



The Allegan Congregationalist

December 2023

Our church exists to introduce people to Jesus Christ and train those who already know Him.

The Great Giver's Greatest Gift

by Greg Carlson



Calendar Events:

- 12/1 Downtown Christmas Parade 6:30 PM
- 12/3 Advent begins
- 12/3 Christmas Hymn Sing 4 PM
- 12/24 7 PM Christmas Eve Service

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed..."

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given" (Luke 2:1; Isaiah 9:6).

At the same time Caesar Augustus taxed the citizens of the Roman Empire, God gave to humanity the greatest gift ever given. The taxation ultimately ended - "it came to pass" - as the power of ancient Rome perished. The gift of God however, continues to be freely given unto all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ and walk in the ongoing presence and power of His dynamic working in our lives.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

We must understand continuing reception as the basis of continuing faithfulness. Born again believers no less depend on the Lord Jesus for the living of the Christian life than we did for the initial experience of salvation. "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6). The Apostle Paul's command reveals God's perpetual giving of Christ to the Christian regarding our moment by moment need of life, supply, enabling and His working in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Our calling involves the recognition and affirmation of our Lord's continuing provision of such grace, and also our continuing need for it. "Without Me, you can do nothing... I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (John 15:5; Philippians 4:13). From "nothing" without Him to "all things" through Him, we proceed as we began by receiving gifts that enable our faith and faithfulness to God. Unlike doomed Caesar Augustus and his tax, God's grace in Christ abides forevermore as the Gift that keeps on giving.

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivers Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

"But my God shall supply all your need according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Inside this issue:

Cong. Kitchen	2
Problem Solved	3
Bazaar Recap	4
Calendar	5



What Do You See?

by Carrie Lovett

Seasons come and seasons go.
 Soon our community will be blanketed with snow.
 The joy we feel from our warm houses looking out.
 Holidays will soon be here! You can hear people shout.
 For some the holidays bring gifts and joy.
 Gatherings and presents and perhaps a new toy.
 It's filled with laughter and food that delights
 Every stomach is filled as they are tucked in at night.
 Others are grateful for the thin jacket they wear.
 As for scarves and hats there are none to spare.
 The storms will come, where will they go tonight?
 Staying warm on a empty stomach is such a hard fight.
 The house is cold, the little ones plead.
 Young and old are on their knees.
 Help is needed but where can do they go?
 To keep their loved ones protected from hunger and the cold?
 Who is there to help them with their plight ?
 As cold and hungry, they whisper good night.
 We hear your cries loud and clear.
 We see your eyes filled with hunger and fear.
 Warm meals are served every Thursday night.
 The Congregational Kitchen will help with your plight.

Our community sees you, we hear your cry
 All you need to do is call and stop by.
 Thursday from 3:00-5:00 you can call in your request.
 The volunteers who answer will do the rest.
 269.673.3139 is the number to call.
 Pick up at 323 Cutler. Food is ready for all.
 Our kitchen is wide open for all those in need.
 Still, Volunteers are needed to help those we feed.
 Who are you? What do you see?
 Are there gifts waiting under your tree?
 A gift of time is the best gift of all.
 Are you one who will answer the call?
 You can make a difference for those around you.
 Being a volunteer is what you can do.
 There are those around us who all they can see
 Are the gifts awaiting them laid under the tree.



Problem Solved

By Todd Wagner



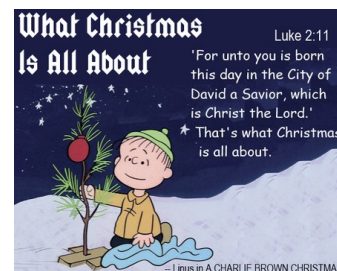
God's Story painting by David Arms

It's amazing how swiftly our seasons can change, and how our focus can change even faster. Last weekend completed the Thanksgiving holiday, where our focus almost immediately switched from giving thanks to God for all our blessings to the commercialism of the Christmas season. And this doesn't even take into consideration how so many people today overlook Thanksgiving altogether, plunging right into Christmas with the installation of lights, outdoor decorations, and the never-ceasing holiday music. While this seems to be the norm in today's culture, and though I may not agree with it, I can certainly understand people's desire to look forward to a time of year when we can look to the hope that the Christmas season brings. In less than a week, the Advent season will be upon us. And so, as I sat down to consider what to write about for this month's newsletter, I mused on various passages in the Bible that speak of the Gospel and our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

