

MESSENGER

VOLUME 69, NUMBER 12

DECEMBER 2020



December 24,
5:00 PM

The LCPC family and the entire community is invited to a fun, colorful, family-friendly, outdoor Christmas event that will include inspiring, Christ-centered music and a short, Christmas-focused message. This service will be held in our main parking lot, and masks and distancing will be required. Pre-packaged snacks and bottled water will be offered, as well as gift-wrapped New Testament Bibles while supplies last. Gather safely with your church family and welcome the newborn Savior with joy.

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ALTERNATIVE GIFT FAIR GOES ONLINE!

COVID continues to be a thorn in our sides, you might say. But we can still glorify God by supporting the work of Heavenly Treasures, who provides a livelihood for poor people around the world through sales of their handicrafts.

You know the quality of HT's products from the Christmas time



sales we have held in the past. Now HT sells most of its beautiful craft array online, and RIGHT NOW THEY OFFER FREE SHIPPING ON ALL ORDERS OVER \$20.

HT's mission is to equip and assist people in developing countries to break the cycle of poverty through their handiwork and creativity. They focus on

handicraft projects that allow the development of a micro enterprise, leading them down the path to self-sufficiency. They network with those who can consistently build relationships with the participants of the livelihood projects and have their own network to build the kingdom of God.

Please check out the Heavenly Treasures website at: <https://shopwithamission.com/>.



PASTOR'S LETTER



'Tis the season – and don't you just love it?

Round about the third week of November, when the inflatable Santas appear on rooftops and we hear Christmas tunes in every store and restaurant, we all start fantasizing. We dream of that elusive white Christmas in Montrose. We have visions of sugar plums – plates and platters of deep fried sugar plums with creamy chocolate and caramel centers that are completely lacking in calories. Not even COVID could spoil Christmas.

That said, the season isn't all candy canes and candles. All of us of us experience conflicting emotions this time of year. We feel childish excitement, profound gratitude, and overwhelming love for family members and friends. We're more inclined to give lavish gifts, tell bad jokes, and drink too much

special punch. At the same time, we feel stressed by our cram packed schedules, let down by friends, and maybe envious of their happiness. We feel cut off from our church family and homesick even when we're home. In our darkest moments, we feel disappointed with God, and with the life he has given us.

I love the way Kate Boshier talks about our Christmas longings. (Dr. Boshier taught Classics at Northwestern University.) (Sadly, she died on April 1, 2013, at age 38.)

"Isn't it funny that at Christmas something in you gets so lonely for – I don't know what exactly, but it's something that you don't mind so much not having at other times."

Some people think the secret to contentment – or at least to minimizing misery – is to lower your expectations. But that diagnosis is overly simplistic.

Our Christmas disappointments aren't just about spoiled eggnog and political fights at the dinner table. They have much more to do with the fact that the heavenly promises of Christmas are never fulfilled as we would like them to be. We yearn for a world at peace, but the New Year inevitably brings news of another war. The Savior is born, yet we wait and wait for his return. We long to see human hearts changed, but our personal failures and weaknesses persist.

What we're lonely for – what we crave – at this hope-filled time of the year is intimacy with the Lord Jesus. And that loneliness is a gift. It's a message from God's Spirit to our spirits. It's the beginning of the answer to the deep, deep yearning of our hearts.



So we're drawn once again to our Emmanuel – God made flesh, lying in a manger. We're reminded once again of those glorious promises. As we surrender our lives to the Lord, we discover a peace we've never known, a peace that no setback – no war – no pandemic can take away from us. As we tune our hearts to his heart, we experience a joy, the durable kind of joy proclaimed by the angels – joy that isn't dependent on circumstances – joy that comes from walking with our gracious God and bringing glory to him.

Merry Christmas,
Josh

God bless us, everyone!
Andy Wilson



STUDENT MINISTRIES

This last month in Abide has been one of great grace from our great God. We met with multiple age groups weekly in the park as it got darker and darker each week, adding to the ambiance of our discussions. November saw us wrap up our two-month long series focused on understanding our pain and trials from a Jewish perspective – that is, how Hebrew imagery from the Old Testament can inform our suffering. We now will be studying the life of the Apostle Paul, and considering how we

can learn from his passionate pursuit of Jesus after his conversion.

Please continue to pray for our students as they navigate school, friendships, complicated home life, faith and passions during this already difficult season. We bless God for His great kindness and mercy to Abide!



