

Advent Christmas

at Catonsville Presbyterian Church

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Closing the Distance Between Us

By Kenneth Kovacs

Ordinarily, we try to give plenty of space for the Advent season before we turn our sights toward Christmas, which doesn't begin until December 25. Most years, to be honest, this is a struggle for us. But this is no ordinary year, and this won't be an ordinary holiday season. Given all that we have been through since March, and as we prepare ourselves for what will be a difficult winter, we need to hold on to the story of Christmas all the more, the birth of a child who promised a new future for God's people, the Word made flesh. "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:3b-5). Advent is about waiting but waiting is tough these days. We need his life—*now*. We need his light—*now*. We need to feel God's presence through Jesus, to know that presence within us, among us, and between us.

continued on page 2 ➔

—INSIDE—

Worship: Dates and Details on Sunday
Worship through Advent. See page 2.

Devotion and Prayer: Read the
Advent Resources. See page 3.

Education: Learning and Growing
Through Advent. See page 3 and 4.

Serving and Giving: Share the Joy this
Christmas with others. See page 4.

Closing the Distance Between Us

Continued from Page 1

To celebrate the Incarnation is to acknowledge that with the birth of Christ, in love, God closes the distance between us—the distance between God and humanity. Christmas is about God coming close to us. Coming close, however, takes on new meaning this year as we, in love, work to intentionally keep a safe distance from one another. In our time apart our life together is seen for the precious thing that it is. I can't take credit for these thoughts. It was my good friend Christy Waltersdorff who first suggested it to me several weeks ago. It's the theme for her church throughout Advent and she has allowed me to "borrow" it. (I'll repay her with some really good chocolate).

This special newsletter provides an overview of all the ways we will strive to close the distance between us this Advent and Christmas. The issue covers four areas: Worship, Devotion and Prayer, Education, and service/giving. *O, Come, let us adore him! Christ the Lord!*

Worship

Lord's Supper the First Sunday of Advent November 29

We will celebrate the Lord's Supper on the First Sunday of Advent, November 29. We will light the Advent candles each week. And most of the scripture texts will focus on the birth narratives from Luke's Gospel.

New! An Advent Candlelight Vesper Service

Tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m. on December 13 (or Dec. 20 depending upon the weather). Join us for an outdoor vespers service on the church lawn (near the tower door and ramp). Hear the Christmas story and music of the season. (Facemasks and safe distance will be required). Everyone will then be invited to walk (single-file at a safe distance) through the sanctuary to see it decorated for Christmas. We know there is a deep desire to be near the building and to enter again that holy space.

Blue Christmas Service Monday, December 21 at 7 p.m.

Our Blue Christmas Service will be on the longest night of the year, Monday, December 21 at 7 p.m. This year in particular we need a time to sit with our sadness, sorrow, and grief, acknowledge our feelings and emotions, and find God's light shining in darkness. This service will be shared on Facebook Live.

Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24 Family at 4 p.m. Candlelight at 8 p.m.

Our traditional Christmas Eve services will be

pre-recorded and premiered on Facebook and YouTube. The Family Service will be at 4 p.m. and the Candlelight Service will be at 8 p.m.

New! Zoom Worship December 27 and January 3

Worship on these Sunday will take place at the usual time but on Zoom (and not on Facebook or YouTube). We'll share the Zoom link several days in advance. We imagine these services to be very casual (feel free to wear your pjs). Using this format for worship will give our music staff and camera/worship production team a well-earned break.

Christmas Poinsettias

You are invited to contribute to the Poinsettia Fund, which provides poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary during Advent and Christmas. You may donate as you desire and designate your contribution in honor of or in memory of loved ones. All poinsettias will be delivered to the homebound. Send a check payable to CPC with "Flower Fund" on the memo line and be sure to indicate the name(s) of those being remembered or honored. You can email this information to office@catonsvillepres.org. You may also contribute online <https://onrealm.org/CatonsvillePres/-/give/Christmas2020>, be sure to leave the name of the memorial/honoree in the memo section. Gifts will be received through December 17. Questions? Contact Susan Hutton at 410-719-6711.

Devotion and Prayer

Presbyterian Lights Advent Luminaria

Join us in our Presbyterian-wide witness as we await Jesus' birth. We'll set out luminaria at our homes each week in Advent as we share the Light together. Prayers and devotional activities have been written by the Christian Educators of Baltimore Presbytery. Learn more at <https://baltimorepresbytery.org/presbytery-lights/>

- a. Drive-thru pickup available at the church's 1400 Frederick Road entrance on Sunday, November 22 from 12–2 p.m. and Saturday, November 28 from 12–2 p.m. Materials: You may pick up your bag and candle at
- b. The church office, Tuesday–Friday, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. beginning November 18. We will also set some outside on the church office front porch so you can pick them up after hours.
- c. Charlestown residents will receive them from Howie and Sara Nixon.
- d. Columbia and Ellicott City residents can contact Dorothy Boulton at dboulton@catonsvillepres.org to schedule a drop-off.

