



JANUARY 2024

THE LAMPLIGHTER

YORK FIRST MORAVIAN

THE GIFT OF GOD

WHEN SHE WAS A CHILD, OUR FRIEND TANYA COULD HARDLY WAIT FOR CHRISTMAS. ON CHRISTMAS DAY HER PARENTS WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO A ROOM IN THE HOUSE WHERE SHE WOULD FIND THE TREE DECORATED AND A PILE OF GIFTS. BUT SHE NEVER FORGOT THE YEAR CHRISTMAS WAS DIFFERENT. SHE JUMPED OUT OF BED AND RAN TO THE ROOM ONLY TO FIND IT WAS EMPTY, NO TREE AND NO PRESENTS. AS SHE QUESTIONED HER PARENTS WITH TEARS IN HER EYES, THEY LED HER TO ANOTHER ROOM. THERE SHE JOYFULLY DISCOVERED THE CHRISTMAS TREE AND BOXES OF GIFTS. HER PARENTS EXPLAINED, "WE WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT CHRISTMAS IS NOT ABOUT TREES AND TOYS, TANYA..."

IF CHRISTMAS IS NOT ABOUT TOYS, WHAT IS CHRISTMAS ABOUT? CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT A GIFT! CHRISTMAS IS A CELEBRATION OF THE GREATEST GIFT GOD EVER GAVE TO YOU AND ME AND ALL OF HUMANITY. THIS GIFT IS A NEW KIND OF LIFE THROUGH JESUS! ROMANS 6:23 SAYS, "THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST."

"HOW GOOD MUST WE BE TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE AND PEACE WITH GOD?" THIS WAS MY QUESTION AND STRUGGLE AS A TEENAGER. I VIEWED GOD AS THE DIVINE HOLDER OF THE SCALES OF JUSTICE. I THOUGHT HE WEIGHED EVERYTHING I DID, AND IF THE GOOD WAS MORE THAN THE BAD, I WOULD GO UP, AND IF THE BAD OUTWEIGHED THE GOOD, I WOULD GO THE OTHER WAY. BUT I NEVER KNEW IF I HAD BEEN GOOD ENOUGH. I WEIGHED MYSELF IN COMPARISON WITH OTHERS. THERE WAS A BOY IN MY SENIOR HIGH CLASS WHO WAS REALLY BAD, SO MUCH SO THAT HE LATER DID TIME FOR ARMED ROBBERY IN THE PENITENTIARY. COMPARED TO HIM, I WAS GOOD. PERHAPS I WOULD MAKE IT WITH GOD. THEN I WOULD LOOK AT MY SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER, ANNA SWARTZ. SHE WAS REALLY GOOD. I WAS NOT NEARLY AS GOOD AS MRS. SWARTZ. PERHAPS I WOULD NOT MAKE IT. THEN, ONE DAY SOMEONE SHOWED ME FROM THE BIBLE I COULD NEVER EARN ETERNAL LIFE, BUT THAT GOD OFFERED IT TO ME FREELY IF I WOULD OPEN MY LIFE TO JESUS AND TRUST HIM TO SAVE ME. I JOHN 1:12 SAYS, "AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM, TO THEM HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD, EVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME..."

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. THIS IS THE **FIRST** THING YOU AND I NEED TO UNDERSTAND. THE **SECOND** THING WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND IS THE TRUE MEANING OF ETERNAL LIFE. ETERNAL LIFE IS NOT QUANTITY OF LIFE BUT QUALITY OF LIFE. TO LIVE FOREVER BUT BE MISERABLE WOULD BE TO HAVE LIFE EVERLASTING BUT NOT TO HAVE LIFE ETERNAL. THE GREEK WORD FOR ETERNAL LIFE IS **AINIOS** WHICH MEANS LIFE WITH GOD, THE KIND OF LIFE GOD HAS. TO KNOW GOD, TO TRUST IN GOD, TO LIVE LIFE SECURE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD WHICH BEGINS NOW AND GOES ON FOREVER, TO KNOW THAT NOTHING, EVEN DEATH, CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE LIFE ETERNAL! LIFE ETERNAL, THIS KIND OF LIFE, IS THE GREAT GIFT OF GOD MEANT FOR US!

ETERNAL LIFE BEGAN IN THE BABY JESUS IN A MANGER IN BETHLEHEM, ETERNAL LIFE GREW UP IN A HOUSEHOLD IN NAZARETH WITH MARY AND JOSEPH, ETERNAL LIFE MATURED AS JESUS TAUGHT, HEALED AND CAST OUT DEMONS AND DEMONSTRATED THAT LOVING PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE UNWANTED AND UNLOVELY, WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO GOD THAN RIGIDLY KEEPING RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS.... THEN, LIFE ETERNAL CLIMAXED WHEN JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS TO PAY FOR OUR SINS AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD TO SHOW THAT GOD HAS THE LAST WORD!

THIS IS WHY WE GATHER TO CELEBRATE THIS CHRISTMAS EVE. WE CELEBRATE THE ORIGINAL CHRISTMAS GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST!

THERE IS ONLY ONE MORE QUESTION FOR US TONIGHT." WHAT WILL YOU AND I DO WITH THIS GREAT GIFT FROM GOD?" I CAN THINK OF AT LEAST THREE THINGS WE NEED TO DO: **FIRST**, WE NEED TO RECEIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE WITH GOD. TO OPEN OUR HEARTS, REACH OUT OUR HANDS AND SAY "YES" TO JESUS. "YES, JESUS, I WILL OPEN MY LIFE AND HEART TO YOU." **SECOND**, WE NEED TO THANK GOD FOR HIS GIFT BY WORSHIPPING GOD AND LOVING OTHER PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE UNWANTED AND UNLOVELY. **THIRD**, WE NEED TO LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE THE GIFT OF GOD WITH THOSE AROUND US WHO MAY STILL BE TRYING TO FIND THEIR WAY IN THIS DIFFICULT AND DIVIDED WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE.

IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED GOD'S GIFT OF LIFE IN JESUS, OR YOU ARE WILLING RIGHT NOW TO ACCEPT THIS GIFT FROM GOD, AND YOU ARE WILLING TO SHARE THE GIFT WITH OTHERS, I INVITE YOU TO STAND AND LIFT YOUR CANDLE HIGH ON THE LAST VERSE OF OUR FINAL HYMN...

REV. STEVE NICHOLAS
CHRISTMAS EVE 2023

ELDERS NEWS

THE ELDERS MET ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12 AT 7:00 PM VIA ZOOM. WORSHIP SERVICES WERE REVIEWED. THE SCHEDULE FOR GUEST PASTORS FOR THE UPCOMING MONTHS WAS DISCUSSED. DETAILS FOR THE CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT/LOVEFEAST SERVICE WERE FINALIZED. PASTORAL CARE FOR OUR SHUT-INS WERE DISCUSSED. THE CHRISTMAS PARTY WAS REVIEWED. FOLLOW-UP ON MEETING WITH MELISSA JOHNSON WAS DISCUSSED. THE PEC AND THE EDB HAVE APPROVED CLIFF BERGSTRESSER TO BECOME A PART-TIME LAY PASTOR. ELDER NOMINATIONS FOR CHURCH COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 28 2024 WERE DISCUSSED. LINDSEY'S THREE-YEAR TERM HAS ENDED. REQUEST FOR BAPTISM OF PAISLEY MILLER, DAUGHTER OF JESSE AND KARLY MILLER WAS APPROVED. PLEASE PRAY FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP FOR FIRST AND COVENANT CHURCHES AND FOR ALL CHURCHES WITHOUT PASTORS. OUR NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 9 AT 7:00 PM VIA ZOOM.

TRUSTEES NEWS

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.

FIRST MORAVIAN CHURCH HAS A NEED FOR A MEMBER TO SERVE ON THE TRUSTEE BOARD. IT IS A THREE-YEAR COMMITMENT, AND WE MEET ONCE A MONTH, USUALLY VIA ZOOM, THE FOURTH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH 7:00 PM. I TRY TO KEEP THE MEETING TO ONE HOUR. WE HAVE ABOUT SIX WORKDAYS A YEAR, BUT THEY TYPICALLY ARE NOT ALL-DAY AFFAIRS. PLEASE CONTACT CLIFF BERGSTRESSER WITH YOUR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS.

CBERGSTRESSER@VERIZON.NET OR 301-466-3775 CELL.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1/7 - NEW YEAR'S SERVICE WITH COMMUNION AND WATCHWORD
TEXTS TO BE DISTRIBUTED.

1/28 - CHURCH COUNCIL FOLLOWING WORSHIP
(SEEKING A DELEGATE AND AN ALTERNATE FOR EASTERN
DISTRICT SYNOD WHICH WILL BE HELD JUNE 26-29, 2024.)

**TOTAL INCOME & OFFERINGS FROM
SUNDAYS 12/3/2023 - 12/24/2023**

\$5,895.50 GENERAL FUND (INCLUDES XMAS EVE OFFERING)
155.00 REFURBISHING FUND
216.00 FLOWER FUND (XMAS POINSETTIAS)
60.00 EMERGENCY NEEDS FUND

\$6,326.50 TOTAL OFFERINGS

50.00 PARKING RENTAL
1,000.00 PARSONAGE RENTAL
497.91 PARSONAGE UTILITIES PAID INCOME
46.74 UNCLAIMED PA PROPERTY FOUND
(AT&T DIVIDENDS FROM 2011)

\$1,594.65 TOTAL OTHER INCOME

\$7,921.15 TOTAL OFFERING & OTHER INCOME FOR DECEMBER

\$6,404.07 TOTAL EXPENSES FOR DECEMBER



January Birthdays

- 1 Jeffery Rishel
- 2 Chelsea Swartz*
Holly Sterner*
- 4 Sally Senft
- 5 Kayla Rishel*
- 7 Mary Jones*
- 8 Terry Zeigler
- 10 Stanley Senft
- 16 Aaren Downs
- 17 Elaine Patrick*
- 25 Jasani Kotek
- 31 Mona Kotchmar*



Please contact any of the Elders for Pastoral needs:

Steve Nicholas - 717-755-7412
John Knokey - 717-848-9220
Keith Rishel - 717-472-6793
Jeannette Sprenkle - 717-424-5636
Lindsey Robinson - 717-965-5552

January Anniversaries

- 1 Rev. David & Nancy Danneberger*



Prayer Concerns

Mary Jones
Kathie Nicholas
Karrie Rishel
Cliff Rowell
Ruth & Clair Seiple
Jemon Grant
Gary Paules
Elaine Patrick

January Schedule for Guest Pastors

1/7 - Rev. Terry Folk
1/14 - Marion Haynes-Weller
1/21 - Rev. Terry Folk
1/28 - Cliff Bergstresser

Did you know...

We have an online giving portal! If you prefer to worship via Zoom you can send your offering online!

Just go to:

- mmfa.info
- click Giving Portal at the top
- Click 'F' and select First Moravian Church - York, PA

If you prefer to mail your offering, you can send it direct to:

Wanda Hendricks
3715 Fox Chase Drive
Dover, PA 17315

First Moravian Church
39 North Duke Street
York, PA 17401

717-843-2239

www.yorkfirstmoravian.org



2023 Watchword

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:7