

Creekside Church of the Brethren Connection

December 2023

How Far is it to Bethlehem?



*'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place,
which the Lord has made known to us.' Luke 2:15b*

"How far is it to Bethlehem?" asks a children's Christmas song. It's a question we'll be posing at Creekside this Advent season, which begins on Sunday, December 3. The simple answer is: that depends on where you are starting from. Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph had 90 miles to travel from their hometown of Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of Joseph's ancestors David and Ruth, where he was "invited" by the Roman government to come and be taxed. Ninety miles may not seem far to drive on the interstate, but it was a journey of several days through some rough terrain for a man and especially a woman who was late in her pregnancy.

But geographical distance is not the only territory we have to traverse in order to find Jesus; the stable in Bethlehem represents the place to which we must go in order to worship the Christ Child and make room for him in our hearts. That distance may be different for each person, but again, that distance depends on where we are starting from. Children may have the shortest distance to travel: for those whose hearts are innocent and open, the distance from wonder to belief and joy may be very short indeed. For those of us who have seen scores of Christmases come and go, the trip to Bethlehem may be obstructed by cynicism or busy-ness or apathy. We may have decided that it isn't that important to go to Bethlehem. It's too much trouble. I'll just sit this one out and let other people go this year.

In our Advent services we'll be considering characters in the nativity story—Joseph, Mary, the shepherds, and Jesus—and imagining what their physical, emotional, and spiritual journey to Bethlehem was like. It is an opportunity to consider what journeys we might have to make through grief or disappointment or disillusionment to find the Christ Child for ourselves. Can we decorate our hearts with hope, rejoice in the work of God, and meet the challenges of our lives armed with love? With God's help, I believe that each of us can find that place where the human and the holy meet in a manger. We can meet there, too, if we are willing to look for God in unlikely places.

See more information in this Connection about the Christmas Eve services (morning and evening!) at Creekside, and how you can share a bit of the nativity story from your home with your church family at Creekside. Daily Advent devotionals, "All Things New" will be available beginning Sunday, Nov. 26.

Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing which is taking place! Blessings for Advent and Christmas.
Pastor Rosanna

PASTOR'S REPORT

I have enjoyed the mellow November days, but I am dreaming of Christmas. Advent planning is mostly done, and these are services I look forward to each year.

It was great to host friends and guests from Seed to Feed gardens at a potluck on November 9. We had about a dozen Creekside folks at the meal, and several more back preparing and helping guests in the kitchen. Roger Griffith was a big help, and our Fellowship Team did a great job preparing and serving turkey and cleaning up. Coordinator Erica Coppens had some games, including identifying a crazy assortment of oversized gourds.

Beth Sollenberger has done a great job working with Creekside kids on an Advent project which you will be able to see in the Worship Center. Thanks to other folks who have helped with that, and to Angi Harney who donated clean sheets of cardboard.

Worship Team will be decorating inside the building for Christmas; New Life Class will have some new things for us to see outside. Thanks to Mike Bailey and those who helped him put lights on the tall evergreen in the Prayer Garden; it will be lit after Thanksgiving. If you are driving up the driveway or even passing by on CR 113 in the evening, you will be able to see these lights.

December is a good time to remember and reach out to local members who are unable to attend in person, or members who are out-of-town over the holidays. Please think of them when you are sending Christmas greetings. Thanks to our deacons for their visits, calls, and prayers. We want to wish every member of our church family a merry Christmas.

Thanks to those who participated in interviews with Shalom Team for a pastoral evaluation, and those who held that process in prayer. I am blessed to work with our Shalom Team and this congregation.

Best wishes for Advent and Christmas!
Pastor Rosanna

2024 CREEKSIDE CALENDARS

Calendars are now available in the Gathering Area. Each household may take a calendar; they will be delivered to shut-ins and mailed to members who are out-of-town. Calendars which are left by December 2 will be shared with guests at the Cookie/Candy Walk.

Larry Ford's photographs are an inspiration each year. Marita Barsoda does the lay-out, and spends time photoshopping images—you likely aren't aware of her work, but it is vital to the finished product and makes the calendar a lovely keepsake. Many thanks to Followers of Faith who paid for the calendars so that each household can have one at no charge, and we can share them with our guests.

Pastor Rosanna



CREEKSIDE'S COOKIE CANDY WALK, DECEMBER 2

Calling all cookie and candy makers: it's that time again... There's a chill in the air and it's time to start thinking about all things sweet!

Creekside's *Cookie Candy Walk* is Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023 from 8 am - noon.

