

CONESTOGA Connections



December 2011
Vol. XXII, No. 12

O Come, All Ye Faithful . . . Silent Night . . . Away in a Manger . . . Joy to the World

Community Christmas Carol Hymn Sing



Sunday evening, December 4, 2011, at 6:00 p.m.



Join this community-wide Christmas Carol Hymn Sing.

Invite your neighbors to sing these old-time favorites and enjoy home-baked cookies and drink!

Christmas Still

by Jill Waters

Listen to the Christmas stillness.
Listen to the still, small sound.
Listen to the Christmas spirit.
The voice of God is all around.

Listen to the Christmas stillness.
Listen to the calm and still.
Time for rest and true reflection.
The voice of God is there to fill.

Lost in all the rush and flurry,
Time gone by in wasted speed.
Days are blurred by constant hurry.
Christmas spirit, bruised with greed.

Bow the head.
Bow the heart.
Be still. Be still.

Come before Him, see what's missing.
Take it back, your place of peace.
The heart is speaking, yearns
retreating.
All He wants is our release.

Listen to the Christmas stillness.
Listen to the simple sound.
Listen to the Christmas spirit.
God's sweet presence will abound.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

December 24, 2011
7:00-8:00 p.m.

Come for an evening of scripture, carols, vocal solos, and autoharp music in worship to the Child of Bethlehem led by Ivan Stiles, an internationally-acclaimed autoharpist who will play familiar Christmas music, interspersed with scripture and prayer—as we gather to hear again the story of that Holy Night.

~ O Holy Night ~

Baskets will be available to benefit the Twin Valley Food Pantry after an honorarium is shared with Mr. Stiles.



The PASTORS CONNECTION

How Big Shall We Grow?

A growing church is a wonderful gift! It also presents challenges and opportunities. The past months your Pastoral Team has been discerning what God would have us do with the growth with which He is beginning to favor us. We believe it is wise to discern this matter long before growth necessitates conclusions.

As outlined below we believe church planting would be God's preferred future option for CMC versus the option of unlimited growth in one place. We recognize not all growth is equally conducive to church planting; however, our best wisdom as a Team is to commit to intentional discernment towards a church plant when Sunday morning attendance averages 225 over a three-month period. We are now ready to receive your counsel on this matter.

The following foundational beliefs shape our current thinking:

1. We believe growth is a characteristic of Christ's kingdom evidenced in all creation.
2. We believe healthy organisms grow naturally.
3. We believe God sometimes restrains growth until containers are in place.



CONESTOGA MENNONITE CHURCH

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Monthly newsletter for Conestoga Mennonite Church published since 1988. Deadline for articles and photos is the 20th of the preceding month of publication.

Editor: Lois Ann Mast
Assistant Editor: Elizabeth Petersheim
Reporters: Bonnie Beam and Sharon Stoltzfus

4. Although growth can be measured in multiple ways we believe kingdom growth includes numerical growth where potential exists (may not exist for a congregation in an isolated dying town, for example)
5. We believe that although God blesses some churches to minister to thousands in attendance; God calls other congregations to steward their growth by planting churches so they retain strengths only possible in a smaller body.

Research indicates that when attendance goes over two hundred it gains a unique "feel". Few can know everyone. By necessity, the Pastor mostly spends time with leaders. The sense of being a family diminishes.

We also recognize church planting would require sacrifices. Few of us like change. To accomplish church planting entails genuine sacrifice and loss alongside the joys and rewards.

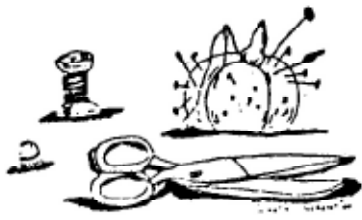
We also believe church planting has benefits over unlimited numerical growth. The benefits include:

1. Fits the church planting history of previous CMC generations
2. Preserves our strength of CMC members remaining connected to one another
3. Lets us continue to live into the Anabaptist New Testament emphasis on community
4. Preserves our strength of every member having a place to use their gifts
5. Motivates us to actually call out and equip the next generation of CMC leaders
6. Casts a forward and outward looking vision to "benefit others"
7. Reflects the current cultural emphasize on genuine community

Many families are drawn to programs only possible with larger numbers. We envision preserving this benefit with "network ministries" similar to what CMC did with daughter congregations in past decades. We foresee network ministries including youth ministry, affording more dynamic interactions; leadership training, enabling use of higher quality equippers; and our Food Pantry, Sewing Circle, and V.B.S.; plus our anticipated Hope Within Medical Clinic.

