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# The Parish Voice

Nappanee United Methodist Church



MidDecember 2023

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## Bishop's Christmas Offering

Will you help make a difference in the lives of children around the world this year? Each year, our Indiana Annual Conference supports The Bishop's Christmas Offering for Children, which is divided to meet the needs of the following ministries:

1. Impact 2818, the Indiana Conference camping ministry.
2. The 3 Indiana United Methodist-related children and youth homes.
3. Local outreach projects.
4. United Methodist advance projects (national and global).
5. Bishop's fund for emergency children's projects and the promotion of this offering.

Especially this Christmas season, join us in praying for children in Indiana and around the world...because they truly are precious in God's sight. Just indicate on your offering envelope how much you'd like to give to this offering.



## Love Offering

Each December, our congregation collects a Love Offering for our staff during the month of December. This offering shows our appreciation for all our staff does for our church family throughout the year. To give to the Love Offering, simply mark an offering envelope "Love Offering" and place it in the collection plate, or turn it into the church office by December 25th. Thank you for supporting our staff this Christmas and throughout the year!

-Staff Parish Committee



(Psst....I know you may not want to be reminded, but tax season is coming soon. Perhaps a donation to your favorite church mission might help ease your pain, and someone else's pain, too.)

## Let's Go Caroling

Join us to spread some Christmas cheer! Meet in Fellowship Hall at the church on Sunday, December 17th, at 4:00 pm. We will team up and go to some of our shut-ins around town and share some Christmas songs and cheer! Dress warm and bring those Christmas bells, hats and big smiles.



Rebekah/Esther Circle - Our holiday meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 19th, at 1:00 pm at the home of Dianne Debelak, 1309 McCormick Drive, Nappanee, Please RSVP by call or text, 574-354-0050, by December 17th.

Knowing Christ and Making Christ Known

## What Christmas is All About

*By: Pastor David Schrader*

Dear friends:

I am concerned about the secularization of Christianity, but not when it comes to Christmas. Oh yes, I hear the complaints; “There is no manger scene at the Mall. Plenty of reindeer. And there are snow fairies and elves and tons of things related to gift giving sponsored by Penny’s and Target and MasterCard, but no Mary or Joseph.”

I hear the concern, and I also wish malls were not so afraid of displays of the nativity. But this is what I have learned: No matter how hard society tries, the reason for the season cannot be hidden. The more the schools do things which ignore the Christ child by having Winter Festival parities instead of Christmas parties, the more the malls hang up snow men instead of Wise Men, the more obvious it becomes that something is being left out. Why? Because winter festivals and snow men do not have the power to cause people to celebrate the way we do. And thus, inevitably, whether this Christmas or the next, every individual in our society asks, “Why? What is it all about?”

The grocery stores have food collection baskets for the poor at Christmas; not on the Fourth of July, but Christmas. Toy stores ask you to buy something extra for Toys for Tots, not on Memorial Day, but Christmas. The Salvation Army is ringing its bells at Christmas; not on Labor Day, but Christmas. And so it is that even the most secular of people cannot get away from the fact that the spirit of giving is related to the birth of a child; the Christ child, whose title is a part of the name of the holiday. And somehow, through all of this the message that we give because God first gave to us gets through.

I firmly believe that God can use the most secular version of this holiday imaginable and still reach people for Jesus Christ. Every time someone hears that Saint Nicholas was a Christian Bishop who gave to children in need, that the star on the top of the tree relates to what the wise men followed as they brought gifts, we communicate that we give because God first gave to us, and say that we indeed have much to celebrate. It is time we get this straight; the secular world does not have the power to overcome Jesus Christ, nor the fact that Christmas is the celebration of his birth.

Though there may be days while shopping that you fail to see the baby Jesus on display in the mall, that real manger back in Bethlehem also was not easy to find. Bethlehem was a noisy place, a town filled with travelers involved in the Roman census. No room in the inn, there were people out in the streets, watched by Roman Centurions in iron clad boots. The manger was out back some place; obscure, hidden, perhaps hushed that Mary and her child might rest. But the shepherds found it nonetheless. Why? Because God has the power to lead us there. There-

fore let it be known that it might be the mere reflection of your Christmas tree through the window which might cause someone to question why the holiday feels so empty, and might through the questioning be led by God to the Savior whose holiday this is. For God leads, and God calls, and God can use even the most secular of holidays to do this.

This Christmas I pray that you feel Christ’s call upon your life and are drawn to him, just as the shepherds were irresistibly drawn to that manger. And like them, I hope you go away from that spiritual experience glorifying and praising God; and that like Mary, the experience causes you to find much to ponder in your heart. And I don’t care whether this experience comes to you at church while singing Silent Night, or at the mall while looking at a display of Santa’s elves. I just pray that it comes.

Merry Christmas!



The office will be closed on Tuesday, December 26th.



## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

The Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be at 7 pm on Sunday, December 24th.

