



## CHRISTMAS MIRACLES

In 1914, a Christmas miracle occurred. World War I (the “war to end all wars”) had begun in July of that year, and all along the western front, soldiers were hunkered down for battle. In the week leading up to Christmas, men on both sides had been adorning their trenches with candles and improvised decorations. Groups of German, French and British troops shouted seasonal greetings to one another and sang carols in their native language. There were even instances of a few brave men crossing the battlefield to take gifts to the enemy. Then, on Christmas Eve, the men of the Western Front put the war on hold. Soldiers left their trenches to meet in the empty No Man’s Land between the battle lines. They greeted one another, exchanged gifts of tobacco and chocolate, and even traded buttons from their own uniforms as souvenirs. They played football, sang carols and helped each side bury fallen comrades. The miracle of this unofficial truce lasted through Christmas day. There are some wonderful photographs of this event on-line.

The story of the Christmas truce was not reported in the newspapers of the time for fear it would undermine morale and weaken the public’s commitment to the war effort. If enemy soldiers were seen getting along, people might question the need for war. As for the soldiers, there would never be another miracle. The next year, a few units arranged ceasefires at Christmas, but for most men, December 24th was just another day of war. This was due in part to strongly worded orders from the high commands of both sides prohibiting truces and discouraging “fraternization.” By 1916, the human cost of war had become so dreadful that no one even considered a Christmas truce.

Fraternization is a funny word. In a military context, it means “to associate on close or familial terms with members of a hostile group.” In other words, fraternization is when you treat an enemy like family. By that definition, it sounds a lot like the incarnation.

The miracle we celebrate at Christmas is the reality of God’s love, a love so big that God enters into our world in human form. Pastor John Pavlovitz puts it perfectly: “Jesus didn’t need to live here. He could have shown up, tossed out another stone slab or a rolled parchment filled with black-and-white religious do’s and don’ts, and then disappeared into the ether – leaving a neat and tidy religion... Instead, he chose to live life alongside flawed human beings, in messy and meandering trips into wheat fields and lepers’ homes and leaky boats.” (Low, p. 11)

Jesus didn’t need to live here, but he did. He came down, which is why we name him Emmanuel, God with us. In Jesus, God is with us, with us in times of war and times of sorrow, with us in times of sickness and times of struggle. God’s light shines most brightly in dark moments...and there have been some dark days this last year.

I love the story of the Christmas truce because it reminds me that there is more that connects us than divides us. It also reminds me that the true spirit of Christmas is loving God more than we hate our enemies. The incarnation calls for fraternization. May the miracle of this season come to us all!

*Dr. Monroe*

## PASTORAL CARE AT THE PEOPLES CHURCH

Allow me to introduce myself. I’m the Rev. Penny Swartz. I was the Associate Pastor at The Peoples Church from July, 2002 until I retired from ministry in July, 2013. In the last seven plus years, I’ve thoroughly enjoyed my retired status. But, when I stepped up to the lectern on Sunday, November 15, to lead the Pastoral Prayer, it was as though I’d never left this church.

Funny how life can come full circle. Low those many years ago, I was originally hired as the Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care. I have gladly accepted the opportunity to rejoin the staff to focus almost exclusively on—yes, you guessed it—pastoral care.

Pastoral care is generally a ministry conducted face-to-face, often one-on-one. It’s a matter of building relationships over time, of creating and strengthening bonds of trust. While the constraints of social distancing and lockdowns will temporarily redefine how pastoral care is conducted in the coming months, the ultimate goals remain the same.

I expect to be sending out more notes to members of the congregation. I plan on being on the phone a lot with many of you. I came reluctantly to the world of Zoom, but have come to rely on the technology for allowing me to see and hear others when I cannot otherwise be physically present with them. I’m confident that many in the church have mastered Zoom basics. While we all yearn for the day when we can meet without masks, in person, and freely exchange hugs and handshakes, Zoom is a useful tool to help combat the feelings of isolation. Perhaps Zoom “Peoples Pods” will be in our future for a bit.