MESSENGER

LA CRESCENTA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ART DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Shawn Kelly
shawndraws@gmail.com

**MESSENGER DEADLINE
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15
9:00 AM SHARP!**

Messenger articles and corrections should be emailed to shawndraws@gmail.com. Please put the word "Messenger" in the subject line. They can also be placed in the Messenger folder. Materials submitted after the deadline may be omitted at the discretion of the editor.

LEE'S LATEST

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17)

Thanksgiving is the Jan Brady of Holidays – caught in the middle of Halloween and Christmas! KOST 103.5 is already playing Christmas music just four days after Halloween. I acknowledge the difficult historical realities of the settlement of the Americas, but to just gloss over the one day a year when we focus on gratitude does seem to be throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Paul makes gratitude one of the centerpieces of his theology. Gratitude should be the default setting of our hearts – it acknowledges that all good things come from God and understands that God is God and we are not. But beyond the theological truth of thanksgiving, it is one of the most important disciplines we can use to shape our hearts and minds. Neuroscientists and psychologists have studied the physical changes that happen in our brains when we practice sustained, disciplined gratitude. It rewires our brains to experience greater joy and less anxiety.

I hope this year of all years you make gratitude a habit. Amid all the stress, anxiety, and depression that our culture is experiencing, it's vital that we learn and practice the art of thanksgiving in all that we do, whether in word or deed.



Light A Candle Foundation Update



Wilkin Meristol, Director of Enciende Una Luz/ Light a Candle, and his wife, Karen



The 2019 Project Dominicana group in front of their hotel



The Light A Candle/Project Dominicana medical clinic

children's Ministries

by Kristy Hicks

There were some days this year I didn't know if we'd make it to December. But time keeps marching forward, and now we're finally at the most magical time of the year. And with December comes Christmas, and with Christmas, Advent, my favorite liturgical season!

Those of you who aren't "high church" people might not have a favorite liturgical season. (Most people don't!) But especially around the holidays, I crave tradition, and I love looking through church history to find traditions that make me feel more connected to the Christians who came before me. One of those traditions is Advent. Now, you might guess that Advent is my favorite because of the themes of hope, faith, joy, and peace. (Or maybe because of the chocolate advent calendars!) And I do love those themes. . . and chocolate!

But Advent is actually my favorite because it is a tiny example of what we face all the time as Christians. To me, Advent is about waiting for something that we know is going to happen, but hasn't happened yet. It's about the tension between the imperfect world we live in now and the perfect world to come – the already, but not yet, of the Kingdom. When we lean into the waiting at Advent, we recognize that the world is a broken place. And yet, we aren't without hope. Jesus already came!

And He will come again! But in the meantime there is pain and brokenness. And observing Advent gives us a time to recognize that pain and brokenness while we wait for the world to be made new.

I think the impulse in the modern American church is to skip straight to the joy. I understand that impulse. The world is hard, and I love a good Christmas cookie and Christmas lights as much as the next person! But I love Advent because it reminds me that the Church is with me in the waiting and longing. Jesus knows those feelings, and we don't have to ignore them or pretend like everything is okay. And the last few years as I've been more intentional about observing Advent, the celebration at Christmas is even sweeter. I'm not saying that you shouldn't wear an ugly sweater or put up decorations until December 24, but I would encourage you to remember as you prepare for Christmas that Jesus knows the pain of an imperfect world. Advent is a time to both long for a better future, and celebrate the fact that Jesus has already come!

If you're looking for some ways to celebrate Advent and Christmas as a family, have no fear! Parents should have already received a packet with Advent activities via email the weekend after Thanksgiving. And December's Family Faith Box

will have plenty of Christmas activities as we learn about the Christmas story and the birth of Jesus. (If you don't get Children's Ministries emails and want them, let me know by emailing me at: kristyh412@gmail.com.)

Finally, we are going to be hosting a virtual event called "Dough Holy Night," put on by the same company we used for this summer's Bolt VBS. This will consist of families spending a night at home together as a video walks them through baking some delicious cookies and learning the true meaning of Christmas. We're encouraging as many families as possible to do this on Friday, December 11, but if you're busy that night, the video will be up for the entire month of December. We'd love to see what you make, so post pictures of your cookie creations on Facebook or Instagram and tag LCPC!

I hope that your holiday season is full of as much peace, hope, faith, and joy as possible this year. But if you're feeling more frustrated than joyful, I hope this idea of Advent being a time where we can hold both longing and joy in tension helps you feel a little less alone.

Merry Christmas!

