

Cross and Gifts COMMENTS

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Advent

Rev. Bob Hoffman

Christmas is coming!

But Advent comes first. Actually, Advent is the four-week season that helps us get ready for Christmas. How do you get ready for Christmas? I imagine there are lots of plans that get put in motion so that your blessed Christmas Day is all that you want it to be. Isn't that the very same thing God did with us in the days and weeks and years leading up to the birth of Jesus?

How do we get ready for Christmas? How do we get ourselves ready when there are so many obstacles and challenges and changes confronting us? That's the essence of our Advent worship this year. The overall question we are going to answer is: "How Does A Weary World Rejoice?"

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Christmas Eve CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

"For unto us a child is born and his name shall be called Wonderful."

**Come Make Room for the Christ Child in the
soft glow of candlelight**

7:00 PM

This service will also be available on Zoom.



December 2023		Upcoming Events	
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**“Every block of stone has a statue inside it.
and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.”**

-Michelangelo

There are not enough words to express my thanks for all you have given the Cornwell family over the past months. Every step we took, you took with us. We are forever grateful for all you have shared with us – hand to hand, heart to heart.

Our Lord has placed a great new block of stone in front of us. He is calling us all to look for the statue within. God beckons us to pick up the tools that Bruce has provided and honed with love over the years. Our family and this congregation will now begin to chip away that stone with all the strength and vision the Lord has provided. Beginning with rough cuts, the stone will be chipped away. The new creation will begin to take form. The refining will take time and the polish will contain the sweat of us all. A stone that could have blocked our path will become a reflection of God’s vision for this church – for His church.

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord, remember: We are blessed. We are grateful. We are blessed. We are thankful.

**Peace and grace,
Sandy**

Being Stewards of our Neighbors

There are different aspects of stewardship: using our time, talents, and resources to help support the work of our church, as well as using these God-given gifts to care for the planet that has been entrusted to us.

The Stewardship of Life Institute provides this guidance, “To be a steward of one’s neighbor implies getting to know others, to seek understanding and common ground. It means praying for the welfare of those one does not know and bridging the gap by finding ways to enter into relationship and learn from each other. It means seeing the image of God and the face of Christ in everyone, and it means stepping way out of our secure personal space and cultural

comfort zones. These are hard teachings, ones that convict us and drive us to our knees at the foot of the cross. Thankfully, the discipleship journey is one of lifelong learning and constant revision. After all, it is only by the grace and mercy of the Son of God that we are able to even begin to faithfully steward this amazing gift of relationship and love of neighbor.”

Many of us provide our time and talents for organizations that serve our neighbors: the Red Cross, volunteering with literacy agencies, making quilts and hats for children in foster care, just to name a few. One local organization that embodies the aims of stewardship is Street Soldiers. Their goal is

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December Mission of the Month

December's Mission of the Month is our Angel Tree!



This year we are collecting gifts for **Things of My Very Own** and **Albany StreetSoldiers** in two ways!

There are angel tags on the tree in the back of the sanctuary for your choosing or you can go to:

<https://www.target.com/gift-registry/gift/crcc-angel-tree-2023>

Things of My Very Own

When a child is removed from an abusive or dangerous situation, they may only possess the clothing they are wearing at that moment. This agency, which serves the Capital District, provides them with clothes, bedding, supplies – and even toys. This caring agency gives them “things of my very own” and helps them transition through those initial difficult days.

StreetSoldiers

StreetSoldiers, founded in Albany in 2016, is a collaboration of impassioned volunteers who've come together to provide comfort and necessities to the area's homeless and less fortunate populations. This is done through community donation and reflects the best principles of grassroots action.

Please return **unwrapped** gifts and items by **December 10**.
Questions? Contact **Sandy Cornwell, Sarah Huiest, or Tina Bottini**

Thank you for your support.