It’s a lovely feeling to see familiar eyes over the masks, and hear the voices of members I knew before. But it’s also exciting to know there are so many new members to meet. I am thankful for the possibilities ahead.

Grace upon grace.

*Rev. Penny*

# Birthdays & Anniversaries

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

\*80 & OVER

- 12/01 - Gene Cornelius
- 12/02 - Beverly Oetzel
- 12/03 - Harold Weaver
- 12/06 - Virginia Williams
- 12/11 - William Woolsey
- 12/12 - Joan Dailey
- 12/12 - Darold McCalla
- 12/12 - Doris Weil
- 12/13 - Faye Dragosh
- 12/21 - James Close
- 12/22 - Audrey Wilson
- 12/30 - Gary Coopes
- 12/30 - Irene Seahawk
- 12/31 - Denny Rosenbrook

## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 12/19 - Robert & Luella Erbes (66)
- 12/19 - Thomas & Lynne Hoffmeyer (50)
- 12/30 - Roger & Marilyn Grove (67)

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

## CHICS BIBLE STUDY GROUP



CHiCs (Connected Hearts in Christ) Small Group will be starting a discussion of *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans. In this book, Evans examines some of our favorite Bible stories and possible interpretations. She is undaunted by the most difficult passages and wrestles through the process of doubting, imagining, and debating Scripture's mysteries. The group will start on **January 7** over Zoom and meets weekly on Thursday evenings from 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. If you are interested in joining us please email Beth Lundy at [Lundybb@comcast.net](mailto:Lundybb@comcast.net) or 610.246.0029 by call or text.

## VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS



Stay connected with us and join one of our virtual meetings or Bible studies. See below for what is currently being offered:

**SERMON PREVIEW GROUP:** meets each Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. To join, [click here](#); Meeting ID: 861 2945 8059. You can also dial 1.929.205.6099 and when prompted enter 861 2945 8059.

**MONDAY MORNING BIBLE:** meets each Monday at 11:00 a.m. and is currently studying Romans. To join the meeting, [click here](#). Or, on your Zoom app enter meeting ID: 369 714 134 and enter the passcode: MMB. You can also dial 1.312.626.6799 and when prompted enter meeting ID: 369 714 134 and then passcode: 456440.

**TUESDAY MORNING MENS GROUP:** meets each Tuesday at 8:00 a.m. To join, [click here](#). The meeting ID is: 963 085 991. You can also dial 1.646.558.8656 and when prompted enter the meeting code 963 085 991. They are studying the book, *Strength to Love* by Martin Luther King, Jr.

**WEDNESDAY NOON MENS GROUP:** meets each Wednesday at Noon. To join, [click here](#).

### VIRTUAL FELLOWSHIP\*

Join us, virtually each Sunday, following the 10:30 a.m. worship service for fellowship. It's easy! Grab a cup of your favorite coffee and a sweet snack and log on to Zoom. Join the meeting by clicking on this link: [Join Zoom Meeting](#), or in your Zoom app enter Meeting ID: 837 9739 7682 and when asked for a password enter: Peoples

Don't have access to internet? No problem! You can still join us from ANY phone! Dial 1-312-626-6799 and when prompted for a meeting ID enter 837 9739 7682# and the password is 50803#.

\* Please note: For those who are with us in person for worship, there will not be a fellowship until further notice. Virtual fellowship will continue for those at home.



## CHILDREN'S EDUCATION UPDATE

by Kathi Mitchell, Children's Education Director

We are so excited to present the premier of our Christmas pageant, "The Reluctant Inn-keeper" to you on **Sunday, December 13!** Ten kids devoted time and energy for several weeks of rehearsals and they did a phenomenal job! Pastor Drew, Mrs. Reed and I are so proud. We can't wait to share it with all of you!