You have called your Pastoral Team to lead in matters of vision. Wise leadership also invites the prayerful feedback of members. We welcome you to add your voice!!

*Joyfully Living Christ's Story with You,
Pastor Bob Petersheim*



Sewing Circle

Sewing Circle met on Wednesday, November 2, 2011, with 13 ladies present. Six kit bags were donated. Finished items included: 4 comforters, 48 diapers, 14 baby blankets, 6 baby gowns, and 10 health kits.

For devotions, we sang "I Love To Tell the Story." I John 1:1-5 was read, followed by a devotional entitled "The Human Camera." The special offering amounted to \$53.00. We sang "Jesus Saves" before adjourning.

- Betty Cannell

NEIGHBORS caring & sharing

*Neighbors meets on Tuesday mornings during the academic school year in our church fellowship hall from 9:15 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
Everyone is welcome for this time of fellowship!*

— December 6 —

Bible Study

with Stan Deen

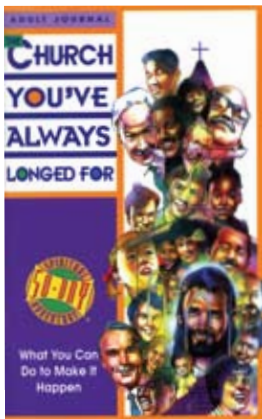
— December 13 —

Christmas Tea at Mt. Culman Guest House

with Cindy Petersheim sharing a devotional

— December 20 and 27 —

No meeting due to Christmas week.



50-Day Adventure

at Conestoga . . .



The 50-day Adventure that we have studied this fall has now come to a close. We pray that this has been a growing experience in our lives.

You have been together in Small Groups to experience God with a few others, and we trust you have grown together in faith, love, and trust as you shared in your groups.

Let's continue to practice the **Five Action Steps**:

1. Learn to listen with the ears of Jesus.
2. Attract others by saying good things about the church.
3. Connect with individuals outside your circle.
4. Help each other become all God wants us to be.
5. Get rid of personal garbage that pollutes God's church.

We would like to see the Small Groups continue. Your group can choose the material you would like to use next and decide how often you would like to meet. If you need help with this, or if you have not participated in a group, you can still join one. Talk to Wes, Lois, or Pastor Bob. May we listen with the ears of Jesus as to what the next step should be for each group.

- H. Wesley Boyer, 717-875-9489

Lois A. Boyer, 717-875-9467

Conestoga MYF Calendar for December

MYF Bible Study at 7:30 p.m. on Wed. night, Dec. 7, 14, and 21. No Bible Study on Dec. 28.

December 18 - Amanda, Bryce, Dylan, Hope, Jonathan, Josh, Joy, Mason, and Meredith have been invited to experience Philadelphia with Pastor Bob and Cindy. It all starts after church with lunch, head to Philadelphia, do a historic tour on a horse-drawn carriage, sights of Christmas, Liberty Bell, shopping, and food. The youth were sponsored by members of the congregation at the Youth Auction, so no charge to you—FREE! Thanks to the congregation for their support! Please confirm

to Cindy that you can go or not. Her email is rlpckp@juno.com or tell her in person.

Friday, December 30, to Sunday, January 1 - Camp Deepark, N.Y., for a wood cutting day on Saturday. All youth and young adults are welcome to join us for this tradition of serving at Deepark. We need a chainsaw gang!!! Please contact Tina Essick if attending. We will depart at 4:00 pm from church and return Sunday late afternoon. We also welcome those who just want to make it a day trip for Saturday. Bring warm clothes, money for two meals, a servant's heart, snack, and drink! - *Tina Essick*



~ Jr. MYF Barn Party ~ at Gary and Sharon Stoltzfus' Barn





The 2011 Youth Auction was another FUN event for everyone as it raised \$7,200 for Conestoga's youth program and mission activities in 2012! Thank you to everyone!





Joe Miller

So Unbelievably Good For so Unbelievably Long That We Expect Good Things?

by Joe Miller

Our Christian holidays are disappearing faster than jobs in America. First, it was Easter, conveniently relabeled “Spring Break.” Then it was Christmas. First people started abbreviating it as “X-mas” and then it became the Winter Solstice holiday. Most recently, Thanksgiving has become transformed into the pagan “Harvest Festival.”

It was not too long ago that the traditional image of Thanksgiving—beside the turkey and the cornucopia—was of a pilgrim on bended knee with head bowed in a thanksgiving prayer. However, today in a country where God is gone and Christ has been ruled unconstitutional, there is little place for pilgrims in prayer.

