



*Central
Connection*

December 2, 2015

Dear Friends,

If your household is anything like mine, you are starting to feel the crush of the holiday seasons. I say holiday seasons not Christmas Season since we are just beginning the Advent season and Christmas is not just one day but a twelve day observance culminating in Epiphany. I bring up the semantics of the season because every year seems to heighten the polarization between those who through a desire to be inclusive or politically correct emphasize winter holidays over Christmas and those who want to put the Christ back in Christmas. The divide doesn't feel as abrasive this year as it did almost ten years ago when there was a controversy sweeping through Washington, DC over whether it is the "Christmas season" or the "Winter Holiday season". You may recall that Dennis Hastert, the then Speaker of the House, had decided that the decorated tree in the Capitol was going to be the Congressional Christmas Tree instead of the Congressional Holiday Tree. To the outside observer, this seems reasonable; Jews, Muslims, and presumably observers of all other religions do not decorate evergreen trees at this time of year as part of their religious observances. Therefore, the tree in question is a Christmas tree. The controversy then had to do with potential violations of the separation between Church and State. Those who disagreed with the renaming of the tree may have had a point, but I did not think it was an overt attempt to overturn two hundred plus years of Constitutional law, rather I think it was an attempt to reign in what some in the Christian community had sensed about the increasing secularization of Christmas.

Think about how many of us prepare for the day when we observe the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We light up our houses. We put up brightly lit and colorfully decorated trees. We make shopping list for both gifts and feasts. We fill our calendars with parties, pageants, and other such events. We take our children to the mall to have their picture made with Santa Claus, and we send off piles of "holiday greetings." Somehow we do manage to squeeze a nativity scene in the front yard alongside the ten-foot tall inflatable Frosty the Snowman. However, driving around town seeing all the decorations, listening to the plans people are making for Christmas weekend, and knowing that Sunday will be a low attendance day has me wondering if maybe those wanting to put Christ back in Christmas are right.

The history of Christmas observances goes back to the early days of Christianity right after it became the official religion of the Roman Empire. In an attempt to speed along the conversion of the Roman pagans to the new religion, the religious authorities adopted the old Roman festival of the winter solstice as the new feast of the nativity complete with "Christ Mass." Somehow I think what we have done in recent years is lose the religion and turn back to the celebration of an old pagan festival. Maybe the Puritans had it right some three hundred years ago when they outlawed the observance of Christmas. Since everyday was a day of the Lord's making why did we need to observe a festival to recognize the Lord's presence in the world? Every Sunday worship was a celebration of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, it was in short the Lord's Day, and had been for centuries. The interesting thing about the Sunday worship was that in the beginning of Christianity when it was still a minor Jewish sect, Sunday was a normal workday. Saturday was the Sabbath, the day of rest and formal religious observances. Sunday the faithful had to be intentional and carve out part of the busy day to worship our Lord and Savior. Thus it seems ironic that in years when the Lord's Day and Christmas intersect (like next year because of the leap) many choose to ere on the side of a modern pagan festival and refuse to carve out some time for God.

I am not sure yet how we will observe Christmas on the Lord's Day in 2016 here at CPC. It will probably be a scaled down version of our usual Lord's Day worship and may even look like our new Koinonia service. The service may be earlier in the morning, since I have doubts about Sunday School attendance. We might even be in pajamas having just opened presents. Whatever form it takes know that it will be a day that the Lord will make, and we will rejoice and be glad in it. In any case that is for next year. As for this year we will worship and celebrate for nearly a month and a half the Light coming into the world. May you all be filled with the joy of the seasons and show forth the light of Christ in the world during these seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany.

Joy and peace,

Brian

Birthdays & Anniversaries

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| David Boudra..... | 12/06 | Maddy Clements..... | 12/17 |
| James Raines..... | 12/07 | Bailey Magill..... | 12/18 |
| Connie Schutt..... | 12/07 | Sarah Floyd..... | 12/19 |
| Sarah Dove..... | 12/08 | | |
| Haley Perks..... | 12/09 | | |
| Joshua Perks..... | 12/10 | Ken & Kellie Coker..... | 12/12 |
| Susan Jordan..... | 12/11 | | |

Prayer Concerns List

A special prayer that you'll be blessed with tender care and needed rest, warm thoughts of friends that mean so much and most of all, God's healing touch.

