

# BELL TOWER NEWS

College Hill Presbyterian Church – JANUARY 2025

513.541.5676 | 5742 Hamilton Ave. | Cincinnati, OH 45224 | chpc.org

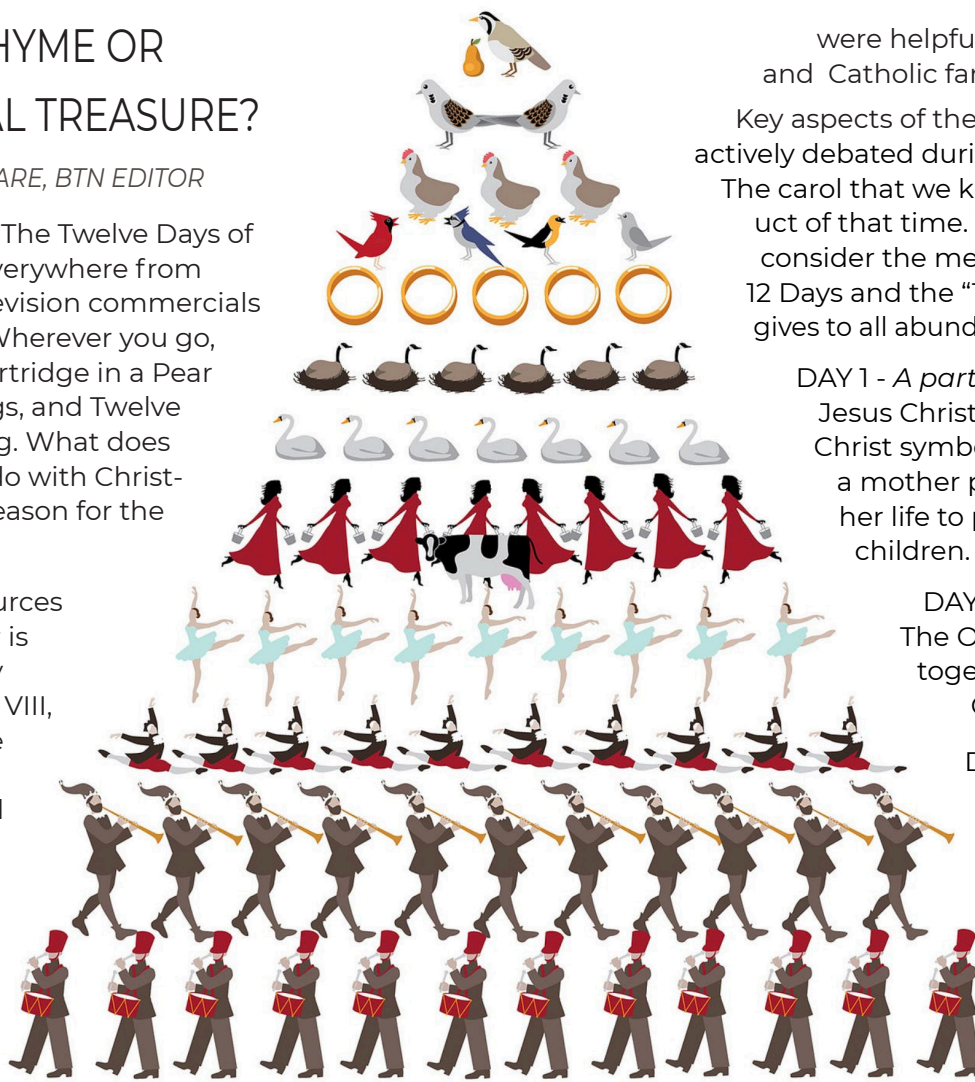
## SILLY RHYME OR THEOLOGICAL TREASURE?

BY SHARLYN STARE, BTN EDITOR

Each holiday season, “The Twelve Days of Christmas” is heard everywhere from shopping malls to television commercials to church functions. Wherever you go, you’ll hear about A Partridge in a Pear Tree, Five Golden Rings, and Twelve Drummers Drumming. What does such a song have to do with Christmas and Jesus, “the reason for the season”?

