

# The Central Visitor



Vol. XCVI

Decatur, Illinois, December 18, 2024

No. 25

## What Now?

On Sunday, December 29, Vicky and Scott Woolridge will be preaching. The sermon will be entitled "What Now?" and will reflect on the "in-between times and places" in our lives. We may find ourselves asking, "What now?" when something has ended and something new has not yet begun. How can we connect with God when the way forward is uncertain? We will hear the familiar words from Ecclesiastes 3:1: "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven." On the Sunday after Christmas, we will ask the question, "What Now?"

## Christmas Offering: Behind Every Church Stands a Supportive Regional Office

The Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin and The Christian Church in Michigan, like the 29 other Disciples of Christ regions across the United States and Canada, are often recognized for their camps and conferences. According to Clayton Summers, co-host of our camp near Dieterich with his wife Alix, "Camp Walter Scott continues to be a place for everyone who comes to experience the Divine flowing around and through them, in both the serious moments and in full-bellied laughter." But these two partner regions do much more than that. Their staffs also nurture the next generation of pastors, assist congregations in calling their next minister, and come to our aid in times of crisis. Our Christmas offering, to be collected Dec. 22 and 29, is our chance to support regional ministry. Please consider giving generously. If you have an offering to give, you may place it in the brass bowl in the Narthex, give online, or take it to the church office.

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2024

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP  
IN-PERSON (SANCTUARY)  
AT 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM  
AND LIVESTREAMED ON  
WWW.CCCDISCIPLES.ORG  
AND FACEBOOK LIVE  
AT 10:30 AM

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP  
IN-PERSON (GREAT HALL)  
AND LIVESTREAMED ON  
WWW.CCCDISCIPLES.ORG  
AND FACEBOOK LIVE  
AT 9:15 AM

## Scripture and Sermon for 12/22/24

Scripture: Luke 3:7-14

*We Praise God for the Invitation  
to Follow Jesus*

Michael E. Karunas

Happy New Year

Please join us for a  
New Year's Eve  
concert

Tuesday,  
Dec. 31, 2024  
7:00 PM

Unplugged Classics:  
An Evening of  
Timeless Hits

Featuring  
Heidi & David Sork  
from Seventh Trumpet

Central Christian Church  
650 W. William St.  
Decatur, IL



## Happy Birthday!! (12/22—1/4)

Jarrett Bednar, Chris Stock, Dean Larrick, Makaela Luthy, Debbie Hoffert, Gabbi Morelli, Scott Bicknell, Cruz Bottom, Travis Wilcoxon, Braylon Wilcoxon, Rebecca Monroe, Jace Van Uytven, Lyle Ater, Noelle Cohan, Caroline Dull, Kathleen Dudley, Melinda McDonald

Advent prayer: **Homecoming**

Steve Garnaas-Holmes ©2024

*And I will save the wounded and gather the outcast.*

*I will bring you home.*

—Zephaniah 3.19-20

**Sometimes, God, I long for you to take me to the Promised Land, but instead you bear me home, home to yourself, and to my own true self, to a place of belonging, of wholeness. Though dangers may still surround me,**

**I am in you, and you find your manger in me.**

**Take me home, Holy One, to the self I am called to be, in you.**

Breath Prayer:

At home in you ... in me

Steve is a retired United Methodist minister and can be found on Facebook or via direct email - [pastorstevegh@gmail.com](mailto:pastorstevegh@gmail.com) for more of his prayer poems.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY**

Our DOVE Clothing Room Hosts need someone to fill a host vacancy at the West Entrance. NO special training is needed! You are highly qualified if you are available from 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. on the 3rd Monday of each month, have a welcoming smile and can direct shoppers to Room 407.

Central is fortunate to house the DOVE Children's Clothing Room and we are happy to help in this valuable community ministry. Please contact Sandy Garver at [revrag@comcast.net](mailto:revrag@comcast.net) or 217-454-2111 if you have questions or are interested in being a Clothing Room Host.

**Counting On You**

**Sunday, December 15, 2024**

Total worshipping online = 198  
Total worshipping in-person = 335

**Counting On You**

**Sunday, December 8, 2024**

Total worshipping online = 137  
Total worshipping in-person = 275

**"Gloria – We Praise the God of all Homecomings"**

Everywhere we look in the Christmas story, we see people coming home. When Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem, where Jesus ended up being born, because they were coming home. Home to Joseph's ancestral home. Joseph was from the lineage of King David and David's hometown was Bethlehem. So Mary and Joseph went back home; to the place where it all began. And when they arrived, they weren't invited into a spacious room inside the roadside inn. Instead, they had to squeeze into cramped space, out back in the stable, negotiating with the livestock for valuable real estate. We go home like this too. Not exactly the same way, but – from time to time -we also go home to the place it all began for us; to visit the house in which we were raised; to the farmland our grandparents settled; to walk the hallways of the schools we attended; to swing on the swings of our favorite playgrounds; and to sit in the pews of childhood churches. Have you ever noticed, when you do that, that everything seems smaller? Back then, they were so large – or at least normalized. But now? It's as though we've outgrown them. And it's true. We have outgrown them. Coming home to the place our journey started shows us how far we've come; how much we've grown. Of course, it all seems smaller now, because we've changed. We've become so much more than we were then.