This annual event is a wonderful way to interact with our community and to raise funds for outreach. Your help is needed: start thinking now about what you can bake or make. *We want to offer as many varieties of cookies & candy as possible.*

New this year: supplies will be available for guests to create their own cookie plate, candy dish, treat box, or treat bag to give as gifts.

Cookies and Candy are due at the church on Friday, December 1 or by 7:30 am on Saturday, December 2. Questions? Contact Diane Lund: 574.304.7595, or thelunds57@msn.com. *Thank you!*



HOW FAR IS IT TO BETHLEHEM?

Pastor Rosanna's theme for Advent this year will be "How Far is it to Bethlehem?". The first Sunday of Advent will be December 3, and the fourth Sunday of Advent lands on Christmas Eve, December 24. More information is included in the article below. New Years Eve is also on a Sunday; we will have morning worship in the Gathering Area and Worship Team will present the service.

A big thank you goes to the Children of our congregation for designing and displaying the town of Bethlehem you will see during Advent in the Worship Area. The New Life Class has decorated the outside at Creekside and we are grateful for all they have done to bring the meaning of Christmas to us and the community around Creekside. Drive by or take a walk in our Garden and enjoy the lighted tree. Many hands have been at work! May the holiday season bring you peace and joy.

Maryann Zerbe, Worship Team

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

December 24 is a Sunday this year; we will have two worship services that day. The first will be at 9:30am in the Gathering Area. Adult Sunday School classes may choose whether or not to meet. There will be no children's Sunday School that day.

The evening Christmas Eve service will be at 7:00 in the Worship Center. Families, friends and neighbors are always welcome. This service of readings, carols, communion and candlelighting is a great way to celebrate the season. It will be followed by a fellowship time with hot drinks, cookies, and savory snacks. We hope you can celebrate at Creekside on the 24th!

Pastor Rosanna, for Worship Team

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS EVE CHOIR

Creekside singers: you are invited to join a choir to sing one Sunday in Advent and for our evening Christmas Eve service. We are grateful to Diane Lund who has graciously agreed to accompany us. A rehearsal schedule is listed below: you do not need to be present at each rehearsal in order to sing. You do need to present on Christmas Eve in order to sing with us on Christmas Eve (!) Please contact Pastor Rosanna if you have questions, or to talk about the schedule. You are welcome to join us even if you have not previously sung with the choir at Creekside. Thank you!

Rehearse Fri, Dec. 8, 10:30 am (done before noon)

Rehearse Sun, Dec. 10, 8:45 am **Sing in worship that day**

Rehearse Sun, Dec. 17, following worship

Rehearse Fri, Dec. 22, 10:30 am

Rehearse Sun, Dec. 24, 6:00 pm **Christmas Eve service at 7:00 pm**

NATIVITY SET PHOTOS WANTED!

Do you have a nativity set that you put out in your home or apartment? We'd like to see it at Creekside! Take a photo and send it to the office at creeksidecob@gmail.com no later than Sunday, December 17. We'll put together a slide show for December 24. If you'd like someone to come to your home to take a photo for you, contact Pastor Rosanna.

Thanks for contributing to our Christmas Eve celebration! *Pastor Rosanna*

HAT & MITTEN TREE

Outreach Team is again sponsoring a hat and mitten tree for Advent/Christmas. Your donations of new hats, mittens, gloves, scarves or other winter outerwear will go to adults and children in need in Elkhart. The tree will be out Dec. 3 through Dec. 31. We are grateful to Rita Barnes, Shirley Supancik's caregiver, and Myrtis Justiniano who have already donated beautiful handmade items.

Thanks for sharing warmth this Christmas season. *Pastor Rosanna, for Outreach*

ADVENT LOVE OFFERING 2023

Creekside will again be collecting an Advent Love Offering. These are donations *over and above* regular giving to the church. 100% of these offerings will be going toward outreach this year. We will donate 50% to organizations in Elkhart, and 50% to organizations who support outreach in other countries. Followers of Faith will match congregational gifts given by Dec. 31, 2023 up to \$3,000.

Outreach Team has designated the following organizations for our giving: these are ministries which are not supported by Creekside's budgeted giving:

Susanna's Kitchen re-opened in August 2023 after moving and remodeling the basement at Grace Lutheran Church in Elkhart. They provide a mid-day meal for unhoused people in downtown Elkhart, and have been doing so for forty years. They were grateful for our support last year.

