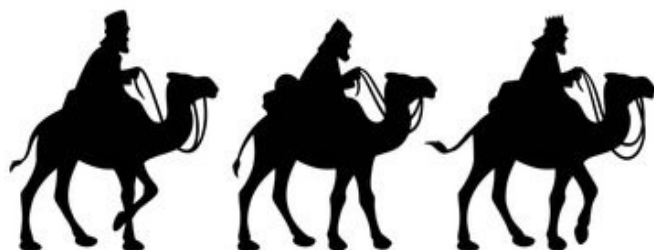
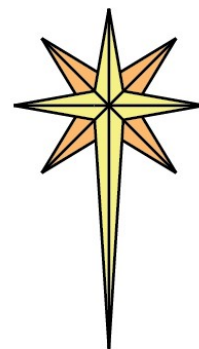


Creekside Church of the Brethren Connection

January 2024



Still Seeking

When the wise men had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. Matthew 2:9

As I write this, I am in preparation for Christmas. The week is full of choir practice and grocery shopping and house cleaning and visiting folks in hospitals and nursing homes. Some of this work will continue after Christmas, of course, but the beginning of a new year is a good time to pause and take stock of what is most important. Our Advent worship resources were inspired by the writing of Ann Weems in her book of reflections, *Kneeling in Bethlehem*. These words are from the poem "It Is Not Over":

It is not over, this birthing.
There are always newer skies into which God can throw stars.
When we begin to think we can predict the Advent of God,
that we can box the Christ in a stable in Bethlehem,
that's just the time God will be born in a place we can't imagine and won't believe.

January sixth is the Feast of the Epiphany, or Three Kings' Day. In Spanish-speaking countries in Europe and Central America, this is the day when gifts are exchanged and families gather for a special meal. What we know about the kings, or the magi, comes from Matthew; that gospel tells us that the wise men came from the East and brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Christian tradition has filled in a lot of other details, which may have become so familiar that we don't realize they are not biblical: that there were three wise men, they rode camels, their names were Caspar (or Gaspar), Melchior, and Balthasar, representing the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

For me, what the wise men represent is the truth that God can be found in places we can't imagine and won't believe. God can be found with people we don't know and might not want to meet. As long as Christ is still active in our hearts, in our lives, and in our world, then God is still placing stars along our path to guide us to unlikely places. Along with taking down the decorations and finishing up the leftovers, we are called to keep seeking the Christ, knowing that he will not stay in a stable in Bethlehem, safely on a mantel or boxed away until next year.

May the new year find us still seeking—looking for the blessing of the Holy Spirit, or listening for Jesus' call to follow Him. Thank you for a beautiful Advent and Christmas season; it is not over.

In Christ—
Pastor Rosanna

PASTOR'S REPORT

My heart is filled with gratitude for my Creekside Church family this season. Thank you for the way you have blessed my husband Tim and me with your Christmas cards, greetings, and remembrances. Thank you for the way you have loved and supported the families of Bruce Barwick and Curtis Miller as we have celebrated their lives. Thank you for leadership and participation in worship for Advent and Christmas Eve. Thank you for your generous financial support of Creekside in 2023, and for your commitment to giving toward outreach for organizations who are ministering to people in Elkhart and around the world.

Many of us were delighted by the contribution of Creekside kids of bringing the town of Bethlehem to our December services, and singing for us in worship. They will continue to meet during the Sunday School hour in the new year, and we hope they'll be sharing more of their gifts in worship. I was excited to see the first of eight stained glass windows installed in early December. Look for several more windows in the Worship Center in January.

I am grateful to our deacons, who have called and visited shut-in members during December. There are health concerns which are weighing on members and friends who covet your prayers. I have tried to be with these folks as I am able, but know there is more than I can do alone. In this *Connection* you will find a summary of the pastoral evaluation conducted by the Shalom Team. Those anonymous comments have given me food for thought and deep appreciation for our work and ministry together.

Tim and I will be gone for the Sundays of January 28, February 4 and February 11 in order to spend two weeks in Hawaii celebrating our 40th anniversary. Tim Morphew and Carrie Eikler will be filling the pulpit during that time. Wednesday, February 14, is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. You will be hearing more about plans for that day and that season in the coming month.

May God bless you and your families in the new year as we continue the work of Jesus.
Pastor Rosanna

PLETCHER BEQUEST

Creekside Church has received a bequest of \$185,051.43 from the estate of Dr. William Pletcher. It was accompanied by a letter from Bill's children, Steve, Barb, Stan, and Brian, regarding their parents. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

This letter is meant to accompany the donation you are receiving. Sarah died in 1998 at the age of 69, and Bill passed away at the age of 93 in December of 2022.

Their lives were guided by the two greatest commandments found in scripture, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." They lived to bring peace to the world by building relationships, encouraging others, leading Bible studies, and supporting others.