Depending on the sources consulted, the answer is “a lot.” In 16th century England under Henry VIII, the reformation of the Christian Church was underway. He banned the Catholic Church and imprisoned or killed practitioners.

Christian Education for adults and children grew in importance. Some believe that memory verses like the *12 Days of Christmas*



## 12 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS

were helpful for both Protestant and Catholic families.

Key aspects of the Christian faith were actively debated during the Reformation. The carol that we know today is a product of that time. Take a moment and consider the meaning of each of the 12 Days and the “True Love,” God, who gives to all abundantly.

DAY 1 - *A partridge in a pear tree:* Jesus Christ. Our ultimate gift is Christ symbolically presented as a mother partridge sacrificing her life to protect her helpless children.

DAY 2 - *Two turtledoves.* The Old & New Testaments together bear witness to God's self-revelation.

DAY 3 - *Three French Hens* are the three virtues of Faith, Hope & Love.

DAY 4 - *Four Calling or Collie Birds* are the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

(CONTINUED PAGE 4)

# “JOIN ME FOR THE CHPC HONDURAS MISSION TRIP JUNE 7-14, 2025”

An invitation from Samuel Mock, CHPC Assistant Pastor

Will you and maybe some friends join us for this year’s Mission Trip to Honduras in partnership with SonLight Power? Here is an update.

## What’s the deadline to apply to go?

January 15th is recommended.

## What will we be doing on the trip?

We share Jesus with people in remote areas of Honduras by providing solar electricity and light in their communities, which are too far for the government to provide.

**But I’m not an electrician!** Me neither. We have skilled electricians who teach us what to do. if you don’t want to do electrical work at all, we have a fun role on our Fiesta team. This team interacts with the local community, plays with the kids, sings songs, and tells them about Jesus similar to a Vacation Bible school.

**Where is Honduras?** It’s a country of Central America situated between Guatemala and El Salvador to the west and Nicaragua to the south and east. The Caribbean Sea washes its northern coast, the Pacific Ocean its narrow southern coast.



**Do I need vaccines?** I’m not a medical pro. Talk with your healthcare provider. An up-to-date Tetanus shot is recommended (if you don’t have any allergies to the shot). There are also services like Passport Health of Blue Ash that can advise you and provide vaccines as needed.



IT’S A MIRACLE! BE PART OF THE WONDER THIS YEAR.

## Total cost of the trip: \$ 2500

What does that cover? Your Airfare, lodging and food while in Honduras, and supplies for our team and our work in the country.

HALF OF THE FUNDS DUE: March 1st

PAID IN FULL DEADLINE: May 15 th.

**What if I don’t have that kind of money?** We have scholarships available to help with some of the funds. I will also help you craft a support letter you can send to friends, family, etc. You’ll be surprised how God provides for those who seek to do his will. Remember a passport is needed for this trip.

**To apply, go to [Chpc.org/SLP25](http://Chpc.org/SLP25) .** With limited spots on the trip, we will prioritize sign-ups by order of sign-up, relationship to our congregation, and team needs. A guardian must accompany all participants under 18.

If you’re selected for the 2025 team, I will notify you via the email you list on your application. Upon notification, you will receive a Submission Form. Sign up and pay a \$500 non-refundable deposit within 14 days to reserve your spot. The deposit will be applied to the \$2500 trip cost.

**Need more information?** To learn more and see videos of other trips, visit

<https://www.sonlightpower.org/join-mission-trip>, or call Jill Council at SonLight Power (513) 285-9960.

I can’t wait to partner with you!  
Samuel MOCK [smock@chpc.org](mailto:smock@chpc.org)

## GIVING THE GIFT OF LIGHT FOR GOD'S GLORY

*Testimony by Samuel Mock,  
November 2024 Team Member*

Our first SonLight Power trip is hard to put into words. It was a wonderful opportunity to be an answered prayer to many, to see God's love transcend language barriers, and experience his blessing as he moved in and through us.

