. We will be having an online Sounds of the Season on December 12th and online Christmas Eve service for families on the 24th in addition to regular services, and a longest night service December 21st. Our hope is to be able to continue to gather in some capacity throughout it all. Regardless, I will be available for zoom conversations, sled riding, outdoor conversations, sanctuary distanced prayer time, or whatever you may need this Advent season. I repeat the invitation to any and all who are not currently in a regularly 'meeting/phoning/zooming' group – call us and we will get you connected. The hope rises...

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Rejoice! The very word seems to have a layer of pandemic dust upon it. But let us remember it again as we celebrate the coming of our King and await His return. Rejoice! Jesus love flows through us and overflows. Though distributed, we are still called to share this love with our neighbors, service to others, extravagant generosity, humble hospitality, and thanksgiving. May we have eyes to see these opportunities and boldness to act upon them...and Rejoice!

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We do not know what tomorrow may hold, but we know the One who holds it. And Christ is with us. Friends, let us make this Advent and Christmas season one to remember.

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Joseph

Pastor Joseph



Reflections on a Christmas Memory By Madeleine Demetriades

The year was 1999. My parents, sister and I had traveled to Denver to visit my grandparents, as was our annual tradition. My Grandma Helen played the organ at her church so we would always attend the 11:00pm candlelight service. I remember walking in; the dimly lit space seeming to pulse with light chatter and ponderous organ music. There were shawls and blankets laying across the pews in a very cozy scene. "Please pray over these shawls during the service. They're going to be delivered to shut-ins," the pastor said. The service went on as usual. Boisterous classic hymns were sang, the sermon was given, the offering taken. What I most remember most though was Silent Night. My parents were lovingly stern, telling me to hold the candle steadfastly upright so as to not spill the wax. As we conducted the ritual with reverent yet anxious care, the beautiful and mystical tones of Silent Night spread across the sanctuary. The hymn grew in volume and energy as the verses went on and by the end, my young face was in tears as I gently lifted the candle up high during the final passage: 'Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light; with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King; Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.' I felt God move through us all as we sang. When the service concluded shortly thereafter at midnight, we descended into inky black nightfall which was now punctuated by beautiful bright snowfall. My sister and I remarked with delight: "It's snowing! It's Christmas!" The adults smiled at us and said, "let's get home and get to bed. Santa will be coming...presents in the morning!"

The moment was beautiful and simple. It seems like it was only yesterday, although many years have passed since then. I'm so grateful for this memory and that my family all live nearby (Columbus, OH; Covington, KY; Dayton, OH). This coming Christmas season will certainly look different than past years. In-person gatherings may not occur and people will continue to mourn all the uncertainty and change. It has made me so grateful for my memories like the one I shared above, and for technology which facilitates a virtual connection to my family when we can't gather in person. I often take my worries and concerns to God in prayer.

Let's go to prayer now.

Dear God,

May You grant us patience, courage and serenity in December and beyond as we continue to struggle with Covid-19, and the anxiety, uncertainty and change that comes with it. We know You are here, and that You've got this. We love you with all of our hearts.

In Christ's Holy Name,

Amen

Upcoming Events:

Advent/Christmas Hymn Study (via Zoom): begins Tuesday, 12/1 at 2:30pm

Livestream Worship w/ Madeleine: Every Tuesday at 10:00am on FaceBook

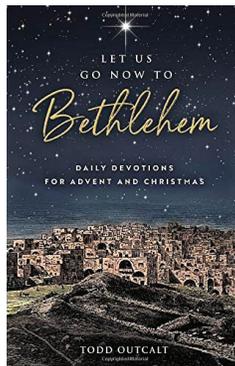
Musical Meditations: Every Wednesday at 12:15pm on FaceBook



Longest Night Service

We are in the middle of a season of great joy and light. When we look at one another, many of us expect to see a smile on another person's face and a twinkle in their eye. However, for many, Christmas can feel more like a season of great darkness and shadows. We may be experiencing loneliness, grief, loss, separation, pain, and/or sickness, especially this year. With so much joy surrounding us and long, lonely nights, we can feel lost in the hustle and bustle.

One of the ways in which we can survive the holiday season is to claim and acknowledge our feelings, both the good and the bad. The longest and for many most difficult night of the year is December 21st. It has been a practice the past few years to create a space where people can be themselves and bring their sadness to the Lord. The Longest Night Service (sometimes referenced as Blue Christmas) will offer us a way to claim those feelings and still feel surrounded by the compassionate love of God. If you are searching for a place to just be, for a place to experience God's love, and for a place to feel a glimmer of hope and peace, join us on Thursday, December 21st at 6pm for this contemplative service. We will keep you posted on if the service will be offered in person or not, but our hope is to be able to gather. We will also livestream the service on Facebook.



Let Us Go Now to Bethlehem:

Tuesdays, Dec. 1st – 22nd You are invited to join Pastor Jen as she participates in this offering from Conference leadership and author Rev. Todd Outcalt for a Tuesday afternoon focus on joy and the miracle of Christ's birth through Let Us Go Now to Bethlehem: Daily Devotions for Advent and Christmas. With leadership provided by Bishop Trimble alongside pastors Oscar Ramos-Gallardo, Marcy Patrick, and Pete Ward, we'll gather for a devotional focus designed to bring you rest and encouragement in the midst of this season. Meetings will be held Tuesdays, December 1-22 at 1:00 p.m. (ET). For the Zoom link and to register, contact Luska.Natali@inumc.org. If you have any questions, contact Pastor Jen for more information and let her know if you'll be on the call with her!