SPA Women's Ministries has group homes in Elkhart, and is a Christian ministry to women who have been broken and wounded from addiction, abuse, or exploitation. Judy Gable's daughter-in-law is a case worker there.

CWS (Church World Service) is a faith-based organization which works around the globe to make just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster. Gary Arnold and David Hoke are former employees of CWS.

MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) follows Christ's example of love and compassion by responding to human needs and working for peace and justice. They are active in 45 countries. We have assembled school kits for MCC at Creekside in the past.

You may give any time before the end of 2023. Please write *Love Offering* on your offering envelope.

Outreach Team will be providing Thanksgiving dinner from Martin's grocery to women and children at the Elkhart Women's Shelter. Thanks to the Borem family for this ministry on behalf of Creekside.

Outreach Team/Followers of Faith



Pictured: Dennis, age 9, holds a school kit he received in Ukraine.

THANK YOU!

Dear friends at Creekside Church of the Brethren,

Greetings in the name of Christ. Thank you for your donation of **223 school kits** to Mennonite Central Committee which will be used to help those who are suffering around the world.

You may have heard about our School Kit Challenge this summer. Our goal was to collect 10,000 school kits in the month of August. We reached our goal and surpassed it! More than **27,800 school kits were collected during our challenge**. What a wonderful way to support the educational hopes of so many children. Because of generous support from you, families of students from countries experiencing crisis and economic hardship can send their children to school.

Thank you for the many ways you support folks around the world in vulnerable situations.

Nadine Zook Miller, Material Resource Coordinator, MCC Great Lakes

MEET THE MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT: NOV. 30

Manchester University has a new president, Dr. Stacy Young '96 and we are hosting a "Meet the President" event in Goshen on **Nov. 30, 2023**, 5:30-7:30 pm at 57971 Blue Heron Drive, Goshen, IN 46528. Register by visiting www.manchester.edu/meet-the-president. Or call 260-982-5223. You do not have to be an alum of Manchester University to attend; anyone is welcome to come and hear about the future of MU from Dr. Stacy Young.

Sincerely,

Megan Julian '07 Sarber, Director of Alumni and Church Relations, Manchester University

Praise, Blessing & JOY

with Terry & Irene Rassi



Jesus:

What song or Bible verse brings praise to mind for you?

T: Love your neighbor as yourself.

I: Romans 8:28 (And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.)
— Ha-le-lu-ia-feeling.

What do you love about Creekside Church?

T: Their caring and giving to others.

I: Friendliness and welcoming.

What is one prayer you have for Creekside?

T: Continued abundance.

I: Continued presence in the community.

Others:

What ministry do you do for others?

T: Sharing my talents to help others.

I: Taking in strays—animals, people, etc.

What connects you to people at Creekside?

T: Concern for others.

I: Being fed with sermons and feeling welcome.

What words of blessing or encouragement do you have to share with others?

T&I: The Lord loves us all and is always giving as we are willing to receive his grace.

Yourself:

What would you like to share about yourself?

T: I'm a DIYer and have a good knowledge in many things.

I: I collect skunks, love canning & preserving for our family & friends, and I drive a school bus.

What gives you joy?

T&I: Music and helping others.



DECEMBER 2023

| Su | Mo | Tu | We | Th | Fri | Sat |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

BIRTHDAYS

- 5 Ellis, Donald
- 10 Metcalf, Bryce
- 12 De Pue, Stephen
- 12 Kauffman, Deb
- 13 Ehret, Vicki
- 16 Hostetler, Doris
- 22 Neal, Roger
- 25 Bollinger, Grace

ANNIVERSARIES

- 15 Kauffman, Mike & Deb
- 20 Foland, Ted & Lynne
- 28 Rodgers, Rick & Valerie

EVENTS

- 1 Set-up for Cookie Candy Walk
- 2 Cookie Candy Walk, 8:00-noon
- 5 *Church reserved, 4:30 pm*
- 6 Church Board, 6:30 pm
- 8 Choir, 10:30 am
- 8 Game Night, 7:00 pm
- 10 Choir, 8:45 am
- 12 Brunch at Angel's, 10:45 am
- 16 *Church reserved, noon-10:00 pm*
- 17 Choir, following worship
- 22 Choir, 10:30 am
- 24 Choir, 6:00 pm
- 24 Christmas Eve Service, 7:00 pm

The Creekside Connection

A publication of Creekside Church of the Brethren



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The Creekside Connection is published monthly to keep members and friends informed of church programs and to report news about the people of Creekside Church.

