

December/January 2024



A Bi-Monthly Newsletter from The Community Church of Barrington

Advent Venting



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I am an easy-going guy. Few things really get under my skin. Want to put up Christmas decorations in September? No problem. You consider 'Die Hard' a Christmas movie? Knock yourself out. But there's one holiday tradition that truly irks me. It's everywhere, impossible to escape. It's...Magi at the manger.



Every Nativity set, whether ornate, abstract, or even chocolate, features a trio of Magi poised to present their gifts to baby Jesus nestled in a pile of straw. Here's the catch: **THERE WERE NO MAGI IN JESUS'S BIRTH STORY!!!**

"But wait," you might say, "I distinctly remember the Magi story in the Bible. They came from the East, followed the star, and brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Yes, those details are indeed in the Bible, but they belong to a completely different narrative.





The Magi are in Matthew, while the rest of the Nativity imagery stems from Luke. Merging these two accounts isn't just Biblically inaccurate; it also dilutes the intentions of the respective authors.

Matthew wrote for a predominantly Jewish audience, depicting Jesus as a king by aligning him with great leaders from Jewish history. The Gospel starts with his lineage to emphasize his royal connection to King David. The Magi's visit and their lavish gifts affirm Jesus's status, encouraging readers to accept him as the Messiah.

In contrast, Luke, a Gentile, wrote for a broader audience. His Gospel often highlights power reversals (check out Mary's prayer in *Luke 1:46-55*) and showcases Jesus uplifting those typically marginalized, such as women and the poor. That's why the birth story portrays humble beginnings. Despite the polished Nativity sets for sale at Neimen Marcus, the real scene was a lowly, dirty, and humiliating place to bring forth a child. Modern comparisons liken it to a gas station bathroom or a hotel supply closet. Such meager accommodations would not be fit for a king, hence why Matthew depicts the Magi arriving at a house.

Maybe I'm splitting hairs here. Perhaps I should relax and be grateful for any imagery we have around Jesus's birth, especially given the abundance that necessitates differentiation. Imagine if only Mark's Gospel had survived throughout history. Nativity scenes would either be sparse or non-existent. Interestingly, the premise of our Sunday School study, "Holy Disruption," hinges on Mark being the sole Gospel. Author Tracy S. Daub uses Mark alone to find Advent messages of hope, peace, revelation, and belonging. It is a testament to the power and majesty of the incarnation of God in Jesus that even without the rich narratives of Matthew and Luke, the Gospel message shines bright. Learn more about the upcoming classes on the Christian Education page later in this newsletter.

So, I will be thankful for the Gospels we have, and I will work on unclenching my jaw when I see the Magi kneeling next to a shepherd. Next year, though, I want everyone to work on adding John's Gospel into the mix. *Pastor Chris*



Join us at 7:00 pm for a candlelit Christmas Eve Service.

Moderator's Update

"May you never be too grown up to search the skies on Christmas Eve."

What image immediately comes to mind when you read this quotation? Quaking shepherds in remote fields or Santa encouraging his reindeer on through the night?

Silent Night

Silent Night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright...

Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories Stream from heaven afar;
Heavenly host sing Al-le-lu-ia!!

Night Before Christmas

Away to the window, I flew like a flash
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer...

I suspect that most of us, including me, would have to admit that eight tiny reindeer come in range of our inner eye before streaming glories trumpeting Emmanuel!

So, let's think again. Santa Christmas is a wonderful time. Warm gatherings, gifts, the joys of family, etc. Christmas morning is all about children and presents, pajamas and eggnog. But, like all good things, the day draws to a close and the show shuts down for another year. Some gifts are returned, decorations are taken down, Christmas lights are stored for next year. In short, Santa Christmas comes to a close and the New Year is soon rung in with eight tiny reindeer all but forgotten for another year.

