

COUNTRYSIDE TRINITY CHURCH CONNECTIONS



December 17, 2020

From Pastor Brant...

For a child has been born for us,

A son given to us;

Authority rests upon his shoulders;

And his is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

--Isaiah 9:6

I imagine that for some of you your Christmas celebration includes listening to Handel's *Messiah*. Even if you don't you are probably familiar with this passage from Isaiah in which the early church saw the promise for a messiah, understood to be fulfilled by Jesus. Walter Brueggemann, in his Advent Study, *Names for the Messiah*, explores these four names, which help us understand both the expectations the people had for the title, and the ways in which Jesus fulfills them. This passage has its initial setting in the community of faith in the time of the prophet Isaiah, the 8th century, BCE, probably for the coronation of King Hezekiah. This would have been a time of anticipation of peace and prosperity in the regime. The expression of this anticipation "would have been as extravagant and excessive as such occasions are, not unlike the political speeches of promise with which we are familiar...." The great hope contained within it is the end of the experience of oppression from which the people of Judah had suffered during the time of imperial oppression under Assyria. They will be set free to recreate a kingdom of justice and righteousness.

In exploring the first title, "Wonderful Counselor," it is helpful to point out that Handel put his comma in the wrong place, as the "Wonderful" is not to be separate from the "Counselor", but is to be an adjective that directly describes this Counselor. The term counselor "refers to the exercise of governance, the capacity to administer, to plan, and to execute policy." The new king is expected to set into places policies and rules that will benefit the whole community, repairing the damage done by the oppression, restoring the relationships that have been broken by the injustice that has been carried out. That this new king will be wonderful speaks to just how extraordinary his plans and policies will be, "a big surprise that goes beyond all the usual conventions of political power and

practice.” Though Hezekiah’s regime was able to survive the attack of the Assyrian army, he did not fulfill the prophecy offered to us in this passage.

When Jesus entered the scene, the deep compassion and wisdom he demonstrated invited those who surrounded him to wonder whether or not this man was the fulfillment of the prophet’s vision from centuries before. Through his teachings, he astonished his listeners with a sense of authority very different from the religious “counselors” of his time. Through his healings, he brought wholeness to the broken and the discarded, and healed and elevated them so that they could see that what seemed to be impossible with people was possible when God was present. He too came into a situation of oppression, as Rome had the people of Judah by the neck. Many hoped Jesus would be the Wonderful Counselor by being a political leader, a king who would fulfill the role of messiah by defeating this empire, but this is clearly not how Jesus understood his role. His only sword would be a sword of truth, one that cuts people to the heart, empowering them to see exactly who they are, and more importantly, who they could be, a force for amazing goodness. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor because he guides us towards a life that is abundant and full. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor because he leads us to see the power of God loose in the world bringing liberation and wholeness to all who are open to experience it. Perhaps what is most wonderful, is that Jesus offers to all who choose to follow him, this same wonderful power. When we dare to trust his guidance, when we dare to believe his teachings that the power of God is given to us through God’s Spirit, then we too can behold this wonderful transformative power. The power to mend relationships, the power to restore people to positions of status and worth, the power to create greater justice and righteousness in the land, the power to give up our selfish concerns for a more meaningful existence, this is what is offered to us through this Wonderful Counselor.

This week we have had something wonderful happen for us. On Sunday we approved the selling of the manse. On Monday we were notified that an offer had been made to purchase it. On Tuesday the presbytery approved the sale and later a contract for sale was signed. The closing might happen before the end of the year. It seems to me the timing indicates God is at work in this. Through the sale of the manse God has wonderfully blessed us with an abundance. Through this God has empowered us and challenged us to demonstrate to our community how we are led by a Wonderful Counselor. How do you think God would want us to use this for God’s glory in our ministries? Where is the situation into which you believe God’s Spirit is inviting us to intervene with not only our financial, but also our real assets and our time and energy? In this season of Advent, where we proclaim a wonderful light in the face of darkness, ask God to guide you to discern how we can demonstrate the wonderful power of God.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,... and his name shall be called, Wonderful Counselor!

