

## Reframing the Merry Madness

Catalogs have clogged our mailbox, lights went up before Thanksgiving and the distant rumble of commercial Christmas roars in the background.

When Christ was born there was no mail service, just angel messengers. The only lights were the glory of the heavenly hosts. And there was no roar, only nighttime silence broken by the cry of a newborn.

We love Christmas but it can take a few years to start getting your head out of the crazy consumer Santa version. This is a time to focus on Christ's first coming: a defenseless baby born to poor parents without a home. With that frame around this month of merry madness you can look on the stress with a detached bemusement.

The shepherds, the Magi, Simeon, Anna; they all wanted the same thing. To see Jesus. They did. It was enough. I want the same. That gift of seeing the Lord turns your heart around. The cold burn of greed is replaced by a warm glow of grace. Get moves to give. Judging yields to compassion. Unsettled nerves are led beside the quiet waters.

Because of family and customs there is legitimate work to do in preparation, but if you blow it on attitude, you've missed the whole point. The hunt for the perfect gift is over. It's in Jesus. Restless bargain hunter, rest in him. Endless list-maker, only one thing is needed. Heedless errand-runner, park it and walk with the Master.

Are you going to make a change or go back to the same crazy you've done every year? People that love you might want a change in you more than anything else. Instead of big and bloated, try small and meaningful. It's enough. We are shooting for something we feel inside. That's God's specialty and more things just won't touch it.

How do you do it? Simple. Start with a Bible open to the Gospels at the start of each December day. In that time with the Word in a spirit of prayer God will make it clear what you need to do. Then rise and do it.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas.

*Mark*

## **Update on Our "Thanksgiving Catch-Up" Special Collection:** What a blessing it is to give! Praise God!

Our final figure as of this week is **\$34,538** ! This includes \$2,565 in pledges that will be given by the end of the year. There are some year-end donations that usually come in which would bring this final figure north of \$35,000.

**"12-Hours of Prayer" –Best Ever!** From the eternal perspective THE most significant event we had this fall was this day of prayer. The LORD heard our voices. The simple power of God's people showing their belief by taking this time to pray will have huge results. God is working among us right now. Participation was very good. The chain of prayer was unbroken. Prepare to be blessed!

**17 Full Thanksgiving Baskets Were given out to families with needs.** Thank you for helping donate and put these together. Thanks, Nelson, for leading this and the great job you do each year.

**Gingerbread Houses on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>:** will be right after worship. You need to bring a "house" to decorate. Pick up the instructions for your cardboard "house" in the lobby. Also, sign-up there to attend and also to bring candy supplies.

**"Christmas Party" Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall.** The food, the decorations, the "*Talent Show*" — it's going to be great! Team 1 is in charge. Carl & Sarah are leading the Talent Show. **Sign-up to bring Food and to be in the Talent Show.**

**Youth Group:** Sat. 12/6 (evening) we will go see Logan in **CONCERT** @ the Medford Dickens Festival. Then on Sunday, Dec. 7 we will help with the **GINGERBREAD HOUSES**, Dec 12 we will do the **Drop & Shop childcare**.

**Drop & Shop- FREE CHILDCARE** at the church building Friday evening, Dec, 12<sup>th</sup> by the **YOUTH GROUP**. We will provide pizza, popcorn, games & a holiday movie (probably *Polar Express*). Any **DONATIONS** we get will go toward Winterfest.

**Small Toys Needed** – if you have small toys & trinkets, Happy-Meal toys, or small Dollar-Store toys or prizes, please give them to Karen McEntire for our children’s Treasure Chest.

**Today’s Worship Leaders**

**Welcome & Scripture:** Jeff Powers (Matthew 2:13-16, 19-23)

**Main Prayer:** Nelson Nuñez

**Lord’s Supper:** John Derricott, Bret Goen, Jess Nitla, Ed Francoeur

**Scripture Reading:** Eddie Francoeur (James 3:13-18)

**Closing Prayer and Announcements:** Tony Ceraso Jr.

**Nursery:** Sarah P. & Karen Next Week- Tina & Hannah

**Purple Cleaning Team** Dec. 3-6 **Becky** Coordinates

**OUTREACH/MINISTRY**

Mark Finn – Preacher  
Church Office- (856) 854-0197

**ELDERS:**

Rick Boyle (856) 986-4876  
Tony Ceraso, Jr. (856) 278-6276  
Bret Goen (856) 996-5267

**Worship** ..... 117

Bible Class ..... 81

**Contribution** ..... **\*\$30,913**

Budget Goal ..... \$4,260

**\*Note:** more funds are coming in, see announcement above.

Daily Bible Readers: 28

Collingswood Church of Christ

Church Website: [www.ccc123.org](http://www.ccc123.org)

300 White Horse Pike  
November 30, 2014

Collingswood, NJ 08107  
Vol. XVIII No. 47

“Now faith is being **sure** of what we hope for and **certain** of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1)



**BETHLEHEM is a real place. You can visit it to this day. How odd to realize that God stepped into our world in a real place; not just in some made-up story. Bethlehem had no place for Jesus so he was relegated to a manger. Do you have more than just a symbolic place for Jesus in your life? Have you given him a real place to stay? For real?**