

## Stay Ready So You Don't Have to Get Ready

Advent is both looking back and looking forward.

Black Friday. I suppose we all survived. You know what Black Friday is, don't you? That inevitable Friday after Thanksgiving that signals the official beginning of the holiday season. That day when shoppers line up outside malls and shopping centers to get those early bird deals retailers are offering to those crazy enough to brave the pushing and shoving to save a few bucks. I heard about one store, either Best Buy or Circuit City, where the crowd actually breached the doors and entered the store before it opened. The police had to be called to clear the store so it could open. The onslaught of people actually caused the store to open late. Thankfully, no one was hurt, but it is the time when we start preparing for Christmas. We start getting ready because the big day is coming. We get ready by wrapping the gifts, baking the cookies, decorating the tree, lighting the house, going to parties, and making travel plans. We have to get ready because Christmas will be here before we know it. And in the course of our conversations, we seem to inevitably ask someone, "Are you ready for Christmas yet?"

Even in our churches, we embrace the Advent season as a time of preparation. We prepare the sanctuary by hanging the greens, and we adorn the church with decorations and poinsettias and nativity scenes because, after all, the Advent season is the season when we look with expectancy to the coming of the Christ-child. Advent means "coming" or "arrival," and we focus on his arrival by setting out our prettiest nativity set for all to see. I find the traditions interesting as I have served the church over the years. Churches everywhere have never failed to set out the nativity, but what we do with the baby Jesus is interesting.

Some churches never give a second thought about putting out the baby when the decorations are put out. Decorate for the season and baby Jesus goes in the manger. Other churches, who consider themselves "liturgically correct" would never consider putting out the baby Jesus until Christmas Eve. I even heard of one church that would move the baby Jesus to a different place each week so the people would have to look to find him. We focus on the "first" advent of Jesus Christ. And we should, but we don't stop there.

Perhaps we might understand it better if we think about how we live our lives. We live knowing death is inevitable, but we are all uncertain as to when it will come. Most sane people don't go around lamenting, "Oh, woe is me! I'm going to die." Rather, the prudent person prepares for that day, gets ready if you will, not by obsession, but by faithfulness. Living in faithfulness to the first advent gets us ready for the second advent. How do we live in faithfulness to the first advent? First, living in faithfulness to the first advent is accepting Christ. To accept Christ is to acknowledge what God was doing in the first advent, namely, sending His Savior in the world to redeem His creation. Secondly, living in faithfulness to the first advent is growing to maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is allowing the awesome power of God through the Holy Spirit to transform us, to remake us, to give us new birth. We grow by opening ourselves to Christ, by preparing for his coming into our own lives through Bible study, through prayer, through fellowship, through so many other spiritual disciplines. Finally, living in faithfulness to the first advent is serving Christ by serving others. When we serve others, the spirit of Christmas/Spirit of Christ, lives through each of us as we give ourselves in sacrificial, humbling love, which is exactly what Jesus did in that first advent. Advent is the time when we reflect on the grace of God made real in our lives in a manger 2,000 years ago, and advent is living in anticipation of his glorious return. It is staying ready, so we don't have to get that way.

BLESSINGS AND MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, TROY AND MINDY DRAYER



Thank you Ruth and Jerry for sharing your villiage with us again this year!

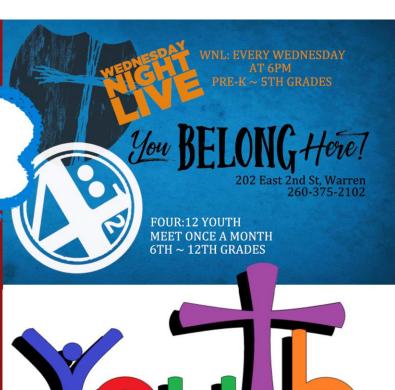


It's time to start our collection for the Crossroads tree!

### NEEDED ITEMS

Colored Pencils
Adult Coloring Books
Drawing/Sketch Pads
Body Lotion (men & women)
Body Wash (men & women)
\$5-10 Gift Cards
(McD & Dairy Queen)







TAKARRA MYERS

"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

(John 1:5-11)

# NEWS

It was so fun making ornaments with all of you at the holiday walk! December 10th we will be having a taco bar fundraiser following service to raise money for our roller-skating party. Thank you Terry Lee and East of Chicago Pizza for preparing the food for the fundraiser!



The kid who stood out most in my mind was Leah. She is a talented singer and is also very creative! She always notices when someone is feeling down and knows how to cheer them up. Her talents and kindness have also been noticed at her school. Great job being an example to those around you Leah! Keep it up!

