

# The Messenger

January, 2019



To God's children at Grace Mennonite Church who have been adopted into the family of all of God's people from the beginning until now through Jesus Christ our brother, season's greetings!

As you read these reflections the rest of the world looks at this year's holiday season in the rearview mirror. We the people of God, on the other hand, are just getting started. Sunday, January 6 is the Sunday of Epiphany which marks the close of the 12 days of Christmastide. December 25<sup>th</sup> is long gone, with its tinsel, trees, trimmings and trappings. But we continue to celebrate the incarnation of our Creator God in the baby born in Bethlehem. Epiphany marks a transition in our celebration season; on this day we turn our gaze from the manger in Bethlehem to the star in the east and the dawn of God's light from on high. Our celebration of the coming of Christ's light into the world is emphasized by the incremental increase of sunlight each day as our beloved mother, planet Earth, tilts away from winter solstice and the longest night of the year toward a new season of light, warmth, and rebirth.

Our season of celebrating the return of the light will continue for the next eight weeks, culminating in Transfiguration Sunday on March 3. Transfiguration Sunday is the day we remember and celebrate the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus, and the accompanying revelation of Jesus' divine nature – the cosmic Christ – to his disciples, Peter, James and John. Only after this glorious day of feasting and celebration do we turn toward a season of fasting and penance; on March 6 Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season. Let it be known by this 14-week holiday season of feasting and celebration that we Christians know how to party!

As I write these reflections, my family and I are settling back in from our early holiday season travels. This year our travels took us to Lititz, Pennsylvania on Christmas day. There we enjoyed two full days of feasting and celebration with Stutzman uncles, aunts, cousins and 'Gramp & Gram.' Then it was on to Harrisonburg, Virginia for two more days of feasting and celebration with the Yoder clan. The Tennessee Yoders were unable to travel this year due to my nephew, Oliver's bout with leukemia this fall. On the third Sunday of Advent we received news that Oliver's chemotherapy treatment had been effective and he was in remission, praise the Lord! Praises be for the miracle of Google Hangouts; we were still able to share part of the festivities with the Tennessee Yoders. Finally, on New Year's Eve, my family and I traveled home. We arrived in Bluffton just in time to ring in the New Year by carrying sleeping children in from the van to their warm beds.

(Cont. on page 2)

## **Vision: Healing & Hope**

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

## **Table of Contents:**

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Reflections                      | 1-2 |
| Worship Calendar                 | 3   |
| Announcements                    | 4   |
| Christmas Eve pictures           | 5   |
| News Among Our Members & Friends | 6-7 |
| Anniversaries & Birthdays        | 8   |

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Pastor Matthew Yoder

I love to celebrate the holidays. I'm particularly partial to the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve with all of the decorations, family visiting, gift exchanging and oh so much feasting. About this time of the season, though, I'm ready to get back into a familiar routine and move forward with new habits and practices for the New Year. There's a lot of holiday season left for us Christians, but I look forward to celebrating it right here in Northwest Ohio with all of you. I have no plans to travel again until late May and, as wonderful as our week of holiday travel was, I'm just fine with that.

May God's spirit of love, joy, peace and, above all, hope continue to abide with you this holiday season. And may the Lord Jesus Christ be with you now more than ever.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Matthew



# January 2019

Sunday, January 6  
The Lord is our Righteousness  
“Light”

Pastor Matthew Yoder  
*Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12*

Sunday, January 13  
“Reading the Bible with Jesus “  
Guest speaker: Bryan Moyer Suderman  
*Scripture: Luke 24:13-35*

Sunday, January 20  
Journey Forward  
“Who am I? What is this?”  
Pastor Matthew Yoder  
*Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21*

Sunday, January 27  
Journey Forward  
“Jesus is my Guru”  
Pastor Matthew Yoder  
*Scripture: John 13:34-35*



### Did you know that ... !?

You can set up regular recurring automatic transfers to Grace! If you have trouble remembering your checkbook or cash on Sunday morning but would like to give to Grace regularly, or if you're one of those who like to "fix it and forget it" when it comes to your giving, contact Christie Suter for bank account information to get started today!