This gift is a part of their legacy. We pray that this gift will be received as a gift of love from a couple that lived out their faith in Christ.

The check has been deposited in Designated Funds for Creekside. On recommendation of the Finance Team and consensus from the Church Board, after the first of the year it will be moved to Edward Jones investments. Dr. Pletcher did not designate these funds for a specific purpose; we will divide the money between 3 month, 6 month, 9 month and 12 month CDs. This will ensure that some portion of these funds will be available for Capital Improvements or other projects as we have ongoing conversations at Creekside and with Rosemary and the Pletcher children about how to best honor this gift.

We are so grateful for Bill Pletcher's long life of faithfulness and service to his church, community, and toward the cause of peace in the world. We miss him as a friend and brother in Christ, and will help his legacy live on through this gift and our work at Creekside Church.

Pastor Rosanna, for Finance Team

SUMMARY OF 2023 PASTOR ROSANNA MCFADDEN PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The Shalom Team recently completed an evaluation of Pastor Rosanna's work with us since our last evaluation in 2019. The Appreciative Inquiry Interview approach was used for this evaluation. Appreciative Inquiry Interviews are conducted in person and examines the best of what is. If there are any concerns noted they are framed in the positive, what do you wish would happen.

Shalom Team interviewed a total of 18 individuals including ministry team members, and others representing a cross section of the Creekside family of faith. An open invitation was made for anyone interested in being interviewed. One individual responded to this invitation.

There were four questions asked during these interviews:

1. Does Pastor Rosanna do what she says she will do?
2. Can you tell me about a time when Pastor Rosanna exceeded your expectation?
3. If you had a wish for Pastor Rosanna what would it be?
4. Do you have anything else you would like to share?

A summary of the responses is as follows:

Does Pastor Rosanna do what she says she will do?

Yes, she goes above and beyond. She is willing to do things herself and doesn't ask others to do things she won't do herself. She is very attentive, a good listener, thorough, kind and works to build positive relationships.

Can you tell me about a time when Pastor Rosanna exceeded your expectation?

A number of stories were shared with these themes; Pastor Rosanna is process oriented and has excellent leadership and acting skills and is comfortable integrating them into Sunday morning worship and sermons which are always inspiring. She sets the bar so high for herself and is involved "hands on" with most of what goes on at Creekside which exceeds what is expected from pastors. Her pastoral care is an extension of her personality and who she is. Her visits, cards and calls are appreciated by members and friends of Creekside. She prays for others in difficulty and keeps confidences.

If you had a wish for Pastor Rosanna what would it be?

A collective theme in the responses to this question is the concern that Pastor Rosanna over-extends herself and will get "burned out". Some responses to this question were framed as a "hope" instead of a wish. Hope that she will know when to slow down or step back from commitments.

We are indeed fortunate to have Rosanna McFadden serving as our pastor. Shalom Team encourages everyone in their own way to thank and affirm Pastor Rosanna for her ministry to us. If you have questions about the process used or content of this evaluation you are welcome to contact Cary or any of the Shalom Team members.

Shalom Team: Cary Kelsey (team lead), Anne Griffith, Jan Nicodemus, Steven Barton

FROM THE CHURCH BOARD:

The board has been busy this year; here are some of our projects for the betterment of Creekside:

- Committee working on the board's 2023 goal: "We will be intentional about welcoming children and providing activities for them each Sunday."
- Booths at the Trunk or Treat sharing information about church programs.
- Sunday school for children.
- The Wall between the previous Overcomers and Jr. High class rooms relocated to provide Thee Seekers a larger class room and storage space for Fellowship Team.
- Revised the Wedding policy.
- Stained glass project was donated and is in process with one window complete and more to follow.

We welcome Deanna Ward to the 2024 Board. We appreciated David Hoke's 6 years of service, as well as Gene Hollenberg's work as our Moderator for 4 years. Thanks to Scott Harney for his leadership on the Board Goal committee; I personally have appreciated having dinner together prior to the meetings.

Kurt Vardaman, Church Board Chair

EVERENCE SHARING FUND

The Everence Sharing Fund supports congregations to help members with financial needs. Everence provides matching funds to congregations who use Everence services. Creekside provides this assistance through our Creekside Needs Fund. We were ably served for years by Everence advocate Jan Nicodemus; we are grateful for her service and for the information about Everence which she provided in the *Connection*. Jan stepped down from that position in October 2023, and Larry Ford will be our new Everence advocate; we're grateful to Larry for taking on this role.

Members who have unexpected financial needs should contact Pastor Rosanna; those requests are confidential. Not every need is eligible for matching funds. Creekside shared \$1,632.07 with members in 2023. If you wish to donate toward this fund, please mark your giving envelope "Creekside Needs."