Congregational Care Team

Our ministries of hospitality, welcome host and coffee hour host, play vital roles. Welcome hosts help to ensure that everyone feels at ease and valued when they enter our church home. After worship, our coffee hour hosts create an opportunity for us to catch up with members of our church family and introduce ourselves to guests.

We have a number of openings for both ministries on the current schedule which ends January 21, 2024. If you have questions, would prefer not to use sign-up genius, or if you would like to pair up with someone, please contact **Linda Murphy** at lindamurph98@aol.com.

Here is the link to sign-up for these ministries:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D4EAEA92AA6FAC43-welcome5>

Reverse Advent Calendar???

The typical Advent calendar is the December countdown to Christmas. With great anticipation, each of the 24 little doors is opened revealing maybe a drawing, saying, little toy or even a chocolate. What if the calendar focus was on giving instead of receiving this Christmas season?

The idea of the Reverse Advent Calendar is simple. Start with a large sturdy cardboard box. Decorating the box could be a fun family activity – let your imaginations soar. Make it merry, or keep it plain. It's all up to you.

For each day December 1-24, add one item to your box. Again, use your imagination. You could focus on a specific item such as a different pasta for each day, or personal care items, or only canned soups, or just a variety of non-perishable foods.

This reverse calendar is your very own design and would be fun at home or at work. The best gifts are those we give away.

Bring your calendar box or items to church either December 31st or January 7th. Can't get to the building? Just let the church office know and we will arrange to have the box picked up. All items will be delivered to local agencies that strive to aid our neighbors in need. For those of our church family who live afar, consider donating your box to your local agencies. Near and far, we remain together in Christ.

To view a list of suggestions for items or themes, click on this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/CRCReverseAdvent>

Questions? Contact Jessica Kaercher, Tina Bottini, or Sandy Cornwell.

Family Ministries NEEDS YOUR HELP!!

Our January Family Ministries Event will be FAMILY FEUD! And we need YOU to help us out with the answers! Below are 10 questions. Submit one answer for each question to Sarah at crccsarah@gmail.com so we can have great poll results to pull from!

Questions? Contact Sarah Huiest.

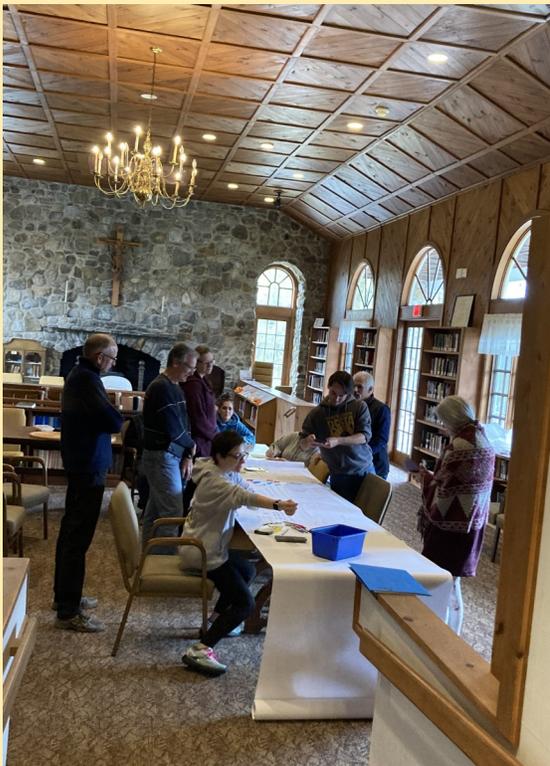
- 1) Give me a woman's name from the Bible that is popular today.
- 2) Which commandment is the average person most likely to break?
- 3) If the plagues of Egypt were modified for modern times, what would be the most devastating thing God could send?
- 4) Name an animal that would take up the most room on Noah's Ark.
- 5) Name a word that is used more than any other in the Bible.
- 6) Name a biblical hero you'd most like to have as a friend.
- 7) Name an animal that is mentioned several times in the Bible.
- 8) If you had to create a habitable world in six days, what is the first thing you'd create?
- 9) Name a gift the Three Wise Men brought to Baby Jesus.
- 10) Name a book from the Bible that is longer than most other books.