Christie Suter

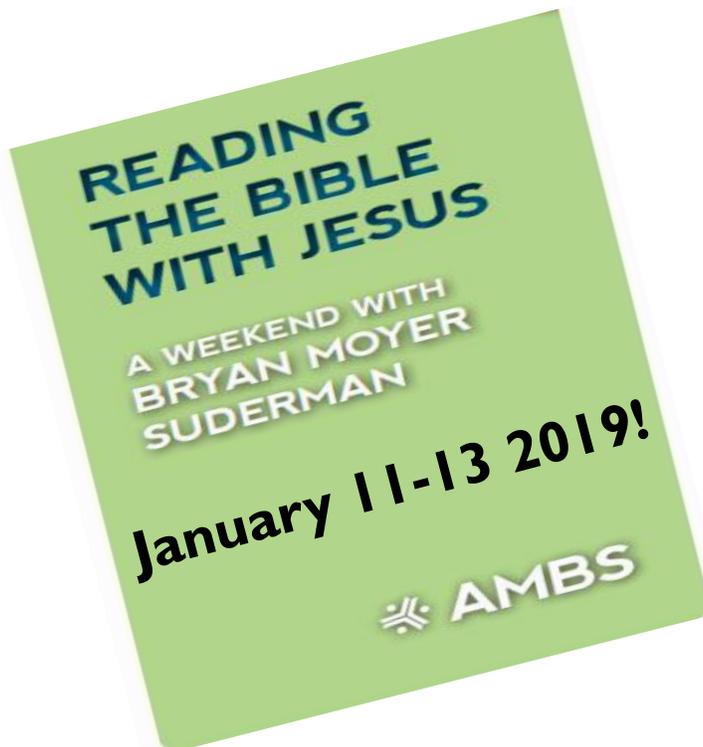


## WEEKEND SCHEDULE

**Friday, January 11 7:00–8:00 p.m.** All-ages concert Free and open to the public; donations are welcome. First Mennonite Church, 101 S. Jackson St., Bluffton, OH 45817

**Saturday, January 12** Reading the Bible with Jesus workshop Grace Mennonite Church, 502 E. Main St., Pandora, OH 45877 Lunch, snacks and child care provided. 8:30 a.m. – Doors open 9:00 a.m. – Reading the Bible with Jesus, Session 1 10:30 a.m. – Break 10:45 a.m. – Reading the Bible with Jesus, Session 2 12:15 p.m. – Lunch 1:00 p.m. – Reading the Bible with Jesus, Session 3 2:30 p.m. – Break 2:45 p.m. – Reading the Bible with Jesus, Session 4.

**Sunday, January 13** Adult Sunday school and worship with Bryan Moyer Suderman, Grace Mennonite Church 9:30 a.m. – Sunday school will include something for everyone—those who attended the workshop and those who did not. 10:30 a.m. – Musical meditation by Bryan Moyer Suderman



# Pictures from Christmas Eve Program



# “News Among Our Members & Friends”

**HAPPENINGS IN AND AROUND GRACE.....By Shirley Sommer**

**Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>** – First Sunday of Advent “Waiting.” Scripture was Jeremiah 33: 14-16. The first purple candle of Advent was lit by **Beth Diller**, with the meaning of Expectation! In the scriptures it says the “**Lord** is our righteousness” meaning we should all try and do right things; morality, do right actions and with our thinking too. In the Call to Worship it was mentioned we are waiting for the **Messiah, God’s** promise to be fulfilled. **Pastor Matthew** said that, “**God’s** love reaches all over the world.”

**2:30 p.m.** Bluffton University hosted their “**Holiday Concert**” in Yoder Hall. Jazz Ensemble, Concert Band, Chorals and Camerata Singers performed. **Meghan Gibson-Martin** and **Eddie Martin** (husband) performed in the program and did well as usual. If one didn’t leave with a “good feeling,” I would be surprised. A wonderful way to begin the Christmas season.

**4:30 p.m.** The University hosted a new event on campus with a tree lighting ceremony at the **Houshower House**. It will be known as the “Welcome Center” located on the corner of Spring St., and College Ave. A dedication was given and concluded with carol singing and refreshments.

**Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>** – Second Sunday of Advent “Proclaiming.” Scripture was Malachi 3:1-4. Second Advent candle (purple) was lit meaning Hope! Lighters were **Tim and Hannah Watson family**. In the Call to Worship it was stated we are called to prepare our hearts for his coming by repenting and allowing **God** prepare our hearts for his coming. God will renew us and work within us. We are to prepare the way of the **Lord** and anticipate the love and grace of **God** to burst forth into the world.