Brant

YOUR SESSION/COUNCIL AT WORK
November 17, 2020
Mary Ann Parker, Your Clerk of Session

Following a period of reflection and thanksgiving, reports were received.

- Pastor Brant reviewed his plans for services and devotional time for the Advent Season.
- Roger Scovill will serve as elder commissioner for Presbytery meeting on December 2, 2020. Meeting will be held virtually.
- Session approved contributions of \$250.00 each to the basic mission of Presbyterian Church and to United Church of Christ for the year 2021.
- Called congregational meeting will be planned for November 29, 2020 at 1:30 PM in the church parking lot for the purpose of obtaining congregation's approval to sell the manse on Deerfield and to elect officers for the coming year. The proposed slate of officers was presented,
- Staff performance reviews are in process.
- Following the information from the state of MI health department and Lake Huron Presbytery Council and because the COVID 19 cases are rising, the session voted to discontinue in house worship services until further notice.
- Dates for the Lord's Supper in 2021 were approved.
- Session also approved the expenditure for a video mixer and software to enhance video capabilities.

YOUR SESSION/COUNCIL AT WORK
December 15, 2020
Mary Ann Parker, Your Clerk of Session

Following a period of reflection, thanksgiving, and prayer, reports were received.

Clerk's report: Church membership is 123 with the passing of Dorothy Gray.
Virtual communion was celebrated 11-19-2020

Pastor's report: Working on Advent devotional services for Wednesday nights.
Church service sermon on 12-27-2020 will be provided by Dr. Rev. Dan Saperstein as this offer has been made to all churches in the Presbytery.

Denominational Reports: Roger Scovill served as elder commissioner at last Presbytery meeting which was held on ZOOM. Roger reported that two Korean churches have merged through the work of the Presbytery (Pastor Brant served on this committee.) The service and sermon were very inspirational as sermon was presented by Rev. Diane Moffat on being a Matthew 25 church.

Building & Grounds: C. Davis reported that a contract has been signed for someone to purchase the manse. Closing date will be on or before 1-5-2021. Discussion regarding a request for an organized scout troop to use CTC for meetings. This will be investigated further, but it was thought to be a good thing to help the scouts and for our mission outreach. Scouts not meeting at the present time.

Finance & Stewardship: There has been a decrease in the number of pledges made for next year and for the amount given. ***If you have not returned your pledge card, it would be beneficial to all concerned parties for you to do it now! We need to pay our staff and to keep the lights and heat on.***

Christian Outreach: K. Blehm reported that 5 families from Weiss school and 1 family from CTC will receive gift cards for Christmas.

Personnel: M. Parker related that performance reviews have been completed. **Session approved the new office hours to be Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM year-round. (NO change during the summer months).**

Spiritual Life: Pastor Brant reported that prerecorded services are in the making through the end of the year. Christmas Eve service will air at 7 PM on CTC YouTube channel.

New Business: Session agreed to a by-law change to be put before the congregation at the annual meeting. Session ***is asking for the congregation's approval to allow session to review and to approve all congregational minutes.*** Further information will be given later. **It was agreed to hold the annual congregational meeting in the church parking lot at 1 PM on January 17, 2021.** K. Loviska has asked all committee moderators to have their annual reports to her as soon as possible after the first of the year and no later than January 10, 2021.

In Person Worship Suspended Until Further Notice

At its meeting on Tuesday, November 17th, in light of the increased number of people contracting the virus, and the recommendations of both the state's health department and the presbytery council, the session acted to suspend in person worship until the way be clear for us to resume safely.

The Sunday Worship service will continue to be broadcasted on our YouTube Channel, CTC Saginaw, premiering at 10:30 am, and will also be available on our FaceBook page later on Sunday afternoon.