Members of Central:

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Ann Shields | Mary Baker | Steve Zimmer | Ivana Salmans |
| Janet Roys | Richard Perkins | Carol Wilkins | Evelyn Porter |
| Elizabeth Hopkins | Crutch Aikman | Jeanice Falls | Bill Wade |
| Mary Henson | Jerry Ratzlaff | | |

Friends of the church:

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Lorene & Whit Evans | Delores Bryan | Winn Corpes | Gunner |
| Ron Reid | Julie Session | Pat Landrum Odum | Brenda Ballard |
| Eddie Carrington | Emile Brown | Linda Sanders | Flave Peters |
| James Young | Pam Mathis | Marty & Gary Hayward | William Reid |
| Sheree Hodge | Barbara Webb | Tim Gutierrez | Pam Staggs |
| Rhonda James | Mr. Delone | Myra Ballanger | Robert Reynolds |
| Harris Family | Sherry Felder | Jim Gifford | Scott Brownlee |
| Denney Jordan | President Carter | Robin Rylander | Diana Rambo |
| Jan Schutt | Edward James Family | Judy Powley | Dorothy Walker |
| Ariel Pishney | Margie Nance | Steve Erwin | Liz Frank |
| Wanda Brewer | Tracey Salzan | George & June Workman | Richardson Family |
| Jeff Pike | Frank McCarron | Betty Turner | People of Paris |
| Ed James | Sam Ake | | |

All military personnel including: Will Porter, Riley Whittenburg, Timothy Dann, Callie Latimer, David Gordon, Brandon Gortemiller, Stephanie Williams, Will Holland, Mark Hendron, Dustin Clark, Joshua Johnson, Andrew Bellocchio, Jacob Randle, Jason Harrison, Robert Barber, Carter Stone, and Travis Sloan.

Memorials

None

Thank You

Thank you to Sally Ramey and Vicky Kiehl for help folding the *Central Connections*.

Central Welcomes Visitors



November 22: The Belongia Family, Amy Wetzel, David Rochford, Eldon Clary, Shelly & Claire Fine, JJ & Judy Thornton

November 29: Jodi & Donna Copeland, Shelly & Claire Fine,

Notes of Interest

Join us for the *all church potluck* hosted by Session on Sunday, December 6, immediately following worship. Bring your favorite dish to share. Everyone is welcome!

