

Week of December 10, 2023



From Woody: Last week I mentioned the Christmas Truce that took place along the lines in Europe in 1914. It is an amazing story of the power of Christmas. Today I thought I would mention a less pleasant story of today. After tumult on many college campuses, a Congressional Committee questioned several university presidents last week on how their schools were handling the conflicts between students who supported the Palestinian side and those who supported the Israeli side. The waffling answers of the President of the University of Pennsylvania, M. Elizabeth Magill, brought about her resignation under pressure. The Presidents of both M.I.T. and Harvard are facing pressure from students, faculty and donors to resign as well. The basic issue was whether these university leaders thought that students who verbally supported genocide should be disciplined or removed from their schools. The three college presidents seemed to waffle in their answers, torn between violating a basic American right of freedom of speech and a pretty clear moral principle of "Thou shalt not kill." I am sympathetic and believe in both principles. I do think that the furor over the question reflects the need to stand for peace between the two sides. I know it is a simplistic formula for us to ask, "What would Jesus say?" but it seems appropriate. I think a clear Christian solution to this terrible war is to recognize that each side has a viable view but that killing is not morally right. It is embarrassing to me that our country used its veto power in the United Nations Security Council to stop the extension of the Cease Fire. I am not at all sympathetic to Hamas but caught in the middle of this horror we call war are the people of both sides.

It is time we found leadership that puts people ahead of power and finds a grown-up approach to conflict. It should be possible for intelligent and sincere leaders to sit down and work out their differences without violence. Violence leads to more violence. As we Christians celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, let us try to unite under the banner of peace and justice for the civilians of both Israel and Palestine and also let's be clear that the University Presidents who are under fire should clearly condemn any genocide but help students learn to disagree without reprehensible words of death.

On a more upbeat note: Saturday morning will be our distribution of Food Baskets and gifts at the church. Many thanks to Kim, Colleen, Barbara and all those who will help on Saturday and who have donated to a great cause. I am very grateful and proud of our church and community for support of this local mission project.

Just a note that on Christmas Eve morning we will have an informal service with a Carol Sing and a short movie featuring the powerful story of Henry Van Dyke- The Other Wiseman. The morning service will not be put on line but the 7pm service will be on line. All are invited to the Christmas Eve services at 10am and 7 and 11pm. Hope to see you there.



Joyful Sharing – Thanks to all who contributed to the joyful sharing with over 90 children and youths. They will be given out this Saturday with the food baskets.



Christmas Food Baskets: Christmas food baskets will be distributed on **Saturday, December 16**. We will be collecting food donations on Friday, December 15 from 7:30-9:30am. We'll also be collecting them on Saturday, December 16 from 7:30-8:45am. Thanks to the generous people in the church and this community, we were able to fill all the food needs.



Annual Christmas Cookie Walk: Will be having our annual cookie walk after church **December 17**. Cost is \$15 for 2 dozen. You will also be entered into a raffle for a cake donated by Shephard Basset of Shephard's Pie Baking Company. If you would like to donate cookies, we are asking for 4 dozen. You can bring them to the church on that Sunday morning. Please include a list of ingredients. Contact Lynn Wawrzniak if you have any questions and/or wish to donate cookies. lwawrzniak@comcast.net.



Christmas Eve poinsettias: To decorate the church on Christmas Eve, we are asking (those who are interested to provide \$12 for the purchase of a poinsettia. The plants will be used at the Christmas Eve service and then you can take it home to enjoy. Please sign up on the clip board in the church hallway or let Ellen Anderson (andersel@njms.rutgers.edu) know if you want to help. **Sign ups will close Dec. 17th.**

Please pay by placing a check or cash in the offering plate clipped to a memo indicating the money is for the flowers.



Christmas Eve Services: Christmas Eve services will be at 7:00 and 11:00. The 7:00 service will be broadcast live on Facebook, YouTube and the church Website.

Our 10 am service on Christmas Eve will be a Carol Sing and will not be broadcast.

Ushers are needed for the 7 pm service. Contact Woody if you can help.



Peace Quote What we have still not learned is how to treat our fellow human beings. We have to find a way to coexist without doing harm to one another and that is whether it's in the United States or in the Middle East or in the African continent or in Asia or anywhere on the planet.....*Martin Luther King III*