



## November/December 2020 Communiqué

### John Calvin Presbyterian Church

50 Ward Hill, Henrietta, NY 14467

Office Phone: 585-334-2130

Office Hours: 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Tue, Thurs, Fri

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### A NEW THANKSGIVING TRADITION

By David and Scott Staal. David Staal is the CEO of Kids Hope USA and author of [Show Up: Step out of your story and into someone else's](#) and [Show Up Student Edition](#)

Several years ago, our family tried something new for Thanksgiving that has evolved into an authentic tradition. As November rolled around each year, we constantly heard the importance of developing a spirit of gratitude and wanted that to be true for us. Yet, there was a definite disconnect between our good intentions and our implementation.

Said another way: we didn't do anything. The result was an unsettled feeling, so the four of us decided to take action in order to truly live out our thankful spirits. To walk the walk. Practice what we preach.

Said another way: to finally *do* something.

If you remember the old T-Mobile slogan from a decade ago, then the phrase "Who's in your 5?" may sound familiar. The cell phone company encouraged its customers to select five personal contacts to call for free. Our family creatively enhanced the concept.

It's simple; each November, each of us looks back over the past year and chooses five people who made a positive difference in his or her life. After developing our personal lists (the only rule: the five people must be non-relatives), each of us specifically expresses thanks to each of the five via note, text, email, or call. It's nothing elaborate, nothing over-the-top. Just a quick description of the "Who's in your 5?" tradition, followed by a couple sentences of gratitude for the impact that person made in our lives that year.

On Thanksgiving, we share with one another "Who's in my five" and why. The new result: our family celebrates twenty individuals (25 this year, now that I'm married) and a spirit of gratitude fills our hearts and highlights the holiday. We look forward to this tradition more than anything else.

Who can you personally thank this holiday season? Whether you do it at Thanksgiving or Christmas matters little. It's a tradition any family can adopt. Now it's your turn: Who's in your 5?

*I thank my God every time I remember you. (Philippians 1:3)*

## ***Christmas will be different this year.***

As I type these words, my thoughts immediately go to “Wow! That’s an understatement. Our lives have been different since March with no apparent end in sight.”

And still, our lives go on. We live with the “normal” day to day challenges of life, along with those that go along with Covid-19. And the holidays bring with them new thoughts to ponder.

*How can I celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas without friends and family? If we do get together – even for just a short time – how do we do it safely?*

Session and the worship team have been pondering the same questions when it comes to Christmas Eve worship. We know that despite all of the warnings to social distance, there will be those of us who will have extended family who will share time with us in our homes. Some may be comfortable joining us for worship, some will not. In our effort to minimize our exposure to any potential germs, we are limiting our time together in worship to 30-40 minutes. And there is just no way that we can have the kind of inspiring, moving music provided by the choir and soloists as is our tradition. It is not safe for the choir members, soloists and other musicians.

It would not be safe for those in attendance in worship.

Taking all these things (and others) into consideration, session has decided that there will be NO in-person worship in our building on Christmas Eve.

HOWEVER, for those of you with internet access, you will have the opportunity to worship in your home with your family – with music – at a time that works for you.

Rev. Marie will prepare a Christmas Eve worship document (like she did at the beginning of our quarantine time). The document will provide the elements of worship, with scripture and music, and will be emailed out to everyone on the morning of December 24.

*Christmas will be different this year.*

But it will be Christmas – whether we gather together as a church family under one roof or we find a new way of welcoming the Christ child of love into our lives. God is with us and God will be with us.

Joy to the World, the Lord is come...and comes over and over again.

World without end. Amen.

*Rev. Marie*

## **MORE WORSHIP NOTES**

In-person worship in the building will continue through Sunday, December 20 with our traditional lighting of Advent candles each week.

There will be no worship on Sunday, December 27.

