



# Cordata Beacon

A Publication of **Cordata** Presbyterian Church

December, 2022



## Message from Pastor Greg: “The Fast / Feast of Advent”

After my sermon on “Christ the King” Sunday (November 20th, proclaiming Jesus as Lord of heaven and earth a la Colossians chapter 1), several people asked me to repeat the “7 Jesuses I have known in my lifetime” from Brian McLaren’s book A Generous Orthodoxy. In this list, McLaren describes his confusion and growth in understanding about Jesus’ identity. Here they are, including a brief parenthetical to describe the focus of each aspect of Jesus in a believer’s faith):

- 1) Conservative Protestant Jesus (innocent Jesus born to die for individual sins)
- 2) Pentecostal/charismatic Jesus (present, personal, and dramatically involved in everyday life through the Holy Spirit)
- 3) Roman Catholic Jesus (focused on the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper and ancient tradition)
- 4) Eastern Orthodox Jesus (emphasizing the Trinity and God’s mystery)
- 5) Liberal Protestant Jesus (social justice growing out of personal faith in Christ)
- 6) Anabaptist Jesus (peace and non-violence)
- 7) Liberation theology Jesus (confronting injustice in society; solidarity with the poor)

It is an intriguing list, since each of these aspects of Jesus have at least some grounding in Scripture. Maybe as we reflect on this list we will be convicted of our human tendency to settle for only a fraction of who Jesus really is?

Newly inspired by this reminder that Jesus is much greater and multi-faceted than I can hold in my thinking, I have decided to approach Advent differently this year. I have also been encouraged in the direction I describe below by two fellow disciples whose life of prayer I deeply respect; they both independently observed that CPC is in a season of change, in which we need to **draw as close as possible to our Lord** who is Head of the Church. How can we do that? In a few words: fasting and prayer.

**Prayer** we know about (although it was enough of a mystery that Jesus’ closest disciples asked him “how do we do this?”). **Fasting**, on the other hand, is a much less common practice, especially during a season usually marked more by feasts than fasts. I have almost no experience with fasting, but I do have a

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deep desire for “more Jesus, less religion.” So I have started and plan to continue until Christmas Day an Advent discipline of fasting. I believe there are many legitimate and Biblical ways to do a fast (try a Google search on “Christian fasting for beginners”). Mine will involve fasting from added sugar. Every time I find myself reaching for a Christmas cookie, candy or sugary beverage, I will refrain. I will turn that desire and hunger into a reminder to seek the Lord in prayer. Does this sound “holier than thou” or “super spiritual”? It is not. It grows from my pastor’s heart for Jesus and for CPC, as I look for Jesus to show up and speak into my life and our life together. Would you like to join me in some form of fasting this Advent season (or maybe instead of fasting, you simply want to pray in a particular way)? If so, just shoot me an email (grege@cordatachurch.org), and I will add you to my weekly “Advent Fast” email list. Maybe the feast of Christmas this year will be a closer walk with the One who has come into the world to save us.

Yours in Christ’s Advent,  
Pastor Greg



### Keep Those Pledge Cards Coming

After a wonderful season of reflecting on God’s grace and how it is flowing through our lives and out to others, we are in the process of collecting the pledge responses from the congregation. Please consider turning in your pledge card as soon as possible so the leadership of our church can make realistic budget plans for the coming year.

Your generosity and faithfulness is such a blessing to all. Thank you.

*The Generosity Team*





## CPC Kids Clubhouse

We will pause our chronological study for the month of December and the first Sunday in January for Advent lesson plans. We will resume our study in the Old Testament beginning January 8th. A new study unit: "Warnings to the People" covers stories from 2 Kings 12:2, Chronicles 24, Isaiah 22:48, Zephaniah and wrapping up the unit with the meaning and reason of repentance from Matthew 3.

**December Lessons:** Prophets Told About Jesus, Angels Spoke to Mary and Joseph, Jesus is Born.  
January 1st: Wise Men Visited Jesus

**Christmas Day: NO Kids Clubhouse or childcare** on Christmas Day - Families will worship together in the Worship Center.

**Caroling, Cocoa, & Candy Canes** - This (3rd annual) Caroling and Tree Lighting event is Sunday December 4th at 4p. Invite friends and neighbors, dress warm, and join us in front of CPC for this fun sing-along! \*Volunteers needed to help prep and serve the hot cocoa.

**CPC's 2022 Christmas Eve Keepsake Ornament** - A design has been decided! So if you like stars, cutting wool felt, and threading wooden beads – or if you are just feeling crafty... contact Bonnie Hollingsworth for ways to help put this year's ornament together! It's super cute!