But what about that silent night long, long ago, when shivering shepherds alone in their fields became the first to learn the joyous news that God was suddenly truly among us – in the flesh? Emmanuel! A babe is born who is the future of the world. He's not here so we can do a nativity play once a year in the manner of Santa and his reindeer. His birth is the beginning of a story that never ends. Hope, Peace, Joy and Love are not markers along the way, they ARE the way.

When I look into the night sky, I wonder what the new year will bring for our warm and welcoming Community Church. I try to see shepherds rather than Santa because their faith will carry me far beyond Christmas Day. Christ's birth was the beginning of a new world unfolding, not a singular event to be celebrated once a year. This gives me joy, energy, and hope that we will work together to make 2024 a year filled with new visions even better than sugar plums dancing in our heads!

What will the new year bring? Think about the shepherds as you look into the Christmas sky and believe – with confidence – God only knows.

Peer Lykke
Moderator

Mission Update

Missions Committee Meeting

October 10, 2023 (Third-quarter 2023 Distributions)

Glee Huddlestun - Chair

The Missions Committee met on October 10, 2023. Those present were Jim Majzan, Sandy Schroeder, Carolyn Roussel, Christy Davis, Lauren Davis (via phone), and Glee Huddlestun; absent – Jackie Phinney and Pastor Chris Shade.

Fourth Sunday donations to the Barrington Food Pantry will include all fresh produce items.

Update on Barrington Back-to-School donations (girls' tops) (August 2023); goal = 44 tops; collected 59 with additional donations of 40+ pieces of clothing (sweatshirt, fleece tops, etc.). Thank you, Carol Marsh, coordinator!

Ministry Fair – October 8, 2023. Special thanks to Lauren and Christy for the bulletin board depicting Missions' purpose, events and its actions on behalf of CCB.

Fifth Sunday Missions Moment – October 29, 2023, Catherine Inserra - Kids Above All (first-quarter recipient)

Cindy Alton will be welcomed as a new member of the Missions Committee.

Donations of children's snow boots to Barrington's Winter Giving Day will be coordinated by Carolyn Roussel. She will provide dates and sizes to the congregation. In the past, the campaign ran through the first week of December.

It was suggested that the yellow pew cards "Recommendation to the Missions Committee" be distributed with Sunday's bulletin followed by an announcement by Pastor Chris for individuals to provide the name of a charity they would like Missions to consider. If no specific charity comes to mind, members should indicate the type of organization they'd like to support through CCB's benevolence funds, such as a food source, shelter, children's organizations, personal protection, learning opportunities and skills, etc.

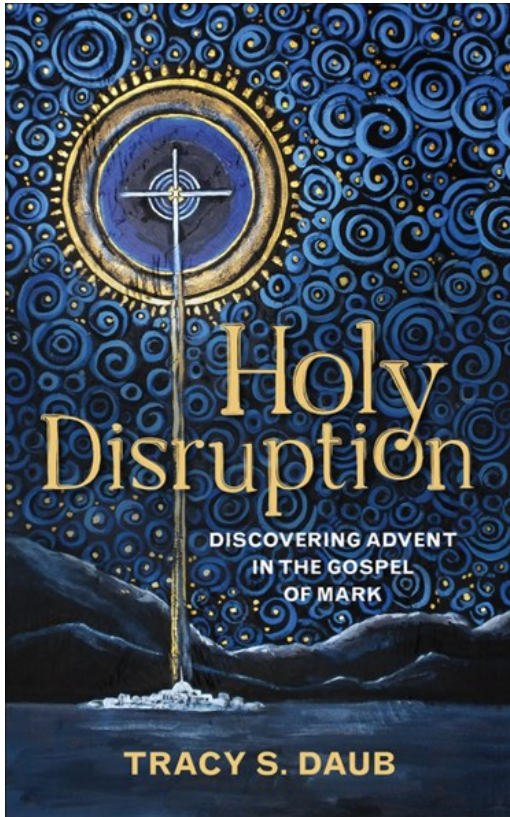
CCB maintains an Assistance Fund, which provides one-time financial assistance to members or local residents in need. The Fund was formerly known as the Deacons Fund. The funds are supported through designated donations and are not taken from general gifts or pledged income.