# THE GIFT OF CHRIST

Everything good is a gift from God but, the greatest was the gift of Christ. "Thank God for his gift that words can't describe!" (2 Corinthians 9:15) There is no good or proper way to describe the blessings that God has poured out for us but, in my own flawed way of thinking, I will give it my best attempt.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Because of Christ's love for us we are saved. This is the greatest gift we have been given. Christ willingly extended God's grace to us through death on the cross. It is because of this that we can go home to be with him again. This alone is the greatest, and the most immeasurable gift to be received.

Another gift Christ has given to us is that he promised to be with us always. The bible tells us that he is our ever-present helper in times of trouble. No matter what bad things we experience as born-again Christians, we have the promise that Christ and the Holy Ghost will always be with us no matter what.

Additionally, it can be said that everything that is good at all, is a gift of God. And it is only because of Christ that we would come to know love or goodness at all. "Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above. These gifts come down from the Father, the creator of the heavenly lights, in whose character there is no change at all." (James 1:17) Everything good is a gift from God but the greatest gift was the gift of Christ!

The best way to appreciate the gift of Christ is to accept the gift of Christ, accept Jesus into your heart and believe in him. This is the most important thing that we could do to show our respect and adoration for the gift of Christ. We should seek out a relationship with him. We should want to strive to live as Christ did and live out his teachings. Once we accept Jesus, we can share Jesus and his love with everyone around us.

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Takarra



Mark your calendars December Sunday, Santa will arrive at the church following service. Stay after church Sunday and come down to the Fellowship Hall refreshments for and pictures with Santa.





Join us ~ Sunday, December 24 Fellowship Hall, 9:30am

Light brunch will be served.

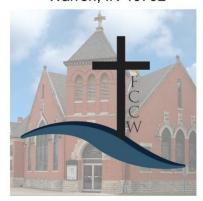




Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Angel Tree. You helped make it another successful year! The Remnant house has scheduled a wrapping party in our fellowship hall on the December 19th. If you haven't brought your gifts back in yet, please drop them off this week in the office. Thank you again for your support!



#### FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH of WARREN 202 East Second Street PO Box 344 Warren, IN 46792



## First Christian Church of Warren

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# The Nativity Story\*



#### JOSEPH & MARRY

A long time ago, a woman named Mary and a man named Joseph were going to be married. Mary and Joseph were good people who did what God wanted them to do.

#### ANGEL

One day an angel came to Mary and told her she was going to have a baby! The angel said she should name the baby Jesus. The baby would be the Son of God, the Savior.

#### DONKEY

Mary and Joseph had to travel to a town called Bethlehem to pay taxes.

#### JESUS & ANIMAL

The town was very crowded. So Mary and Joseph spent the night in a place where animals were kept. That night baby Jesus was born!

#### SHEPHERD

Shepherds were taking care of sheep in nearby fields
Angels came and told the shepherds that the Savior
had been born. The shepherds went to find and worship
the baby.

#### WISE MEN

Far away Wise Men saw the new star. They knew it was a sign that the Savior had been born. They followed the star until they found Jesus. They gave Him presents and worshipped Him

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. We can be like Mary and Joseph by doing what God wants us to do. We can be like the shepherds and Wise Men by following Jesus Christ. We can be like the angels by telling others the real story of Christmas. And we can be like Jesus by following His example!



# December





**Church Operating Cost** \$3,550 Weekly

> 11/5 - \$3,080 11/12 - \$2,237 11/26 - \$2,345



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YOU A merry
CHRISTMAS

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SATURDAY SUNDAY MONDAY **TUESDAY** WEDNESDAY **THURSDAY FRIDAY** Amanda Tolen 5 8 Sunday Service Communion 9:30am Refresh Service WNL Youth Carson Thiele Luke Thiele Jerry Wilson Gary & Jill Yount 5:45pm Jill Yount 10 12 16 15 Sunday Service 9:30am Refresh Service WNL Youth Brenda Tolen Ron & Cynthia Wartzok Taco Bar Jada Johnson 5:45pm Keaton Jones Deb Baker 20 Children's Program Remnant House Wrapping Party 9:30am SANTA Kari Green Peggy Wilson Ceaten Brubaker Kevin Deakyne 25 MERRY 29 26 27 28 30 24 Christmas Service 9:30am - Hall Candlelight 11pm Joyce Dahlquist (HRISTMAS 31 Sunday Service 9:30am Chod & Claudia Boxell COUPON OFFER Use Code: 25percent At Checkout!

EXPIRES DECEMBER 4, 2023