Honduras is a beautiful country full of gracious people with incredible grit. After a day of work, we would celebrate when we turned on the lights for the first time. For us in the States, who turn on lights every day, it is something we don't think twice about. But, providing such light in a community of people in remote areas of Honduras, it is a miracle!

The lights being turned on mean so much more than brighter rooms; it means access to electricity. With the TV we give to the school and power outlets, the school will gain access to advanced curriculums for students, and the students will be able to attend school beyond the elementary school level. Students often need to farm the land during the day, so light allows them to continue their education at night.

Our work will change many lives, and more importantly, it's an open door for our Lord. We *tell* each community that Jesus sent us, tell them about Jesus, and give them Bibles. Beyond the *telling*, we *show* them—Jesus is the light of the world. Whoever follows [him] will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12)."

# CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY

**FOR ADULTS WHO INFLUENCE YOUNG PEOPLE**

**The Church Staff and Session invite adults to prayerfully consider joining them on Friday, January 17th (7-8:30 PM) for an overview of what to expect as CHPC embarks on a Christian Sexuality journey together in 2025.**

The five-part Christian Sexuality Training (CST) series is initially for adults – parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, coaches, mentors etc.—anyone who is in a role where they can impact the lives of children, youth, and young adults.

Now more than ever, our children need robust, honest, and theologically-rich conversations about sex, sexuality, and gender. This is exactly what the Christian Sexuality Training provides. The hope is to involve a broad group of adults to experience and evaluate the training before unrolling it in the Fall for young people.

Session members spent four months at the beginning of 2024 studying this series together and doing the hard work of ensuring that what we present to you has been examined both theologically and psychologically from a counseling perspective. Now we are ready to share this with adults within CHPC. We realize this may stir a host of emotions and responses, which is why we are sharing the series overview and a Q&A session on January 17. We are grateful for your consideration!

The Church has always struggled to address questions related to gender and sexuality with truth and grace. That challenge has increase exponentially in today's culture. Children are growing up in a world far different from anything we've seen before, and this difference compounds the challenge of helping them embrace the beauty of God's intention for sexual expression. Our children are constantly bombarded with messages about who they are (gender) and who they desire (sexuality).

By the time they begin hearing from trusted adults or the church about God's vision for sex and gender, they've already been bathed in a pool of competing (and sometimes destructive) ideas. How will the Church disciple through these challenges? It's not enough to just quote Bible verses at our youth, or to give a one-off message on sexuality and gender. We need to show them how beautiful the Creator's vision for human flourishing really is, so that they will not only believe it—but desire it!

**Registration is required for this training series. Go to [chpc.org/CST](http://chpc.org/CST).**

Questions? Contact Nikki McKenna, Director of Family Ministries  
NMckenna@chpc.org; 513-491-5571 .,

**The CST Series for Adults WINTER Dates & Times are  
Overview 1/17 (7-8:30 PM); Training 1/24, 2/21, 3/21, 5/02 (6:30-8:30 PM).**

*A light meal will be served and free child care provided.*

# 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

## SILLY RHYME OR THEOLOGICAL TREASURE?

(CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT COVER)

DAY 5 - *Five Golden Rings* refers to the Torah or Law, the first five book of the Old Testament which give the history of humanity's sinful failure and God's response of grace to his creation and redemption to/for a people to be a light to the world.

DAY 6 - *Six Geese-a-Laying* - Six days of creation before God's rest on the seventh day. "Laying down" on the Sabbath restores us to grow in love of God and love of neighbor.

DAY 7 - *Seven Swans a-Swimming* represented the sevenfold Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, Leadership, and Mercy—1 Cor. 12:8-10, Eph. 4:7-13, and Rom. 12:3-8.

