



THE SEBRING CHRISTIAN

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December 2019

From The Pastor



It does not add up! It does not seem to make any sense.

December is upon us and we will celebrate one of the most exciting times in the Christian year. We will celebrate the season of Advent and Christmas followed by Epiphany. This is also a time for depression as our sadness can be great and overwhelm us. However, I hope that through fellowship, joy, and peace you will find fulfillment in the celebration of the birth of our Savior.

I was headed to Sebring and wondered what it would be like today if Jesus was born here. Would it be in a garage, a lean-to, a shack, a cow barn? I think perhaps it may be the farmworkers who might be working late at night who would see the star or something unusual and have the courage to check it out.

It may be the early morning garbage collectors as they drove by with a star above some structure, or a dairy worker milking cows at the farm outside of town. Of all the likely people to see the stars and know what that meant; well, it would not have been the shepherds. The shepherds would be at the bottom of the list. However, they probably had something others did not.

The shepherds had a consciousness, an awareness of God in their midst, a consciousness of what was going on around them even as they tended their sheep. They observed the patterns in the sky had changed. They saw something unusual. They were not caught up in their iPads, TVs, work lives, or with other distractions. Those that were distracted may have been the Pharisees, scribes, or Sadducees. But the shepherds were unencumbered by life's technologies, political maneuvering, or distractions. Many of the shepherds were likely children themselves with an innocent curiosity. They were curious about what they saw and willing to take a risk by leaving the sheep, perhaps in the pen, to go, see and share the good news.

They went and saw Jesus, and their unlikely suspicion or belief was confirmed. The most unlikely people discovered the most unlikely situation in the most unlikely place, and they found the most unlikely Savior. Who would have thought on that night shepherds would have been the first ones to stand before the son of God?

Are we conscious enough to know what is happening around us? Are we curious enough to take the risk to find out a newness in what is happening? Can we go confirm that story, that revelation, and can our confirmation be a witness to a miraculous story we will never forget?

I wish for you to dwell richly with the spirit of Christmas. May it bring you a rediscovery of the humanity the shepherds demonstrated that night as they found the Christ child, the baby in a manger, the Savior of the world!

Pastors December projected mornings in the office: 11, 14, 17 pm, 18.

Vacation December 1-5 and 23 – 31.

CHOIR NEWS

(December 2019)



The Christmas music is here! The Chancel choir has worked for several weeks to bring you beautiful anthems this month. One is brand new and unforgettable. We'll be presenting our cantata "Christmas Suite" on Dec. 15th during the morning service. Now is the time to invite your neighbor to come with you to church!!

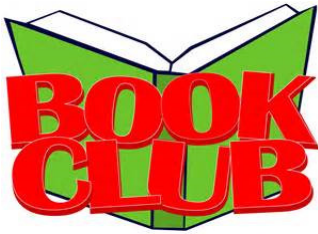
Keep in Tune, Jaquae

A JOYFUL NOISE

Our quartet, Heavenly Sounds will be chiming "Carol Of The Bells" this month. It's a beautiful way to start out the Christmas season! We'll see you in church!

For Whom The Bell Tolls,

Jaquae



We have been reading "Family Secrets" (Secrets of Wayfarers Inn) by Becky Melby. This book is set in Marietta, Ohio where 3 friends want to buy a historic hotel and turn it into a B & B and soup cafe. They quickly learn it was once a stop on the Underground Railroad and that someone or something is trying to stop them from making this happen. Strange things occur, howling noises, words scrawled on a dusty mirror yet in their quest for answers, they stumble on an old journal written by Prudence Willard, a Melungeon former slave who made trips across the river to pick up human "parcels" and give them refuge as they traversed the Underground Railroad. Can her insights from the 1800's teach the new owners of the Inn anything and shed light on the present-day mysteries? Come to Book Club and find out about the Secrets of the Wayfarers Inn!!

Please read as follows:

Dec. 3: Chap. 16 – 23, p. 191 – 276 (to finish the book)

We will take a short break during the rest of December and begin again in January with "Wings Of The Wind" by Connilyn Cossette.

Please join us!! There will be a copy in the library for you to read. We meet at 4:30 p.m. in the church library the first and third Tuesdays of the month.

DISCIPLES WOMEN

The Mary-Martha Group will meet at 10:00 on Friday, Dec. 6. We will have a short business meeting and devotions and then arrange the cookies for our Cookie Walk on Saturday Dec. 7.



There will be no Christmas luncheon this year but we are planning on a Tea in March. Please plan to come to that event. Details later.

A group of ladies (anyone interested may come) are journeying to Wauchula for a lunch at the Grace Tea Room. We will leave the church lot at 11:00. Please join us for an afternoon of fellowship and visiting. Reservations will be necessary so sign up if you are interested by Sun. Dec. 8.

DISCIPLES MEN

Six men were on hand for our November meeting and we welcomed a newcomer, Ross Fadely who hails from the great state of Indiana. It was reported that the new kitchen blinds that we paid for have been installed. Some discussion ensued concerning a future money-making project. It was decided that when Richard Neff, our head special event chef, returned in a couple of weeks we would proceed with plans for a chili supper sometime in January.

Our next meeting will be December 14th at 8:00 AM in the church kitchen at which time we will reveal who our secret prayer pals have been this past year and we will be drawing names for 2020. All men of the church are invited to come and join us for good food and fellowship



I want to say a big THANK YOU to everyone who packed a shoebox or brought items to be used in filling a box. This being our first year, I feel we did very well. I delivered 35 boxes last week to the drop off center.

Linda Ellis printed labels for the boxes so we could track them or be notified as to what country they went to.

