



I remember my second year in college when I found myself in a philosophy class. After the first lecture, a few students left class saying, "The professor is just brilliant. What a vocabulary he has. I just wish I was better informed so I could get more out of the class." I left confused and frustrated, thinking, but not saying, "I wish this guy could bring this down to my level." A few years later in seminary, a professor joked about a famous sermon we read by a legendary 19th century Presbyterian preacher that was dry and loaded with complicated theological terms, "He was from that era when all the great preachers were invisible during the week and incomprehensible on Sunday."

One of the best things about Christmas is that the story is so accessible. Our God, who often appears in the Bible to be "immortal, invisible and wise" (to paraphrase the Martin Luther hymn) stoops down to our level and arrives in the form of a baby. In the story, the angelic pronouncement didn't go to the powerful or to the Temple priests or even to the wealthy professionals, but to common shepherds working in the fields. God comes down to our level and sticks around so we can observe firsthand what God is like and what God wants out of us in a relationship.

This Sunday, we have the privilege to watch Children's Ministry put on a short (15 minute) play that tells part of the Christmas story. I love all these children's productions because they remind us of the unique nature of our faith: that God came in human flesh and lived among us. It is a story even the youngest child can easily comprehend and retell. I remember my first Christmas Eve service as a pastor when I gave the children's sermon. I didn't know the kids well (except my two sons) so I read the Luke 2 accounts, closed the Bible and asked them a question, "What is this story about?" A very bright 9 year old answered, "Jesus comes all the way down from heaven to make sure we understand who God is." Wow. He nailed it.

We have been struggling for several years to improve the congregation's ability to hear the service. We knew there were dead spots in the building and that the liturgists and your pastor do not always speak clearly or directly into the microphones. Recently, we ordered a microphone that is mounted on a headset and has a wireless transmitter without one of those wire tails that produces annoying static noises each time it rubbed against my jacket or the podium. Now, everyone says how much more accessible are my messages. The new equipment was made possible by a gift from Bob and Rose Marie Rice in memory of their parents who were always concerned about people with hearing loss.

I want to conclude with a poem by Presbyterian pastor J. Barrie Shepherd. It is titled, *Don't Stop Me*, which was printed in the December 10th edition of the Presbyterian Outlook.

Merry Christmas!

James Brassard

Don't Stop Me ...

If you've heard this before,
It all begins, you see,
with an amazed young virgin wondering by the well,
then proceeds, past puzzled Joseph, to a manger
in a cattle stall. Some shepherds get involved,
and three venerable Magi from the east
led by a star. A narrow escape
is followed by the usual brutalities
And then ...

You know the rest, of course.
But in this chill and wintered season
when depth draws near despite the merchandizing
and the malls, to hear it all once more in song,
and speech, and simple celebration,
can bring light to darkness, trust beyond all fear,
and a gentle way to walk, at least until you hear
this time-worn, secret splendid tale
for still another year.

Memorial Service

for

Gwen Turnbull

Gwen Turnbull, a long-time friend of many members of CCPC, died at home Monday evening, December 10, 2012. Gwen had been undergoing treatment for cancer for several years and had done quite well until recently.

Gwen and Alan Turnbull were original homeowners in Bowie, moving to Greenbelt in their retirement years to be near a son and his family. Gwen worked many years for women's rights through the American Association of University Women, the League of Women Voters, and other community groups, and she worked as a secretary at Roosevelt High School.

Services for Gwen will be held on Tuesday, December 18th at 1:00 PM at the Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church, Powder Mill Road, Hyattsville, MD 20783. Tel. 301-937-3666. Condolences may be sent to:

Alan Turnbull and Family
45-G Ridge Road
Greenbelt, MD 20770



Christmas Eve Worship Services

CCPC will have two Christmas Eve worship services, one is at 6 PM,
the other is at 8:30 PM.

Also, there will only be one service on Sunday, December 30th,
and it will start at 10 AM.

We hope you can join us.





Christmas Joy Offering

Good News of Great Joy!

As we celebrate the good news of great joy and open our hearts to God's love in Jesus, may our gifts bear joyful witness to that uncontainable love.

The Christmas Joy Offering supports racial ethnic education at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges, where students develop their gifts and find their calling. It also helps families of active and retired church workers meet unexpected needs through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

Thank you for your support of the Christmas Joy Offering!



Session Highlights

December 2012

On December 10th, Session welcomed and received Paige Beshens into CCPC membership. She will be introduced to the congregation on December 16th. Please say hello and introduce yourself to Paige. She has been Presbyterian most of her life, lived in many places in the US and the world since her Dad was in the military. She comes to the Bowie area from NC due to a transfer with her job.