Advent Calendar

Adapt this calendar to your family's needs and interests. This is a lovely calendar published by the United Church of Canada, especially recommended for families with children. [Advent Calendar Link](#)

Education

Thursday Morning Bible Study

10:30 a.m. on Zoom

The texts we're studying throughout Advent are Luke 1:26-38 (December 3), Luke 1:39-56 (December 10), and Luke 2:1-20 (December 17).

Adult Ed Advent Study

The Gifts of Peace, Justice, Joy, Salvation

This is a four-part Advent series written by Dr. Cynthia Campbell, Presbyterian pastor and former president of McCormick Theological Seminary. The handouts for all four weeks are included here for you to reflective upon, either alone or with your family/friends. And we invite you to join in a conversation on Thursday, December 10 and 17. Ken Kovacs will host a discussion on the gift of "joy" and the gift of "salvation" at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

- ◇ [Advent I: The Gift of Peace Link](#)
- ◇ [Advent II: The Gift of Justice Link](#)
- ◇ [Advent III: The Gift of Joy Link](#)
- ◇ [Advent IV: The Gift of Salvation Link](#)

Advent Wreath

Here's a great advent wreath craft. The only tools you need are paper, coloring materials, and scissors.

[Advent Wreath Link](#)

Christmas Coloring Pages

Suitable for all ages. [Christmas Coloring Pages Link](#)

Advent Daily Devotional

Jill Duffield, editor of The Presbyterian Outlook, has authored a beautiful daily devotional for the Advent season. In the New Testament, there are two words for time: kairos (meaningful time) and chronos (ordinary tick-tock time). These daily readings will help us discern God's kairos in the midst of our daily chronos. Download the series here:

- ◇ [Week 1: Hope Document Link](#)
- ◇ [Week 2: Wait Document Link](#)
- ◇ [Week 3: Watch Document Link](#)
- ◇ [Week 4: Witness Document Link](#)



EDUCATION

Continued

Segregated by Design

December 15 at 7– 8:30 p.m.

The Dismantling Racism hosts this 17-minute video followed by group discussion. This video, narrated by Richard Rothstein, author of the book "The Color of Law," examines the forgotten history of how our federal, state and local governments unconstitutionally segregated every major metropolitan area in America through law and policy. After the viewing, we'll discuss the information presented in the video. Details coming soon. Questions? Contact at Jeff Bolognese jabolognese@gmail.com.

Advent / Christmas Story Videos

The Christian Education team is offering these short videos each week, accessible via YouTube. CPC guest readers will share a story from the Growing in God's Love story bible. There's an accompanying printable pdf with discussion & sharing questions for your family.

Advent Resources for Young Children

Drive up to the church on Sunday, November 22 or Saturday, November 28, from 12–2 p.m., to pickup an Advent kit for your family. We've included a book with daily countdown stickers, and craft materials for holiday ornaments. (While you're there, how about posing for a picture for our Christmas Eve family worship service—see info under Serving and Giving). If you can't make it to the drive-thru, please contact Dorothy Boulton at dboulton@catonsvillepres.org to see how we can arrange an alternate pickup.

Serving and Giving

There's lots of ways to share the joy this Christmas. Catonsville Presbyterian Church is involved in several ministries this season that can use your financial or material support: Seafarers, Westside Men's Shelter, Local Food Ministries, McKim Gifts, and the Christmas Joy Offering.

Monetary Gifts

To give online, please use this link and select a ministry using the small up arrow on the right. <https://onrealm.org/CatonsvillePres/give/Christmas2020>. Checks may be made out to the church, indicating the designated ministry in the Memo Line.

Contribute Items

There is a collection bin on the front porch of the church house for Seafarer items (men's hats, gloves, socks, new items only, Sudoku puzzle books, decks of cards) which will be received through November 30, and then West Side Men's Shelter items (men's hats, socks, long underwear—new items only) will be received from December 1 through January 31.

McKim toys for children and youth (board games, craft kits, sports equipment) can be dropped off at one of the drive-thrus (November 22 and November 28 from 12–2 p.m). Non-perishable food donations can be made at Chef Paolino's and State Fare restaurants in Catonsville throughout the winter months.

Share your Time and Talents

There's also ways to share your time and talents during this season, particularly through our worship ministries:

The 4 p.m. Christmas Eve Family Worship service is looking for youth and family musicians. We'll pre-record you in the sanctuary, or you can send in your video from home. We're also asking for photos to accompany the Christmas story (Dorothy is sending this info via email). You are welcome to come by one of our drive-thru days Sunday, November 22 and Saturday, November 28 from 12–2 p.m. to take your photos at the church. We have costumes—or adapt and create your own.

Choir members are invited to participate in musical video recordings for Advent worship and the 8 p.m. Christmas Eve service. These can be scheduled with Greg Knauf at gknauf@catonsvillepres.org.