Leadership Retreat



On November 3rd and 4th, the church's staff and consistory members retreated to Christ the King Spiritual Center in Greenwich, NY for their annual leadership retreat. This year's retreat focused on CRCC's past and present. It was an important time to recognize what we had lost in Rev. Cornwell's passing, as well as the current challenges, successes, and ways we've seen God show up in the present time. Tears, laughs, and important conversations were all shared.

There will not be a search committee formed in the immediate future for a new pastor. This next year will be spent processing our grief and discerning the needs of the congregation. The biggest mistake a church can make is rushing into finding a new pastor. Even when a beloved minister retires, there needs to be a significant time of mourning and discernment. Reverend Cornwell's tenure was substantial and his passing devastating. It will take time for us to heal and to be in the appropriate place to begin looking for a new minister.



In the meantime, we continue to have the support of our Classis Care Team, of our interim Pastor Bob Hoffman, and a strong leadership team in the consistory and staff. We were fortunate to have many conversations with Bruce before he passed. We will continue to spread the love and message of Jesus Christ Sunday mornings in the pulpit and throughout the week in our small groups.

If you ever have a question or concern, PLEASE speak to Pastor Bob, a member of Consistory, or a staff member. We WELCOME open communication and intend to be as transparent as possible.



Advocacy and Global Mission Update

Since January 2023, the newly commissioned Advocacy and Global Mission team has supported the following organizations each with a \$500 donation on behalf of CRCC:

Albany Outreach Van, RISSE, Direct Relief, Room for All, Peace Corps, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

Would you like to add your voice?

Contact **Karl Cote** or other team members: **Sue Bredice, Nancy Bacon, Donna Davidson**. The team meets monthly on **Tuesdays** at **6:30** at CRCC for about an hour (the team is on hiatus July/August).

The Peace Corps was the recipient of a donation this past August. Below is a brief overview obtained from the Peace Corps website. If you would like more information highlighting "the power of human connection" search: [Peacecorps.gov](https://www.peacecorps.gov).

On October 14, 1960, the future President of the US, John F. Kennedy, issued a challenge to 10,000 students at the University of Michigan: How many of them would be willing to serve their country and the cause of peace by living and working in the developing world?

Since then, over 240,000 Americans have responded to that challenge.

The Peace Corps celebrated its 60th Anniversary in 2021. It was initially established by President John F. Kennedy on March 1, 1961, and formally authorized by the Congress on September 22, 1961, with the passage of the Peace Corps Act. In 1961, volunteers began serving in 5 countries. Within 6 years, programs were in 55 countries with over 14,500 volunteers. Today, opportunities continue to be offered in over 60 countries. Volunteers live and work side by side with community members:

- Building relationships
- Exchanging cultures and knowledge
- Helping transform lives

Volunteers work within six established sectors - agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth development.

In 1983, Peace Corps partnered with the President's programs including:

- Small Project Assistance
- Stomping Out Malaria in Africa (the Malaria Initiative collaborating in 18 countries)
- Global Food Security (the Feed the Future program)
- Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (with the targeted goal for an AIDS-free generation)

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“helping the homeless and those striving to thrive one day at a time.” On the third Friday of each month, at 7pm, their volunteers distribute food and essential goods to our neighbors in need at 1 Academy Park in Albany. Our fellow CRCC church member, Nancy Bacon, volunteers for the Albany chapter. We have an opportunity to assist Street Soldiers to be stewards of our neighbors through the CRCC Angel Tree.

While we have multiple avenues to serve as stewards at this time of year, our neighbors have needs throughout the year. Scripture has many reminders that we should be stewards of our neighbors, “No one should seek their own good, but the good of others” (1 Corinthians 10:24).