But, people have always had difficulty with giving thanks. It is almost not in our nature. Maybe it is just the people in the United States who have had it so unbelievably good for so unbelievably long, that we expect good things. All the time.

Last summer, I got sick and had to have surgery. Sometime after the surgery, the doctor called and told me that the images they had taken showed that I had terminal bone cancer. Now I may look old to you, but to me I’m just getting started.

Unless you have been through a diagnosis like this, I can’t really explain it to you. Here I was at age 56—with two kids ages 11 and 15—at a time when people routinely live into their 70s and 80s . . . and I was being told to prepare to die! It was truly a terrible time in my life.

After another barrage of tests, I finally got the phone call. The first test was in error. There was no bone cancer.

You know, somewhere in the Bible, I recall people “dancing for the Lord.” Well, I was so happy—I want

you hard-core Mennos to know that I did not give into the temptation and do any dancing—but I was absolutely bursting with joy and thanksgiving to God. It was like I had been innocently subjected to death row and at the last minute, the governor had called with a reprieve.

For about a week, I woke up every morning, praising God and looking at the trees and the birds and . . . I was THANKFUL. But after about a week, I started grouching to myself—I still don’t have a job. I’m not sure if I can pay all the bills this month. And on and on and on.

I am embarrassed to say that it wasn’t long until my thanks to God had petered out.

There is a story in the Bible about ten men, all who suffered from the deadly and disfiguring disease of leprosy. Jesus, it turns out, was on his way through Samaria and these ten men had heard about Him. So when Jesus arrived in town, the men were there to meet him. And they stood afar off as the law commanded, crying out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

And when Jesus saw them, he said to them, “Show yourselves to the priests.”

Obedying, they began to walk, and on the way they realized that they had been cured.

One of these men, seeing that he had been healed, turned back and with a loud voice, glorified God. And the Bible says that he fell down at the feet of Jesus, giving thanks.

And Jesus looked at him, saying, “Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?”

We do not know what happened to the other nine. But we do know from the story that God wants our thanks. He certainly deserves it, from each and every one of us, **at least** one day a year.

Happy Thanksgiving!



Replacing our old sign was surely welcomed by those who changed the old one, but yet quite a challenge to then get it installed! Thank you, Doug Beam, Bob Ebert, Lyle Essick, and Gary Stoltzfus for undertaking this project!



Spectacularly decorated rooms are internationally known!



Ladies' 2011 "Dust Bunny Hunt"

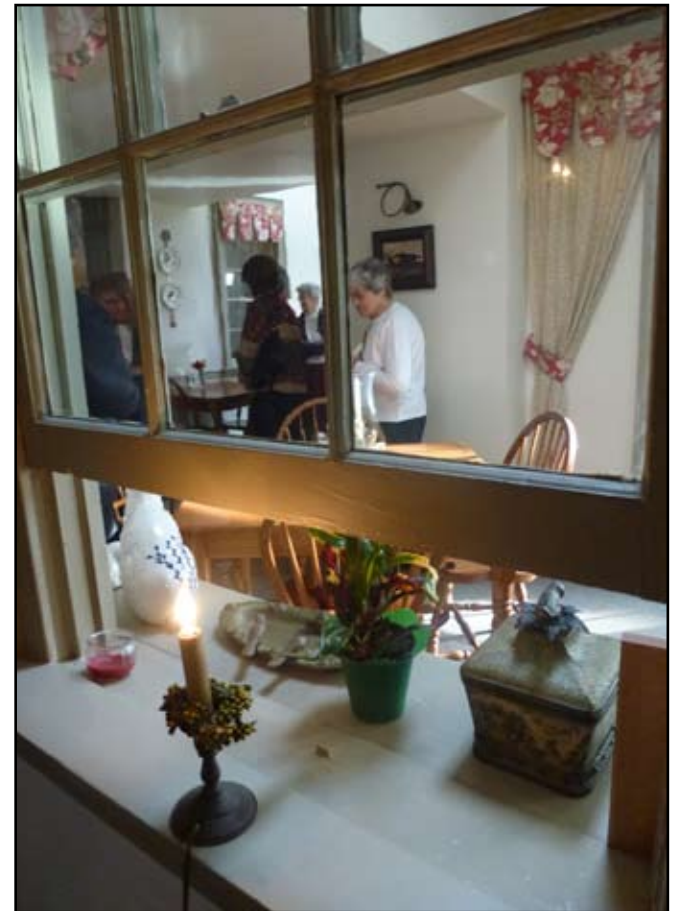
The 2011 Ladies "Dust Bunny Hunt" organized by Cindy Petersheim was lots of fun for 30+ ladies who first enjoyed snacks, heard inexpensive gift-wrapping ideas, and visited both the Inn at Twin Linden and the Churchtown Inn. Thanks, Cindy!