Third-quarter benevolence funds in the total amount of **\$3,869.35** were available for distribution., of which **\$3,800** was distributed to the following recipients:

ABC United (quarterly)	\$600
ABC Metro (quarterly)	\$300
Galesburg Rescue Mission & Women’s Shelter (founded 1941) Christian-based organization which provides women and men clothing, food, shelter (grmws39@centurylink.net)	\$725
Hawaii Community Foundation – Maui Maui fire disaster funding	\$725
Bill Cook Foundation – organization provides funding for books and education for children in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Vietnam, intending to foster democracy through education	\$725
Sleep in Heavenly Peace - national charity where volunteers build and deliver beds for children who otherwise would sleep on the floor; partners with Lowe’s for lumber donations (shpbeds.org)	\$725
Total:	\$3,800

Christian Education

Holy Disruption: Discovering Advent in the Gospel of Mark



Unlike Matthew, Luke, and John, which begin by telling of Jesus's birth (or origin in John's case), Mark begins with Jesus's baptism. Tracy S. Daub, author of *Holy Disruption* began the development of this Advent study by asking, "What if Mark was the only Gospel we had? What would Advent look like?"

Her journey to answer this question led her to the revelation that the Advent message is in every aspect of Jesus' life, to his death and beyond.

The Incarnation—God come to earth in human form to be baptized, teach, heal, eat, and die—is what we celebrate at Christmas, and Mark shows us just how radical and celebration-worthy it is!

Holy Disruption presents a fresh understanding of the holiness of Christmas grounded, not in a conventional cozy Christmas message, but through Mark's disquieting gospel which invites its readers to experience God's disruptive but transformative love for us and our world.

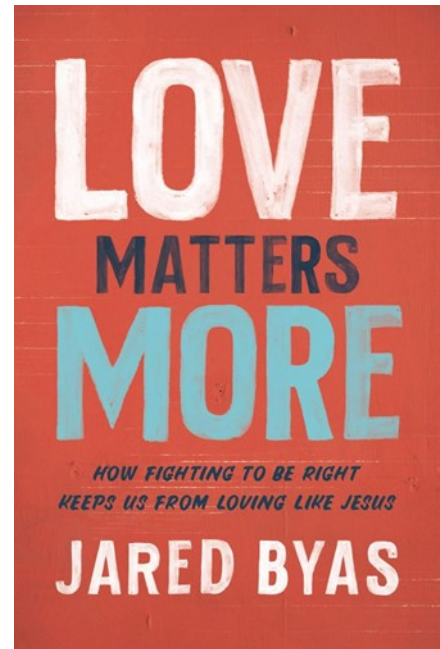
Join us each Sunday during Advent and Christmas as we seek to understand the lessons Mark has to teach us about who Jesus came to be and what he came to do.

***Love Matters More* by Jared Byas**

A biblically-based Christian life is not grounded in having all the answers but in a living relationship. This ultimately shifts our focus from collecting the "right" answers to loving others deeply and authentically. With stories and insights drawn from his years as a pastor, professor, and podcast host, Jared Byas calls us back to the heart of the Bible: that truth is only true when it's lived out in love.

Jared unpacks the concept of truth, its meaning, and why we so often fight over it. He makes a compelling case for how what we believe is less important than how we believe it and that, more than anything else, telling the truth in love is about following Jesus.

We will begin study of this book on January 14th.



SPARK: Kids' Table Curriculum



We are very excited to announce a new curriculum for the Kids' Table called SPARK! Incorporating easy to understand concepts, fun activities, and a corresponding Story Bible this new curriculum will make it easy and fun to teach the kids Bible stories and Biblical concepts. The leader's guide is designed for classrooms of multiple ages so we will be ready for visitors young and older.