**4:00 p.m. Handel’s “MESSIAH”** being its’ 123<sup>rd</sup> performance was presented at Yoder Hall at Bluffton University. Our new director, **Dr. Bo Young Kang**, made her debut conducting the oratorio. The choir wasn’t as big as years gone by, but their presentation was very good plus the orchestra. **Dr. Kang** did a very good job for the first performance in Bluffton. (I don’t sing in the choir, but just listening to it and being there, I’m exhausted when done. Ha!) Another great way to get the Christmas season off with a good start. (I believe that **Keith and I** have attended at least **45 years** of our 49 years of marriage. One might say it is a Family Tradition.) **Ivan Friesen and Meghan Gibson-Martin** and **Sarah Sprunger** took part in the choir from our church.

**Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup>** – Third Sunday of Advent “Rejoice.” This candle will be the pink one and means “Joy.” It was lit by **Brian & Robin Timpe and daughter**. Scripture was Zephaniah 3:14-20. This scripture reads a voice calls out from the wilderness, converting to **God’s** way of justice. We need to make changes in the way we live so justice may be shared with others. The following hymn we sang was great to follow the sermon, “**How Can We Be Silent.**” The words in the song affirmed what **Pastor Matthew** told us.

Special music was **Grace Notes Choir** playing the metallophones (four of them). For one song **Sophia Kauffman** (daughter of **Rudi & Ravonn**), **Ethan Suter** (son of **Tom & Christie**), **Conner Clum** (son of **Heather & Brent**) played them while the choir members sang. Then **Elizabeth Suter** (daughter of **Lane & Teresa**) sang a solo with the other song. **Carolyn McDaniel** is the director of these 11 young people. What a great job they all did as well as the experience of performing in front of people. Thanks to all of them!!

**Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>** – Final Advent candle was lit by **Joel & Teri Steinmetz family**. It stands for “Blessing” (purity). Scripture reading was Luke 1: 39-45, This final Sunday is when **Mary** finds out the news that **Elizabeth** is having a baby and then **Mary** received a message she was caring a son and he was going to be the **Savior** of the world. **He’ll** be called “**Emmanuel, God** with us.” **Pastor Matthew** stated that women are very important then and now and keep doing their jobs well; keep your eyes alert to what is happening around you and use your voice when necessary; and last, if you have been blessed, may you be a blessing to others by sharing the good news and spreading the love of **Jesus** to whoever.

The special music today was the **Cherubic Choir** of eleven young children from K-2nd grades. **Joyce Schumacher**, director with **Olivia Schumacher**. These small children played hand bells first and then several sang solos of the song, “**The Friendly Beasts**”, an old French Melody. The little ones that sang were (donkey) **Leighton Archer** (son of **Jamie & Katie- kindergarten**); (cow) **Carter Steinmetz** (son of **Joel & Teri – second grade**), (doves) **Brennen – second grade and Claire – kindergarten Dorman** (bro/sis of **Jon & Denise**); (sheep) **Abram Sprunger** (son of **Josh & Amy – first grade**), **Sophie Watson** (second grade) and **Ben Watson** (kindergarten) (sis/bro of **Tim & Hannah Watson**). Wow, what a great job these little ones did and what a learning experience as they perform for all of us. Congratulations to the children and their leaders.

(cont. on page 7)

During the children’s story time, **Jeff Lugibihl** asked **Ivan & Rachel Friesen** to do actions to the song (**Love Before Us**) along with everyone in the congregation. When done, the little ones were given a red pipe cleaner and were told to make a heart out of it and pass it on to someone. They are always so excited when they receive something to take back with them. One could see many, many SMILES!!!

Our Sunday morning started with a Christmas Brunch held in the Fellowship Hall which was wonderful as usual. The hall was decorated with red candles, evergreens, and cranberries for centerpieces. A nice crowd was present with a nice assortment of food prepared for all of us. A big “Thank You” to **Joyce Schumacher and her helpers** for a very nice brunch!

**Monday, December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve Service.** (I wasn’t able to attend but heard from others how nice it all was.) **Jenny (Lugibihl) Fish** was the person who organized the program. There were a lot of talented people to share music for the service. They did something different this year with “Freeze Frame” participants while the scripture was being read. There were five different ones with people creating a scene about what was read and not speaking a word, just posing. Went well and I’m sure very impressive. There were piano solos, Grace Note Choir, saxophone solo, piano & violin duet, solo with a guitar, a group of two soloists with a trumpet player and a piano player, and ended with an organ and piano duet. Of course, the lighting of the candles completed the service while singing, “**Silent Night.**” A “THANK YOU” to all who gave of their time to make a wonderful service which makes good memories. Also, had a nice assortment of poinsettia’s around the sanctuary and that makes such a nice color plus on the altar table. Through December there was an arrangement of dried sticks of wood that held the Advent candles. **Sue Habegger** was in charge of that and “Thanks” for your beautiful ideas. (If you missed the service, I know that **Terry Schey** has made a disc of it and just ask him if you could see it.)

