

Torches

One fact you might not know about me is that I love madrigal singing. While I am a huge fan of contemporary Christian music and like to spruce up some of the familiar carols we sing, I love a group of singers in acapella four-part harmony singing about the wonder of Christ's birth. I was in a madrigal group in high school, and it's always stuck with me.

A neat thing about madrigals is that you often hear Christmas carols that you won't ever find on the radio alongside Bing Crosby. One particular song that stands out to me is called "Torches." Here are the central lyrics:

*Torches, torches, run with torches
All the way to Bethlehem
Christ is born and now lies sleeping
Come and sing your song to Him.
Sing, my friends, and make you merry
Joy and mirth and joy again
Lo! he lives, the King of Heaven
Now and evermore! Amen!*

Whenever I hear "Torches," I get all excited. It's a fast-moving song, and as you listen, you can imagine the shepherds stumbling over themselves, sprinting in from the fields to find the infant Jesus. There's that wonderful expectation – come see what we have found! Rejoice! The Son of God lies sleeping in a cattle stall...the King of Heaven who lives now and evermore!

Do we have that same sense of excitement? I've been out shopping recently and nearly gotten bowled over by people hunting down holiday bargains. Christmas lights are starting to appear and plans made for breakfasts with Santa. But do we have that same sense of wondrous anticipation for the birth of our Savior? Would we be running, torches in hand, to find the infant who would grow to be the man who would lead us out of darkness into God's marvelous light?

Or would we walk? The baby will still be there when we arrive, right? For some of us, getting all excited about the birth of Christ that happened so long ago is difficult. Celebrating Jesus' coming is something we do every year...why should this year be any more different or special? And if we focus on the hustle and bustle expected of us this time of year, it can seem not just a little superficial.

But I want to run to that manger. No matter how many times we hear the Christmas story, it always rings out with the song that we have a Savior. Those tiny feet and toes were not just any baby but God made manifest in the flesh. In Jesus, God came down to us. In Jesus, God saves us from ourselves. And through Jesus, we can know our Heavenly Father in a meaningful, personal way. Easter may be the more important holiday for the church...but without Christmas, there is no Easter. Without Jesus making himself nothing, coming in the very form of a servant, we would not have salvation. His birth signals new life, new hope, new beginnings. So let's celebrate...let's run wherever we see him leading.

In the Savior's love,

Pastor Jason

SCRIPTURES & SERMONS

Dec. 4

Scripture: Isaiah 26:3-9; Psalm 126; Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon: "What Were They Thinking?: Joseph"

Dec. 11

Scripture: Joel 2:28-32; Psalm 33:1-11; Mathew 2:1-12

Sermon: "What Were They Thinking?: The Wise Men"

Dec. 18

Scripture: Isaiah 40:9-11; Psalm 80:1-7; Luke 2:8-20

Sermon: "What Were They Thinking?: The Shepherds"

Dec. 24

Service of lessons and carols at Bethel Church
51850 North Avenue, 6:00 pm

Dec. 25

Scripture: Psalm 65; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 2:1-7

Sermon: "What Were They Thinking?: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

**CHRISTMAS EVE 6 P.M.
JOINT WORSHIP AT BETHEL
CHURCH
51850 NORTH AVE.
CAROLS, SCRIPTURE,
& CANDLES
MERRY CHRISTMAS**



STEWARDSHIP

During November the church encouraged members to indicate their level of financial support for 2012 by turning in a pledge card. We are thankful for all who have pledged; but there is still time to turn in your 2012 financial commitment during December. Pledge cards are available on the front hall table. Please pray about how you will support the work of the Lord during the next year.

Free Meal & Movie!

The Covenant Outreach Team is again organizing another Meal & Movie night on Friday, December 16th at 6:00 p.m. As we have opened these nights to the community, we ask that our own members who plan to attend to contact Gary Cynowa at (586) 291-0399 and help us out IF YOU ARE ABLE by preparing a dish of their own to share with other non-church families. We also will be providing a box of food on that same night to needy families who request it in advance.

COVENANT FOOD PANTRY

Please remember to bring canned or boxed food for our emergency food pantry. Suggested items to purchase are frozen meats, soup, peanut butter & jelly, cereal, spaghetti and jars of sauce, macaroni and cheese, and cans of tuna, chili or stew. When you contribute to the Deacon's Fund on the first Sunday of the month, the money helps to restock the food pantry. We are able to give people enough food for a few days and then refer them to the Hope Center Pantry.

OUTREACH

A new Usher and Greeter list is being prepared. Please sign up for one or more Sundays. Ushers pass out bulletins and later collect the offering. Greeters stand at the door before church service and welcome people. All volunteers will be greatly appreciated.

On Sunday, March 4, 2012 after the church service, the Outreach team will be cooking and serving a meal to the homeless in Mt. Clemens at Zion UCC Church. About 12 people will be needed to cook, serve, and clean up after the meal. Please let Gary Cynowa know if you can help with this project.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

There are many opportunities for volunteer work here at church.