This is a difficult time to make this decision as we move into the celebrations of Thanksgiving, the Season of Advent, and of course, Christmas. We are working to include as many elements of the season into our services as we can. Please let us know what additional items you would like to include through either emails or letters.

Celebration of the Lord's Supper, Christmas Eve

During our worship on Christmas Eve we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper. You are invited once again to gather before you the elements of the bread and the cup so that you might fully participate in this sacred celebration.

A Weary World, Wednesday Evenings on our YouTube Channel, 6:30 pm

For the first three Wednesdays in December, we will be using "A Weary World; Reflections for a Blue Christmas," by Kathy Escobar. In this season of Christmas, a season that will be not like any Christmas season we have experienced before, we are taking the opportunity to reflect on the losses we are enduring, trusting that as we search for Christ in the midst of the sadness, Christ will see us through them to a place of joy. The first theme will be "Honoring Reality," and in this presentation you are invited to light a candle for "each reality you want to honor," that is each person or situation on your

heart for which you feel sadness. If you would like to participate in this, please have some candles ready. Also you will be asked to create for yourself a mantra, a short expression that speaks hope to your heart and mind, that you can easily repeat to yourself when you find yourself touched by sadness.

Blue Christmas Service, December 21st, on our YouTube Channel, 6:30 pm

December 21st is the longest night of the year and traditionally a time when we remember the many people for whom the Christmas season is difficult. Tragedy, isolation, loved ones no longer present, these rob many of the joy that is supposed to be a part of the season. Into this darkness we pray for the light of Christ to come. On this day, for this service, we will lift up our stories of loss and express our hope that in the darkest of times Christ comes to comfort us and empower us for lives of compassionate service. If you have a story of a difficult Christmas, and would be willing to share it briefly for either an audio or video recording, or you want to offer it anonymously, please contact Brant so that arrangements can be made.

Offering Envelopes will be available to be picked up on Wednesday, Dec. 9th.

Because we will not be meeting in person for the time being, Lori Halase will be making the boxes of offering envelopes available during the week for pickup, starting on December 9th. To pick yours up, please first call the church office to make an appointment to ensure both that someone will be here to unlock the door for you, and to pick up your offering envelope if you want to drop it off, and also to help us keep the number of people coming into the church building manageable. The boxes will be on the table on the left side as you come in the East door, each one in its own plastic bag. Please wear a mask as you enter, and exit as quickly as you can.

Ode to Countryside Trinity Church, written by Dorothy Hughes

These stanzas are excerpts from the poem "Ode to Countryside Trinity Church", which was written by Dorothy Hughes. In them, she expresses her thanks and praise to God for the blessings she has received since joining us from Warren Avenue. She also lifts us up in prayer while we are away from each other, especially in this holiday season. Thanks Dodo for this gift of love.

*"When an old door closes, God opens another
And two become one, brother to brother
So enter our portals with kindness and prayer
Our hopes and desires and sorrows to share.*

*The fellowship, the kindness, the love of all
Is here and present within these walls.
A fine place to worship our God and our King
In praise of our God let our voices ring."*

*"This year: 2020! Will it ever end?
We are lonely and isolated, losing family and friends
To a silent pandemic we can't comprehend*

*Mother Nature and God are warning us: Beware!
Our people and planet need much better care*

*We have a deep faith that God will provide
The courage and faith for us to survive
He will not desert us in our hours of need
Our unshakable faith will sustain us, indeed.*

*Let us all hope that there'll soon come a day
When we can gather together to sing and to pray
Until that day comes, we hold out our hopes
For good will and good health for all of our folks."*

Women's Association - The women will meet in the new year 2021 to determine how much and who will receive our monies. We have paid our budgeted expenses.



Greeting Cards: Due to the new restrictions regarding Covid-19, Shirlee Scovill will **NOT** be selling cards for the next three weeks or until further notice based on Covid Guidelines. However, she wanted me to relay that if you need to get something please call her or email her and maybe she can arrange something with you. Her phone numbers are: 989 892-1903 (Home) 989 327-2219 (Cell) and her email is scovillshirlee@yahoo.com.

