

Operation Christmas Child Breaks Record

Cheri Brunner, Coordinator

I am ever so grateful for so many more Operation Christmas Child boxes this year. **We set a new record of 146 boxes - that means 146 children and their families will hear the message of Jesus because of you.** In our area, 5,760 boxes were collected in all, including 229 that were done online.



There were more than a few people who had never done a box or did not go to our church who did boxes this year because they heard about it from someone in our church. Thank you to all who got the word out and helped build excitement for the project. A special thank you Connie Kuehner who helped deliver the boxes (there were so many it took two cars)!

#TheChurchIsNotClosed



Above: Connie Kuehner helps load the boxes for delivery to Colfax. Below: Oralene Romjue packs boxes on the hood of her car.



Connections

December 2020

Light Out of Darkness

Corey Laughary, Pastor

*“The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.”*

- Isaiah 9:2



God brings light out of the darkness.

This Advent season, which started Nov. 29 and begins the new year of the Christian calendar, is a season where we watch and look for the coming of Christ into the world. This year, as much as ever, we need to be looking for the Light.

This is a season of spiritual darkness for the USA. A new illness entered our country early this year and as of the writing of this article it has accounted for the deaths of at least 270,000 Americans, with more added every day. The restrictions to fight the spread, the economic impact, the family and friends who go unvisited and the general fatigue and anxiety have added to the darkness of this time of grief.

We now join many people over the centuries that faced pandemics mixed with national division and confusion.

In biblical times, there were many periods of darkness and struggle. The Prophet Isaiah was called to preach and prophesy in a time of darkness. God gave him a message that there would be a great light coming to the people. As followers of Jesus, we believe that He is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise to give “great light... in a land of deep darkness.” That promise was for people of the past but also for us today.

God still is the God who brings Light into the world in times of darkness. And we need to be looking, praying, searching, seeking- watching for the Light. That’s what Advent is all about.

One of the most encouraging chapters of scripture for me is Psalm 139, and a verse that gives courage to my soul when I hear it is Psalm 139:12 -

Christmas Activities

Children’s Christmas Program
December 20 | 6 PM
ONLINE ONLY
Facebook & YouTube

Christmas Eve Services
December 24 | 7, 9 & 11 PM
In-Person Outdoors/Online
Look for more details in the
mid-month
newsletter and e-mail
communications.

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“Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.”

- Psalm 139:12

God is not consumed or altered by the darkness we experience. When it is night for us, God still has the Light. That doesn't mean God can't relate to us, it means that God can bring us the Light of Christ, no matter the darkness we experience.

This Advent, we are going to consider the Light of Christ and how it exposes the types of darkness we allow to mislead us, particularly the darkness of coveting. Coveting is wanting another's life, relationships or possessions, instead of wanting and fully living in your own. This year has exposed a lot of coveting in my heart, and others I know, with many of us seeking to have any year but 2020, and any life but the one we are living in. When we covet, we aren't letting God shine the light in our darkness. In our worship services, we will explore what this means and how God can help us out of our selfish ruts and lead us into lives of deeper love, concern, compassion and care for others.

The Good News, friends, is that God's Light is still shining, and if we seek it, God can help us even in the worst of times to become the best version of ourselves that truly represents Christ well.

Depending on Jesus and His Light,
Pastor Corey

“The Good News, friends, is that God's Light is still shining, and if we seek it, God can help us even in the worst of times...”

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Adult & Teen Challenge Pantry Project Update

Thanks to all who were able to donate. The photo above includes all that was donated to support the ministry of Adult & Teen Challenge in Spokane.



Advent Resources

There are plenty of Advent activities you can do at home this year. The church is providing color-your-own Advent ornaments, Advent & Christmas coloring sheets, Nativity stickers and a build-your-own Advent wreath. Stop by the church and pick up your Advent resources on the table outside the Fellowship Hall.

A digital Advent devotional is available on the church Web site:

www.palousechurch.org/worshipresources

Palouse Federated Church members
- Don't forget to postmark your ballot for Executive Board elections by Dec. 11!

Vote

Deep & Expectant

Tracy Lee Sievers

“The silence was deep and expectant.”

~Tove Jansson



I was reading a book to Asher the other night for his bedtime story. It is our routine to read a chapter of a novel together each evening just before he gets tucked in for the night. Our current book, Moominland Midwinter, by Finnish author, Tove Jansson (1914-2001), included the above quoted phrase on the second page and it grabbed my attention. After finishing our chapter, tucking my son into his bed, singing his bedtime song, and kissing him goodnight I came back to this sentence. I opened the book and wrote the quote down in my planner.