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## Birchwood Christian School

The Students and Staff of Birchwood Christian School invite you to:

**God's Indescribable Gift**  
**Thursday, December 15th**  
**6:30p in the Worship Center**

\*This year will feature a few changes and additions... There will be a special presentation from Dancing for Joy's production of The Nativity plus more! So be sure to save the date – you won't want to miss this delightful telling of the Christmas story!



**Advent Craft**

**Read-a-Thon for Charity** - Teacher Tammy's Kindergarten will participate in its 22nd annual Read-a-thon on Friday, December 2nd! The kids collect pledges in exchange for reading. The money collected will be used to buy gifts for local children through the Salvation Army Angel Tree tags. The class will then go on a field trip to the mall on December 9th, to shop for the angel tree tag items, and pay for their gifts themselves with the money raised. This is a powerful opportunity for the class to learn the excitement and joy of giving.



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## Important BCS Dates:

Dec. 2: Read-a-Thon in Kindergarten class – pledges due by Dec. 8  
Dec. 9: Kindergarten Angel Tree field trip to Bellis Fair Mall  
Dec. 15: BCS Christmas Program in the Worship Center 6:30p  
Dec. 16 – Jan 2: No School – Christmas Break

**Veterans Day at Birchwood Christian School**

## Peace, Goodwill

By Carol Lawrence

Watercolor is not my favorite art technique. The God who controls the seas did not give me the skill to control the flow of water on paper. Every once in a while, though, He does provide me a happy result, like this bright and cheery poinsettia. Apparently, I'm not the only one who loves poinsettias. According to the Farmers' Almanac, there are more poinsettia plants sold than all other potted plants combined (1).

One reason the poinsettia is so popular, of course, is that it is cheery and bright. Beyond its beauty, the plant is cherished by Christians as a symbol of the birth of Jesus, bringer of eternal life. Some see the pattern of its red bracts as a reminder of the star of Bethlehem. Others see the brilliant red color as symbolic of Jesus's blood shed on the cross. What? This is Christmas, the time when we celebrate Jesus's birth, not His death. I suppose there is some logic to connecting the little baby in the manger with His eventual death on the cross. As Christians, however, we know that the crucifixion is not the end of the story.

The plant we enjoy for a Christmas decoration appears to die after the season. But that is not the end of its story. The poinsettia is not dead, merely dormant. If it is held over winter in a dark place and later brought into the light, it will come back to life, resurrected, so to speak. Seems like a pretty apt symbol, doesn't it?

At Christmas, many of us think of children - not only that all-important little one in the manger, but also our own offspring, nieces, and nephews, children of friends and neighbors, all those less fortunate. This year, it's hard to think about what kind of world we will give them. Some of you may remember ten years ago a 12-year-old girl was a finalist on the singing competition *America's Got Talent*, singing the amazing song *Some Day at Christmas* (2). Although the song was first recorded in the 1960s by Stevie Wonder, its words are sadly relevant today. If you go online and listen to Jackie Evancho singing it, you will be doing yourself a favor. Here are a few lines of the lyrics:

*Someday, at Christmas, there'll be no wars  
When we have learned what Christmas is for.  
When we have found what life's really worth,  
There'll be peace on Earth.*

We have so many Scripture verses about the coming of the Christ child it's hard to choose a favorite. Because peace is on my mind, I bring you this:

*Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men.  
(Luke 2:14 NKJV).*

Amen.

(1) <https://www.farmersalmanac.com/poinsettia-legend-facts-trivia>

(2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5v9ETR9W8w>





## Pinecone Swags to Decorate your Door!

Cindy Edwards has delightfully shared her creative gifts with us at CPC for a number of years on the Visual Arts Committee. She has done craft projects with us at the Block Party, and we often see evidence of her work throughout the foyer and down the main corridor.

Annually, one of her very special gifts to us has been the door swags at Christmas time crafted from the greenery around her home. This year, her swags are pinecone beauties which will be available for 50 of us to take home or to the home of someone with whom we want to share the hope of Christ's birth.

Come and choose a Pinecone Swag on December 4th, at the Carols and Cocoa event at 4p at the north portico area.



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## Bake Sale Supporting the Guatemala Mission Team December 18

This Christmas holiday season allow the Cordata Guatemala mission team to do your baking for you! We will be having a bake sale after the service on December 18 to raise funds for our upcoming trip to Guatemala (March 2023). We will have a variety of sweet treats, including gluten free options.

Thank you in advance for your support! 😊

The 2023 Guatemala Mission Team



Mission Team  
Hosts  
Informational  
Taco Lunch



## Unsung Hero Coffee Host Dave Egan

One of the joys of our fellowship each Sunday morning is coming out of worship to a wonderful, warm cup of coffee and a cookie. They provide the perfect enticement to pause before we leave to go to lunch and to chat for a moment or two, perhaps to meet someone new or to encourage someone who needs it. And the coffee is even better when it is served by a smiling volunteer, such as Dave Egan.