DAY 8 - *The Eight Maids a-Milking* are the eight Beatitudes taught by Christ in Matthew 5:3-10. (1) Blessed are the poor in spirit, (2) those who mourn, (3) the meek, (4) those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, (5) the merciful, (6) the pure in heart, (7) the peacemakers, (8) those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

DAY 9 - *Nine Ladies Dancing* are nine choirs of angels and nine fruits of the Holy Spirit—Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.

DAY 10 - *Ten Lords a-Leaping* are the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17: (1) You shall have no other gods before me, (2) Do not make an idol, (3) Do not take God's name in vain, (4) Remember the Sabbath

Day, (5) Honor your father and mother, (6) Do not murder, (7) Do not commit adultery, (8) Do not steal, (9) Do not bear false witness, (10) Do not covet.

DAY 11 - *Eleven Pipers Piping* stood for the eleven faithful disciples who "piped" (declared) the faith in an unbroken tradition: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Jude, and



Simon the Zealot were faithful to Jesus until their deaths.

DAY 12 - *Twelve Drummers Drumming* are the twelve beliefs in the Apostle's Creed: (1) I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. (2) I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (3) He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, (4) He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell (the grave). (5) On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, (6) He will come again to judge the living and

the dead, (7) I believe in the Holy Spirit, (8) the holy catholic Church, (9) the communion of saints, (10) the forgiveness of sins, (11) the resurrection of the body, (12) and life everlasting.

### TO "or" OF

As I was researching the *12 Days of Christmas*, I also discovered a not-to-subtle shift in the use of the carol. It was developed as a vital memory device for Christians of all ages. Today, it has been trivialized and treated as a "silly rhyme."

Originally, the text represented a key part of the Church's liturgical calendar—the 12 days of celebrations between Christmas (Christ's birthday December 25th) and Epiphany (January 6th), the celebration of the Magi bringing gifts to Jesus.

In today's market-driven environment, the carol serves as a countdown *TO* Christmas, rather than a theological treasure leading *FROM* Christmas to eternity.

### NEW YEAR'S GIFTS

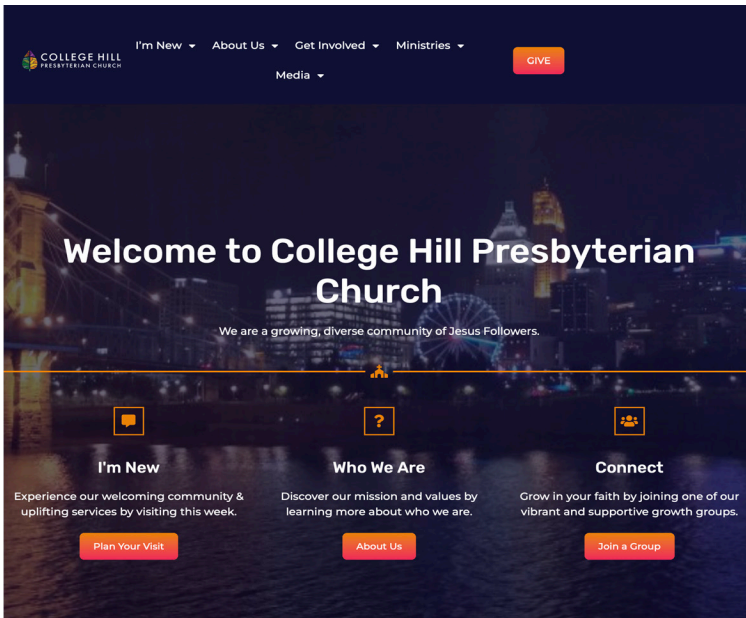
As we welcome the New Year 2025, let us consider the nature of our personal relationship with Jesus Christ—"Our True Love...the Giver of Good Gifts." Is the relationship superficial (based on a silly rhyme) or is it rooted in real theological treasure that enables his lovers to grow in grace and truth for the whole year.

If you do the math in the carol, you'll find that by the end of the 12th day of Christmas, you will have received 364 gifts from your "true love," Jesus. That's one for each day for the rest of the year. Amazing!

A happy New Year to you all.

## HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEW CHPC.ORG?

For many months, the CHPC Leadership Team has been working on the Church's website to make it welcoming, informative, and easy to use. You can help. It's still under construction. Will you find something new that you like? Or something with which you struggle? Please pass on your feedback to HLethander@chpc.org, or leave written comments at the Atruim Desk on Sunday mornings for Heather. Thank you.



## HAVE YOU SEEN

the changes in the plaque that lists members of the church who have been ordained to the Gospel ministry? The bronze plaque is located in the stairway that goes from the side narthex to the main floor of the Sanctuary. The plaques hold bronze plates that list the names and year of ordination. The first person listed is John L. Muntz in 1968. The most recent addition is Samuel G. Mock, ordained in 2024. Glory to God for those who have responded to his call to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ in the Church and beyond.



*Tidings of Comfort & Joy*

**BLESSED TO BE  
A BLESSING TO  
OTHERS**

Elfreda Akorah-Onyegbulam (left-in the photo above) is regularly seen playing violin with the CHPC orchestra. This Christmas the 17-year-old did more than make beautiful music. She knew of a family in need and mobilized school friends to help. You can see the results. How exciting when God's people respond to "his nudges" to love other in his name.

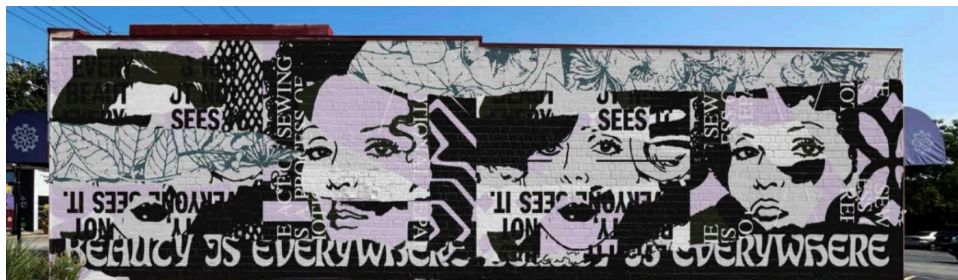


# PRAY FOR & INVEST IN COLLEGE HILL **WHY?**

Every thriving neighborhood is built on the foundation of a strong, resilient community, and in College Hill, that strength is embodied in the work of College Hill CURC. We are deeply committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive neighborhood—one where affordable housing is a reality, local businesses flourish, and our business district remains a welcoming hub for everyone. But this vision doesn't come without its challenges, and we need your help to maintain the sustainability of this mission.

Maintaining our affordable housing stock is no small feat. The properties we manage are more than just buildings—they're homes that allow families to stay rooted in College Hill, creating stability and fostering growth. However, as a non-profit, the cost of upkeep and rising maintenance expenses threaten the very affordability we strive to protect. We do everything we can to maintain the affordability and to create the best standards of living, but additional support helps to improve the quality of lives for our residents.

Beyond housing, our work extends to championing the small businesses that make College Hill unique. From the coffee shop to the local boutiques, these local entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of our community. Yet supporting these businesses and ensuring they have a clean, vibrant district to call home requires resources. From landscaping and street improvements to hosting free,



SILK ROAD TEXTILES welcomes its new mural, located on the south side of the building! Designed by Christopher A. Ritter and BLDG Brands, "Beauty is Everywhere" invites viewers to open their eyes and discover the extraordinary in the ordinary. In this work, iconic illustrated women are "sewn together" to create a unified face, symbolizing the interconnectedness of diverse cultures and identities. Each visage blends elements from various ethnicities, celebrating our shared humanity and the beauty of embracing our differences. Flanked by textile patterns from the Sandwich Islands, the Middle East, and India, the mural honors global beauty while inviting reflection on the aesthetics of College Hill. Measuring 16 ft. x 60 ft., this vibrant artwork transforms the urban landscape into a canvas of appreciation and awareness. The mural is made possible by College Hill CURC with support from *Keep Cincinnati Beautiful*.

family-friendly events, every effort we make enhances the quality of life for residents and business owners alike.