For the most up to date information on Street Soldiers – Albany, visit their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/fahey2017/>.

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In addition, the Peace Corps network is partnering with local communities to:

- Recover from health and development setbacks caused by COVID-19
- Adapt and build resilience to climate change
- Provide leadership development and other opportunities to the largest generation of youth in the history of the US



Happy
New Year!

Day Care News!

It's hard to believe that the holidays are coming upon us! We just celebrated Halloween! The children dressed and paraded around the parking lot to the delight of many parents and grandparents! After the parade, we entertained them with many fun Halloween songs. When we sent the parents home, we celebrated with lunch and many treats. It was a fun and crazy day!

The week after Halloween, Christmas songs filled the air! Everyone is practicing for our Annual Christmas Show. Our show will held the evening of Thursday, December 14th. A “standing room” only crowd will enjoy their “littles” singing and dancing to their song choice! Of course, all dressed in adorable costumes! The show will conclude with a “surprise” visitor bringing surprises for all! It's a wonderful time and enjoyed by all.

Thank you for your participation in our wreath fundraiser. We use the proceeds for all our special events and equipment. I hope you enjoyed your beautiful wreath!

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We certainly all know the weariness that is present in our lives and our world, so how can we see through and beyond all of that and discover God's most precious gift in Jesus Christ? Each Sunday, we will look at a specific way that will help us to rejoice, have hope, discover peace, and embrace love. Come to worship each Sunday throughout Advent and receive God's blessing through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*“Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!”*

(From O Holy Night)



Christmas Poinsettias

It's time to order your poinsettias!

Given by: _____

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Total Plants ordered: _____

Cost: \$12 per plant

Cash

Check (Made payable to Community Reformed Church)

**Please return this order including payment
to the church office
by December 17**

Plants will be supplied by Valoze's Nursery

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**Community Reformed
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Worship Hours

We invite you to join us for worship and fellowship every Sunday at 10 AM in person and via Zoom.

Outdoor Services are also available in the Summer every Sunday at 9 AM

Holiday and Special Services will be announced on our website and this newsletter

Colonie Community Day Care Center

701 Sand Creek Rd
Colonie, NY 12205-2497

Carol Grasso, Director

Tel: (518) 869-0131

E-mail:
cgrasso6@yahoo.com

Winter Weather Advisory!

If winter weather becomes a hinderance to us worshipping safely on Sunday morning, Zoom **ONLY** will be announced approximately 1 hour before worship begins. The Worship Team for the day will make the decision. Building closure will be announced on the church's website (communityreformedchurch.com), Facebook, Instagram, X account, and via email. Even if the decision is made to remain open, PLEASE exercise appropriate caution when deciding whether or not to commute. Keep in mind that you need to get TO and FROM the church safely and that weather where you live may be different than the church's location. Your safety is of utmost importance and with Zoom, you can still access and participate in worship.

Christmas Eve Services!

With Christmas Eve falling on a Sunday, we WILL still have our 10:00AM worship service, as well as our 7:00PM candlelight worship service.

Let us welcome the Christ child!

Book Group News

The Book Group will not be meeting in December. For our January meeting, everyone is encouraged to bring a book recommendation for the coming months!

All are welcome.

Questions?
Contact **Karen Reynolds**.



Break Bread, Share Bread

For the month of December, we will be collecting **Bread Crumbs and Canned Vegetables**. Jams, Jellies and Juices (all flavors) are a constant need, as well. Please feel free to donate these at any time throughout the year.

Donations to the Help Center Food Pantry can be left on the back table in the sanctuary.

Questions? Contact Tina Bottini.

Communications/Media Coordinator: **Sarah Huiest**

Layout Designer: **Bob Becker**

Articles are due by the 15th of the month and can be submitted to crccsarah@gmail.com or given to Sarah Huiest.