

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS



Christmas is coming.

At least that is what I heard as I passed through Target on November 1st. It feels like the Christmas season begins earlier and earlier every year. As a Christian minister, I know I am supposed to take a hard line against this, but the truth is I've been listening to Christmas music since the first snowfall.

I love Christmas. I love the cookies, the music, the decorations—all the traditions that make this time of year special. But, I especially love watching the old Rankin & Bass Christmas specials. You know the ones I'm talking about—the stop-motion animated versions of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* and *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*, released in 1964 and 1970, respectively. As a child, these shows seemed magical to me, capturing the spirit and joy of the holiday through seamless animation and beautiful music. I looked forward to the night the shows would be broadcast. It meant Christmas was coming!

When Walter was young, I found the Rankin & Bass Holiday Collection on DVD. I hadn't seen the shows in years, so I was thrilled to find them. Imagining the magical experience that awaited my son, I bought the DVDs and sat down with my little boy to share the wonder of these marvelous TV specials from my childhood. The lights dimmed, the music began to play... "you better watch out!"

Wow! What a revelation it was to see these shows through the eyes of an adult. The animation was clunky at best, and the characters' mouths rarely moved in time with the words and music. I noticed the bad editing and the lack of continuity in the sets. Were the wires that held up the arms and legs always visible?! Why had I never noticed the shoddy production values?! Plus the plots were full of gender stereotypes and outright bullying—and the Winter Warlock looked troublingly Jewish. I was horrified at how bad the shows were. I turned to Walter, expecting him to be as disappointed as I was. He looked up at me with his eyes wide and full of wonder and said, "I liked the Santa Claus one best!" Walter watched those shows—with their clunky production values and schlocky music—over and over until he had memorized all the lyrics and dialogue. Later, he gleefully sat down his younger siblings and introduced them to the marvels of Rankin & Bass.

My children are all adults now (or at least adult-ish) and we still enjoy watching those old shows. It's true, the animation is awful and the plots are ridiculous and the music is more than a little trite. But somehow, despite their flaws, they still give us joy and delight, a shared experience that binds us together across generations and time.

As a child, I loved reading the story of Christmas, filled with angels and shepherds and wise men. But now it is different. I've been an ordained minister for nearly 25 years and I am enough of a biblical scholar that when I read the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke, I see all the flaws. I notice the inconsistencies in the stories and the signs of redaction and editing. I recall that the shepherds and the wise men never met, that Joseph is the lead in Matthew's Gospel, but Mary is central to Luke. I know the early church made decisions about the story of Jesus' birth that had more to do with stamping out paganism than any received truth. And yet...

When the lights dim and the carols play, when I hear the opening words, "In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered..." my heart skips a beat. Jesus is born Emanuel, God-With-Us, and nothing will ever be quite the same. That is the power of Christmas. It was never about the production values or the seamlessness of the plot. It is an imperfect vehicle to tell a perfect truth: because God so loved the world, God came down. And when we gather together, generation after generation, and share this story, there is joy and delight and glory.

I wish you a blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas.

Dr. Monroe

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

*80 & OVER

12/1 - Gene Cornelius
12/3 - Harold Weaver
12/6 - Virginia Williams
12/11 - William Woolsey
12/12 - Darold McCalla
12/12 - Doris Weil
12/21 - James Close
12/22 - Audrey Wilson
12/25 - Jean Porter
12/30 - Gary Coopes
12/30 - Irene Seahawk
12/31 - Dennis Rosenbrook

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12/19 - Robert & Luella Erbes (65)
12/30 - Roger & Marilyn Grove (66)

If we missed you, please accept our apology. Contact the office to make sure we have your correct information on file.

PORTAL DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions to the January 2020 Portal is December 15. Submit content to Rachel Giddings at, rgiddings@thepeopleschurch.com.

The Portal is a monthly newsletter that is mailed each month to opt-in subscribers and also included in the Friday email.



Our PCYG students have been keeping very busy! Between Youth Sunday, the Cake Auction fundraiser, different service projects, and all of our extracurriculars—like our group Zap-Zone trip in October—it's hard to find a youth in our church who hasn't just finished volunteering for something or is only just beginning to volunteer!

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make this year's Cake Auction fundraiser a success. Our goal was to raise as much money as last year, \$2,300. Instead, we raised well over \$3,000 which all goes to keeping the cost of our yearly mission trip low. Well done church, and well done PCYG!



KUDOS KORNER



DEE PRZBYLSKI

Office Administrator, The Peoples Church

25 Years of Dedicated Service

Q: What is your favorite part about your job?