Several years ago, when Dave first arrived at CPC, he didn't really know anyone, so he decided to begin volunteering. First he became an usher, then he saw the need and expanded to serving coffee. Dave's coffee was as much an encouragement to talk as it was a hot drink. Dave was a conversationalist who really wanted to get to know you. He arrived early before worship, prepared coffee not only for CPC but also for Mosaic, then stayed after fellowship to clean up. In doing so he "found" his way of belonging and being included but also of serving and enriching our fellowship.

Dave will be missed, so now we need new coffee hosts. We appreciate that Mary and Bob Walsh have stepped up to help, but we need more volunteers. If you have a heart for fellowship, contact Barbara Sanford, Fellowship Elder, to volunteer for this ministry.



### "Session Update: Denominational Affairs"

Every even-numbered year in the summer, our denomination (Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.) conducts a General Assembly (GA) to consider a variety of overtures, topics of study, and proposals of interest to the broader church. The agenda of a GA meeting typically includes a number of controversial topics, and this year was no exception. Thus, the position statements (adopted by the voting majority) that emerge from the GA gathering can be unsettling, especially to congregations like ours who hold to traditional historic views on these important ethical issues. Many CPCers have been interested to know how the GA actions impact our own congregation's ministry and mission. To that end, we held a well-attended "listening session" in October to report on the GA and hear questions or comments. Our Session leaders heard and share the concerns expressed at the listening session, which might be characterized this way: "How does the progressive agenda apparent in the GA's positions relate to CPC's sense of God's agenda for our congregation?"

Short answer: Our General Assembly does not set our congregation's agenda; instead, our Session (Elders and Pastor) is responsible for discerning and determining the Lord's agenda for CPC's mission, ministry, teaching, etc. To that end, Session is preparing a two-part response to the GA report: (1) to write a letter to our GA and Presbytery expressing our protest/disagreement with the progressive agenda expressed in the GA report; and (2) to renew and highlight our "statement of beliefs" on our website. We expect the refreshed statement of beliefs to focus on essential issues such as Jesus' lordship, the authority of Scripture, etc.; we do not expect to publish a position statement on our website involving important but divisive human issues (same sex marriage, abortion, gender identity, etc.). Both the letter and the statement of beliefs are intended to clarify our understanding of who we are in Jesus Christ. Your Session leaders hope and pray that these responses will serve as a witness to Jesus Christ and will clarify our essential convictions.

Dear Cordata Presbyterian Family,

Thank you for the sympathy cards and messages of comfort and encouragement that you shared with Tim and I when my brother Paul Tuttle passed away so suddenly. I read them many times during the weeks following his death. I treasure my church family, especially when missing him so much during Thanksgiving and the upcoming Advent season. Paul is dearly missed, by many, but he is rejoicing with his Savior.

Sincerely, Kris Unger

## Being a Member of Cordata Presbyterian Church

As we look forward to our Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 29th, when we will elect two new Elders to fill current vacancies on Session, let us reflect on what it means to be a member of Cordata and to serve as an Elder or Deacon.

At the core of Presbyterian identity is a secure hope in the grace of God in Jesus Christ, a hope that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, empowers us to live lives of gratitude. This strong emphasis on the grace of God in Jesus Christ is our heritage from the founder of the Reformed tradition, John Calvin. Presbyterian church government emphasizes that the leadership of the church is shared between representational leadership, those called to be ministers and church members called to be elders and deacons within the congregation.

The church's ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God's new creation. Christ's ministry is the foundation and standard for all ministry, the pattern of the one who came "not to be served but to serve." The basic form of ministry is the ministry of the whole people of God, from whose midst some are called as pastors (ministers of the Word and Sacrament), elders and deacons to fulfill particular functions.

To those called to be deacons, elders, and pastors God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. They must have the approval of God's people. Standards for these particular ministries reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life.

As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. Accordingly, congregations should elect persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit. Elders and deacons are men and women elected by the congregation from among its members. The nomination and election of elders and deacons shall express the rich diversity of the congregations' membership and shall guarantee participation and inclusiveness. Elders, as members of the Cordata Presbyterian Church Session, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of our congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships. Our elders serve three-year terms on the Session, each with a focused area of responsibility.

The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry. Our deacons serve three-year terms on the Board of Deacons, each caring for several members and friends of Cordata (called a "parish").\*

Our Cordata nominating committee has been elected by the congregation. We are charged with nominating candidates to serve as deacons and elders, drawn from and representative of Cordata's active membership. If you are actively participating at Cordata, and not currently a member of Cordata, we encourage you to pray about becoming a member of Cordata. Pastor Greg is always available to answer any questions on that subject that you may have.

Our blessings and honor to our Lord and Savior whom we serve,  
Cordata Nominating Committee

\*Much of this narrative has been drawn from the Book of Order, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II

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