

## Shepherd's Staff

December 2012

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

**"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"**

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m. ~ Life Plus Wed., 6:30 p.m.

### Bah Humbug!

The changing of the season is upon us. We can read the signs of change in many ways, the cooler temperatures and barren trees, the harvest complete, the turkey dinner that brought many expanded waistlines and many other signs that clearly come into view. One sign that we cannot miss is one that may cause us to cry out "bah humbug!" Seeing the media blitz to get the consumers out to buy themselves into year long debt has begun. The idea that "fun" is the description of camping out for a week on a sidewalk at a store waiting for a discounted purchase is not how I would identify the craze. Perhaps I just simply get a little cynical this time of the year.

Our family has developed an unusual tradition during the preparation time for the holidays. When the time comes to take out the decorations for the CHRISTmas season, I develop an attitude of Scrooge (at least on the surface!) We have our talents put to good use as mine is the setting up of the CHRISTmas tree. Ours is an artificial tree because of allergies in the family but always a good symbol of the evergreen concept of life. During the attempts to get the tree to appear straight in the stand many attempts at finetuning are needed as looking from different angles always seems to reveal a tendency to lean not seen before. At last we do agree that success has been managed with smiles going around with the exception of one "Bah Humbug" spoken to keep things in perspective followed by an "Oh Rus!"

The beautiful ornaments are applied to the tree with care, without my help so we do not end up with a "Charlie Brown" CHRISTmas tree. The theme of the tree can change from year to year and yet the tradition of having a tree is never lost as we begin our anticipation of this special holiday. With lights aglow and the sparkling bulbs and other items evenly spaced and looking great we are ready to enjoy the benefits of our effort.

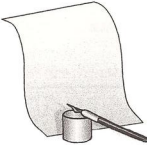
Still I am reminded of the loss of the true meaning for so many. Giving of ourselves and remembering the greatest gift ever given is not likely to be on the minds of the bargain hunters shopping at unusually early hours or the long lines or even the chaos of shoppers pushing and doing battle over a "limited supply" of the "must have item" for this year. I may be too Scrooge like but where is the "peace on earth" that we are to be enjoying? There was a time when gifts were well thought out with the special person in mind. The necessary items to **make** the gift were gathered with the greatest care to maintain secrecy in the operation undertaken. The care intertwined with the loving thoughts of the intended recipient while making the gift would warm the heart of the giver. Now we end up with frustration and a new heart condition after looking for just the right gift with the choice likely to be sold out as others had the same wonderful idea.

Perhaps we should all take time to take a deep breath and **reca!** the reason for the season. We should pause life long enough enjoy the company of each other rather than the hurried pace of life when thoughts of how much God loved us and still loves us today should be foremost on our minds. Using the talents God gave us as we dwell on both the people around us we find so special but also on the God who loves us as we celebrate the gift of His Son should be our focus. This might even bring back the principle of "it is the thought that counts, not the gift we exchange." Right thinking at the CHRISTmas time will help us focus on the central point of this season. In case you missed the clues in this article, we should have our thoughts dwelling on CHRIST, living as he taught us. Loving God and loving each other would take the Scrooge out of even the most cynical among us. Maybe some year we can all celebrate the holidays with the joy we should, without a single "Bah Humbug" spoken.

Merry CHRISTmas, everyone!

Pastor Rus

## Missionary Letter Writing Schedule

Week of:	Larry & Ann Vanderaa C/O CRWM 2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE Grand Rapids, MI 49560	Michael & Victoria VanDerDyke C/O CRWM 2850 Kalamazoo Ave SE Grand Rapids, MI 49560	
12/2	Marlyn Allspach Family	Michael Allspach	
12/9	Erma Aswegan	Marjorie Aswegan	
12/16	Delbert Cordes Family	Rollyn DeGroot Family	
12/23	Ryan Edeker Family	Hazel Eiklenborg	
12/30	Ida Folken	Bernice Freemon	

**When writing to Missionaries, do not ask about their work (do that when they come here) or mention missionary because it could put their lives in danger. Tell them about yourself, your family, our town and that you (we) are praying for them, etc.**

### Sunshine Circle Christmas Tea



The Sunshine Circle will be hosting another "Christmas Tea" for the ladies of our church and our friends. Traditionally, the "Tea" has been a special way to start the Christmas season for us. The date set for this event is December 5, 2012, at 1:30 p.m. in our fellowship hall.