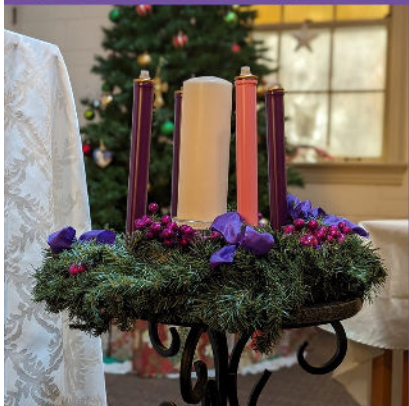
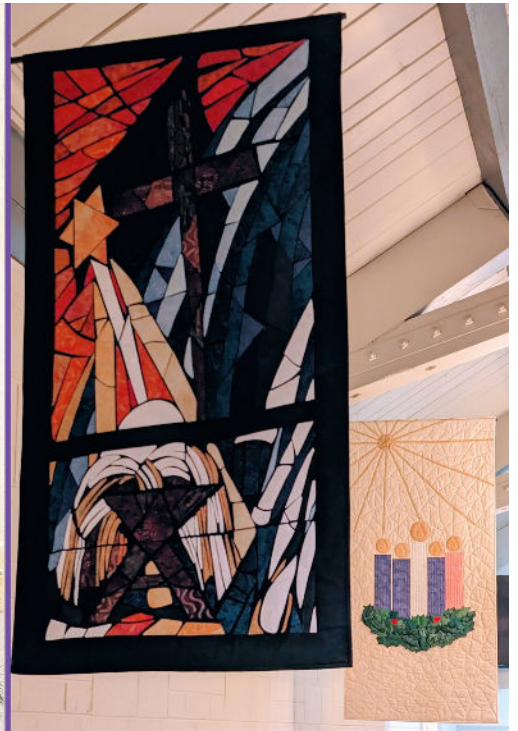
If you are interested in helping teach at the Kids' Table, please contact Sharon Horning or Pastor Chris.

An example of one of our fun activities is on the next page.

The Many Names of Jesus

Throughout the Bible, many different names are used for Jesus. Can you unscramble these nametags to discover some of these names?





December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 <i>Worship Service</i> 10:30	4 <i>Cindy Alton</i> <i>Birthday</i>	5	6	7	8	9
10 <i>Worship Service</i> 10:30	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 <i>Worship Service</i> 10:30	18	19	20 <i>Potluck</i>	21 <i>Hailey Campe</i> <i>Birthday</i>	22	23
24 <i>Worship Service</i> 10:30	25 <i>Merry</i> <i>Christmas</i>	26	27	28	29	30
31 <i>Worship Service</i> 10:30						

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <i>Happy New Year</i> <i>Worship Service</i> <i>10:30</i>	2	3	4	5	6
7 <i>Worship Service</i> <i>10:30</i> <i>Andrew Majzan</i> <i>B'day</i>	8	9	10	11 <i>Hannah Hornig</i> <i>B'day</i>	12	13
14 <i>Worship Service</i> <i>10:30</i>	15	16	17	18 POTLUCK	19 <i>Glee Huddleston</i> <i>B'Day</i>	20
21 <i>Worship Service</i> <i>10:30</i>	22 <i>Kin McLean</i> <i>B'day</i>	23 Council Mtg.	24	25	26	27 <i>Carolyn</i> <i>Newman B'day</i>
28 <i>Worship Service</i> <i>10:30</i> <i>Produce Sunday</i> <i>Budget Meeting</i>	29	30 <i>Taylor Alton</i> <i>B'Day</i>	31			

Community Church of Barrington

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Snowfall, your majestic crystals blanketing the earth
Concealing all my blemishes, renewing my self worth
Rain down on me, keep sending your rejuvenating flakes
Keep falling till my soul finds peace, however long it takes.

~Sarah Elle Emm