Ladies looking for "dust bunnies" that were only found outside!



Becca Horning hosted the first hour of fun with a game and snacks.



New Library Resources . . .

Who is responsible for teaching our children about sex?

- TV?
- School?
- The church?
- Or parents?

Talking with our children about sex is hard for most parents, even though we think we live in an “enlightened” generation, and even though our culture is saturated with information about sex. There are good reasons why this is difficult. God planned for sexual intimacy to be shared between one man and one woman in marriage. It is appropriate that we guard what happens in the marriage bed as private and sacred. We may even feel embarrassed to let our children know that we enjoy a sexual relationship for more than conceiving babies!

Parents often have questions about the right timing in bringing up this subject with their children. Sixty years ago in second grade, I learned how babies are conceived from my cousin. That was long before my mother told me about it. I learned from my own parenting experience that after children reach adolescence, they are no longer very open to talking with their parents about sexuality issues.

There is the dilemma of how to present not only physical facts, but also the moral issues surrounding these facts. God created the whole human person and called it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). We need to teach our children to see their bodies, including their sexuality, as gifts from God. Along with this, they need to be taught the boundaries God has given us for expressing this special gift. Pop culture today presents a warped view of this gift which God meant for our blessing and fulfillment. Pornography is more readily accessible today than ever before and is wreaking havoc in too many people’s lives. Who will protect our children from this and teach our children God’s plan for sex if parents fail to do so?

Another concern is guarding our children from sexual abuse and how we can best equip them and protect them from becoming victimized sexually. How do we teach them about inappropriate touch and how to say “no” to such things? Children should be taught to tell their parents if anyone touches them in an uncomfortable way, and parents can have young children practice saying “no” to inappropriate touch.

In order to help parents with this task of sex education, our church library has purchased some helpful resources. We now have a series of four books called “God’s Design For Sex.” They are written from a Christian perspective and are appropriate for different age levels. They are:

- *The Story of Me* (Book 1 for ages 3 to 5)
- *Before I Was Born* (Book 2 for ages 5 to 8)
- *What’s the Big Deal? Why God Cares About Sex* (Book 3 for ages 8 to 11)
- *Facing the Facts: The Truth About Sex and You* (Book 4 for ages 11 to 14)



Dot Leatherman holding two of the new books in our church library.

The first two books are designed for reading with your children. The third and fourth could be read by your children themselves, but it would be wise for parents to read them too and hopefully discuss with their children the issues presented. If you have children of multiple ages, you might begin with reading one of the more elementary books together as a family, then do the older age-designated book with just your older child.

These books are being placed in the library as of the first Sunday in December. We hope parents will keep them circulating so that all our families have an opportunity to use them.

One additional book, *How & When to Tell Your Kids About Sex*, will be placed in the library in January. This book reads more like a textbook and assists parents in establishing a Biblical view of sexuality as their children mature. Look for a review of this book in next month’s *Connections*.

- Dot Leatherman
Family Life Shepherd



Senior Connections

Thursday, December 8, 2011, 12:00 noon

Janet Caley and her third graders at Conestoga Christian School will join us for dinner and then will share a Christmas program.

Invite your friends and neighbors!



PRAISES AND REQUESTS

• Praise God that all **109 families who came to the November Food Pantry** had the opportunity to receive a turkey along with all the other food they received. About 50 turkeys were donated and the remaining 60 turkeys were purchased with funds from donated Food Pantry funds. Local organizations also contributed both food and money gifts: The Goddard School, Holiday Inn, Susquehanna Bank, Boy Scouts, many local churches, and the Twin Valley Middle School Home Ec class made a number of pumpkin pies! God blessed us abundantly through so many willing workers!

• Praise God that **free flu shots and blood pressure screenings** were also available at the Food Pantry, thanks to Beth Good of Hope Within Medical Clinic who supplied the flu vaccines donated by Lancaster General Hospital. Robin Miller gave the flu shots and Dan Mast took blood pressures.

• **Pray for Conestoga's Sunday School teachers** as we begin a new Sunday School quarter this month! Thank God for the privilege to participate in these small group settings as we discuss and study a variety of sources—from discussing current issues using *The Mennonite* to studying Mennonite Publishing Network's series titled "God Establishes a Faithful People" using the Bible books of Genesis, Exodus, and Galatians.