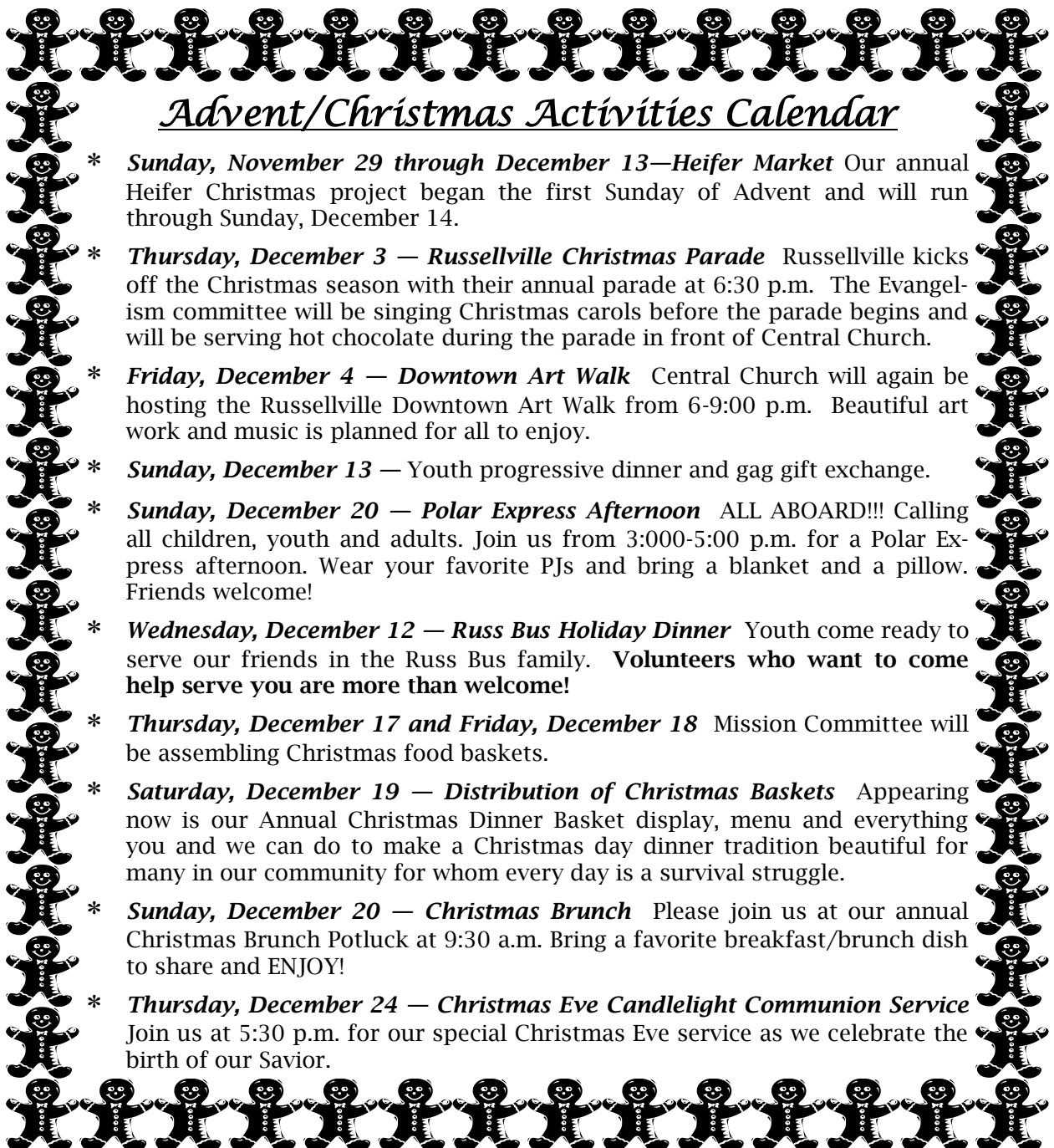
There will be a **Congregational Meeting during potluck to elect officers.**

Mission Committee still needs the following items for the Christmas Baskets: **Black eyed peas or green peas 23 cans, Cranberry Sauce 85 cans, soup 64 cans, corn and green beans still need a few cans, sweet potatoes 68 cans, cake mixes 90 boxes, muffin mix 84 packages, stove top stuffing 95 boxes, jiffy mix 90 packages , potato mixes 75 boxes, teas or cocoa 90 boxes.** Thanks!

Members and friends of Central Presbyterian Church are *invited to place a Christmas poinsettia* in the sanctuary this Advent and Christmas season. Call the church office if you wish to place a poinsettia in honor or in memory of someone. You may either purchase or order your poinsettia through your favorite florist (the church does not place orders for poinsettias). We ask that the poinsettia's be red. Please ask the florist to cover the post with gold paper and red ribbon.

Welcome new members:

Cindy Thompson and Kelsey & Hank Walker



Advent/Christmas Activities Calendar

- * **Sunday, November 29 through December 13—Heifer Market** Our annual Heifer Christmas project began the first Sunday of Advent and will run through Sunday, December 14.
- * **Thursday, December 3 — Russellville Christmas Parade** Russellville kicks off the Christmas season with their annual parade at 6:30 p.m. The Evangelism committee will be singing Christmas carols before the parade begins and will be serving hot chocolate during the parade in front of Central Church.
- * **Friday, December 4 — Downtown Art Walk** Central Church will again be hosting the Russellville Downtown Art Walk from 6-9:00 p.m. Beautiful art work and music is planned for all to enjoy.
- * **Sunday, December 13 — Youth progressive dinner and gag gift exchange.**
- * **Sunday, December 20 — Polar Express Afternoon** ALL ABOARD!!! Calling all children, youth and adults. Join us from 3:00-5:00 p.m. for a Polar Express afternoon. Wear your favorite PJs and bring a blanket and a pillow. Friends welcome!
- * **Wednesday, December 12 — Russ Bus Holiday Dinner** Youth come ready to serve our friends in the Russ Bus family. **Volunteers who want to come help serve you are more than welcome!**
- * **Thursday, December 17 and Friday, December 18** Mission Committee will be assembling Christmas food baskets.
- * **Saturday, December 19 — Distribution of Christmas Baskets** Appearing now is our Annual Christmas Dinner Basket display, menu and everything you and we can do to make a Christmas day dinner tradition beautiful for many in our community for whom every day is a survival struggle.
- * **Sunday, December 20 — Christmas Brunch** Please join us at our annual Christmas Brunch Potluck at 9:30 a.m. Bring a favorite breakfast/brunch dish to share and ENJOY!
- * **Thursday, December 24 — Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service** Join us at 5:30 p.m. for our special Christmas Eve service as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Looking to Sunday

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| <p><u>December 6</u> Scripture.....Mal. 3:1-4; <i>Luke 1:68-79; Phil. 1-3:11</i> <i>Luke 3:1-6</i></p> <p>Worship Assistant.....Steve Zimmer Children's SermonMaggie Brock Children's Church.....Kellie Coker, Hanna Haines Ushers..... Scott & Susan Jordan, Joe David Turk Nursery Volunteer.....? Bus MinistryJohn Aikman AcolytesIzzy Clements, Jennifer Belongia Coffee HostPotluck-Session</p> | <p><u>December 13</u> Scripture.....Zeph. 3:14-20; <i>Isa. 12:2-6; Phil. 4:4-7</i> <i>Luke 3:7-18</i></p> <p>Worship Assistant.....Charlotte Calvert. Children's SermonPastor Brian Children's Church.....Beth Monroe, Garrett Magill Ushers.....Andy Brock, Susan Allen Nursery Volunteer.....Kris Griffin Bus Ministry..... AcolytesDay Stoker, Maddie Clements Coffee Host.....Cheryl Coleman</p> |
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| Upcoming Events: | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Sunday, December 6 | | Sunday, December 13 | |
| 9:30 am | Sunday School | 9:30 am | Sunday School |
| 10:50 am | Worship | 10:50 am | Worship |
| Noon | Potluck, Knox | Noon | Fellowship, Knox Hall |
| Afternoon | Congregational Meeting | 4:00 pm | Youth-Dinner and gag gift exchanges |
| | Communion to shut ins | | |
| Tuesday, December 8 | | Tuesday, December 15 | |
| 1:30 pm | Central Prays | 10:00 am | Newsletter deadline |
| | | 1:30 pm | Central Prays |
| Wednesday, December 9 | | Wednesday, December 16 | |
| 5:15 pm | Tech Reading Day | 5:15 pm | Handbell Choir Rehearsal |
| 5:30 pm | Handbell Choir Rehearsal | 5:30 pm | Bible Study |
| 6:30 pm | Bible Study | 6:30 pm | Koinonia Worship |
| 7:30 pm | Koinonia Worship | 7:30 pm | Chancel Choir Rehearsal |
| | Chancel Choir Rehearsal | | |
| Thursday, December 10 | | Thursday, December 17 | |
| 5:00 pm | Central Prays | 9:00 am | RV Quilters |
| | | 5:00 pm | Central Prays |
| | | | Assemble Christmas Baskets |
| Friday, December 11 | | Friday, December 18 | |
| 9:00 am | Quilters | 9:00 am | Quilters |
| | | | Tech Graduation |
| | | | Assemble Christmas Baskets |
| Saturday, December 12 | | Saturday, December 19 | |
| | Russ Bus Dinner | | Distribute Xmas Baskets |





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