As a reminder, Sunday School materials and videos are available to all who are interested. My weekly videos include a lesson, story, craft and discussion topics for your family. The newest set of winter curriculum has just begun and we will, of course, be studying the miracle of Christmas this month. If you want your child to receive materials, please contact me! I am happy to send you what you need to continue Sunday School at home.

I can't wait until our Sunday School rooms are full of energy and joy once again! Until then, I pray you and your families find joy during this holiday season. Merry Christmas to you all!

Peace,  
Kathi

## ASL UPDATE



A Note About ASL Interpreters: Some people have asked why we do not show the ASL interpreters during our worship live stream. We don't show them because the interpreters have asked not to be shown during the broadcast.

We are committed to accessibility for all, so we are looking into what it would cost to make closed captioning available. We'll keep you posted on our progress.

## AT-HOME ADVENT WREATH

One of the lovely traditions of Advent is marking each Sunday with the lighting of the Advent candles. But just because you aren't coming to church doesn't mean you have to miss out on the tradition. All you need is five candles. Usually, three of the candles are purple (or blue), one is pink and one is white, but don't let that the colors get in your way! Any candles will do. Label your candles Hope, Peace, Joy (the pink candle), Love and Christ. If you want, you can arrange them in a circle, with the Christ candle in the center. Then, when you tune into worship, you can join along in the opening liturgy and bring Advent light to your home! And don't forget to send us photos of your at-home Advent candles. Let there be light!

## PCYG

PEOPLES CHURCH YOUTH GROUP



Hello PCYG Students and Families!

We have had a wonderful month of youth group together! It has been a blessing to see each and every one of you in-person, and to laugh and spend time together. In an effort to keep you and the community safe, we have transitioned to a fully virtual youth group, via zoom. While this can be challenging, I am encouraged by the positivity and flexibility you each display! This month we will enjoy virtual game nights and other activities as we continue to grow in our friendships and in relationship with the Lord.

We will continue meeting virtually, on Sunday nights (high school) and Wednesday nights (middle school) on zoom at 6:00. Our final youth groups of the year will be on December 13th and 16th. If you know of any middle or high school students who are interested in joining our PCYG family, please connect them with me!

Joyfully,  
Elisha Smith

## LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE



**December 21  
7:00 p.m.**

The Peoples Church will offer a virtual Longest Night Service on Monday, December 21. This service is designed for those having a difficult time during the holidays for whatever reason.

Join us for scripture, reflection, prayer and song. Watch the Sunday bulletins for further details.

## DON'T FLUSH THOSE DRUGS!

a word from the Earth Stewardship Committee

Don't flush those expired or unwanted medications! Experts say proper disposal can prevent adverse effects on the environment resulting from flushing or throwing out medications. In fact, scientists in the United States and Europe studied surface water, groundwater and landfill leachate and found that medications persist in these liquids at very low levels.

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) makes it simple to find household medication collection and disposal options with the interactive *Household Drug Take Back Map*, which is phone friendly, and its new companion "how to" video.

EGLE's *Drug Takeback Map* helps residents find convenient collection locations across the state. Instead of flushing or tossing medications in the trash, takeback programs provide a safe disposal option that eliminates potential risk of unintentional poisoning of children or pets and negative impact to the environment.



Most wastewater treatment plants and landfills are not equipped with technology to remove the chemicals in pharmaceuticals which often don't break down once in the environment. In a collection program, the drugs are incinerated under specific conditions that destroy active drug components. You can find more information at [Michigan.gov/EGLEDrugDisposal](http://Michigan.gov/EGLEDrugDisposal).

# VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS EVE

**Join us on-line for our Christmas Eve service, December 24th at 7:00 pm.**

After careful consideration, the Council of Elders decided that the Christmas Eve service should be live-streamed only—not in-person. There was no way to maintain the safety of worshippers and limit the number of people in attendance. We were afraid that we would have to turn people away. This decision is in keeping with the recommendations from the PCUSA, the UMC and the UCC. While we know that this will come as a disappointment to many people, we are doing this for the good of all. The Elders trust you will understand.