“The silence was deep and expectant.”

This phrase propelled my mind toward Advent. As I write this it is a week before we officially start the Advent season but this phrase is still ringing in my mind 24 hours later and is pushing my thoughts ahead to the coming season.

For the Jews, the silence was deep and expectant. God had been quiet. For 400 years before the angel visits to Zechariah and Mary there had been only silence from The Creator. No prophets. No miraculous appearances. No movement. The people were waiting - waiting for God to make good on the promise to bring them out of oppression. At that time, the Romans were in charge of the area of the world where they lived, however, for years-upon-years, God's chosen people had been living under the rule of others. They'd heard the old prophecies. They knew the old promises. But God had been silent for so long. So they waited with the expectation that God would do what God said God would do. They had hope amidst the deafening silence. And when that time finally came it looked nothing at all like anyone expected. They thought it would look like a conquering king, but instead it came as the cry of a baby in the stillness of the night.

For us today, the silence was deep and expectant. 2020 has been a long, challenging year. Pandemic has caused plans to be set aside with the hope we could pick them back up again in a few weeks only to find that few weeks stretching into months. We have been told to minimize our interactions with others in an effort to protect our loved ones, our communities, and ourselves. We have cancelled our vacations, put aside our community gatherings, adjusted the ways we do daily activities like school, worship, and work, and

we have even changed our holiday plans. Businesses have struggled under directives that no one could have seen coming this time last year. And amidst it all we have tried to wait in deep expectation that things would go back to the way they were before. We have hope even though we can't see the finish line from here - hope that we will again be able to gather for community celebrations, for dinner parties, for worship, for sporting events, and just for the fun of it.

Advent is a time of waiting - a time when we, the people of God, are expecting something. While we are remembering the waiting for the baby to be born all those years ago, with the advantage of hindsight (which they say is 20/20) we also find ourselves in deep expectant silence. We wait for Christ to return as He said He would. We wait for the fullness of His kingdom to be made known. We study and we worship and we pray and we wait - with the expectation that Christ will come again as He said He would.

This Advent, as we recognize the darkness of the Earth through the winter, may we also recognize ourselves among the stories; for without seeing Advent through the lens of Easter, the child born in the manger is just another baby. When we see Him born for His true purpose, though, we find the hope we need amongst this darkness.

This Advent, may you ponder how the silence [is] deep and expectant as you yourself are waiting for the return of Christ, as you remember the birth of the Christ child, and as you wait for the end of this pandemic. Tune in to the sermons Pastor Corey has prepared for us. Hear the old stories. Find yourself among them. And wait, with expectation, for the time when Christ comes again as He said he would do.



“For 400 years before the angel visits to Zechariah and Mary there had been only silence from The Creator...The people were waiting...”



Acts of Loving Generosity

Jim Fielder, Executive Board Chair

As the board has pondered, prayed, and moved forward as Palouse Federated Church, we have looked to scripture and how it applies to our everyday lives. One of our principles we rolled out in July of this year was our Culture of Caring. The scripture that led us to that document was this:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

~ Matthew 22:37-39

We have looked to the words and actions of Jesus as we have shaped our responses to this very unordinary year, we have been having with COVID-19. It is something we weren't prepared for in so many ways. I remember several years ago, in another time and place, we had friends in a church that had a huge snow and ice event. The elders and pastors had a conference call to discuss weather conditions and whether they would cancel church or not. They had five Sunday services in two venues within the church building. They didn't have electricity; the roads were icy and snowy. Limbs were down blocking streets, and some streets were impassable with stranded cars littering the way. This, in a city that very seldom had snow with any accumulation and had only two snowplow sanding trucks. Big dilemma – you never cancel church. They didn't have live streaming, they didn't have a radio feed, they didn't have any alternate plans. Their Modern Worship Service required lighting, so they were in the dark. Their sanctuary had great natural lighting through stained glass windows on the east and west, but the organ and sound system required electricity. And the bigger deal – they had no heat for the last two days. Their decision was this, activate their phone tree and telephone the whole congregation of

5,000 plus members. Including the church staff and elders – they called 100 people each and let them know there would only have one service at 10am on the next day, Sunday. They were informed it would be cold, there were no lights, only available light coming in through the windows. encouraged people not to travel and risk their personal safety. They made sure people were aware the temperature would be in the 40s in the sanctuary. Each caller took time to check on the person they were calling. Checking on their condition and encouraging them and praying briefly with them. Sunday morning came and the parking lot was about half full. People came out and had a wonderful experience, singing hymns and hearing a shortened sermon to make sure people weren't sitting in the cold too long. The church flexed and was able to do the best they could with the circumstances. The snow and ice soon disappeared, electricity was restored, the heat came back on, and by the next Sunday, everyone was back at church worshipping. They had reacted with the safety and care of their congregation as they made that decision.