My first inclination was to write about the Christmas story found in the gospel of Luke, but that seemed too obvious. Though I must admit, I love how Luke writes it! Then I pondered the prophetic words spoken by Isaiah in his prophecy concerning Christ in chapter 9, but that too seemed rather obvious, though well deserving of reflection. After much contemplation and with the leading of the Holy Spirit, I decided to write on the Christmas story found in the book of Genesis. Now some of you may be wondering where that is, and I hope some of you already know where I am going. But I would like to bring you to the first Gospel story found in Genesis 3, the one that brings us hope of redemption and sets the stage for why we celebrate Christmas.

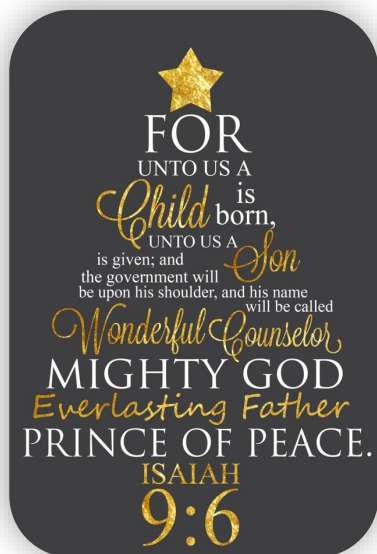
Ok, you should know the back story here. One day, Lucifer decided he would enter the Garden of Eden and used the form of a crafty serpent to deceive Eve (Gen 3:1). In doing so, he successfully created doubt in Eve's mind, introducing sin into the world when she found the forbidden fruit desirable for food and for gaining wisdom (v. 6). Once she and Adam ate from it, Satan's monkey wrench was tossed right into God's perfect creation. As God came strolling in (v.8), Adam and Eve knew things weren't going to go so well. If they were to quote Astronaut Jim Lovell or John Swigert, they would have said, "OK Eden, we have a problem here."

Once God confronted Adam and Eve in verse 10, we know things began spiraling downhill in a hurry. After hearing



Problem Solved (cont.)

By Todd Wagner



what His children had to say, we see God exact His judgment beginning in v. 14 starting with the serpent. Now, I know you're probably puzzled right now wondering where I'm going with all this and how it even comes close to tying in with Advent and Christmas. Well, hang on, because this is going to get good. Even though God rains down judgment, there are words of hope and mercy found in the story. When we read further in Genesis 3:15, we see something remarkable. As God curses Lucifer and the serpent, he declares, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel." While there is a lot to reflect on here, I want to emphasize how this passage points to the promise of Jesus' birth, including His redemption, and His victory over Satan. Here God delivers the very first Gospel in two messianic prophecies.

First, He identifies Jesus who is the offspring of [Eve] the woman (Isa 7:4; Matt 1:25; Gal 4:4). To right the wrong, Jesus will "crush your head" (Ps 110:6; Rom 16:20; 1 Jn 3:8; Rev 20:10). The second messianic prophecy refers to Satan, "... and you will strike His heel". Like a cunning snake lying in wait ready to strike, Satan and his children (the evil people of this world) waited for the opportunity to strike at the Savior to crucify and kill Him. But as we know, Satan's attempt failed miserably. This strike on the heel was merely a bruise because Jesus rose again from the dead, conquering evil and death, demonstrating sovereign dominance over Satan, and crushing his head in the end (Rev 20:10).