• Pray for God to work through the words and messages displayed on our **new church sign** along the road that it will help us serve Him better in this Ministry Center that God has blessed us with!

I ASKED, HE GAVE

I asked for Strength
And God gave me Difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for Wisdom
And God gave me Problems to solve.

I asked for Prosperity
And God gave me a Brain and Brawn to work.

I asked for Courage
And God gave me Danger to overcome.

I asked for Love
And God gave me Troubled people to help.

I asked for Favors
And God gave me Opportunities.

I received nothing I wanted.

I received everything I needed.

- *Author Unknown*

Noteable Christmas Quotes ...

- The best Christmas gift of all is the presence of a happy family all wrapped up with one another.
- Christ was one child Who knew more than His parents—yet He obeyed them.
- Keeping Christmas is good. but sharing it with others is even better.
- Let's approach Christmas with an expectant hush, rather than a last-minute rush.
- Selfishness makes Christmas a burden; love makes it a delight.
- Don't worry if your Christmas card list seems to be growing each year. Instead, be grateful! It just means you're making friends faster than you are losing them.
- Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift— indescribable, inestimable, incomparable, inexpressible, precious beyond words!



A Prayer For Our Congregation

During a recent Sunday morning message following Catherine Taylors' homegoing, Pastor Bob recognized we lost a strong intercessor who prayed for her pastor and congregation every day. He recognized that the Old Testament law required someone to pay back seven times what was stolen. The question posed was, "Since death stole Catherine away from us, might seven persons be called of God to committ to praying daily for our mission and ministry for the rest of their lives?"

Many persons responded to say they have practiced this ministry service for years already. Pastor Bob blessed us to report that one of the new respondants was a young teenager! If God grants that teenager long life, imagine how many pastors and elders and teachers will be prayed for as a result of this committment!

Andy Leatherman also responded and shared with Pastor Bob the content he felt called to commit to praying. Pastor Bob asked his permission to publish it for others and we offer it below.

— Andy's Daily Prayer —

I pray that:

- . . . The church will be remarkable in its welcoming of all kinds of people
- . . . The church will be remarkable in its adherence, loyalty, and practice of mercy and truth
- . . . The church will be full and overflowing of the life-giving presence of Jesus
- . . . That the Holy Spirit will flood with anointing this church daily
- . . . That Christ would bless and make clear the mission of the congregation
- . . . That the leadership throughout the church would be wise, inspired, courageous, and humble

To the above, we invite you to add your "Amen and Amen!"



Wheelchair Bags to Peru

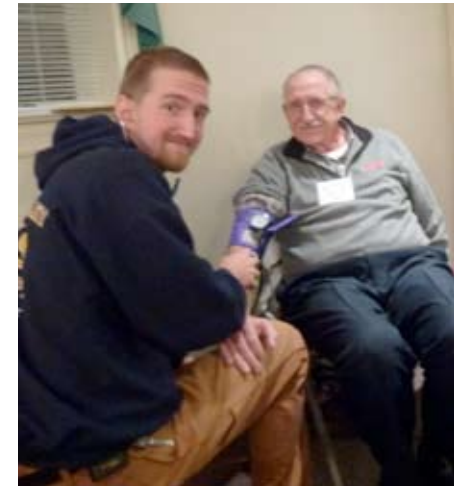
THANK YOU to Conestoga Mennonite Church for making 80 wheelchair bags for the Peruvians. (Violet Beam and Mildred Yoder finished these wheelchair bags outside of the monthly Sewing Circle here at Conestoga.) The wheelchair bags were filled with gifts and a Bible before given to each wheelchair recipient. You were a part of this ministry where 413 Peruvians heard the Gospel—267 of these received Christ as their Savior for the first time and 88 more made a recommitment. We distributed a total of 164 wheelchairs of which 32 were children. It was a wonderful trip!

- Cletus Yoder (son of Mildred Yoder)





The first Sunday of Advent with Carol Moss on the hammered dulcimer (left) and Dottie Martin lighting the Advent candle (right).



Turkeys, Gideon New Testaments, flu shots, blood pressures, and lots and lots of tasty food were given at the November Food Pantry.



Lots of fellowship in November with Senior Connections Thanksgiving Dinner (left) and "The King's Heralds" sang their hearts out!



Children's Church cartoons drawn about the story of Jonah. See these and more posted in the hallway outside of the Youth Room.