

# The Visitor

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## The Meaning of the Story

As I watched our Christmas Eve Service on Facebook and YouTube with many of the rest of you, I found myself listening to the words of the songs and to the words of the Scripture and Litanies with an eye for critique. Instead of worshiping, I was busy wondering if the service had meaning for those watching, if I could have edited things differently or if there was too much of one thing and not enough of something else. I know that is one of the struggles of wanting worship to touch people, even if we are watching through computer or tv screens.

As I spent some time after Christmas on a quick getaway with Julie, I began to think about something I shared in my homily, listening to the stories and spending time in the manger with Jesus. So, I decided to do just that. I read the story from Luke again, this time purposefully reading it with a simple question in my mind, "Why does this story still have meaning for me?" That might seem like a strange question to ask oneself, but I find sometimes it is good to reexamine what it is about the stories that still holds power for us, instead of simply saying this is what I believe, or this is what I know.

As I thought about the story of the birth of Jesus, of the simplicity of the story of the birth and the magnitude of the story of the announcement to the shepherds, I tried to move past some of my academic/pastoral tendencies and re-read the story for me. And in the words, I found something I had forgotten – I need God in this child because in this story, in this child, I meet the caring, loving God who gives up God's power to know what it is to be like me. This story still means something to me because it reminds me that God knows what it means to be heartbroken. It reminds me that God knows what it means to be stabbed in the back. It reminds me that God knows how we mess up and make excuses and try to make ourselves look better than we are. God knows how broken our hearts are, how fearful and anxious we can be, because God chose to be with us, to be like us, to truly know us. For me, the birth of Jesus, of the Christ child still holds power because it is an annual reminder that God who was and is and shall be, who is the Creator of all that is and all that will be, THAT God shows us that



love is about others and love is about hope and love is about knowing how hard human life is and love is walking together to make things just a little bit better for us all.

Rereading this story has helped me to remember why it is that I am a follower of Christ and of God. God is love and to follow God and Christ is to love like God loves. God knows we aren't perfect at it. God loves us anyway. God knows we will make horrible mistakes. God will be with us regardless. And when we want to run away, to give up and to hide away for a while, God shows up unannounced to walk with us, to keep us going and to help us to see hope.

As we move on from a year that has been anything but normal, I encourage you to find why these stories still have power for you. You never know what God might show you.

In Christ – Pastor Matt

## Special Dates in January:

January 1: New Year's Day  
 January 8: Drive-thru Community Dinner, 5-6 pm  
 January 18: Martin Luther King Day  
 January 18: BG Food Pantry Volunteer - 1-3 pm  
 January 20: BG Food Pantry Volunteer - 10 am-12 noon  
 January 22: BG Food Pantry Volunteer - 10 am-12 noon



## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED...**

...for the BG Christian Food Pantry on the following dates:

Monday, January 18 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm  
 Wednesday, January 20 from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon  
 Friday, January 22 from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Four people are needed to help each day.  
 Please contact Pastor Matt or the church office  
 if you are interested.



## **Financial Information**

| Date  | Offering   | YTD Income  | YTD Expenses | Difference |
|-------|------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| 11/22 | \$260.00   | \$92,604.60 | \$92,339.81  | \$264.72   |
| 11/29 | \$943.67   | \$93,509.60 | \$94,252.31  | (\$742.71) |
| 12/6  | \$2,665.00 | \$96,174.60 | \$95,834.74  | \$339.86   |
| 12/13 | \$1,713.00 | \$97,887.60 | \$97,287.14  | \$600.46   |
| 12/20 | \$987.00   | \$99,795.40 | \$99,008.57  | \$786.83   |

|              |      |
|--------------|------|
| Jill Witham  | 1/5  |
| Lynda Dean   | 1/14 |
| James Cole   | 1/18 |
| Logan Wick   | 1/18 |
| Todd Jimison | 1/20 |
| Rowan Wicks  | 1/21 |
| Kell Shaffer | 1/22 |



First Christian Church  
 Bowling Green, OH

## **BG DRIVE-THRU COMMUNITY DINNER**

**FRIDAY, January 8, 2021**

**5:00 - 6:00 pm**

**(or until food runs out)**

**FCC BG - 875 Haskins Road**

We have now served two "Drive-Thru Dinners" at FCC and hope to keep this a part of our food mission going forward. However, to be successful, we need a team of regular volunteers to help with the following:

*- Advertising at local food pantries and on social media      - Menu planning, Cooking & Serving*

If you are interested in helping with Elizabeth Wick and Betsy Solley with this monthly Outreach Project, please contact Elizabeth Wick at 419-575-7867 or DEZSLL6@gmail.com as soon as you are able.

Please note that at this time and due to Covid, all cooking is occurring off-site and social distance is maintained during meal construction and serving.

**WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US IN THIS VALUABLE COMMUNITY OUTREACH!**

## **Prayer**

### **Please Pray for**

Family of Carol Steiner  
 Family of Juanita Prowant  
 Laynee (Sharon Daniels' great niece)  
 Ann Harris (Betsy Solley's sister)  
 Ric Lane (Betsy Solley's brother)  
 Healthcare Workers  
 First Responders

### **Continued Prayer for**

Karen Adams  
 Larry Ballard  
 Patty Bienkowski  
 Tim Bomeli  
 Seldon & Peggy Carsey

Ann Jones  
 Ruth Ann McCray  
 Diane Morlock  
 David Ridgway  
 Sharon Shaffer

### **Missionaries & Ministers**

Audrey Connor  
 Erin McCreight  
 Ernie Unholz

**Need someone added to this list? Please write your request on the sheet in the foyer or e-mail the church office.**





### Thank you to all who supported the various Salvation Army programs during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

You may have donated a coat, hat, gloves, or scarf. These items were distributed during the BG Christian Food Pantry's Thanksgiving Food Basket program, hosted at FCC.

You may have donated cash to the Food Pantry to help cover the cost of food or donated your time during set-up, or during the organizing and distribution of the food. Please know that the gratitude of the organizers and recipients was sincerely expressed.

The Adopt a Family program helped five families totaling 13 children (age 14 or younger), 2 young adults, and 8 adults. The generous donations from our FCC family, the Men's and Women's Fellowship

groups, and friends of members of our church reflected the true meaning of Christmas...Love, Joy, and Peace!

The adopted families recognized the **LOVE** you shared by giving; I saw the **JOY** of the families, (especially the adults) knowing they were now going to have a Christmas for their children; and the **PEACE** of knowing they no longer had to struggle to figure out where they could afford even one gift.

It was amazing to meet these families and to hear their stories of unexpected unemployment, raising grandchildren, etc. One mother broke out in tears, when she was also given wrapping paper, tape, bows, and tags. She said these luxuries were simply not affordable for her to purchase.

Your generosity also enabled a minimum of \$125 to a maximum of \$250 per family to be used on groceries. Again, the heartfelt and sincere gratitude was expressed by these family members!

The Bell Ringing program came to a halt when the ringing was moved outdoors. As I spoke with the Salvation Army's Executive Director Nichole McKnight, she noted that numerous organizations were unable to fill slots due to the new location.

This decline of ringers led these groups to find other ways to support the mission, including special collections and allocating funds from existing budgets. FCC will be making a special Salvation Army donation of at least \$500. My hope is that this donation will increase once the total financial contributions are confirmed.

I believe the true **JOY** for me was being reminded how blessed I am to have such an amazing Church family! I am speaking not just of those who supported these programs, but those who offer to share their time or resources or talent, to ensure God's love, care, and compassion are radiated throughout our community.

Thank you! May everyone have a Blessed, Healthy, and Prosperous 2021!  
(If you have any questions, please call me: 419.601.0976 or email me: cnekilpatrick@outlook.com)

Earlene Kilpatrick



~~ Feed My Sheep ~~ Tend My Sheep ~~



Care Team members will continue to reach out to church members as we enter the winter months in 2021.

If you find you have time on your hands after the holiday season, pick up your phone and call someone to chat for a few minutes; we can never have too many contacts with others. The winter months make it even more difficult to get out and a phone call might be just what someone needs to brighten their day.

Thanks and Blessings to the Care Team members for keeping the connection to others in the First Christian Church family strong.

Nancy Andrade, Sharon Daniels, Patty Hollabaugh, Jay Kirkbride, Pat Koehler, Marge Leathem, Carla Meredith, Marcia Naugle, Rae Thomson, Julie Sink, Betsy and Mike Solley, Char Scherer and the Wednesday Study Group, and Pastor Matt Every.



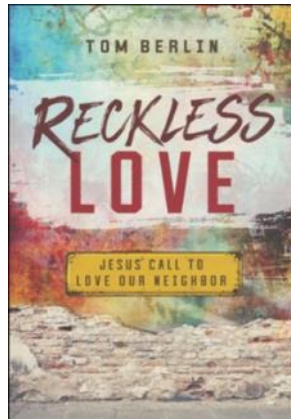
## Women's Spiritual Studies Group

We continue to meet weekly at 11:00am via Zoom and would love to have more people join us. Contact Char Scherer ([cschere@bgsu.edu](mailto:cschere@bgsu.edu)) if you need the link.

We concluded our Advent Book, *Making Room: Sharing the Love of Christmas* by Ed Robb on December 23, 2020.

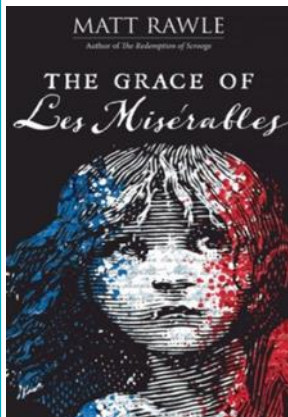
On January 6, 2021 we will start a new study: *Reckless Love: Jesus' Call to Love Our Neighbor* by Tom Berlin.

In this study we will "consider how to follow the Greatest Commandment and learn how [our] love for the people around [us] can completely renew [our] faith and give [us] a new experience of loving God." With FCCBG's emphasis on helping our neighbors through our food ministry, this seems a fitting inspiration for us to do even more. It is a 6 week study and will take us up to Lent.