**OTHER NEWS ITEMS INVOLVING OUR CHURCH FAMILIES.....**

--Another thank you to the group of volunteers who decorated the church: **Marcia Lugibihl, Nancy Suter, Rod & Carolyn McDaniel, Meg Schroeder, Beth Diller, Frank Gibbs, Terry Schey and Arman & Sue Habegger.**

--Again, **Arman & Sue Habegger** hosted an OPEN HOUSE for church family and friends. **Sue** had munchies and drinks and their home was decorated with lots of different things for us to enjoy. A **Lego train** was on the dining room table with a gingerbread train in the center of the track. The large electric train sets were in a room upstairs as usual and still very interesting to see. **Arman** has been involved in building large sets of **Lego buildings** such as: **Ghostbuster’s Fire House, London Bridge w/cars on it, Harry Potter’s castle and etc.** several little **Lego items** and last the **Taj Mahal**, a memorial building to a ruler’s wife in India. Thanks for your time for “Show and Tell.”

--**Terry & Beth Schey** celebrated their **50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary** on December 27<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations to you folks and wishing you many more years.

--(cont. on page 8)

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*on the calendar*

**Tuesday, January 8**  
Council meeting 7:00 pm

**Friday-Sunday, January 11-13**  
“Reading the Bible with Jesus”  
Bryan Moyer Suderman

**Thursday, January 17**  
Threads of Grace Set-up 9:00 am—12:00 pm

**Friday, January 18**  
Threads of Grace Comforter Knotting 9:00 am—3:00 pm

**Sunday, January 27**  
Congregational Meeting following worship



(Happenings—cont. from page 7)

**New Address for Brian & Robin Timpe**, 425 N. Gilbert St., Ada, Ohio 45810.

--**Lydia Lugibihl**, daughter of **Jeff & Chrissy**, will be going to Washington D.C. in January thru May for her cross-cultural study at Bluffton University class for this coming semester. **She'll** work at a **Soup Kitchen** and join a group from Eastern Menn. University doing the same. Wishing her the best while living in a large city and making new friends and etc. **God's** blessing to you and hope that each day is a good one!

--Congratulations to **Andrew Renner**, a Junior, who was Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conf. Men's basketball player of the week of December 12<sup>th</sup>. He averaged 32 points at two games making a career high. **Andrew's** parents are **Chris and Angie Renner**; grandson of **Ron & Carolyn McDaniel**.

--**Rachel Schutz's brother, John Eicher**, Berne, IN died early in December.

--**Ruby Basinger** had knee replacement mid November. She is doing well and it's good to see her back in church. She would like to thank everyone for visits, food, and prayers and cards during her recovery.

--We still have our group of church members and friends living with cancer and receiving treatments involving other things. Our church secretary, **Gail Neff**, had a CT scan and it came back clear with no evidence of cancer. What a great report for her to receive for the New Year. **Esther Nafziger's** knee cap is healing slowly and hopes no surgery in the future; **Tim Byers** had back surgery replacing a rod in his back and is now recovering at home. **Mildred Lugibihl** is suffering from a fall that injured her back and hopes for some help in the near future to relieve some of the pain. **Rebecca Peckinpaugh and Amy Byers** are both having to deal with mothers under hospice care. So as you can see, please remember these people and families in our prayers.



Nick & Maria (Schumacher) Earnest

January 15



## January Birthdays

|                         |            |                 |            |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Allison Suter           | January 6  | Brennen Dorman  | January 17 |
| Bob Suter               | January 7  | Claire Dorman   | January 19 |
| Ellery Byers            | January 9  | Beth Diller     | January 21 |
| Ruth Shoemaker          | January 11 | Leighton Archer | January 23 |
| Rachel Friesen          | January 12 | Lydia Byers     | January 23 |
| Tim Byers               | January 13 | Chloe Hanefeld  | January 28 |
| Julia (Schmidt) Shetler | January 14 | Jon Hilty       | January 29 |
|                         |            | Caleb Farmer    | January 31 |

**Deadline for the next Messenger is January 28, 2019**