What makes College Hill special is that we prioritize community over profit. We don't charge entry fees for events, and we work tirelessly to avoid raising rents, knowing how crucial affordability is for both families and entrepreneurs. But as a non-profit, we depend on the generosity of people like you to bridge the gap.

LEARN MORE AT  
visit [WWW.CHCURC.COM](http://WWW.CHCURC.COM)  
and donate your time and support.

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"Whatever your life's work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead and the unborn, could do it no better". —Martin Luther King Jr.



## CHPC's FALL COMMUNION TABLE DECORATIONS CONTINUE TO BLESS

The Bahr Farm at 973 North Bend is the only working farm in College Hill. On Dec. 7, the pumpkins and gourds that graced the communion table in the Sanctuary found a new home. The cows on the farm love pumpkins. Look for more on the Bahr Farm in the Feb. BTN.



## TRAVELING COMMUNION

Communion has always been a vital time in the life of the Church. “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes again” —1 Cor. 11:26.

The ruling body of the church, the Session, has reaffirmed the importance of bringing communion to those unable to come to church. “Disapora Communion,” that some

refer to as “Über\* Communion” is CHPC’s way to provide *The Lord’s Supper* to those who are homebound, have special needs, or are hospitalized.

To request communion, contact Care Director Joanne Cornelius at [jcornelius@chpc.org](mailto:jcornelius@chpc.org), or phone Elder Janet Johnson at (513) 324-7412.



\*Über is German for “above all the rest.”



BY CHRISTY ROEDIGER

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

—2 Corinthians 5:17-14 (NIV)

The Bible teaches us that we are new in Christ – being rebuilt, transformed into Christ’s own image. We are each a unique, Christ-shaped person— a snowflake that is unlike any other of God’s masterpieces. Yet, when I think about myself and my own life, I see the same struggles and disappointments year after year. While there may be no sin that is surprising to God or so very unusual, I seem to struggle with the same sticky stuff day after day, year after year. So, how can I be new? Perhaps I need God’s perspective to see how maybe I’m patient differently than I used to be, or more mindful of interrupting, or with a heart more attuned to life’s challenges. Perhaps God sees how I’m a new creation and is happy with me today.

Almighty God, here we are in this new year and hoping for evidence that we are indeed “new creations in Christ Jesus.” We long to see that the baby we celebrated last month makes a difference in who we are and in our relationships and in our lives. Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. Be in me. Be among us. Do your transforming work and make us the new people you dream that we are. We come trusting in Jesus. Amen.

## WONDER WHO DECKED THE HALLS?

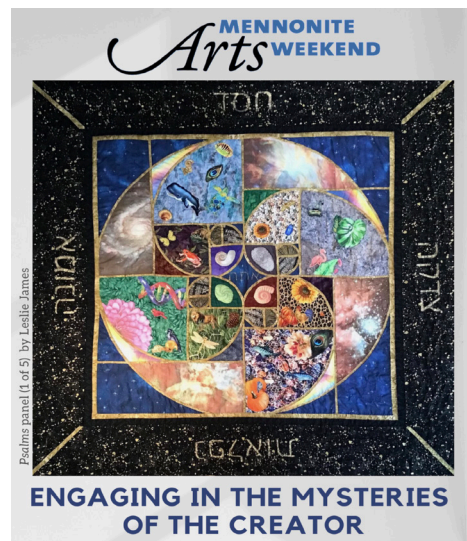
This year’s crew was (L to R) Pat Dollard, John Wendt, Tom & Beth Dryer, Ann Klusmeier, a friend of the Dryers who is a visiting scholar from China, Sam Stare, Mark Klusmeier, and Michael Fox. Not pictured are Barry Stare (photographer) and Cathy Smith. Help “undeck?” Come to the CHPC Atrium, Weds. Jan. 8th at 10 AM. See parts of the church you may never otherwise see. Contact Barry Stare 513-382-5897.