Thank you for your support of our church family. *Pastor Rosanna*

EVERENCE

As of this month, I am your new Everence Advocate for Creekside. I am taking over for Jan Nicodemus who brought many good years of service to Creekside via Everence. It will take me some time to reach her expertise. My main job is to try to make sure we qualify for reimbursements of 50% of the amount we use to help members of our church in financial crisis situations including medical, rent, mortgage, utilities or emergency travel expenses. Everence is also a good source of medigap, vision and dental insurances and low-cost investment plans for members of Anabaptist churches.

Over the next several months, I will try to familiarize you with some of their services, but I will mention just one this month since it begins in late January: *FreedUp* consists of 7 online sessions to help you define your financial goals, develop spending, giving, and savings plans, and create a debt-reduction plan. The cost for church members is \$19. I am leaving some flyers tacked to the bulletin board in the Gathering Area that have more information in case you're interested.

I hope this is will be a wonderful year for you. *Larry Ford*



CREEKSIDE'S COOKIE CANDY WALK

Cookie Candy Walk 2023 was another resounding success! The variety of cookies and candy you made was amazing and, because of that, we made a little over \$2000 after expenses. For me, the best part—once again—was being witness to the ways in which you, my Creekside family, supported this event: from the label and sign-making; from your openness to trying something new, to the set-up, working the event and clean-up, you continuously asked what you could do to help. You arrived early and stayed late; some of you stayed with me

until there was not another task to be done. You invited friends and purchased items. You willingly said, 'yes' to giving the unsold items to the women from SPA Ministries and to Faith Mission.

I was overwhelmed by your graciousness toward me, toward each other and toward our guests; what a gift!! Thank you, THANK YOU! *Diane Lund*

THANK YOU!

To all in the Creekside Family, Thank you for your boundless generosity, kindness and welcome. I have been blessed to be a small part of your church family as I empty trash cans, clean bathrooms, and vacuum carpets. You've been abundantly generous to me with your gifts and kind words. I look forward to another year together with you. Merry Christmas to each of you.

With much love, *Crystal Waggy*

Thank you so much for your gifts and cards. They are always appreciated! I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas, and I wish for you a wonderful New Year!

Marita Barsoda

The Bee Line



By guest writer, Steve Barton
...with apologies to Clement Clarke Moore.

*'Twas the week before Christmas
and all through the hive,
There were lots of bees stirring,
which meant they're ALIVE!
Their boxes were wrapped in
tar paper with care,
In hopes that all through
the winter they'd fare.*

It seems that Mother Nature was kind to the Creekside bees (and their keepers) this fall. The Bee Team didn't have a chance to winterize the hives between the harvest and the time that the temperatures began dropping. In spite of some freezing temperatures at night, the daytime temps have been moderate, so the girls seem to have managed OK on their own.

When Ron and I got out one beautiful, sunny afternoon to insert mouse guards and wrap the hives with roofing felt (AKA tar paper), there was quite a bit of activity in at least two of the hives. In fact, by the last hive, it was warm enough and the girls were active enough that they told us in no uncertain terms that we weren't welcome. (FYI, neither of us got stung.)

We left a layer of sugar on top to provide extra food for the winter and we hope they'll be protected enough to survive the winter now. Next spring we'll need to unwrap the hives and hope they've stayed warm enough and haven't had invaders ruin their colonies.

Speaking of spring, we'd like to enlist a few more volunteers who would be willing to help on occasions when current members have conflicts in their schedule. The bees don't take days off. They're always as busy as... well, you get the idea. Our thought is to develop a routine and be able to set dates each month so helpers can plan ahead and know what needs to be done. You'll hear more in the coming months.



SAVE THE DATE

The 2024 district Women's Retreat will be on Saturday, March 16, 9am-3pm at Shepherd's Heart Fellowship (Osceola). **Topic:** The Gratitude Challenge: 41 Days to a Happier, Healthier, More Content Life. **Speaker:** Stephanie L. Jones, motivational speaker & writer of "The Giving Challenge". More info to come!



JANUARY

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

- 1 Kohler, Karen
- 2 Prah, Benjamin
- 8 Cooper, Jenny
- 10 Borem, Jeff
- 12 Rodriguez, Zoey
- 13 Pletcher, Rosemary
- 14 Supancik, Shirley
- 23 Colver, Carolyn
- 27 Kelsey, Betty
- 30 Mishler, Grace
- 31 Walters, Reid

EVENTS

- 1 Happy New Year! Office closed
- 4 Church reserved, 4:00-10:00 pm
- 9 Brunch at Angel's, 10:45 am
- 10 Finance Team, 3:00 pm
- 12 Game Night, 7:00 pm
- 14 Church reserved, 12:00-4:00 pm
- 18 Church Board, 6:30 pm

The Creekside Connection

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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.