In Christ,
Kristy

Dear Friends,

It's Christmas time! It's a time to reflect on the end of a most unusual year but the beginning of our celebration of the coming of the Christ child.

The year 2020 will surely not be forgotten for many years or even generations, but the memory of God's goodness in sending us His son has stood the test of time for more than 2000 years. Jesus has been our strength and shield through more plagues, wars, regime changes, and disasters than we could imagine and His loving kindness to us has never failed. He knows our suffering, our fears and doubts, and never abandons us to despair or to suffer alone.

This time of COVID and political turmoil has given us the opportunity to truly cast ourselves on his mercy and strength. We have been able to turn to Jesus when everything seems so uncertain and he has answered us sometimes even before we knew what to ask.

I had a conversation just today where a friend told me God answered her prayer so quickly she was amazed and I said I thought He was just waiting for her to ask. He knows what we need but it seems He often wants us to ask him so we know exactly where our help comes from.

I have mentioned in previous newsletters that I know God loves me because of the people he sends



to love and help me in times of need. Your Deacons are here to extend the loving hand of Jesus when times are tough, you are feeling alone and friendless, or just need to hear a kind word.

We had another thoughtful and fun outreach project in November making and delivering pumpkin bread to many church members at home or after the 10:00 AM service on November 14. We hope you enjoyed the personal interaction in person or by phone as well as the list of resources available to us here in La Crescenta or Los Angeles county. Our Lord speaks to us in so many different ways!

It has been a delight to think of ways we can share the love of our Father this year when our usual

traditions have not been an option. Thank God for extending His creativity to us and helping us remain a loving community.

I wish you a very blessed and memorable Christmas season, even though you may not be able to physically be with all your family or friends as usual. We can rest in the company and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ and are thankful that we have our hope and trust in Him.

Blessings and Peace
Kerry Milbrodt





Joy to the World – Christmas is almost here! COVID is NOT going to stop us from celebrating the most wonderful time of the year! The Sanctuary may not be decorated, but the outside of LCPC has never looked more festive, thanks to the vision and talent of **Mandy Cary!** By the first Sunday of Advent, the front of our church was decked out with lights, a creche and a Christmas tree.

We're looking for donations of live Christmas trees for the Courtyard, to bring the Christmas spirit to the kids of CFC and to our outdoor worship services. Call Nancy in the church office if you'd like to help.

Kristy has lots of fun planned this month for kids and their families. Her **December Family Faith boxes** and **Advent Packets** are full of Christmas activities. On Friday, December 11, we hope you will join her virtual event called **"Dough Holy Night."** Families will watch a video while baking together and learning the true meaning of Christmas. You'll also end up with a sweet treat at the end! If you can't make it on the 11th, the video link will be available all month. Please share your photos and videos of your baking extravaganza on our social media pages!

Our praise band, **The Blessed**, has been recording new Christmas music for this year's online services, featuring some of our favorite traditional songs. They're also recording other new songs that can be used throughout the year.

Our **Christmas Eve service** will be an outdoor affair, at 5:00 PM in our parking lot with live music and a message. (See the front page for more details.) We'll also be posting an online Christmas Eve service. Say your prayers for dry weather and decreasing COVID numbers!

Monday, December 28, at 7:30 PM, **Michelle Bouse** will offer her last **Creative Bible Journaling** Zoom meeting of 2020. It's sure to be something festive and fantastic! If you'd like to participate, email michellebouse@me.com to receive the Zoom link. You don't need a Bible Journal to participate – any craft supplies you have around the house will work.

If you haven't turned in your **Faith Estimate of Giving card** yet, it's not too late! These estimates are so important in helping the Finance Committee determine the budget for 2021. You can

bring it to a service and place it in the offering plate, mail it, or drop it off in the church office.

Last month, our **delightful Deacons** treated the congregation to gifts of homemade pumpkin bread (see photos). They baked more than 150 loaves in the church kitchen and passed them out after our worship service. Loaves were delivered to friends who weren't at the service. It was scrumptious and a much appreciated labor of love!

Speaking of love, we are so excited that **Josh** proposed to his longtime girlfriend **Kristin Jewell** over Thanksgiving, while vacationing in Lake Tahoe with his family. How exciting is that? We're so happy for this special couple and can't wait to see the new jewel on her finger!

Despite previous announcements, Session decided **we won't be changing our service times, once indoor worship is permitted again.** We will continue with the Contemporary service at 9:00 AM and the Traditional service at 11:00 AM once the ban has been lifted. In the meantime, we offer our outdoor worship service in the courtyard at 10:00 AM. The first Sunday we changed back to mornings, we had the biggest crowd so far! But don't fear – seats are well spaced out and plenty are still available.