## SAVE THE DATE: February 7-9 CHRISTIAN ARTISTS WEEKEND Engaging in the Mysteries of the Creator

Venue: Sharonville United Methodist

Artists from many traditions gather to “reclaim their identity/relationship with the Church.” The result is a weekend of presentations, workshops, performances, and worship by writers, poets, painters, sculptors, fabric artists, photographers, dancers, actors, comedians, musicians, composers, and choirs from the U.S. and Canada. For more information on presenters and artists for 2025, go to <https://mennoniteartsweekend.org>.



# PREACHING SERIES FOR THE NEW YEAR

BY PASTOR DREW SMITH

## Jan. 5, 2025—WAITING WITHOUT A TRACKING NUMBER Matthew 2:1-12

On this 12th Day of Christmas the last sermon of the *Worth the Wait* series will be preached. The Magi actively waited on God's movement by watching the stars and deciphering the messages of the heavens. As we keep our hearts and minds open to God's voice we, too, will hear from him. He will lead us to himself because of his power, brilliance, and love.

## A CLEAR RESOLUTION – FOCUSING ON OUR COMMITMENTS & WHO WE ARE

In the remainder of the January preaching series, we will focus on our commitments as covenant partners at College Hill Presbyterian Church. We don't have members at CHPC, we have "covenant partners."

Covenants are a central theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, particularly God's loving "covenant" with his creation. The word is a fancy way of saying we make promises together to honor God as a Christian community. We are not customers or clients; we are partners with God and one another, committed to demonstrating to the world how God has created us to live. We covenant with each other to be led by the Holy Spirit in our lives so that we grow to love like Jesus.

We make a common commitment to Presbyterian principles and Reformed theological distinctives. We agree to pursue a common vision: "We honor God by growing a diverse community of Jesus followers." In our lives together, we continually encourage and challenge one another to love God

and our neighbor with our heads, hearts, and hands. We cannot do this on our own. We need one another as partners on this journey.

This sermon series will be an overview of our "Partnership class," which presents our common commitments for those seeking to follow Jesus at CHPC. This will provide a clear resolution of our common commitments – a reminder of what we have agreed to observe as Covenant Partners. As we enter 2025, we will focus our attention on what God has called us to do as part of his church at College Hill Presbyterian.

## Jan. 12—WHAT IS A PRESBYTERIAN?

I Corinthians 12:1-11, I Tim. 3:1-7, 14-16

This Sunday we are ordaining our new officers – elders and deacons – which is a hallmark of the Presbyterian Church. The word *Presbyterian* is derived from the Greek word for elder. The Covenant Partners elect elders from the congregation who will lead the church according to God's plan and purpose (in contrast to someone outside the church choosing the leaders). As Presbyterians, we are not only connected to one another as Covenant Partners, we are also connected to other Presbyterian churches. We work together for the Kingdom of God individually and corporately.

## Jan. 19—God's Commitment

Ephesians 1:3-22

We abide by Presbyterian polity

(organizational principles) and Reformed theology (beliefs about God). We all have a theology because we all have beliefs about God. The core Reformed theological principle is that God is the one who is in control. God is sovereign. God is God all by himself. Who we are as Christians and who we are as a church flows from the character and promises of God as revealed in Scripture.

## Jan. 25—God's Gifts—Ephesians 2:1-10

Reformed Theology states that we know we are made right with God by Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. The Scriptures teach that we are reconciled with God by God's gift of grace through Jesus, in whom we place our total faith for God's glory. All Christians are saved because of Christ by grace through faith for the glory of God, all of which is taught in the Bible.

**MLK SERVICE**  
**JANUARY 19, 2025**  
5808 GLENVIEW AVE., CINCY 45224

A MOVING  
COLLABORATION OF  
FAITH COMMUNITIES  
AND ART FORMS.

4PM - FELLOWSHIP AND SNACKS  
5PM - WORSHIP  
FREE ADMISSION. ALL ARE WELCOME!