



The Presbyterian Church of Llanerch

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DECEMBER 2015 News and Notes

If we have heard the Easter message, we cannot keep going around with a long face, as if the human race has no hope. –Karl Barth

Brothers and Sisters,

In the above quote, 20th Century theologian Karl Barth points to the reality of the resurrection as a means by which we might “turn our frowns upside down.” I wonder how much he might mind if I were to modify it slightly:

If we have heard the Easter Christmas message, we cannot keep going around with a long face, as if the human race has no hope.

The trick is not to confuse the message with the story. Too often, the Christmas story leaves us to grasp and hold on to the elements of the story as if that’s all there was. In particular, the story of Christmas reminds us of the inherent reality that God has become one of us in Jesus Christ—that God has become human flesh. So that there’s much more to grasp aside from just the details or just a retelling of the story. When we grasp that Jesus Christ is God’s gift to us it allows us to see the world and our place in it differently.

When we grasp that God sends Jesus among us, that Jesus—God-with-us—is a transforming gift that not only inspires but empowers, it changes our hearts, our minds, and our expectations. When we allow God not to be trapped in the manger story, or the Easter story—but to be alive in our midst—we generate opportunities to experience God in new ways.

In this season of giving, marked by the familiar stories of God’s giving to us, we’re going to receive the first report from our New Beginnings Small Group Leaders. On Sunday, December 6th, in worship, we’ll receive feedback from those who helped facilitate our New Beginnings Small Groups and led discussions about the future of our congregation. The best way to greet this work is as God’s gift to us. It will be a reminder of God’s love, God’s joy, God’s presence—as it relates to our congregation. And the invitation for us, will be much like the words that capture Mary’s response when she’s told of all the things the Angel reported to the shepherds:

“But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.”

While there is much in the world to make us fearful, God calls to us with the words, “Do not be afraid.” These are almost always the first words out of any Angel’s mouth. We live in a time where fear is used as a weapon. Leaders tell us over and over to be afraid, that we have to be vigilant, that we must learn to thwart attacks before they happen—knowing that they will happen. And it’s easy to transfer that “fear” from the world into the Church. Fear that we will run out of money, that we won’t be able to exist, that our faith-community is languishing, or lost.

But the word of the Prophet is, “Behold! God is doing a new thing! Do you not perceive it?”

The promise of this holy season is to be revisited by the news that God loves us and longs for us to be a part of God’s kingdom of righteousness and love. That God sends us Jesus to demonstrate for us the way that love is lived out. That God transforms our hearts and lives in and through that love. Our congregation is an important part of God’s love, too. And as we celebrate the promises of God’s love come among us in Jesus, we are reminded God’s promises are also for us, where we are, as a part of the Church and in the world.

Thus, if we have heard the Christmas message—God-with-us—we cannot keep going around with long faces as if there is no hope. We must live into the promises God has made for us and for the world!

And part of that hope, peace, joy, and love we celebrate in Jesus is meant for us to share and celebrate for our congregation. It’s time to own our sadness and disappointment by living into God’s promises as God’s people, expecting opportunities to experience God’s love in new ways. To begin to reshape our expectations of how to be Church within our own lives. To begin a new journey together as disciples—learning to love as God has loved us in Christ. It means, learning to identify with the shepherds, for whom God is revealed in a sign and with a message of hope.

So, as we watch, wait, listen, and hope, for the good news to spill over in the familiar refrains and verses of this season, may we be reminded that God is not waiting but is active—living among us—helping us, holding us, expecting us to be and become part of the Good News!

David L. Hipp-Bethune

Worship & Music News



Worship in DECEMBER

This month we'll be celebrating Advent and Christmas!

- Sunday, December 6th is the 2nd Sunday of Advent. Part of our "gift" in this special season will be to hear an update from our New Beginnings Small Group Leaders—a special presentation as a part of our Advent Worship!
- Sunday, December 13th is the 3rd Sunday of Advent. In addition to morning worship, we'll celebrate with a special Congregational Luncheon and Christmas Tea following worship, to include a special Christmas Carol Sing.
- Sunday, December 20th is the 4th Sunday of Advent, with special musical presentations during worship.
- Thursday, December 24th is Christmas Eve. Our service begins at 7:00pm [PLEASE NOTE THE NEW TIME!]! This special service will include Familiar Carols, Special Music, Scripture Readings, and Holy Communion.
- Sunday, December 27th is the First Sunday after Christmas Day.