For Lent we will read *The Grace of Les Miserable* by Matt Rawle.

The author "dives into six ideals found in [Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*] – grace, justice, poverty, revolution, love and hope - drawing parallels between the iconic story and musical and our Christian calling, inspiring us to both understand our faith and live it out in the world." This promises to be a very meaningful Lenten experience.



Come join us anytime!

## MODERATOR REPORT December 2020

Our Food Ministry, as adopted, involves two programs. They are the Bowling Green Christian Food Pantry, under Director Todd Saylor's leadership, and what I've viewed as the descendent of the Martha's Kitchen program, itself suspended, through which a large number of churches cooperated to present a weekly meal at First United Methodist Church. The second of those programs we began in November. At this time, it is a monthly, drive-through meal prepared in volunteer's kitchens and distributed from our kitchen to vehicles that drive through our parking lot. In November, under Elizabeth Wicks' leadership, we served over 90 meals within 45 minutes. We learned some lessons that have been incorporated into the way the Solleys handled the responsibility for the December meal. We anticipate a third meal similarly prepared and delivered on January 8.

Come January I will enter the last six months of my term as Moderator of the Board. My chief goal for those months is to learn how most fully and effectively we can use our resources within the church and around the community to stabilize this "meals" program, so that beyond my tenure it has a clear and lasting role in the life of this church as it connects us to Christ, to each other and to our community.

In particular two questions concern me: (1) How should we make use of the facilities of our church, primarily its kitchen and in a future time, when congregating dining is again possible, its fellowship hall, to serve our mission to be Christ Jesus's agents to society's most vulnerable? And (2) How should we procure the food so that we can live within our own budget, serve nutritious and attractive food, and avoid imposing wastes on our region through the systems we use?

The answers to these questions will need to come partly from experience, partly from how the Pandemic progresses and hopefully subsides, and partly from investigating how others may be willing to cooperate with us as partners in this ministry. I ask you all to pray, confer and plan how we can best use the months ahead to the glory of our Lord and the ministries of his to which we are committing ourselves.

Donald Scherer  
Moderator of the Board





## FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF BOWLING GREEN, OH BOARD MEETING, December 10, 2020

The December 10, 2020 church board meeting of First Christian Church was held as a virtual meeting and was called to order by Moderator, Don Scherer at 7:30 pm. Present: Pastor Matt Every, and members Don and Char Scherer, Earlene and Claude Kilpatrick, Steve Riewaldt, Sid Sink, Pat Koehler

Moderator Don Scherer opened the meeting with prayer.

Minutes: Minutes of the November 12 board meeting and the December 6 congregational meeting were presented for approval on a motion by Earlene Kilpatrick, second by Char Scherer. All yes.

Clerk's Report: Loss of one following the death of Carol Steiner this week.

Treasurer's Report was given by Sid Sink. Current income for the year is \$96,174.60 with expenses of \$95,834.74. The checking account balance is \$27,026. Sid estimates that income/expenses will be about even at December 31. He will have a report in mid-January showing contributions to the Food Pantry and Salvation Army. The report on restricted and unrestricted funds will also be available in January. A motion to accept the report was by Pat Koehler, second by Earlene Kilpatrick. All yes.

Property Committee: Steve Riewaldt reported that snow was removed from the parking lot and sidewalks after recent snow. The globe light at entrance needs to be repaired but requires a new line from the church and that will have to wait until Spring. Weight Watchers will not be meeting and have cancelled their use of their storage locker. The monthly fee is \$10. Marie Rogers is waiting for a response from the landscape designer for the pollinator project.

Worship Committee: The taped readings and candle lighting for Advent has gone well. The Christmas Eve service will be pre-recorded and virtual only. Cleve Patton will be providing piano tracks to use with the carols. Carols and readings will be videotaped on Tuesday and Wednesday next week. Matt continues to post devotions on Facebook using prayer station themes. Matt will be recording the January 3 service as he will be out of town; his homily that day will be on John 1 as it relates to discipleship.

Moderator's Report: *(Full report attached)* Don posed two questions from his report for discussion; to summarize, how should we make use of our facilities to serve others and how could we procure the food. Facility issues of concern are liabilities, training of kitchen equipment, sharing the work load and building restrictions. Planning is difficult with the pandemic still in progress. Matt reported there is money available in the Martha's Kitchen budget and there may be support from other funds. Donations could also be solicited. Don suggested that food purchased in large quantities thru Todd Saylor from the NW Ohio Food Bank might also be possible. This discussion will continue as an agenda item at the January board meeting.

Personnel: Pastor Matt exited the meeting prior to Claude Kilpatrick's report. A motion was presented on behalf of the committee that Pastor Matt be given a \$500 bonus as a year-end thank you for his work in keeping our worship service available during the pandemic. The motion passed unanimously.

Prayer concerns: Carol Steiner's family at her death; Neocle Leontis at his unfortunate death; Jill Witham as she struggles with cancer.

Don closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m. Minutes by Pat Koehler