As I think back to this event and how they flexed for a short-lived situation, I come back to what faces us today here in Palouse. Late last May, as things were improving on the Palouse, we felt that by mid-Summer we'd be back worshipping together with limited capacity. As summer progressed, numbers in Palouse rose drastically as the virus spread from the bigger cities into the rural areas. Even now, as winter is upon us, those numbers continue to increase. That said, the board continues to monitor the situation. The PFC Executive Board has pondered the question, what would Jesus suggest we do in these times. I think each of the board members has different ideas about it, but we all are coming back to our culture of caring as our basis.

For me as I prayed about this, I kept being led back to the book of John. Pastor Corey spent a great deal of time

teaching about the book of John this Fall. Deeper into the book is a passage that has always been a bit uncomfortable for me. I say uncomfortable because I don't think I'd be a bit comfortable with anyone washing my feet. I think the story here goes deeper about what that act represents, and I hope that I can respond with the servanthood that act imparts

John tells us about Jesus washing his disciples' feet and giving them his great command –

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.”

~ John 13:34

Reflecting on this, I think it's important to look at that scene. Here they were gathered in that upper room sharing together their last evening and last meal together. They didn't come into the dining room and take a seat at a long table. Six on the left and six on the right, as we have seen portrayed in many a picture. They were reclined around a low table, very typical of the time and culture. The custom when gathering was for a servant and not the master of the house, to wash the feet of

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“Acts of loving generosity are to be the hallmark of Jesus' followers.”
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the people in attendance. But here they were, and Jesus got up, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin and then began to wash and dry the feet of the disciples as they reclined around him - washing the dust and grime off their feet, something traditionally done by a servant. Oh, did I say servant?

Servanthood was being displayed and modeled by Jesus. Then as the scene concludes, he tells them to love one another, just as he has loved them.

Here he was spending his last hours dining, teaching, and serving. This simple act was a symbol of his life's purpose - to reveal the true nature of God as a being of self-giving love. Acts of loving generosity are to be the hallmark of Jesus' followers.

So, when I think about the old question – What Would Jesus Do? – I come back to his servant nature and his teaching his followers to go and do the same. Our culture of caring reflects that hallmark, we are caring for one another and our community. I truly feel we are called to serve others as we serve Him.



What's the Difference?

Corey Laughary, Pastor

Repeat after me: “Christmas starts on December 25th.”

That is a very counter-cultural idea. For many, the Christmas season now begins before Halloween.

In the Church calendar, however, Christmas starts with Christmas Day, or for many, with the lighting of the Christ candle on Christmas Eve. The Christmas season actually is the 12 days from Christmas until Epiphany on January 6th. Christmas celebrates the birth of our Lord.

Advent is NOT simply preparation for Christmas. Advent is meant to be a season of reflection. It is a season of watching for the Lord and looking for the Lord's return to the Earth, and how God's Light is breaking into the world even now. Advent is a season where we remind ourselves that we believe Christ is returning, and we can see His Light now but it's not fully here yet. It is a season of expectancy. A season marked by the four key virtues - Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.



We're accepting donations for Christmas giving through December 20. Our giving projects for 2020 are:

- Christmas Food Vouchers
- Uganda Christmas
- Eastern State Hospital Residents

Please identify the project you want to support on your check or giving envelope, or designate with your online gift at www.palousechurch.org.

Glow

Tina Laughary



Happy New Year! Advent is the beginning of the Church year, and a time to reflect on the coming of our Messiah. It is a two-fold coming, the already and the not yet. We reflect on how Jesus has come as Messiah to create a way for us to have relationship with our God. We live in that reality. He has come. We look forward to celebrating His coming at Christmas. But Advent is also a time when we look forward to the next time Jesus will come. He will come again. He will bring with him the victory he already has won against sin and death. Man, do I ever look forward to that day. Practically speaking, what does Advent mean for me? What can I “do” to celebrate both the first and second coming of my Jesus?