DATE:	CELEBRATION:	FIRST READING:	GOSPEL:
December 6th	2 nd Sunday of Advent	Jeremiah 33: 14-16	Luke 1: 5-25, 57-80
December 13th	3 rd Sunday of Advent	Malachi 3: 1-4	Luke 3: 7-18
December 20th	4 th Sunday of Advent	Zephaniah 3: 14-21	Luke 1: 26-66
December 24th	Christmas Eve	Micah 5: 2-5a	Luke 2: 1-20
December 27 th	1 st Sunday After Christmas Day	1 Samuel 2: 18-20	Luke 2: 41-52



CHRISTMAS EVE, 2015 AT THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LLANERCH

Candlelight.

Carols and Music.

Scripture.

Holy Communion.

And a new tradition—**STARTING AT 7:00PM!**

The Senior Choir rehearses on Thursday evenings at 7:30pm in the Fellowship Room; and on Sunday Mornings at 10:15am in the Sacristy.

The Handbell Choir will rehearses on Sunday mornings beginning at 9:30am in the Sacristy.

Church News & Events

JOIN US!

We Need Your Help!



We're collecting used, cleaned, 1 gallon milk-lemonade-tea-jugs for a special Christmas-Eve luminary project. There's a collection box in our Fellowship Room. Please help us repurpose your used jugs before they are recycled!

New Beginnings Report on December 6th!

Sunday, December 6th, our New Beginnings Small Group Leaders will be presenting a report of our New Beginnings Small Group experiences.

Our Small Group Leaders will present an overview of the process and group findings, and an initial description of what it may mean for us to enter a more intentional, missional phase as a congregation. This is the important "next step" in our New Beginnings journey. The congregation will be invited to join the discernment process in response to the Small Group Findings.



Annual Christmas Luncheon and Carol Sing

Sunday, December 13, following worship, we will gather together to enjoy Christmas spirit in food, fellowship, and caroling. Bring a favorite dish to share (check the sign -up in the Fellowship Room) and join in singing carols beloved and new. The Senior and Handbell Choirs will participate. Questions? Contact Phyllis Gibson.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Our special 4th Sunday of Advent worship service with Christmas crèche and special music is Sunday, December 20th, 2015, beginning at 11:00am. Come celebrate God's promises with us!



MISSISON NEWS

White Gifts will be received in worship on December 13 for delivery during that week. A "White Gift" is a new toy, outfit, household item, or other welcome item that is dedicated as a Christmas gift to residents and participants at the Children's Village in Rosemont. Church members wrap their donations in plain white paper, and staff members at the Children's Village will deliver them to an appropriate recipient. Children in the Sunday School will make a presentation in worship on December 6 to explain this program. Meanwhile, the Children's Village staff suggests these especially appropriate gifts:

For Children and Teens:

Alarm clock radios (with batteries if necessary)

Art supplies

Dolls (especially African American)

Games (handheld, board games)

Journals/blank books (no locks)

Building toys (Lego, K'nex)

Playing cards

Photoalbums

Puzzles

Sports equipment (basketballs, footballs)

Personal Care items

Wallets

Watches

Clothing (Large sizes especially needed): T-shirts, sweats, pajamas, slippers, socks. Winter gear for all sizes including coats, hats, gloves.

Gift cards are very appreciated, small denominations (\$25) easiest to handle. This will help children and adults who are building new households together, or for a newly independent resident setting up a home for the first time. Food stores, department stores such as Target and Walmart, inexpensive restaurants, electronic outlets.

Connect by Night: Our most significant local mission is our work with the Connect-By-Night program, a partnership between the Mental Health Association and churches to supply homeless adults with a warm place to sleep, nutritious food, and a way to "Connect" with day services such as counseling and training. This year, as in the past, we'll be working with Christ Community Church at the Riverview Center in Lansdowne. The Riverview Center will provide the room and kitchen facilities in which guests will be cared for during the months of January and March. Llanerch Presbyterian will join with Riverview volunteers to provide food and fellowship on alternate nights. Our church will serve on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and alternate Sundays (January 3 and 17). There is a calendar in the Fellowship room that will let you sign up to serve with your family, friends, or a group from work. If you'd like to find out about the program, or be matched with an experienced volunteer, let Phyllis Gibson or Kate Hiebert know. The job of preparing and serving can be split into manageable small tasks, and we always appreciate another set of hands, donations of food supplies, and your prayers of support.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Our Christian Education Team is starting to provide a simple *pre-Sunday School experience for our younger children—our 3, 4, and 5 year olds* who aren't yet reading. These learning and story-telling opportunities will begin in October on the **FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH** and are being scheduled for the fall. If the first Sunday doesn't work, arrangements for a different Sunday can be made. We're starting younger and building our passion for the stories of Jesus!