Our prayer events have changed a bit too. Sunday mornings, the prayer team meets after the service at 11:00 AM in the children's play area behind the Fireside room. Thursday evening Prayer in the Park is now **Prayer in the Sanctuary.** It was just a tad too dark and cold in the park at 5:15 PM, so it has moved indoors, with masks and plenty of distancing. Enter the Sanctuary though the Breezeway door.

Kristy organized an entertaining event for families last month – a **Family Photo Scavenger Hunt.** Prompts led families all over La Crescenta, to take wacky pictures of themselves in parks, at decorated houses and even of wild animals! Photos were uploaded to a Google album and everyone received a prize for participating. I think anyone with a photo of a live bear should have automatically taken 1st place! **Christine Marks, Carrie Hofmann** and **Amanda Granier** could have provided one after a recent encounter at Deukmejian Park, but that's a story for another time!

Mary Wilson and the **SPARKS** had an outdoor game night on the basketball court to get together, have fun and get away from computer screens! Kids were thrilled to burn some energy



and receive a donut-to-go as a party favor!

We were treated to another interesting and informative **Gracious Conversations on Race and Reconciliation** virtual event. **Phil** and **Lecia Van Horn** and **Pastor Andy** got the honor of interviewing **Dr. John Perkins**, one of the leading evangelical voices to come out of the civil rights movement. He discussed his book "One Blood," then there was an open dialogue for viewers. If you missed it, it will be posted on the LCPC YouTube Channel.

Josh has spent hours designing and populating our **new church website**, which is no easy task! We're so excited about this advanced platform that will offer new options for keeping you informed. If it's not up yet, it will be soon!

Thank you to **Trader Joe's** for donating 30 pumpkins to CFC. They added just the right Fall flair around the campus, along with the hay bales. CFC recently got air purifiers for each classroom, to help with cold, flu and now COVID season. **Pat and her staff** do an incredible job of keeping the CFC kids safe, healthy and happy!

May God Bless you and your family this Christmas and praying for health, peace and an abundance of love in 2021. Talk to you next year!



CFC Heartbeat



Director's Corner

As the song says, it's the most wonderful time of the year. I love this season. I love traditions, time with family, children making ornaments, singing carols, baking cookies, and celebrating the birth of Christ. Now with my children in homes of their own and one with children, it's fun to see what traditions they carry into their lives from each side of the family and what new ones they create together. Bob and I will enjoy spending time with our girls at the beginning of December and then spoiling our two grandchildren and being with their parents on Christmas.

This year of course things will be different. Not all holiday traditions will be available to us but that doesn't mean that Christmas this year is "less than." I think about the first humble Christmas in a stable with a mother

afraid for her child and feeling that Jesus was missing out on the traditional birth in a home surrounded by love ones. I see in the story, especially this year, a God that provided all that was needed and people that adapted to the changes in their circumstances. They still praised God and displayed love as a family.

Candle lighting is used in many religions and cultures to mark important times. One of my favorite traditions is the lighting of the advent candles. If you are unfamiliar with this tradition it is where five candles are positioned usually in a circle and sometimes within a wreath.

I Will Light Candles This Christmas

By Howard Thurman

I will light candles this Christmas,
Candles of joy despite all the sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all year long.

One candle is lit each Sunday for the four weeks before Christmas. This year that would be starting on November 29. On this day we will light the candle of hope. The following candles are love, joy and peace with the final candle known as the Christ candle which is lit on Christmas Eve or

Christmas Day.

Our world needs hope, love, joy and peace, as do our families. I hope you can reflect on these words this month and look for tangible examples of these words in your home, work and spiritual lives. If we take the time to notice, we will see wonderful things happening around us and in the face of our children. It is a most wonderful time of the year. There are many advent candle devotionals on line, here is just one example: <https://www.muscadinepress.com/products/family-advent-devotion-free-printable>

May your December and beyond be filled with hope, love, joy and peace.

Pat

Betty White



CFC wants to honor Betty White upon her passing. Betty was one of the original six members of the CFC staff. She was instrumental in taking the CFC from a half day only program to including a full day program. She mentored many new and young staff in their first jobs and was famous for her "BJW" memos. I had the privilege of being her assistant, a teacher under her administration and then followed her as Assistant Director of the CFC. She was always a champion for children, the CFC, and her faith. We stand on the shoulders of women like Betty White.