The Session is diligently reviewing end of the year records and working on a 2013 budget. The per capita for 2012 is \$36 per member. It has not changed for 2013. Kindly include this amount in your giving for 2013.

Women of the Church

Please join us for our Winter Potluck

Wednesday, January 16, 2013

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Dodds Hall

Come prepared for fellowship and wonderful food!

We will be nominating women for the Honorary Life Membership Award. Look for the nominating form in your email or in the narthex.

Contact Carrie Casto or Tracy Backus if you have any questions.

DEACON'S CORNER

This is the 23rd in a series of articles about living well by considering the host of things we can change in our lives, our homes and our surroundings that can make our lives healthier, happier, and safer. Special thanks to Joy Bible, former Moderator of the Board of Deacons, for sharing her wisdom and expertise through the Deacon's Corner. We will be preparing a complete set of Deacon's Corner articles to share with CCPC.

When we come into this world, we don't have any stuff. We come naked and a little angry because we have been disturbed and taken from a nice warm place. But soon our parents begin to give us stuff. They fix up a room for us and put lots of stuff in it. This is the beginning of our accumulation of stuff.

As we grow so does our stuff. For some of us, the more stuff we have the better we feel. Our stuff grows bigger, like cars, boats, houses, cabins. This requires more space to put our stuff. Some of our stuff is beautiful, some so valuable, it requires banks and special storage areas. Every room is filled with stuff. We give our kids stuff. Then we come to our later days and we wonder why we have so much stuff and we think, "One day I will be gone and someone else will have to worry about my stuff." Even then, someone will fuss or fight over who gets my stuff.

Don't you wonder why we invest so much of our lives in accumulating, fussing, worrying, and going into debt over STUFF! If we don't have it, we want it or think we need it. What if, in this Season of Love, instead of focusing on getting stuff, we focus on family, friends, and the "Reason for This Season." There is so much anxiety in this world, so much stress and pain that we focus on the haves and the have-nots. But, maybe it is time to focus on the things in life that don't require money, rooms, and places.

A family rooted in love, strong in faith, surrounded by a faith community will experience less of an insatiable craving for things. Now is the time for teaching the art of giving and receiving. Taking time for communion with God is as essential as shopping, buying or even mopping a floor. Investing time in family, friends, and church, instead of investing in stuff. Shared moments with loved ones are far more priceless than any stuff you may accumulate. Sharing the lessons of love with children and our larger family will create precious memories that last forever, way beyond the memory of some stuff! Give gifts of encouragement, respect, tenderness, empathy, kindness, positivity, and confidence. These gifts will last far longer than any stuff.

Take time this season to reflect on the wonderful gifts you have been given. Savor the season with a thankful heart. Give the gift of a hug, a call, a card or just take TIME for a moment with GOD. For those of us who are older and stuff no longer matters, we have a wonderful opportunity and responsibility to share our gifts, giving support, sharing our wisdom, and having the time to recognize those around us who do need encouragement and appreciation. Brighten some one's life; lift someone up with a smile, or a "you are beautiful" comment. We all share in God's image and that is far greater than any stuff we gather and store.

In this Season of Love, just remember if you want to feel rich, just count the things you have that money can't buy. Like Mary, ponder the mysteries of life in your heart. Realize we need to make room in our hearts and homes, not for stuff, but for the Joy and Love of our Beloved Savior. Will you RISK giving of your time, presence, or attention to someone else today? Will you take time to also be kind to yourself? Giving heart gifts will bring you great joy and will be returned threefold. What a Blessing in this Season of Love!





A Visit from Santa!

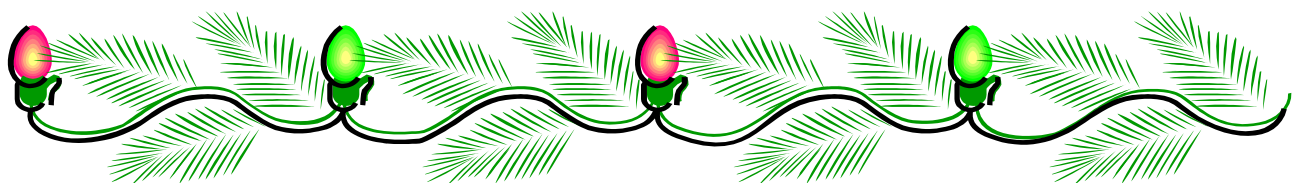
December 16th—Santa is coming to CCPC! Following the 10 AM service come visit Santa in Dodds Hall. You are welcome to take photos, and each child will receive a small gift. Merry Christmas from Children's Ministry!