The service will also be available on our YouTube channel. On behalf of the Council of Elders, we wish you a safe and blessed Advent season.



**DECEMBER 2020 PORTAL**

**ThePeoplesChurch.com**

517.332.5073

200 W. Grand River Ave.  
East Lansing, MI 4882



# WELCOME

## NEW MEMBERS!



**Marla and BJ Stone**



**Darlene Nikoloff**



**Chuck and Connie McNeil**



**Elisha Smith**

**Not Pictured:  
Kristen Mapes and Michael Laney**

## EDGEWOOD VILLAGE CHRISTMAS: COVID STYLE!

You're invited to help the children at Edgewood Village enjoy a wonderful Christmas. If you would like to purchase a gift for a child at Edgewood Village please contact Emily Anderson via email at: [Anderson2910@icloud.com](mailto:Anderson2910@icloud.com) or via telephone at 517.648.0632. She will provide you with all the information you will need: gender and age of the child, item the child wishes and details for returning the gift. If you would simply like to financially support this activity, that is an option too! Please contact Emily, and thank you!

## REFUGEE SERVICES CHRISTMAS DONATIONS

For the last many years we have opened our hearts to our refugee neighbors with various gifts. This year, even with the challenges of Covid, we will be gifting these families and individuals with Meijer and Target gift cards. Spending of these gifts is closely supervised by the staff at St Vincents Refugee Services and the most popular purchases are shoes and boots. A designated box will be in the church office if you wish to donate cards. Or, you may donate electronically to The Peoples Church and designate the donation for 'Refugee Services.' Donations may be made starting now until **December 13**. Email Ruth Worthington at: [worthin2@msu.edu](mailto:worthin2@msu.edu) with any questions.



# SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

For the past thirteen years The Peoples Church has been able to bless forty-eight different students with *The Peoples Church Academic Scholarship*, thanks to the generosity and kindness of the Dooley family. This year we are thrilled to announce that there were three students who received the scholarship. These students have been a part of The Peoples Church family for many years, and we are so proud of what they have done and will continue to do!

## Chloe Mellor

Chloe was confirmed at The Peoples Church and remembers the fun she had volunteering with Vacation Bible School last summer. Chloe is currently studying at LCC, where she is enjoying classes in history, business, and design and communication. During quarantine she has taken up creating homemade cards and attending different zoom Bible studies.



## Samuel Mellor

Sam was confirmed at The Peoples Church in 2018 and his favorite memory is attending MSU basketball games and going to Crunchy's with his mentor and friend Bruce. Sam is currently studying at LCC where he is pursuing Environmental Science and will eventually transfer to MSU. He is keeping himself busy by working hard at Dunkin Donuts!

## Madeline Moreno

Maddy has been a part of The Peoples Church for many years and has fond memories of volunteering at Vacation Bible School and being a part of The Peoples Church Youth Group. She is currently studying at Michigan State University where she is a part of the Lyman Briggs and Honors Colleges. She is also a part of the Osteopathic Medical Scholars Program through MSUCOM.



### THE PEOPLES CHURCH PRAYER CHAIN

Our church has a very active, energetic and viable prayer chain that includes about 40 prayer warriors praying daily for cherished individuals who need the comfort and healing of prayer. People may have lost loved ones, have friends or family who are ill or have the need for mental, emotional or physical support. To request prayers, all it takes is approval from those needing prayers, an agreement to support this covenant group and periodic updating. Grieving individuals may receive prayers for 1 year. All other requests need updating every 3 months. Know that you may always extend these guidelines, if needed. Contact the church office or Janet Perron at: [jrperron@comcast.net](mailto:jrperron@comcast.net) if you have a prayer request, or if you are interested in joining the prayer chain. It helps to have **Peoples Church Prayer Group** on the subject line.