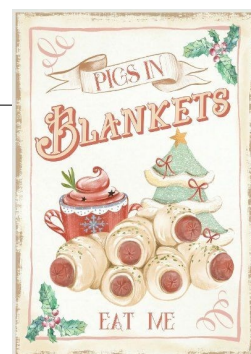
So, as we look to Christmas this Advent season, we can be reminded that without God's perfect plan, we would not have a Christmas story to tell. We could not find hope in Isaiah's prophecy of a Savior, let alone rejoice in the arrival of that Savior – Jesus who is the Christ. Lucifer tried to foil God's perfect creation, but as we see, God had a plan and has always had a perfect plan for the redemption of His creation and His children. Let us always give thanks to God for His steadfast love and mercy, and for the gift of His Son Jesus and the Gospel message. This Christmas, give someone the gift of hope and truth and tell them the Gospel so they too can rejoice in God who said, problem solved!

MERRY CHRISTMAS, AND MAY GOD'S PEACE BE WITH YOU ALL.

Annual Bazaar Recap

And that's a wrap! Another Holiday Bazaar is in the books. We had cookies and canned goods a'plenty. We had a few trinkets and baked goods galore. What's that? Pigs in a blanket...there's more!

A great thank you is extended from the Women's Fellowship for all those who participated in our annual fundraiser. From muscle to moving tables and cabinets, to preparing goodies to sell, to manning stations & cleanup, to shopping. You made it a success. We were able to raise over \$2,000 and thank you for your participation. If you ordered pigs in a blanket, but have yet to pick them up, please let us know this week. If you are interested in purchasing these delicious treats, we do have a few remaining. Price is \$10/dozen and contact is Theresa Prolo 269-650-2037.





04 Barb Polonowski
 11 Faith Brown
 15 Todd Wagner
 15 Alaina Letts
 16 Jody Jackson

17 Gary Henningson
 21 Gwendolyn Goodenough
 22 Jan Lovejoy
 24 Pat Ryan
 27 Sue Campbell
 29 Barry Lucas
 29 Theresa Prolo
 30 Lydia Lucas



01 Leon & Sue Belden
 13 Jeff & Margaret Brown
 31 Randy & Carol Sneller



Please call the office if there is an anniversary or birthday you would like to add to the list.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
LITURGIST: Todd W. GREETER: Joanie T.				9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	1 8 Food Warehouse 6 Downtown CHRISTMAS PARADE	2
3 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship CE Mtg 4 pm HYMN SING	4	5	6 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Choir Practice	7 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner	8 8 Food Warehouse	9 8:30 Men's Breakfast 
10 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Trustee Mtg	11 5:30 Women's Fellowship	12 7 Diaconate Mtg	13 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Choir Practice	14 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	15 8 Food Warehouse	16
17 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 	18	19	20 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Choir Practice	21 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	22 8 Food Warehouse	23
24 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 7 Christmas Eve Service 	25 Merry Christmas 	26	27 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	28 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	29 8 Food Warehouse	30



The First Congregational Church of Allegan

323 Cutler St - Allegan, MI 49010

Church Phone: 269-673-3139

Email: fccofallegan@gmail.com

Website: fccofallegan.weebly.com

Worship with us on Sundays at 10:30 AM!

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



12/3 at 4 PM. Please join us!

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

John Piper says, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel lists names of Jesus ... what He already achieved and will complete. With every verse, the refrain reaches down musically into our weak hearts and pulls us up in faith to see the certainty of the end. REJOICE! REJOICE! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. A perfect rhythm of plaintive longing in the verses, penetrated with the powerful burst of joy in the refrain. A song to wonderfully capture the mystery and wonder of Christian living."

Please join me in prayer as we celebrate the season of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and know...He is coming again. *Father, we thank you for your many good gifts. Most especially, we thank you for Jesus, the one perfect Gift. Thank you for this Christmas carol which helps us to ponder the promises. Every December, the excitement and anticipation for Christmas builds, but we know when it comes, the waiting will not be over. We are filled with Longing and Joy... Yearning, Aching and Hoping. We wait for the dawn of salvation, the return of the King.*

A Message from the



The time is coming for our annual meeting. We will be changing some of the personnel in our committees and have a need for servants of the Lord with willing hearts and talents.

Please pray and seek the Lord's guidance in how He might be leading you to step into a more active role at the First Congregational Church.

Direct specific questions to Mark Lovett, Moderator or Board Chairs.