CARE CLOSET CANS are collected in worship on the First Sunday of the Month. December 6th is this month's collection date! Our Care Closet Cans were recently upgraded by our Children's Sunday School; so please remember to bring yours on the first Sunday!

Preschool Hat & Mitten Tree

This year the children of our Preschool along with members of our congregation are decorating a Christmas tree with new warm woolen hats, gloves, and mittens to be given to less fortunate children. The tree will be located in the Fellowship Room. Come see this expression of human compassion and charity as together we fill the tree for these families. The young children who are the beneficiaries of this program have very little other than the love and support of caring individuals - and as our Llanerch families claim the opportunity to be counted among those caring individuals, we embrace the chance to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

SCOUTING NEWS



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Scout troop 434 was busy around the church and around our region this month. Their autumn service evening for the church happened on a Monday night as they raked up a mountain of leaves on the church grounds. The big oak tree in front still hasn't given up its all its leaves yet, so they may make a return appearance. On two weekends, scouts from the troop and from Cub Pack 462 fanned out across the Llanerch, Chatham, and Beechwood neighborhoods, collecting food for the Delaware County food center network. The entire district (our scout units and others in our part of Delaware County) gathered and delivered more than 12,000 cans. "Scouting for Food" is a longstanding pre-Thanksgiving for scouts, and if you look closely at the Thanksgiving parade downtown, you'll see more Scouts gathering food donated by on-lookers.

This month was a favorite tradition of our troop: the "Father and Son" camping trip to Camp Rodney in Maryland. The scouts and dads camped in two lodges along the shores of Chesapeake Bay, enjoying traditional camping favorite dishes and past-times. Scouts made clay into pots and fired them in the campfire, hiked along the bay, and made up a new game which combined the excitement of soccer with the excitement of rugby. A wonderful time was had in beautiful weather; the scouts don't camp in January so this will be the last outing of the year.

POINSETTIA FOR CHRISTMAS – 2015



In keeping with our Christmas tradition, we will again use donated poinsettia to decorate the church. This year the price of each poinsettia will be \$7.00.

If you would like to order a plant, please complete the form below and return it with your payment by **DECEMBER 13th**, by placing it in the offering plate. Checks should be made payable to the Presbyterian Church of Llanerch with a notation "Poinsettia."

If you have any questions please call Kelly in the church office at 610-789-1639. Thank you.

POINSETTIA ORDER - \$7.00 each – Order due DECEMBER 13th

Donor _____ Date of order _____

Number of poinsettias: red _____ white _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

In Memory of / In Honor of _____

I will take my poinsettia after the 11:00 AM service on December 20th

I will take my poinsettia after the Christmas Eve service December 24th

I will take my poinsettia after the 11:00 AM service on December 27th

My poinsettia may be delivered to someone unable to attend worship services

ALL ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 13th

Black lives matter: A blessing (Guest commentary)

October 30, 2015 by [Cláudio Carvalhaes](#)

As a tradition that says God is always in action among us, reformed and always *being* reformed, the grace of God calls us to reform ourselves by opposing this country's rampant racism and working for racial justice. Hence, a blessing to affirm "Black Lives Matter":

Blessed be those who died due to 300 years of slavery, apartheid and ongoing racial discrimination here and throughout the American continent;

Blessed be those uprooted from Africa, stolen and violently taken away from mothers, fathers, families and land to the Americas;

Blessed be those who died on the way;

Blessed be those who arrived and resisted and kept going;

Blessed be those who worked in the farms and the tracks, whose hands were scarred picking cotton and whose bodies were fatigued beyond words every day;

Blessed be all forms of black resistance throughout history: rebellions, runaways, meetings in the bush, migration to the north, the Underground Railroad, Ferguson and Baltimore!