The Wise Men also came home. That is, before they came home they first came to Judea to visit the newborn Jesus. They had been guided by a star and traveled from the East for many days. And when their visit was over, they came back home. But this time they traveled by another road; they took a detour of sorts. They were not up on all the politics going on in Judea at the time. So, they didn't realize the Jewish King Herod saw the birth of Jesus as a threat to his kingship; and that he wanted Jesus dead. They also didn't know that he wanted to use them as his own personal GPS system. He told them to come back to him and tell him where exactly in Bethlehem baby Jesus was; that once King Herod had that information he was going to come and put the Jesus to death. But even without knowing any of that, the Wise Men were warned in a dream not to return to King Herod, but to sneak out of town and head back home by another road. So, their journey home took an unexpected detour and unanticipated delays - but they eventually made it home.

Last year during Advent, we asked you to share stories with us about a time when Christmas "almost didn't happen." When your Christmas plans unexpectedly changed so much that it seemed like Christmas as you knew it wouldn't come about. It shouldn't be surprising that a good number of your stories were about travel. Sudden blizzards, ice storms, road closures, flight cancellations all required a detour to be made, and delays to be endured, but somehow – eventually and overcoming all odds – you made it home and Christmas did happen. Not only that, the ones that almost didn't happen because of the detours and the delays ended up being the ones that we remember the most.

Then there were the shepherds. They also came home that first Christmas. Or better put, they went home. They were the very first people to hear of Jesus' birth. The angels who proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest" could have gone anywhere that night. They could have visited palace royals or big city businessmen. They could have gone to the social influencers of the day.

*(continued on page 3...)*

But they didn't. They went instead to certain poor shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. Shepherding was hard work; with long hours; and relentless exposure to the elements. It was a low-paying job, so it was one that anyone with any means would run from. Shepherds were drawn from among the disinherited of the world. They were those down on their luck; on work-release programs; who also met with parole officers and were trying to find a footing in life again.

But it was to them that the angels came that night! The ones overlooked and undervalued; with their backs up against the wall. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was spoken to them first! And after the shepherds visited the infant Jesus in the manger in Bethlehem, they went home differently. They were praising God for all they had seen and heard. They would be the first evangelists! Long before James gave up his fishing nets, Levi left the tax both and John baptized his first repentant, the Shepherds were the ones preparing the way for the Good News of Jesus Christ to inhabit the world. Where everyone else had beaten them down for the past mistakes, God lifted them up for their future potential.

Home is any place that celebrates you for how much you've grown and how far you've come. Home is any place that reminds you that the detours and delays on your life journey are meant to define you more than defeat you. And home is any place that believes in you; that believes you matter; that no matter how much you've been humbled by life, you're never to be humiliated. For in God's eyes, you are always worthy of love. And while you can find that place anywhere in the world, we hope that you find it here. We hope that every time you come to Central that you feel celebrated for how much you've grown - in life and in faith; that you are reminded that your challenges cannot break the spirit of God in you; and where you feel loved for you are... no matter what!

Blessings – Michael

#### **Northeast Food Pantry Donations**

Thank you Central Christian Church for your generosity and support for the Northeast Community Food Pantry shopping cart in 2024. A great way to start the new year is to join together and support Northeast Community Food Pantry on January 12, 2025. Last month's donations totaled 150 pounds of nonperishable food items. Please place your food donation in the shopping cart in the Connection Café. Let's fill the cart!

Here are some suggestions for January: canned and pouches of chicken and tuna, soup, canned chili, canned fruit and vegetables, rice, canned spaghetti sauce, peanut butter, boxes with individual packages of oatmeal, cereal, elbow and spaghetti pasta, and applesauce. Please, be sure to check the expiration date. It is also a good idea not to donate items in glass packaging.

#### **Looking for Christmas Eve Readers**

If you know you are attending the 5:00 p.m. contemporary service on Christmas Eve and would be willing to be a reader, please contact the church and let us know. We are looking for 6-7 people to help us read the Christmas story from scripture. We will follow up by letting you know which passage of the story to prepare. We already have volunteers for the 7:00 p.m. service and are only looking for readers for the 5:00 p.m. service. Many thanks in advance.