For me, Advent is a time for self-reflection. How has the fact that Jesus has come affected my life? How does the fact that I know He is coming again shape me? I have been going through a 40-day devotional called, “Take Back Your Life” written by Kalispell, MT Pastor Levi Lusko. So far, I am finding it challenging and full of helpful truth. I read a section the other day that I just keep coming back to, mulling it over in my brain. Lusko talks about what happens when we experience the darkness of life. We know that life in this world includes darkness, grief, sadness and suffering. One of Lusko’s theories is that when Christians go through these dark periods it is not uncommon for their non-believing friends and acquaintances to really lean in and observe how they handle the pain. He says, “You told them that Jesus is the light of the world. Well, now your power has been cut, and they want to see if you can glow in the dark.”

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“There is no darkness, not even in 2020, that can overcome His light.”
—

During the first Advent of Christ, when Jesus was born as the long-awaited Messiah, God’s people, the Israelites, were in a long period of darkness. They were suffering. They were waiting to hear from their God. Jesus came as a light in the dark to show a way back to relationship with God. John 1:4-5 tells us, “In him was life and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.” This verse was true during the first Advent of Christ, and still is true for us today as we await the return of Christ. “Dark” is definitely one of the words I have used to describe 2020. It isn’t hard to find sadness, oppression, fear, anxiety, pain, grief, etc...but, the wonderful news, is that Jesus still is the light of the world. There is no darkness, not even in 2020, that can overcome His light.

So, how can I personally reflect on Advent 2020? I can examine the light in my own life. The power has been cut—do I glow? Do my thoughts, words and actions point to the light of the world, or are they filled with anger, hate and blame? Am I looking for ways to share the light with others, or am I blaming people or people groups for this present darkness? Do I see darkness as the work of the evil one to separate God’s people from Him and from each other? Examination is the first step. The second is repentance - I need to admit areas where I have not reflected His light. The third step is to ask Him to fill me again with His Light and allow me to encourage, to shine, to light up the darkness in the world around me.

Will you join me in some self-examination this Advent? We don’t have to create light—Jesus already did that. We just get out of the way and allow His light to shine. Maybe you have gotten distracted by this present darkness. Maybe it is time to do a course correction and allow His light to fill you. It is time to glow.

GIVING TUESDAY

The results of our GivingTuesday campaign are in! Thanks to all who donated **\$4,364.10** to support GPAC, VIKotics, Distinguished Young Women, Palouse Empire Young Life and the Palouse Skate Park & Tony Kettel Skate Gardens. You can learn more about each participating organization at: www.palousegives.org

Bible Study Schedule
All Bible Studies on Zoom

Tuesday
5:30 AM - Men
10 AM - Mixed

Wednesday
9 AM - Ladies
6:30 PM - Mixed

Middle School Youth Group
(Grades 6-8)
6:30 - 7:30 PM

Thursday
9 AM - Ladies



Pastor Cory & Family
Jace & I wanted to say thank you for your love & kindness during our difficult time. We appreciate the gift cards!! and tell your daughter that Jace loves his “Stuffy” alligator!
It was so nice to meet you & your wife!!
Keep in touch & Thank you again so much!!
With Love,
Heidi

Jace

Palouse Federated Church Family—
Thank you so much for your kindness & generosity. Words will never be enough to say Thank You for thinking of us during this time.
♥ Mat, Heather & Briley

Thank you for everything!
~ Briley



Heidi and her 8-year-old son Jace. Heather, Heidi’s sister, and her daughter Briley. Diana and her 11-year-old daughter Breana. John and Carolyn, a senior couple. They all lost their homes in the Labor Day wildfire that swept through Malden, WA. Our congregation has partnered with each of these families to help them rebuild.

Recently, a team of guys from Palouse (Tim Southern, Cam Heusser, Scott Beeson, Cliff Knauff) went to Malden and build a storage shed for John and Carolyn so they can secure the items they were able to save for use as they rebuild. Additionally, we’ve provided gift cards for fuel and to help the families replace some of what was lost.

If you want to support our efforts into the New Year, we encourage your continued prayers, and financial gifts designated to “Fire Relief.”

Top Left: A thank you note from Heidi & Jace. Bottom Left: A thank you note from Heather, Mat & Briley. Above: John & Carolyn in front of their new shed.