## September/October Session Highlights

- Session agreed to bring proposed amendments to the by-laws for the Congregation's vote of approval on November 1st. This vote will take place at the Congregational meeting after worship as well as the Election of Officers for the coming year(s). Copies of these proposed changes and the current by-laws have been available for the Congregation to peruse. If you would like to receive a copy of these, please call the church (334-2130) and request that a copy be mailed to you.
- Rev. Harry Heintz served as worship leader October 18th and will also be leading our worship in November and December on Rev. Marie's Sundays off.
- Rev. Marie has continued her Fellowship/Bible Study series Wednesday evenings via Zoom. These will continue until Advent.
- Purchase of a HEPA air filter for the office was approved and purchased. The church secretary's desk has also been moved to Rev. Marie's office to allow church secretary more privacy and less interaction with RNS traffic.
- Both RNS and in-person worship have resumed successfully with necessary modifications.
- Parking lot was resealed Oct. 18th thanks to the donation of parents of two RNS students.
- Donations continue to be accepted for Mary's Place (hygiene products) and Cameron Ministry (breakfast items).
- Information regarding Thanksgiving Basket donations and Christmas donations will be forthcoming.
- Stewardship Campaign—Pledge cards need to be returned by Nov. 13th and distributed by Nov. 1st.
- In-person/online worship services have been discussed after seeking input from congregation.
- Presbytery Meeting will be October 31st at 10:00 a.m.

Yours in Christ,  
Ellen Best  
Clerk of Session

## **Buildings and Grounds Update**

Good News! Our parking lot has been sealed!

We received a very generous gift from Ashley and Andy Oberg, whose two daughters currently attend preschool at Rush Nursery School. They are the owners of the asphalt maintenance company, Jet-Black. They had some extra product this Fall and offered to donate the extra sealant to seal the church parking lot. They cleaned the parking lot and applied the sealant after our church service on October 19. I was able to coordinate the scheduling and application of the sealant with Kirstin (of RNS) and Ashley.

The lower drive-through road was not sealed, so RNS parents and employees were able to drive in and out on that road while the sealant dried.

Randy Hamilton  
Building & Grounds

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## **Let's Keep the Blessings Coming!**

The Fall season is upon us, and that means it's Stewardship time. It's the time of the year when we look back and remember how our little church has done BIG things. We have continued to support the Friendship Children's Center, support our own church, and the PC(USA). Your generosity of time, talent and treasure has been such a wonderful blessing. Let's keep the blessings coming!

You should be receiving your annual Pledge Card for 2021 in the mail. If you haven't received it by November 5, please call the church office at 334-2130, and leave a message for Mary. Please prayerfully consider how you can continue to support the vision of JCPC, then fill out your pledge card and bring it to church or drop it in the mail by November 13. Trust that God is working with us to accomplish more than we think we can.

Stewardship Committee  
Barb Hamilton, Mary Cunningham, Bev Little

## **Tis the Season!**

For many years, JCPC has given generously to families during the holiday season. This year will be a bit different. As of this Communique, we have just the Friendship Children's Center and Kirkhaven Traditional & Long-Term Care to support. As the holidays gets closer, we may have some other opportunities to help with. Right now, we would like to support the Children's Center with new toys for Christmas.

Joi says they will need toys for children ages 3 to 12 years. No wrapping is needed, just bring a new toy or two to church, or they can be dropped off at Jody Day's home – or Barb Hamilton's home – starting now until December 15. Monetary donations can also be made. You can make a check out to Friendship Children's Center and send it to church, or give it to Jody or Barb. Cash will also be accepted.

Following is a list of gift ideas from Joi for the Friendship Children's Center:

Baby Dolls	Trucks/Cars	Board Games	Craft Kits
Sketch Pads	Paints	Colored Pencils	Gel Pens
Legos	Card Games	Puzzles	Outdoor Toys
Plastic Animals/Figurines		Balls (soccer, football, Nerf)	

The Kirkhaven Resident's Christmas Gift Wish List will be printed out and put on the back table in the sanctuary for those attending church to take with them. For those of you who receive copies of the Communique because they do not use a computer, the list will be inserted as an extra page of this Communique.

Thank you in advance for being a holiday elf.

Mission Team  
Jody Day, Barb Hamilton

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## **An Unexpected Surprise!**

As I prepare this Communique, Kirstin, Director of RNS, stopped in the office to tell me that the RNS children will be making food donations to RHAFT this year instead of having their annual Trick or Trunk Halloween festivity. They will be leaving their donations in our food cupboard basket in the front entrance of the church. What a lovely gesture and a nice opportunity for these little ones to learn the joy of giving!

## **CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING**

"Many hands make light work."

"Teamwork makes the dream work."

"If we all do a little, it adds up to a lot."