Blessed be every drop of sweat, every shout of praise or resistance, every prayer, and every song sung that kept black people alive;

Blessed be the black women who survived sexual violence by evil men;

Blessed those who were pillars of entire communities, protecting their old ones and letting their young ones live;

Blessed be those living in poverty due to centuries of oppression and racism;

Blessed be those who were somehow able to make it through the steel veil of racism and go elsewhere and find better lives;

Blessed be black kids who grew and grow up in systems of oppression, not knowing daily, if they will be able to go back home;

Blessed be black parents waiting anxiously for their children to arrive home safely every night; Blessed be black parents who must teach their kids how to protect themselves, how to avoid police,

and how to be attentive to the ten thousand ways racist innuendos serve as aggressive forms of violence in their daily life;

Blessed be non-black parents who teach their kids that black lives matter and that black people are human beings precious to God and to all of us;

Blessed be those who fight against the ongoing elimination of black people from this country by economic measures: budget cuts denying communities social support and education, and the consequent construction of jail complexes that shut down black lives and entire communities;

Blessed be those who fight white supremacy;

Blessed be those who refuse to accept black churches burning;

Blessed be those courageous enough to start any conversation about racism by saying, "I am racist and I must work daily to change that;"

Blessed be parents who do not move to white neighborhoods as a way of "protecting" their children;

Blessed be houses that invite kids of many races to play together;

Blessed be churches who instead of avoiding the complicit silence of white supremacy, talk deliberately and openly about racism and unbalanced power;

Blessed be churches where pulpits are filled with pastors openly fighting white supremacy and not hiding behind their congregations' fears;



Blessed be churches that do not wash away their responsibility of sustaining a discussion of racism by barely mentioning news of black churches on fire in their prayer time, avoiding dealing systemically with country's rampant racism;

Blessed be churches that find and give language to their people so they can find open ways to relate and engage in dialogue about racism;

Blessed are those who do their own homework and read this country's history and make a commitment to the plight of black people without relying on those who have lived through it to always do the education;

Blessed be those who love blackness in its entirety, its diversities and complexities of relations, religions, expressions and social perspectives.

Now go in peace and bless those who are being reformed by the grace of God by fighting racism!

CLÁUDIO CARVALHAES is associate professor of homiletics and worship at McCormick Theological Seminary.

Generosity and Gratitude



It's the end of year giving season. Remember, what you give unto God is deductible for what you have to render unto Ceasar. All gifts made or checks written by December 31st qualify! If you have extra dollars yet to share, our church is a tax-deductible contribution! And, if you're giving online, all gifts are acknowledged instantly by e-mail—which means you won't have to wait for a statement from the Church! If you're not giving online, we're happy to give you credit on your end-of-year statement!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 2016 Pledge Drive.

If you misplaced your pledge form and still want to participate, you can receive a pledge form by contacting the Church Office—or, you can download and print a form from our website. Go to www.lanerchpres.org and click on the “Donate” tab.

Start the New Year with something new—Online Giving!



**YOU CAN MAKE FINANCIAL GIFTS AND
PLEDGES ONLINE!**



You can make one-time or schedule monthly or weekly gifts using your checking or saving's account or credit card.

The easiest access is to go online to our church website, www.lanerchpres.org, click on the “DONATE” tab on our homepage and then click on the “Give Now” button that appears on that page (the “give now” button looks like the one above left, heading this article). Alternately, if you have a tablet or a smartphone, you can scan this QR code to go directly to our giving portal page.

If you have questions about online giving, please contact Rev. Stipp-Bethune or our session members.



A season of Thanks AND Giving.

(a story from Facebook)

The Presbyterian Church of Llanerch shared Tara Thompson's post.



Tara Thompson with Rosemary Wooley Jennings at Target.

November 22 at 11:28am · Tyler, TX · Edited ·

Sam and I was at Target store yesterday The couple near the cart didn't have enough money for their purchase. The lady in the green shirt started to hand things back to the cashier to be able to afford what she had. The lady in the black shirt came out from her lane and said you don't need to return anything I will pay for the whole thing. She pulled out her card and did just that. The lady in the green shirt started to cry. We all just experienced such kindness. What a great story to share amongst all this pain in the world.

God has already given us the power to change the world for someone else. It might be a word, a reminder of God's promises. It might be a cup of water, a used coat, a pair of mittens, some warm socks, or a meal. Or, it could just be flat out generosity.

Our church offers us many ways to participate in giving. During the month of December we will invite you to give in several ways, in addition to your pledged giving. Chester Eastside. White Gifts. Christmas Joy Offering. Connect-by-Night in January. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. The Theological Education Fund. Heifer Project.

It's all because the story of Jesus' life and ministry is a story about giving. God gives God's self to us. Jesus gives God to us. Jesus, when he grows beyond the manger, gives to those around him. Those who are sick. Those who are hungry. Those who are near or at empty in their tank of hope. Jesus gives because he can.