#### **Sunday (22) - Bring a Bell to Worship Sunday**

8:00-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary  
9:15-Sunday School  
9:15-Contemporary Worship, GH & online  
10:30-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary & online

#### **Monday (23)**

**CLOSED: DOVE Children's Clothing Room**

9:15-Prayer Group, Heritage Center

#### **Tuesday (24) - Christmas Eve**

7:00-Journeymen, Conn. Café  
5:00-Contemporary Christmas Eve Service, Great Hall  
6:30-Harp Concert, Sanctuary  
7:00-Traditional Christmas Eve Service, Sanctuary

#### **Wednesday (25) - Christmas**

**CLOSED: Church and Office**

**CLOSED: DOVE Children's Clothing Room**

#### **Thursday (26)**

10:00-Alanon, 401  
7:00-Chancel Choir, Choir Room

#### **Friday (27)**

#### **Saturday (28)**

#### **Sunday (29)**

8:00-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary  
9:15-Sunday School  
9:15-Contemporary Worship, GH & online  
10:30-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary & online

#### **Monday (30)**

**CLOSED: DOVE Children's Clothing Room**

9:15-Prayer Group, Heritage Center

#### **Tuesday (31)**

7:00 AM-Journeymen, 401  
7:00 PM-New Year's Eve Concert, Sanctuary

#### **Wednesday (January 1) - New Year's Day**

**CLOSED: Church and Office**

**CLOSED: DOVE Children's Clothing Room**

#### **Thursday (2)**

8:00-Emmaus Reunion group  
10:00-Alanon  
3:00-Decatur Needle Arts, Disciples Room  
7:00-Chancel Choir rehearsal, Choir Room

#### **Friday (3)**

#### **Saturday (4)**

#### **Sunday (5)**

8:00-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary  
9:15-Sunday School  
9:15-Contemporary Worship, GH & online  
10:30-Traditional Worship, Sanctuary & online



#### **Member in Mt. Zion Area**

#### **Seeking Ride to Church**

If you can help with this, please reach out to the church office.

**Remember to bring a bell  
to worship this Sunday!**

**Serving Schedule — Sunday, December 22, 2024**

**Elders:**

8:00 & 10:30 - Susan Bryant, Krista Rohrscheib  
9:15 - Krista Rohrscheib

**Dec. Prep Deacons:** Becky Johnston, Karen Penn

**Offering Deacons:**

8:00 - Gary Horvath, Christine Lyman-Harm  
9:15 - Marci & Steve Baumann  
10:30 - Keith Backes, Cole Shartzner

**Ushers:**

8:00 - Team 3 - David King, Capt., Nancy King  
10:30 - Team 8 - Tom & Diana Ritter, David Sheffer

**Greeters:**

8:00 - Julie & Ken Jacoby  
9:15 - Cheryl & Dave Zollinger  
10:30 - Andy & Theresa Fulk

**P.A. Operator:**

8:00 - Bobby Munos  
10:30 - Luke Kirby

**Liturgist:**

8:00 & 10:30 - Andy Fulk  
9:15 - Cheryl Zollinger

**Contemporary Snacks:** Susie Turner


**Nursery and Sunday School Schedule**

**Sunday, December 22**

**Nursery:** Izzy Kostbade, Rachel Miller, Lucy Rauch, Abigail Smith  
**Children's Sunday School:** Julie Martin, Rachel Miller

**Sunday, December 29**

**Nursery:** Abigail Smith, Jolie Witts  
**Children's Sunday School:** NO Children's Sunday School today



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(Disciples of Christ)**  
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[www.facebook.com/CCCDecatur](https://www.facebook.com/CCCDecatur)

**Serving Schedule — Sunday, December 29, 2024**

**Elders:**

8:00 & 10:30 - Linda Rowden, Karen Wade  
9:15 - Karen Wade

**Dec. Prep Deacons:** Becky Johnston, Karen Penn

**Offering Deacons:**

8:00 - Jane Davis, Bobby Munos  
9:15 - Deb & Randy Trei  
10:30 - Jill Heick, Kevin Wilmot

**Ushers:**

8:00 - Team 4 - Hazel Perry, Capt., Karen Penn, Charlotte Ballance  
10:30 - Team 9 - Kim Miller, Capt., Suzie Miller, Audrey Miller

**Greeters:**

8:00 - Al & Chris Fagin  
9:15 - Andy & Theresa Fulk  
10:30 - Brett Swallow

**P.A. Operator:**

8:00 - Donna Dash  
10:30 - Keith Backes

**Liturgist:**

8:00 & 10:30 - Charlotte Ballance  
9:15 - Theresa Fulk

**Contemporary Snacks:** Deb & Randy Trei

**“Like” and “Follow” us on Facebook**

To “like” hit the thumbs-up icon.

To “follow” click on the ellipse icon (...).

You will see a list of options pop up.

Find the option marked “follow” and click on that.



**Prayer Request Text-In!**

Have a prayer request? Text PRAY to 217-212-2173, or use the QR code to the left. *“PRAY” is the only word you should type.*

Your phone then sends you a link to the prayer request form to fill out. We would love to pray with you and follow up, if you wish.

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