There are lots of ways to say it — but working together really does make bigger and better things possible. And, lots of times, working together makes it more fun, too. In fact, there are times made better just by our ability to be together, to be with one another.

That is something that really rings true, doesn't it? Being together. During these past months, many of us weren't able to be together in person. We have always been together in spirit, and in faith. But we missed seeing each other. We missed seeing faces we love — up close and personal. But that doesn't mean we haven't been together. And we definitely have not been alone.

There is a word that comes up a lot during this season we call Advent in the Church, and it points to the same sentiment, but about God: "Emmanuel." Emmanuel means "God is with us," and, in Jesus, we Christians claim that God took on human form to be with us. "God is with us" is more than just saying God is along for the ride. It states God values togetherness and relationship with us, leading us to value togetherness and relationship with one another. When we are all together as we are today — and even when we are apart. The Christmas Joy Offering is one way we join together as Presbyterians from around the country. We do this to meet the needs of vulnerable people we might not be able to meet as individuals or as single congregations. We might not be able to meet face to face with those who need the support that our gifts provide, but we are very much still together.

The gifts we share connect us. They also change lives. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we support church workers and their families who experience critical financial needs through help from the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. We connect with the young people attending Stillman College, Presbyterian Pan American School, and the Menaul School, supporting the education and leadership development for students of color, who will soon be leaders in our Church and in the world.

"God is with us." All the time. During this season of Advent, as we approach Christmas, I can't think of a more perfect gift than that. Thank you for sharing those lessons and those truths, through your gift to the Christmas Joy Offering.

Please give generously, for "if we all do a little — together — it adds up to a lot."

## **A CHRISTMAS AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

*By Nathan Nettleton*

**We believe in God, the creator and giver of life,  
who brought all creation to birth, who mothers us and fathers us,  
protecting, nurturing, and cherishing us.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ: God born among us as a fragile baby,  
embodying both love and the need for love,  
and calling us to rest in God as trustingly as a tiny child.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, breathed into us at our birth,  
always drawing us on to be born again, encouraging, exhorting,  
comforting, nourishing our growth and inspiring our living.**

**We believe in the reconciliation of the world to God, through Christ.  
Hunted at birth and humiliated at death, Christ entered our fearful  
darkness so that we might enter his glorious light  
and share the life of his resurrection.**

**And we believe that each new child is a glimpse of the face of God,  
a sign of the life to come, and a call to live in peace  
and celebrate living together.  
Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.  
Amen.**

## **ADVENT RESURRECTION**

The disciples had been sitting around Jerusalem for three days. The crucifixion had wiped out all their hopes and dreams. In their understanding, Jesus was dead and buried, sealed forever in a tomb. It's not that they were struggling to find some thin sliver of hope. They were totally hopeless, finished, wondering what to do with the world in which they had been left. Then suddenly, Jesus was alive. The whole world looked different.

I hadn't thought about this until recently. If you read the Bible carefully you will discover that, for some reason, God chooses to bury things before resurrecting them. There was no reason why Jesus couldn't have just come down off the cross instead of being buried. But God chose for Jesus to stay in the tomb three days, just as God chooses for the wheat seed or the tulip bulb to stay buried in the cold winter ground for a period before it germinates and grows.

Perhaps you have noticed in your own life that the sense of resurrection does not come easily. It usually follows a period of despair and hopelessness. New life springs out of the darkness of winter.

It may seem odd to talk about Easter and Advent together, but in fact they are inexorably linked. The open tomb is the reason we know that our wintertime waiting is not hopeless. The coming of the babe of Bethlehem is our reminder that God does, inevitably, come. In the end God will come to restore earth to the perfection that was intended in the original creation. It will be the perfection of the Garden.

And so the liturgical seasons are all linked together in one great salvation drama. And our prayer, in each season of life, remains the same: "Come, Lord Jesus."

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Amen.**





“I don’t think I would be here without the support...”

**Rose Bryant**  
Graduate, Stillman College

The Christmas Joy Offering helps Stillman College and other Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color prepare future leaders.

*Read Rose’s story on page 14 of this guide.*

“What the Board of Pensions is doing is huge. I’m grateful for those who give to the Christmas Joy Offering.”

**Rev. Dr. Stewart M. Pattison**

Stewart is grateful for the grant he received that allowed him to continue to minister to his church members even with multiple sclerosis.

*Read Stewart’s story on page 13 of this guide.*