A: I love the fact that my mom worked in the church office when I was growing up. I also love seeing all the members who come into the office and visiting with them.

Q: What are your favorite hobbies?

A: Gardening, walking my dogs, and spending time with my husband and sons when they are home!

Q: Tell us something unique about yourself.

A: I like to drive fast. Driving a racecar around a track is on my bucket list. Traveling is on my list, too. I would love to go to the Netherlands which is my dad's heritage (I am 50% Dutch and not Polish other than marrying a man who is of Polish descent).

Each Christmas, The Peoples Church members and friends have the opportunity to serve Edgewood Village residents by providing holiday food to 20 households. Participation is simple...

- Each church participant will receive, via email, a specific grocery shopping list on **December 11**. The email will include a general instruction sheet with delivery information.
- Each participant shops at the grocery store of her/his choice for one Edgewood household (plan to spend no more than \$65.00).
- Each participant delivers purchased groceries on **December 18**, between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to Edgewood Village Network Center. Edgewood Village Scholars then take the food to individual households within the village.

It's so simple, yet so appreciated by the recipients! If you are interested in providing a nutritious Christmas food basket for an Edgewood Village neighbor, please email Barb Dunlap at bdunlap1953@gmail.com or call 517.285.0824.

FROM OUR KITCHEN TO YOURS

RECIPES BY GERRI LYNN



Gerri Lynn Nichols, our talented Hospitality Coordinator, shares a recipe with us each month. Enjoy!

BROKEN GLASS JELLO

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 ounces red Jello (1 large box) or any color
- 6 ounces yellow Jello (1 large box) or any color
- 4 cups boiling water
- 14 ounces sweetened condensed milk (1 can)
- 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
- 1 cup boiling water

DIRECTIONS:

In one bowl, dissolve the red Jello in 2 cups of boiling water. In a separate bowl, dissolve the yellow Jello in 2 cups of boiling water. Whisk each until all of the Jello is dissolved.

Keeping the colors separate, pour the Jello in 2 shallow baking dishes or plastic dishes that you've sprayed with cooking spray. Refrigerate until firm.

Once the Jello is firm, cut the Jello into squares.

Place the colored squares in a 9x13 glass baking dish that you've sprayed with cooking spray.

Be sure the two colors of squares are mixed evenly.

In another bowl, mix the 1 cup of boiling water and 2 envelopes of gelatin. Immediately start mixing until the gelatin has dissolved.

Add the condensed milk to the gelatin mixture and stir thoroughly.

Pour the milk mixture over the Jello squares and place, covered, in the fridge until firm. (about 2 hours)

Remove from fridge and cut into large squares for serving.

PEOPLES FORUM

Join us each Sunday for interesting and informative "Voices of the Community" at 9:30 a.m. in the Robertson Room.

DECEMBER 1

MATT REED, FEDERAL ATTORNEY

DECEMBER 8

CLARE LUZ

"Age Alive"

DECEMBER 15

PENNY SWARTZ

"Christmas Readings"

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR EDGEWOOD

You're invited to help the children at Edgewood Village enjoy a wonderful Christmas. Visit the Christmas tree that is set up in Friendship Hall to select a gift ornament, purchase the item listed, and return the new, unwrapped gift by **December 15**.

Unwrapped gifts can be returned to the Christmas tree in Friendship Hall on Sunday mornings, or to the church office during the week.

We will wrap gifts on **December 17**. If you are interested in joining this fun part of the project, please sign up via the weekly church bulletin on the sign-up form. Wrappers are asked to bring their own scissors.





THE PERFECT HOLIDAY GIFT FOR A CHILD . . . A BOOK!

by Dana Johnson, Director, Peoples Church Preschool

This time of year we are inundated with the advertising of sales and special offers for the latest technology that is a “must have” for our children. The truth is that too much screen time does more harm than good. The most enriching thing you can do for your child’s development is to read to them, which makes books a great idea for gift giving.

Did you know that too much screen time has been linked to lower brain development in young children? What may surprise you is that experts agree that over one hour of screen time a day, without parental involvement, is too much. “Screen time use by infants, toddlers and preschoolers has exploded over the last decade, concerning experts about the impact of television, tablets and smartphones on these critical years of rapid brain development,” writes Sandee La Motte on the cnn.com website. Too often, parents are giving children a screen to look at when any type of waiting is needed—in a grocery cart, at a sibling’s sporting event, or when traveling in the car.



She explains, “Now a new study scanned the brains of children 3 to 5 years old and found those who used screens more than the recommended one hour a day, without parental involvement, had lower levels of development in the brain’s white matter, an area key to the development of language, literacy and cognitive skills.”