You're going to be in the line at the grocery, waiting to check-out at A.C. Moore, idling in the drive-thru. You will have chances to make a difference this holiday season in the lives of people you don't know. Perfect! Buy someone a cup of coffee; drop a \$10 bill for the lunch for the person behind you in line; for that family who's having a hard time corralling the children in the restaurant, pay for their meal. Show the world it's not lost. Nice people do win the day. And giving people, change the world forever.

The Church can help you do it. But when you do it, on your own, living like Jesus—priceless! After all that you have to be thankful for ...make these remaining weeks the season of extra-special giving! Go for it!

Ways You Can Help



Our Llanerch Presbyterian Preschool is Looking for More Registrations!

If you know anyone who could use a top-quality, wonderful, amazing Preschool experience for their children, please share the word about our Preschool! Brochures are available at Church. We're currently taking registrations for the next school year that begins in September—and it's not too late! Great teachers, a welcoming staff, amazing stories, 60 years' experience! We'd like to share this gem with the community and help change the world—one preschooler at a time. This is part of the mission work and outreach of your congregation!



We need Worship Leaders and Ushers

One of the worship values we hope to create is that worship belongs to the people as an expression of our diversity and inclusivity. The good news of Jesus Christ is that people "belong." We believe there is a place for everyone at Llanerch. And one of the ways we live that out, is *inviting people to participate in leading worship!* From reading and leading worship to

opening the doors and greeting we need willing volunteers with bright shiny faces ready to help members, friends, and guests, experience the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Sign up by talking to Rev. Stipp-Bethune or sending an e-mail to the Church Office. Worship Leaders can also sign-up online by using this link: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ifd7-lkfpGH2SCq3TwT36yUIMsSAh5ZuZAjmgIxAYl0/edit?usp=sharing>.



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

	EVENT	DAY/DATE	LOCATION
	The Abigail Circle	TBD	
	The Lydia Circle	TBD	

HELPING AND GETTING HELP

Do you need a ride to church or know someone who does?	If you need a ride to church, the Deacons are happy to help! Or, if you or someone you know needs a meal, or a visit, please contact our Deacons.	Please see or call Vicki Murphy (610.446.0637) or any member of the Deacons.	
Monthly Care Closet Offering:	Will next be received on Sunday, December 6 th —in worship	If you know someone in need, please speak with Rev. Stipp-Bethune or Vicki Murphy	

Overview of New Beginnings for an Individual Church *Including Outcomes for Each Step Along the Way*

Phase One: Assessment (One Day)



Your assigned assessor spends a portion of that day with you, per the letter she or he will send to you. You are expected to arrange for people to do the building tour, the community tour, the meeting to review finances and the calendar. Your assessor meets with the pastor and the clerk over dinner and then either leads or takes notes at a feedback evening session with the congregation. The presbytery is involved in finding a facilitator for that evening. The assessor takes all he or she learned and goes home and writes your report.

Outcomes: Your New Beginnings report.

Phase Two: Leader Training (Four hours)



The church will receive a little over four hours of training. During this training we introduce you to the foundational concepts undergirding New Beginnings, teach you how to read your reports and how to plan for your small group meetings. We spend a little time on leading the small group process itself. You want to have anywhere from 7 to 11 people at this training of whom should be willing to consider being small group leader for the next phase and/or serve on the team that will oversee the New Beginnings process. This training is offered in person on a weeknight, typically running as a working dinner meeting from 5 to 9 pm. It can also be done during the day if you prefer.

Outcomes: Leaders ready to run the process plus your small group meeting process ready to launch.

Phase Three: Discernment (typically 6 weeks)



The House Meetings (small group meetings held in homes or at the church) should include at least 50% of the worshipping congregation to discuss the report. The number of House Meetings is determined by your church. Participants will engage the report to discuss what they believe is God's mission for the church. Through answering the following questions, you will begin to name and claim what you feel God is calling you to do and be in your community.

Outcomes: A recommended decision for your church's future from each small group.

Phase Four: Decision (usually takes a minimum of 6 weeks)



Each congregation does this step a little differently, but it is when you bring together the results of all the groups and make a decision together. Typically the leadership of the small groups report pull together their results, report to Session and then the Session reports to the congregation.

Final Outcome: A decision about the future of the congregation.

Completed!

Completed!

Completed!

Report on December 6th