December 23rd—Children's Ministry will have a little Christmas party in the Children's Worship Center during Sunday School hour. We hope you will join us!

December 24th—Happy Birthday to Jesus! At our 6 PM Christmas Eve service, we will celebrate with the traditional birthday cake and song for Jesus to remind the children (and adults!) of the meaning of the season. Following the Children's Message, the children will gather in Dodds Hall for a story, craft, and (take-home!) cupcake.

December 30th—Sunday School will be about New Year's Resolutions — what we can do in the coming year to serve God and others and keep up the charitable spirit of the Christmas season.

If you have any questions about any of the above programs or for Children's Ministry in general, please contact Rebecca Coleman.



Imagine Yourself Debt Free **Financial Peace University Classes**

Beginning Saturday, January 12th at 10:00 AM through March 9th, CCPC will offer classes from Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University. The nine-week program is a biblically-based, video-driven, small group study that teaches families to beat debt, build wealth, and give like never before. Weekly classes are approximately 90 minutes to 2 hours in length and will be facilitated by Michelle Jones. Feel free to call her on 301-809-1121, or e-mail her at fyrangl@aol.com with any questions you may have. Please join her for a preview of the program on December 12th, at 7:00 PM or on January 10th at 7:00 pm in the conference room at CCPC. You may register at one of these sessions or in advance at <http://www.daveramsey.com>.

Buildings and Grounds News

As we wind down the year, I would like to take a moment to recognize the Buildings and Grounds Committee members. Some of them recently received the CCPC Unsung Hero Awards; however, all of them are worthy of recognition. The current committee members are Lou Aquilina, Bob Brutout, Brian Cable, Dave Conrad, Skip Oates, Mark Pfarrer, Bill Radden-LeSage, Miriam Salisbury and Al Wimbish. Each of them brings different skill sets to the committee and all of them donate their time and talents to CCPC. In addition to their regular participation in work days, they do many things behind the scenes to help keep our buildings and grounds beautiful and operational. In the process, they save the church thousands of dollars each year. For example, CCPC must complete a formal Storm Water Management Report for the City of Bowie every year and have it certified by a licensed engineer. Mark Pfarrer, a licensed engineer, donates his services in completing this report and saves the church about \$1,000 a year. When you see the committee members around the church please take a moment to thank them for all they do — even if you don't know what they do — because they all are making a difference.

Warm Nights: The Warm Nights Shelter Program is just around the corner. CCPC will be hosting the shelter from January 20th to January 27th. Program information and sign up sheets will be posted in the atrium in late December.

Work Day Thank You: The committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the November clean up day. We would especially like to thank Boy Scout Troop 1009 that had a great turnout. We managed to rake all of the leaves and put them by the curb for the city to pick up. Several leaves have fallen since the clean up day. However, Dave Conrad, our one-man lawn mowing and grounds maintenance crew, has taken care of them.

Paul Sell, B&G Committee Chair

Merry Christmas *from*

Christian Community Presbyterian Church



3120 Belair Drive Bowie, MD 20715
Phone (301) 262-6008 Fax (301) 262-5177
Web: ccpc.bowiemd.org E-mail: ccpcbowie@verizon.net

CCPC, the first Protestant church in Levitt Bowie, was born from a passion for Christian mission in the local community, and this focus continues.

*Our Mission: To worship God, to grow in faith and community,
and to place our gifts in the service of Jesus Christ.*

Bowie Interfaith Pantry

Open for distribution and service 9 AM-11 AM on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

We are closed on holidays.

Located at: Christian Community Presbyterian Church
(in the Education Building at the rear of the parking lot)
3120 Belair Drive — Bowie MD 20715

Visit our website: www.bowiefoodpantry.org

E-mail us: BowieFoodPantry@gmail.com **Phone:** 301-262-6765

Thank you for your continued support!

Imagine - Yoga & Wellness Center



Located in the CE building, offers yoga and a variety of wellness programs to CCPC members and the community. For more information, visit www.ImagineThePlace.com, call 443-510-6308, or e-mail Ann@ImagineThePlace.com. Scholarships available.



Belair Cooperative Nursery School

The school is a non-profit, non-sectarian, and non-partisan organization. It's located in the CE Building of Christian Community Presbyterian Church.



Call 301-464-5782 or Email info@belaircoop.org



www.belaircoop.org