Keep praying for the children that will be receiving these boxes because a lot of the countries where the boxes go do not allow the Gospel. These children are invited to attend a 12 session class entitled "The Greatest Journey". Through these classes they learn about God and Jesus.

I have been told that each box can touch the lives of 7 to 11 people, because the child goes home and tells his family and friends. That is how the Gospel gets into the country and then spreads. Don't stop now! Stop and get a box or 2 or 3 and be filling them all year. Watch for items that are on sale at different times of the year. Thank you again and have fun filling boxes to be sent next year.

Wanda



Birthdays

4th – Teresa Williams
 4th – Sue Colwell
 6th – Iverne Turnbull
 7th – Effie Simmonds

11th – Helen Kelly
 12th – Peggy Cousins
 26th – Mearlyn Hill



Elders

Deacons

	Communion	Offering	Preparers	Servers
1 st	Ron Colwell	Rich Campton	Johnny Kelly Helen Kelly	Kathy Whitlock C.J. Wiggin
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8 th	Marla Null	Wanda Gordon	Bill Hinline Carolyn Hinline	Rich Neff Sue Colwell
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15 th	Linda Ellis	Sandra Laufer	Johnny Kelly Kathy Whitlock	Roger Sands Helen Kelly
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22 nd			Johnny Kelly Helen Kelly	Bill Hinline Carolyn Hinline
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29 th			Roger Sands Elaine Milward	Rich Neff C.J. Wiggin
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### **Greeters**

1st Larry Andrews  
 8th Mary Ann Thomas  
 15th Howard & Shirley Lewis  
 22nd Frank Reilly  
 29th Toni & Amelia

### **Acolyte**

Johnny Kelly  
 Johnny Kelly  
 Johnny Kelly  
 Johnny Kelly  
 Roger Sands



## DECEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Dec. 1 Advent Sunday 1
- Dec. 3 Bible Study at 11:00 Book Club at 4:30
- Dec. 4 Chancel choir practice. 6:30
- Dec. 5 Baking at the church 1:00
- Dec. 6 Mary-Martha at 10:00 in library
- Dec. 7 COOKIE WALK 8-12. Lunch in kitchen with Movie Time following at 2:00 "The Nativity"
- Dec. 8 Advent Sunday 2
- Dec. 10 Bible Study at 11:00
- Dec. 11 Chancel choir practice 6:30
- Dec. 14 Men's Breakfast at 8:00
- Dec. 15 Advent Sunday 3 Choir Cantata - Lunch following
- Dec. 17 Bible Study 11:00
- Dec. 18 Chancel Choir practice 6:30
- Dec. 22 Advent Sunday 4
- Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service 7:00
- Dec. 25 Christmas Day
- Dec. 29 Congregational Meeting after church.

## ADVENT CALENDAR

Each day add an item to a box. On Christmas Eve, donate contents to food drive.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dec. 1st box cereal</li> <li>2nd peanut butter</li> <li>3rd stuffing mix</li> <li>4th boxed potatoes</li> <li>5th macaroni &amp; cheese</li> <li>6th canned fruit</li> <li>7th canned tomatoes</li> <li>8th canned tuna</li> <li>9th dessert mix</li> <li>10th applesauce</li> <li>11th canned sweet potatoes</li> <li>12th cranberry sauce</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dec. 13th canned beans</li> <li>14th crackers</li> <li>15th rice</li> <li>16th oatmeal</li> <li>17th pasta</li> <li>18th spaghetti sauce</li> <li>19th chicken noodle soup</li> <li>20th tomato soup</li> <li>21st canned corn</li> <li>22nd canned mixed vegetables</li> <li>23rd canned carrots</li> <li>24th canned green beans</li> </ul> |
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## A Merry Balance

In Luke 10:38-42, Martha gets a bad rap. After all, we need Marthas to get things done and to show hospitality. (Note that Martha is the one who opens up her home to Jesus in the first place!)

Marthas are needed in December, but holiday preparations shouldn't shift our focus from the reason for the season. When we become "worried and distracted" as Martha did (v. 41, NRSV), we're tempted to trade God's "one thing" (v. 42) for the world's many worthless things. Yet if we're only like Mary, we may forget to let the world know who we're celebrating!

So this Christmas, keep a proper balance between your inner Mary and your inner Martha. Take time to "be Mary," kneeling at the manger, so that all the merry things you do as Martha have meaning and serve the newborn king.

## Breathless Anticipation



In *Whistling in the Dark* (HarperOne), Frederick Buechner compares Advent to the moments right before a symphony conductor raises the baton to begin a much-anticipated performance. "You hold your breath to listen," he writes. "You are aware of the beating of your heart. The extraordinary thing that is about to happen is matched only by the extraordinary moment just before it happens. Advent is the name of that moment."

During December, silence can seem elusive, Buechner admits. But "if you concentrate just for an instant, far off in the deeps somewhere you can feel the beating of your heart. For all its madness and lostness, not to mention your own, you can hear the world holding its breath."

## +Christian Symbol+



### Poinsettias

This shrub, native to Mexico, is at the heart of legend about a poor girl who wanted to bring Baby Jesus a gift one Christmas Eve. As she walked to church, she gathered a bouquet of weeds — which Jesus miraculously transformed into lovely red flowers. Thus the poinsettia (named for Joel Poinsett, the U.S. ambassador to Mexico who first brought the plant to America) is known in Mexico as la flor de la Nochebuena (flower of the Holy Night). The poinsettia is also an ideal Christmas symbol because its leaves turn red when deprived of sunlight and its flowers (the red inner buds) bloom in December.