Health Policy

As we run headlong into our normal cold and flu season I want to remind you of our revised health care policy. As I have said, it will take all of us to keep the CFC open and serving families.

- If anyone at the Center for Children shows COVID-19 symptoms, during the day, we will isolate the symptomatic person and send them home as soon as possible.
- We shall contact local Department of Public Health and follow their instructions on cleaning, closure and notifications.
- When signing in, both the drop-off person's and the child's temperature will be checked with a no-touch thermometer. If the child or drop off person that has a 100+ temp the child will not be accepted. We ask you to be honest with us about any fever-reducing medication your child may

have taken. We will also be looking for coughs, runny noses and other signs of illness. Children with symptoms will be excluded from our program for 72 hours symptom free without the use of medicine or if in the opinion of the administrative staff the symptoms are related to COVID-19 we will require a medical clearance before the return to the CFC; this will include one of the following: a negative test, 14-day isolation free of symptoms or an alternative diagnosis from a doctor's office.

- We require that you notify us if anyone in your household is currently or becomes sick.
- The same health screenings will also occur for each teacher/staff member.
- These policies are in place to help stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

We are pleased to announce that enough funds were raised in our fall fundraiser to purchase air purifiers for all classrooms. They have been ordered and should be in the classrooms soon.

Christmas Holiday

The CFC will be closed from **December 24 – January 1**. Regular tuition will be due for these days. This break will give us a chance for some deep cleaning and to make sure everyone is well before returning on January 4. Happy Holidays! Please speak to Pat if you have questions about this closure.

Christmas at LCPC

We want all our CFC families to feel welcome in celebrating the joyous season with our larger LCPC family. Look throughout this newsletter and look for announcements about ways to celebrate with us. Worship services continue to be offered on line and in an outdoor setting in the courtyard. A special Christmas Concert will be available on the LCPC website.

Christmas Craft Night

We are so excited to share with you an **At-Home Christmas Craft Night**. On Thursday, December 10, your child will bring home a bag full of the items you will need to make four different crafts. Each one will have a video of a member of the CFC staff demonstrating how to make the craft. These videos will be available on the CFC YouTube channel. Do all the crafts in one night or spread them out. Send us a photo of your finished craft so we can share with others. Maybe Zoom with another family and do the crafts together. Be creative! If your child is not enrolled in CFC but you would like to purchase a craft kit, please contact the CFC office.

CHURCH STAFF

Andy Wilson	Pastor andy@lpc.net
Lee Cook	Director of Spiritual Formation lee@lpc.net
Joshua Horton	Director of Student Ministries josh@lpc.net
Kristy Hicks	Interim Director of Children's Ministries
Gary Woodward Elzbieta Nawrocka	Choir Director Organist/Pianist
Dan Blessinger	Producer of Contemporary Music
Nancy Thomas	Office Manager nancy@lpc.net
Pat Murphy Chambers	Director, Center For Children pat@lpc.net
Helen Tuma Teri Reid	Assistant Director Office Administrator



LA CRESCENTA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2902 MONTROSE AVENUE
LA CRESCENTA, CA 91214-3896
WWW.LCPC.NET
(818) 249-6137

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WORSHIP SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

AL FRESCO WORSHIP IN THE COURTYARD
SUNDAY 10:00 AM

Waiting. We're all waiting – waiting for a vaccine and treatments for COVID, for justice, and for light at the end of an ever lengthening tunnel. Advent is a time of waiting too. We wait for Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Join

us as we continue our meditation on these four themes of the Gospel of Jesus and await His coming. We will celebrate Christmas this year in unique ways, but our faith remains secure in God's unchanging faithfulness!

DECEMBER 6

Message by Lee Cook
Christmas Blessings: Peace
For Personal Study: Luke 2

**FACEBOOK LIVE COMMUNION AT
6:30 PM WITH ANDY, MARY & JOSH**

DECEMBER 13

Message by Lee Cook
"Christmas Blessings: Joy"
For Personal Study: Luke 1:46-56

DECEMBER 20

Message by Lee Cook
"Christmas Blessings: Love"
For Personal Study: Luke 1:67-80

DECEMBER 24

*One Christmas Eve Service
at 5:00 PM*

Outdoors in the parking lot
Message by Lee Cook
"Unwrapping Our Spiritual Gifts:
Faith, Hope, and Love"
For personal study: 1 Corinthians 13

DECEMBER 27

Message by Lee Cook
"Christmas Blessings: Unwrapping Faith, Hope, and Love"
For Personal Study: 1 Corinthians 13