It is important to cultivate children’s love of reading from an early age, which is one way to balance the draw of too much screen time. Here are some tips:

- Make reading aloud a part of your daily routine.
- Travel with books; Not all waiting can be eliminated. Have books on hand.
- Encourage children to retell familiar stories.
- Encourage children to share favorite books with family members or friends.
- Attend story times offered through local libraries and other organizations.



A FRESH TAKE ON SENIOR LIVING

by SarahKate VanAuker, StoneBriar Residency Counselor



45 years ago, members of The Peoples Church worked to create the vision for an new and exciting concept in aging and retirement living that is now Burcham Hills. Today, Burcham Hills is continuing to expand and grow under that original vision, and is adding StoneBriar at Burcham Hills to our campus. We were grateful to be given the opportunity to join you on Nov 10th at the Peoples Forum to share this new living option for seniors with members of that same congregation that originally gave us life.

StoneBriar at Burcham Hills will bring a new style of independent living, with a focus on wellness, new energy, new choices, and a vibrant lifestyle to the Lansing area. As part of a life plan community, the residents of StoneBriar will be guaranteed a home for life, no matter what that life may bring. The new homes we are building have been custom designed with valuable input from the retirees in the East Lansing area, and are being created to truly address the wants and unique needs of modern seniors. With spacious homes ranging from 870-1300 square feet, a delicious new bistro, relaxing salon and spa, theatre, lecture room, gardens, patio, and state-of-the-art fitness center, the residents of StoneBriar will have every opportunity to keep growing throughout their lives.

Burcham Hills continues to be dedicated to the journey of life. We extend an open invitation to the members of The Peoples Church to come and visit us and learn more about the legacy that we created together, and where Burcham Hills is going in the future.

KNITTING PEOPLE

Knitting People will meet on **December 5** from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. in the Robertson Room. Please bring completed items for blessing. We continue to knit and collect slippers for care kits for women going through chemotherapy. All knitters and non-knitters are invited to join us! Questions? Call Mary Anne at 517.214.1487.

REBEKAH/HANNAH CIRCLE

The Rebekah/Hannah Circle will be hosting their December program, *A Celebration of Christmas Music*, with guest artist Joe Kennedy, in the Robertson Room, **on December 4**, at 1:00 p.m. All are welcome for this special event.

DORCAS CIRCLE

Dorcas Circle will join the Rebecca/Hannah Circle on **December 4** at 1:00 p.m. in the Robertson Room for a program of Holiday Music with Joe Kennedy.

WINTER REFUGEE COLLECTION

For years our congregation has supported the Refugee Services program at St. Vincent DePaul Catholic Charities. Even with the significant decrease in incoming legal refugees vetted by the United Nations, the refugees already established in the Lansing area have ongoing needs as they create their new lives. Because needs are so individualized, the decision has been made to again collect gift cards from Meijer or Target. Collection dates will be **December 1, 8 and 15** in the Northwest Entrance. St. Vincent Refugee Services sends a huge thank you for your generosity.

DONATIONS OF SOCKS ARE NEEDED

Did you know the most requested item in homeless shelters and the least received item is socks? With winter fast approaching, we are again collecting donations for NEW packaged socks to benefit the City Rescue Mission (which serves the homeless population in the Greater Lansing area). Please place your donation of NEW socks of all sizes in the box located outside of the church office. This collection is ongoing throughout the winter months.

MSU HOLIDAY BRASS CONCERT

The MSU Holiday Brass Concert, hosted by the Fine Arts Committee, will be held on **December 9** at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. This event features talented student musicians and their professors from the College of Music. The concert is free and open to the community. Join us for a delightful evening of holiday music.



Music Sunday is on **December 15** during the 10:30 a.m. worship service. Join us to hear joyful music fill the Sanctuary with *A Service of Lessons and Carols*, featuring a string orchestra.

PARIS TO PITTSBURGH FILM SCREENING

On Sunday November 3rd, the Earth Stewardship Team hosted a screening of the National Geographic produced film, *Paris to Pittsburgh*. The film provided information on climate change and global warming that has been documented over 20 years and outlined the consequences of not reducing our green house gas emissions. The film was followed by a community conversation with experts from Interfaith Light and Power and the Sierra Club. Approximately 25 people attended from the congregation, MSU, and the surrounding communities. The Earth Stewardship Team was pleased with the turn out and participation of the attendees. The team will continue to advocate for sound environmental policy, reducing green house gases and our carbon footprint, and promoting recycling and energy reduction. If you are interested in joining this passionate team, contact Susan Kilmer, at sdkilmer@aol.com.