- We need a few more people to bring cookies once every two months for coffee hour.
- There is also a need for a few people to prepare and serve at coffee hour once every two months.
- Ushers are needed to pass out bulletins and take up the offering.
- Greeters are needed to stand at the door and welcome everyone.
- The Memorial Committee is in need of a person to write thank you cards for donations made after a funeral.

Sign up sheets will be on the front hall table.

December Birthdays

12/2	James Cascio
12/3	Bud Volz
12/5	Jeanne Steckman
12/7	Gloria Cynowa
12/10	Emma Lechniak
12/12	Jim Cascio
12/16	Don Steckman
12/19	Adam Remesz Gay Rapin
12/28	Anthony Kepseu
12/30	Tammy Simmons



December Anniversaries

12/2	Curtis and Vicki Reynolds
12/29	David and Margaret Neebes

(As a part of our Deacons' call to minister to others and to celebrate your special days with you, if we have missed your or a member of your family's birthday or anniversary in our list, please contact us at church on Sunday or call the church office at (586) 948-2440 and leave a message so we can correct the mistake in our records.)

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

According to the Presbyterian Book of Order*, all persons who trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the fellowship and ministry of His church are welcome as members.

Church members are entitled to vote in congregational meetings. They may have family members baptized, confirmed, and married within the church; they may also have their relative's funerals conducted in the church. Members may be nominated for leadership positions such as Elder or Deacon.

Please consider joining Church of the Covenant, either by a transfer of membership from another Christian church or by professing your faith after taking a short class with Pastor Jason.

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission and to be involved in the ministry of the church.

(*2011-2013 Book of Order, G-1.03 thru G-1.0304)

CHURCH OF THE COVENANT VOLUNTEERS



Head Usher — Gloria Cynowa

Elder of Month —

	<i>Dec. 4</i>	<i>Dec. 11</i>	<i>Dec. 18</i>	<i>Dec. 25</i>
Ushers	Gary & Coleen Heacock	Dave & Margaret Neebes		
Greeters	Gloria Cynowa		Jeri Portlance	Sandi Haapala
Scripture Reader	Gay Rapin	Walter Lechniak	Gary Cynowa	Catha Huff
Coffee Hour	Sandi Haapala	Catha Huff	Gay Rapin & June Dickenson	Men's Group (Ed P. & Ed R.)
Cookies	Denise Tilly & Mary Lechniak	Diana Byks	Gay Rapin & June Dickenson	Tammy Simmons
Nursery	Natalie Heacock	Gay Rapin	Sara Byks	Mackenzie Alm

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

THE ARK

We are looking forward to fun-filled adventures in the ARK and more great conversations with Nick and Cooper. Join us every Sunday because you don't want to miss a minute of fun!

WE NEED YOU!

The Christian Education Committee is looking for adults and youth to help us as an extra pair of hands in the classroom on Sunday morning. Whether it's every Sunday or once a month, we welcome everyone who was a kid, has kids, has grandkids, or is still a kid themselves (you should be able to find yourself in this list somewhere). Please see Catha Huff, Diana Byks or Barbara Chadwick for more information or to volunteer. We appreciate your continued support as we strive to provide creative, fun and educational learning opportunities for Church of the Covenant.

SHOW ME JESUS

The children's Sunday morning program is called "Show Me Jesus" and it will concentrate on families. As the children begin to develop relationships outside the family circle, home becomes a core foundation of their life and a way to teach them about what it mean to be a part of God's wider family. They will be challenged to trust and obey the loving heavenly Father who has called them to belong to His family and has revealed who He is through His Word.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

All high school and college age women are welcome to study at the Huff Home on Thursday evenings at 8:30. Catha is leading this group and we are studying Max Lucado's book *Traveling Light*. Feel free to come and join us as we dive into the Word and grow together.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

Everyone is invited to join us on Sunday morning, December 18 during Worship as our children share the retelling of Max Lucado's book *The Crippled Lamb* and sing of the JOY that has come to us through Jesus' birth.

Attention parents of children in The Ark: We will be meeting to practice singing our song with Catha and Jason after the church service on December 4th & 11th and at 9:30 am on the 18th.

COMING EVENTS

SENIOR CARDS & SACK LUNCH

A group for fellowship and card playing meets at the church at 11 am on the 2nd. and 4th. Tuesday of every month. Please come and chat or play Euchre or Pinochle. Bring your sack lunch, coffee will be available and there is a 50 cent donation to defray expenses. This group is open to everyone in the community; talk to Phyllis Haase if you have questions.

EUCHRE NIGHT

Euchre Night will not be meeting during the month of December.

The next Euchre Night is on Saturday, January 28 at the church. Registration begins at 5:30 and play starts at 6:00 pm.

WOMEN'S GROUP

The next meeting for all women of the church and their friends will be on Saturday, December 17 at 9:27 am at the home of Catha Huff. Please sign up at church and get directions.

Bible Study

The evening Bible study is meeting on Wednesday at 7:00pm. We are just starting an Advent to Christmas Bible Study. This Adult class will meet on December 7 and 21. Please come and study the Bible together.