Facebook Prayer Group: We have created a FB Prayer Group on our newly created FB Page. It is a private group where only those who are invited can see the messages posted for those in need of prayer. If you are on Facebook and would like to be invited, please call Kathy in the office so she can invite you to join.



Telephone Directory: Don't forget to let Kathy in the office know about any change of yours or a family member's address, phone numbers or email addresses so she can update the church records and mailing lists. Please email changes to countryside@ctcsaginaw.com or leave a message at 989 793-0125.

These Days: We have received the October-November-December edition of the *These Days* magazine and they will be in the box outside the east entrance door if you would like to pick one up.

THESE DAYS
Daily Devotions for Living by Faith

**Countryside Trinity Church
Funds Statement**

November, 2020					
	Beginning Balance	Receipts	Disbursements	Transfers	Ending Balance
General	3,099.62	7,506.26	13,562.77	617.00	(2,339.89)
Memorial	7,585.00	30.00			7,615.00
Memorial - Norma Patterson	-				-
Manse	(11,322.00)		221.10		(11,543.10)
Special gift	34,401.29				34,401.29
Special projects	2,195.36				2,195.36
Mission					
Per capita	232.50				232.50
Two-coins-a-meal	51.00	37.28			88.28
Food baskets	474.52	773.00			1,247.52
Heifer proj (Church School)	(0.00)				(0.00)
UCC/PCU	(286.00)	316.00			30.00
Good Samaritan	2,477.28	25.00	30.00		2,472.28
Muriel Lakey Scholarship	6,271.99	312.50			6,584.49
Womens Association	-				-
Local	351.00	75.00			426.00
Bricks	1,335.85				1,335.85
	46,867.41	9,075.04	13,813.87	617.00	42,745.58
Endowment	133,826.86			(617.00)	133,209.86
	180,694.27	9,075.04	13,813.87	-	175,955.44

Year-to-Date Activity					
Beginning Balance	Receipts	Disbursements	Transfers	Ending Balance	
14,342.58	97,232.73	125,962.90	12,047.70	(2,339.89)	
4,765.00	2,850.00			7,615.00	
2,145.00		2,145.00		-	
		6,280.40	(5,262.70)	(11,543.10)	
	46,004.58	11,603.29		34,401.29	
1,768.79	651.57	225.00		2,195.36	
	2,270.00	2,037.50		232.50	
	241.28	153.00		88.28	
1,520.66	893.00	1,166.14		1,247.52	
(0.00)				(0.00)	
626.14	641.00	1,237.14		30.00	
2,627.28	25.00	180.00		2,472.28	
5,334.97	1,249.52			6,584.49	
-				-	
141.71	978.00	693.71		426.00	
1,335.85				1,335.85	
34,607.98	153,036.68	151,684.08	6,785.00	42,745.58	
141,631.55	(1,636.69)		(6,785.00)	133,209.86	
176,239.53	151,399.99	151,684.08	.	175,955.44	



Countryside Trinity Church 2020



Poinsettia Plants

IN HONOR OF

Given By:

Sidney Diggs IV

In Honor Of:

Callie & Augustus Smith

IN MEMORY OF

Given By:

Michael & Karen Hahn

Richard & Nancy Easlick

Shirley Groom

Dan & Barb Groom

Kathy Loviska

Marcia, Sue, Steve Lacker

Roger, Shirlee Scovill

Lou Diechman

Avis Leach

Sidney Diggs IV

Nancy Erndt

Eric & Sue Smith & Family

Ron & Jean Anne Miller

Doug & Marilyn Leffler

Dick Woodke

Darren Woodke

Ruth Marsh

Mary Longstreth

Tom & Chong Ladner

The Gray Family

In Memory Of:

Beloved daughter Emily

Loved Ones

Wayne Groom

Our parents

Larry Loviska

Bill Lacker

Loved Ones

Parents

Garner Leach & Theodore & Cora Scoon

Vashti & Sidney Diggs

Mothers-Elizabeth Ruzowski & Zelma Erndt

Mary Ellen Sierocki

Harriet Miller & Iola Williams

Raymond Doyscher (Marilyn's Father)

Nancy Woodke & Isobel Staley

Nancy Woodke & Val & Anita Rodarte

Marsh & Claytor Families & Loved Ones

My Parents

Our Parents, Chong's mother-Byong Sun Kim;

Parents, Ken & Dorothy Gray



PROTOCOLS FOR COUNTRYSIDE TRINITY CHURCH UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

In an abundance of caution and until it is safe to relax these procedures, the following protocols will be required before entering the building:

1. Appointments are required. Please call the office (989) 793-0125 to set up a convenient time Monday-Thursday in the mornings.
2. Enter the building only through the east door near the office
3. **YOU MUST WEAR A MASK WHILE INSIDE THE BUILDING.** Free masks are available in the entrance hall.
4. Fill out the Registration Sheet on the table immediately inside the door to the left, recording your answers to the Screening Questionnaire and your temperature as shown on example below. To take your temperature, place the thermometer near your forehead and squeeze the button. Your temperature will show up on the screen (please note that if it is cold outside, you may need to place the thermometer close to a location which was covered by your coat in order to get an accurate reading (forearm, neck, etc). **If you are not feeling well, or your temperature is above 100.4° F please do not come into the church.**

EVENT:					
Date:		Time:	Location:		
Attendee/Name		Screening Questions (which one if answered "yes")	Temperature (Below 100.4 F/38C)	Admitted (Yes) (No)	
1	Jane Doe	None	98.4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please use the hand sanitizer on your way in and on your way out.
6. Please do not venture into the church.
 - a. If dropping something off, leave it on the table.
 - b. If picking something up, please arrange this in advance so it will be readily available for you.

We want to make sure that we are all as safe as possible under these extreme conditions and urge everyone to please be careful, always wear your mask and wash your hands often. Use hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes regularly. If you do not have a mask or need more, please let Kathy know and you will be provided as many as you need.

Christian Outreach

Please remember our local ministries during this time, as they work to provide additional resources to our community in this time of pandemic and need your support. This month's Mission of the Month is Christmas Food/Gift Baskets & Christmas Joy Offering.



Offering Envelopes - FYI and for clarification purposes. The colored envelopes (Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas etc.) that come in the box with our offering envelopes, are credited to the General Fund as a gift to the Church. Any money

for special projects (Food Baskets, Angel Tree, CROP, Blankets etc.) must be identified and placed in a plain envelope or special envelope provided by the cause or a designated individual. If you have any questions, contact the office for clarification.

Feeding Families - Ten (10) food cards of \$50.00 each were distributed to needy families for Thanksgiving. Thank you all for your generosity at this tough time. For Christmas, we would like to do more. Please send your donations marked "Christmas Baskets". We will buy gift cards for food and presents and would like to make these cards worth more – perhaps \$100. Any donations left from Thanksgiving will be added to our Christmas funds. We hope to insure each child will receive a gift.



Christmas Joy Offering: December offerings are received by both our denominations. You will get a Joy Offering envelope with your newsletter. These donations will be split between both denominations. The PCUSA use their monies to support leaders and

leadership development, especially for communities of color and for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need. The UCC supplements pension and health insurance for low income and retirees and emergency funds for clergy and lay workers throughout the year.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Rhashell Hunter
- 8 Garth Westendorf
- 12 Melissa Paterson (Shalhoup)
- 16 Alexa Mahan
- 17 Nancy Easlick
- 18 Paula Plater
- 22 Ed Halase27
- 24 Nancy Scott
- 25 Brecque Woodke
- 26 Craig Gates

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 15 Joseph & Doris Ruth (1956)
- 24 Bruce & Patricia Denno (1984)
- 27 Dick & Nancy Easlick (1952)