EMPTY BOWLS CHILI COOK-OFF

SAVE THE DATE! The Empty Bowls Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser will take place on **February 9, 2020** in the Snider Social Hall, immediately following the 10:30 a.m. service. More details to come.

PEOPLES 101

Peoples 101 is a 30-minute informal discussion about The Peoples Church. Bring your questions and meet with a Pastor and Welcome Ministry Members in the Robertson Room. **New Members Classes** take place in the Centennial Room and last roughly an hour and a half. Child care is provided. This meeting explores the history, governance, mission and values of the church as well as programming and volunteer opportunities. Membership is also discussed, but there is never any obligation to join. For more information, call Diane Shafer at 517.388.0437 or email at dm-shafer2001@gmail.com. You can also call Robin Matheson at 517.290.3223 or email at matheso4@msu.edu.

SCHEDULE:

DECEMBER 1	Peoples 101
JANUARY 5	Peoples 101
FEBRUARY 2	Peoples 101
MARCH 1	Peoples 101
APRIL 1	New Members Class during WNL!
APRIL 5	New Members Class
MAY 3	Peoples 101
JUNE 7	Peoples 101
JULY 8	New Members Class during WNL!
JULY 12	New Members Class
AUGUST 2	Peoples 101

NOTICE:

**CHANGE IN FRIDAY EMAIL**

Please note, the weekly email that is sent each Friday to subscribers will be now be sent out each Thursday. If you currently do not receive our weekly email, sign-up on thepeopleschurch.com homepage.

Our Campus Ministry program continues to grow, and with that growth comes new opportunities for ministry. Here are some pictures of our group making tied blankets, which we ended up donating to the pediatric ward of Sparrow Hospital, and to the Linus Project. We also enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving get together and began to make plans for our spring break mission project—this year to Peru!



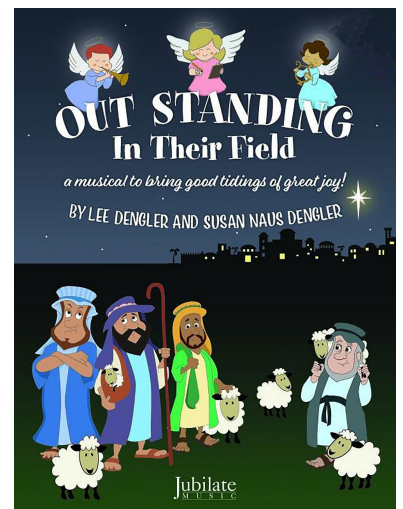
CHILDREN'S EDUCATION UPDATE

by Kathi Mitchell, Children's Education Director

The children are so excited to be performing our Christmas Pageant "Out Standing in their Field" on **December 8**. I have been watching the rehearsals and everyone sounds great! I can't wait to hear the sanctuary filled with their sweet voices. Kudos to those who have speaking parts—they've learned their lines and everyone is a joy to watch!

Sunday School has been growing each week, which is a wonderful sight to see! Kids have been bringing friends, grandparents their grandchildren, and our classrooms are filling up. We have had some amazing volunteers offer to teach Sunday School on a regular basis, but we still have a few spots left in our schedule for winter & spring of 2020. Please contact me if you can offer a bit of your time Sunday mornings. If you don't want to necessarily teach a class, but would like to help in a classroom if needed, that would be helpful, too. An extra pair of hands is always welcome!

We are looking forward to our next Family Fun Event— A Pretend Sleepover on **Saturday, January 11**. There will be movies, popcorn, sleepover games, and lots of fun in our Youth Lounge. It's sure to be a great time! More details to come.





WNL! PROGRAMMING

The WNL! community meal takes place in the Snider Social Hall downstairs. Join us!

DECEMBER:

Adult programming follows the community meal and begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Robertson Room. Be sure to join us in December each Wednesday evening!

WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE! SCHEDULE

5:30 pm - Dinner

6:00 pm - Youth Choir (Youth Den)

6:30 pm - Adult Programming (Robertson Room)
Middle School Youth Group (Youth Den)
Yoga (Yellow Room, 3rd Floor)

~MENU~

DECEMBER 4

Hot Dogs & Brats
Fresh Vegetable Platter
Seasonal Fruit
Assorted Sweets

DECEMBER 11

Baked Pasta ~ Pizza
Mixed Greens Salad
Bread Sticks
Sliced Pears
Root Beer Floats

2019 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

**6:00 p.m., Sanctuary; Family candlelight service
with Youth and Childrens Choirs**

**9:00 p.m., Sanctuary; Traditional candlelight service
with the Sanctuary Choir**



ASL Interpreters will be provided at both Christmas Eve worship services.