Our special guest will be Joan from River Hills School. She plans to present a power-point presentation about what activities happen at River Hills. When we think of this school, we recall the cards that the students 'recycle and re-sale' to provide funds to send the students to various camps.

So if any of you wish to bring cards that can be recycled, please bring them along and those cards will be brought back to River Hills. These cards can be any kind of card—holiday, birthday, anniversary, thinking of you, thank you, and it is not necessary to tear off any part of the card unless it is something personal that you may wish to keep.

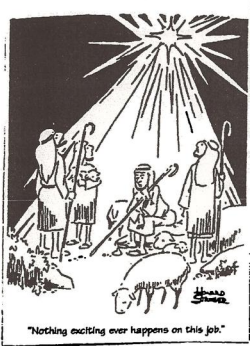
There will be cards to buy and a free-will offering for the River Hills School.

This year we will be joined by the ladies of the Austinville CRC—a new adventure with old friends.

Please consider coming on December 5. Wear your Christmas sweaters to be festive and comfortable. A good time is sure to happen!

### Don't forget...

December 2—Community Hymn Sing @ Bethel Lutheran Church  
 December 5—Sunshine Circle Christmas Tea  
 December 16—Home for Christmas  
 December 19—Sunday School & Life Plus Christmas Program  
 December 24—Young People's Candlelight Service  
 December 25—Christmas Morning Service  
 December 30—Old Year's New Year's Eve Service





## December Birthdays/Anniversaries



### Happy Birthday

12/6	Darlene Bruns
12/7	Mildred Rewerts
12/7	Delbert Cordes
12/12	Angie Meester
12/14	Helen Druvenga
12/14	Clayton Groeneveld
12/20	Duane Anderson
12/20	Betty Mulder
12/27	Austin Shepard
12/31	John Oltman

### Happy Anniversary

12/1	John & Ellen Hanna
12/10	Ken & Jan Johnson
12/10	John & Karen Oltman
12/17	Mark & Lanae Kramer
12/26	Paul & Ruth Haan
12/27	Irv & Amy Haan



**Reminder:** If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Mulder by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.

### CRC Service Schedule

	<i>Greeters</i>	<i>Ushers</i>	<i>Coffee*</i>
12/2	Anna Mae (N) Kevin & Shelly (S)	Gerald Haan	Steve & Charlene
12/9	Sylvia & Ivadell (N) Larry & Mary (S)	Delbert Cordes	Dennis & Sharon
12/16	Steve & Charlene (N) Ryan & Stacy (S)	Ken Mehmen	Clarence & June
12/23	Clarence & June (N) Ken & Nancy (S)	Ryan Edeker	Fellowship Committee
12/25	Marilyn & Marcia (N) Dennis & Sharon (S)	Ken Johnson	
12/30	Don & Annie (N) Ken & Janet (S)	Ken Kramer	Arnie & Kay

\*If you are unable to serve coffee on your Sunday as listed, please find your replacement. Thank you.

## A New Feature—Music Has a Way of Touching One’s Soul

In 2003, a book entitled *Then Sings My Soul* was published. The book was written by Robert Morgan, a pastor of The Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee, who noted the impact of hymns.

Over the years, Pastor Morgan’s appreciation of hymns and their mighty power and strength steadily grew. He gathered and read volumes of hymnology. As a result of his reading, along with advice and expertise from others close to him, he was able to author his own book. His published work contained the stories behind 150 of the world’s greatest hymns.

As quoted from Pastor Morgan’s book, “Hymns strengthen and steady us when we are weary and worn...give us timeless words of scripture...unite the Lord’s earth-bound church in heavenly harmony...help us praise God...enable us to pray...give us a way of talking to ourselves or encouraging ourselves in the Lord...give us a pulpit for preaching to others...and connect us with generations now gone.”

For the next few months you will be introduced to the story behind some of our favorite hymns. Perhaps you will have read about a particular hymn’s origin before; maybe the background of a hymn will even surprise you; but more importantly, knowing a bit more about a particular hymn just might give added meaning to you and touch your soul in a new way.

This series is given in memory of Kathryn Karsjens. The book *Then Sings my Soul* was part of her personal library.

### ***Silent Night (1818)***

*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.* Isaiah 7:14

It was Christmas Eve in the Austrian Alps. At the newly constructed Church of St. Nicholas on Oberndorf, a Tyrol village near Salzburg, Father Joseph Mohr prepared for the midnight service. He was distraught because the church organ was broken, ruining prospects for that evening’s carefully planned music. But Father Joseph was about to learn that our problems are God’s opportunities, that the Lord causes all things to work together for good to those who love him. It came into Father Joseph’s mind to write a new song, one that could be sung organless. Hastily, he wrote the words, “Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright...” Taking the text to his organist, Franz Gruber, he explained the situation and asked Franz to compose a simple tune.