2021 Altar Flowers

If you would like to place an order for Sunday altar flowers in 2021, please call the office at 765-962-8543 or email Christin at christin@richmondcumc.com. Each order costs \$25 and is billed through Jack Daggy Flowers. There are plenty of open dates in 2021!



Spice Up Their Life!

It's time again to donate spices for the Indiana Women's Prison Christmas bags. It's been a hard year, so they will be delighted to receive a bottle of spice to use for cooking in their dorms. NO GLASS bottles, please. SUGGESTED SPICES: garlic powder, onion powder, chili powder, Italian seasoning, cinnamon, oregano, cayenne, pumpkin pie spice, Taco seasoning. Give your spice donations to Ann Cashner or bring to the church office. NO parsley, NO paprika, NO bay leaves. NO GLASS!

UMW News

The new 2021 UMW Program Book will be coming out in January. You may pick up your copy at church following the service or we will mail it to you. There will be no UMW meeting in January. The 2021 UMW "asking" is \$15.00.



We are humbled by the initial wave of commitment Central has already undertaken for ministry in 2021. You all have again and again showed this community your willingness to pay the bill for the light to shine brightly from 1425 E Main and beyond. We are all truly blessed to be a blessing. If you have not yet offered your commitment card, please continue to pray over what God has set upon your heart. When you have discerned, you can either place it in the offering plate this Sunday or mail it to Central UMC, 1425 E Main St. Richmond, IN 47374. Alternatively, you can login to Realm (our private online directory) and share your pledge commitment through clicking on the Giving tab and then the pledge button. Together, we will offer Hope, Faith, and Love for years to come.

Tech Help in Fellowship Hall

Thank you to all who came during our last session for some tech help! The next sessions are planned for Dec. 9th, Dec. 23rd, and Jan 6th at 3:00pm. If you would like to come to a session, send an email with a description of your problem/question so I can look it over:
TechHelpCUMC@gmail.com

Red Cross Blood Drive

Central United Methodist Church will once again be hosting a Red Cross blood drive. It is scheduled for 11:00 am to 3:00 pm on December 17th. As always, the need for blood donations is high. A new aspect of the blood draw is that you will be provided with information on how to check back with the Red Cross to see if they have determined if Covid antibodies are in your system. During the draw, a number of precautions will be in placed in consideration of Covid-19 restrictions. To register for the blood drive, go to redcrossblood.org and enter the code CUMCRICH. There you will be able to select a time for either a blood draw or a PowerRed draw. Hoping to see the time slots fill up quickly. Thanks.



December School Support

Vaile Elementary

We will be partnering with Principal Stevenson this December. She shared with us that the Fall Family Festival Kits were a huge hit. She also wrote, "They loved them. Thank you so much again!" Due to Covid, they likely won't get to do their Breakfast with Santa again this year, so we are partnering together in different ways, especially through donations for their Good Behavior Party. More information will be forthcoming so stay tuned for our Friday announcements, Sunday bulletins, and Facebook posts!

Starr Elementary

Kathy Khamis is the Community in Schools Starr Site Coordinator. She believes that Christmas meals and family gift support will be important in December. If you would be interested to offer support for students and families in these ways, please contact Kathy directly or the church office so we can help you connect with her. She appreciates the many ways that this congregation offers support and loves the students, families, and community!

BISHOP'S CHRISTMAS OFFERING

To Give:
text "BCO" to
855-389-1555
or
visit inumc.org/BCO





“Hark the Herald Angels sing...”

Many people are finding it hard to sing during this season of life. Things we thought would be short-lived have dragged on. People have lost loved ones and been quarantined from family members and friends. Teachers have worked multiple hours of overtime. Students have struggled to understand and work virtually. Parents have felt overwhelmed by extra school work help and the lack of physical outlets for kids. The list goes on. BUT LET US REMEMBER THAT “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.” Isaiah prophesies to the Israelites, in the midst of hopeless circumstances, that a LIGHT IS COMING! May we remember the light of Christ and may we shine it on those who need it most!

Teacher Appreciation

We collected gift cards and encouraging items for our teachers in October/November. Thanks for caring and supporting the teachers in our churches and communities!

December Things to Note

- Sundays December 6th and 13th: TRIBE at Central
 - Date Change!! Friday, December 18: Christmas Party at the ARC. Bring your favorite game to play (voted on by youth). Chipotle catered meal: \$10 per person (will include a drink and dessert) CHRISTMAS SERVICE PROJECT ITEMS COLLECTED AT THIS EVENT (or alternate arrangements with Sheri): items most needed by Refuge of Hope: socks, womens underwear, blankets, womens sanitary items, towels, shampoo/conditioner, soap, and hand sanitizer or cleaning supplies. Please pick one or two items and bring them, unwrapped, to the party. UGLY CHRISTMAS TIE CONTEST RETURNS!! –prize will be awarded
- **Wrap(in the same package) a pair of crazy socks, a bag of candy, and a \$10 gift card to somewhere. These gifts will be for our crazy exchange. **
(Let Sheri know if you are unable to bring something for the exchange and I will provide one for you)

NO TRIBE

December 20th, 27th, or January 3rd

Depending on how things are going with covid restrictions, we may offer a movie night on the 3rd

Central United Methodist Church
1425 East Main Street
Richmond, IN 47374

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Christmas Services

Longest Night: December 21st at 6:00pm

Christmas Eve Family Service: December 24th Virtual on FaceBook at 4:30pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight: December 24th at 8:00pm

 facebook.com/richmondcumc

 richmondcumc.com