That night, December 24, 1818, “Silent Night” was sung for the first time as a duet accompanied by a guitar at the aptly named Church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf.

Shortly afterward, as Karl Mauracher came to repair the organ, he heard about the near-disaster on Christmas Eve. Acquiring a copy of the text and tune, he spread it throughout the Alpine region of Austria, referring to it as “Tiroler Volkslied.”

The song came to the attention of the Strasser Family, makers of fine chamois-skin gloves. To drum up business at various fairs and festivals, the four Strasser children would sing in front of their parent’s booth. Like the Von Trapp children a century later, they became popular folk singers throughout the Alps.

When the children—Caroline, Joseph, Andreas, and Amalie—began singing “Trioler Volkslied” at their performances, audiences were charmed. It seemed perfect for the snow-ciad region, and perfect for the Christian heart. “Silent Night” even came to the attention of the king and queen, and the Strasser children were asked to give a royal performance, assuring the carol’s fame.

“Silent Night” was first published for congregational singing in 1838 in the German hymnbook *Katholisches Gesang—und Gebetbuch für den öffentlichen und häuslichen Gottesdienst zunächst zum Gebrauche der katholischen Gereinden im Königreiche Sachsen*. It was used in America by German-speaking congregations, then appeared in its current English form in a book of Sunday school songs in 1863.

Were it not for a broken organ, there would never have been a “Silent Night.”


Quoted from *Then Sings My Soul: 150 of the World’s Greatest Hymn Stories* by Robert J. Morgan


The Candy Cane  
Traditional ~ Adapted by Charles Kirkpatrick



He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his stripes you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. Psalm 23:1

The candy cane is a long-time Christmas tradition. Everywhere we look we see them. They are used as decorations on Christmas trees and, of course, they are one of the most popular of all Christmas treats. I have heard several stories about the history and meaning of the candy cane. I don't know if they are true, but I do think that the candy cane can teach us a few things about the true meaning of Christmas.

First of all, if you look at the candy cane like this  it looks like the letter J. Jesus starts with the letter J, so that should remind us of Jesus and help us to remember that Christmas is Jesus' birthday.

If you look at the candy cane like this  it looks like a shepherd's crook. The shepherd used his crook to keep the sheep from wandering away from the flock and getting lost or eaten by a wild animal. The Bible says, "The Lord is my shepherd." The candy cane should remind us that Jesus is our shepherd and he will keep us from wandering away and getting lost or hurt. The candy cane is mostly white. White is a symbol of purity. That should remind us that Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God and that because he came to be the sacrifice for our sin, we can become as white as snow.

As you know, the candy cane has three red stripes. The Bible tells us that before he was crucified, Jesus was beaten with a whip which made blood-red stripes across his back. The Bible says that we are healed by those stripes. The stripes on the candy cane should remind us that Jesus suffered and died, so that we can have everlasting life.

To many people, the candy cane is a meaningless decoration seen at Christmas time or just a piece of candy to be eaten and enjoyed. I hope that this year, every time you see a candy cane, you will be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas. Lord, we thank you that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who keeps us from harm. We thank you that because of his suffering and death on the cross, we have life everlasting. Help us to remember that we find the true meaning of Christmas in him.

## Christmas Word Find

G C P M E H E F F N Y Y A S E  
V F I O G K N O C Y R R I L B  
Z H S J Z X U H E G A B Z N B  
H A T I D U R X S Z M E I P E  
R P L R S I L E N T N I G H T  
R K O Q S N E M E S I W A J H  
Y L X T Y Z S W C Z S P E P L  
M I M F H F N P N S J V E K E  
J A B T T B A R I O R S X Z H  
S A I Y L Y T E K V O F L W E  
H A Y E Y T I G N J I O E E M  
F A M K R H V N A E V U G P E  
M A A N W A I A R S A S N O E  
C I H O T C T M F U S O A H F  
D J E D K Q Y S V S W T E K Q

JESUS	HAY
MARY	ANGEL
JOSEPH	FAITH
WISEMEN	HOPE
MANGER	FRANKINCENSE
NATIVITY	MYRRH
BETHEHEM	SILENT NIGHT
CAMEL	LORD
DONKEY	SAVIOR
STAR	CHRISTMAS