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

On Friday, December 2 will be the annual Christmas Potluck Dinner and Church Decorating. Please meet at 6:00 pm and the meal will start at 6:30 pm. Following the delicious dinner everyone will start decorating the church until it is done. Please join us as we begin the Christmas season together.

Heading To The Hospital?

Some congregation members remember when a pastor or elder would show up at the hospital to pray with you or a friend or relative. They didn't have a hotline to God, though! At one time, it was standard practice for doctors and hospitals to call pastoral staff before scheduled surgeries or in emergency situations. However, due to modern privacy laws, your doctor and hospital will **not** notify the church. Pastor Jason and the elders would be happy to go with you or visit with you at the hospital. If you would like a visit – even a regular home visit – please call the church office at 948-2440 or email us at pastorjasonhuff@aol.com. It is a blessing to stand with you in prayer in both joyous and difficult times...so please let us know how we can be in prayer with you!

DECEMBER 2011



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Praise Team 7 pm	2 Advent Potluck & Decorating 6 pm	3 Norm Haase Memorial Service 1 pm
4 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship Communion	5 7pm AA Meeting	6 Deacons, Outreach, Administ. & Worship Committees 7 pm	7 Bible Study 7 pm	8 Praise Team 7 pm	9	10
11 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship	12 7pm AA Meeting	13 11-2 Senior Cards Session meeting 7 pm	14 Bible Study 7 pm	15 Praise Team 7 pm	16 Meal & a Movie 6 pm at church	17 Women's Breakfast 9:27 am at Huff's
18 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship Children's Program	19 7pm AA Meeting	20	21 Bible Study 7 pm	22 Praise Team 7:30 pm at Bethel	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 6 pm At Bethel Church
25 9am Music Rehearsal 10am Worship MERRY CHRISTMAS	26	27 11-2 Senior Cards	28	29	30	31

PRAYER CONCERNS:

Armed Forces Members, including: Mark Alm, Cory Cynowa and Nikkila Scott
 Sara Byks
 People affected by Hurricane Irene
 People who are moving away
 Marge Fuller & the Fuller Family
 The family of Norm Haase
 Ruth McGraw
 Margaret Neebes
 Peace in the World
 Melissa Putt
 Betty Radcliffe

Praise for recovery of Annetta Pokrzywinski
 Praise for the birth of Alaina Gallagher on Nov. 12, 2011. She is the daughter of Loan & Shawn Gallagher and the granddaughter of Jerri Portlance



Contemporary Worship Sun. 10 a.m.
Come and praise the Lord
Sunday Morning Classes for Children
Coffee hour after service

23401 23 Mile Road, Macomb Twp., MI 48042
 (586) 948-2440 www.covenantmacomb.org
 Pastor Jason Huff

Welcome home — Growing multicultural congregation reaches out to the homeless in Las Vegas

by Kimberly Burge (A freelance writer based in Washington, D.C., and Cape Town, South Africa.)

God's declaration in the book of Isaiah to call God's house "a house of prayer for all nations" is a charge First Thai-Laotian Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas, Nev., takes to heart as they build a multicultural ministry. But little did church members know that they would welcome into their house of prayer people from a "nation" forgotten in this country: men living on the Las Vegas streets and sometimes in the bushes behind the church. When the church organized in 2002 it consisted of four families meeting in one another's homes for prayer groups. Now on any given Sunday those attending the afternoon Bible study, dinner and worship service might include people from a dozen different ethnic groups. Rev. Prachuab Dechawan leads the growing congregation, which numbers 60 members. He has been shepherding the growth of Thai Presbyterian churches in the United States since the early 1970s, when he helped to establish the first congregation, Thai Community Church in Hollywood, Calif. Other churches formed in Fort Worth, Chicago, New York, and San Jose. The early 1980s saw a wave of refugees fleeing to the southern California area from the killing fields of Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime. Many of these people were ethnically Laotian, refugees in Cambodia from nearby Laos. The Lao language is similar enough to Thai to be understood, Dechawan says, and the churches reached out to embrace these immigrants and help ease their transition into life in the United States.

"We've all had to learn, how can we sing the Lord's song in this new country?" Dechawan says. With a sizeable community of both Thai and Laotian immigrants in Las Vegas, Dechawan and his wife, Gloria, moved there from southern California in 2002 to establish a new congregation. The initial goals of First Thai-Laotian Presbyterian Church were to reach out to this community in Las Vegas, to join together in worship that features traditional music and dance, and to explore Christian faith from a Southeast Asian context. But they have now become the embodiment of a congregation striving to grow Christ's church through evangelism, discipleship, servant hood, and diversity. These four pillars form the "Deep and Wide" commitment made by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) in 2008. This effort echoes Christ's parting words: "... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Thailand and Laos are both predominantly Buddhist countries. Dechawan says the church reaches out to Thai and Laotian families to bring the gospel to them, often by bringing in their children first. "A child shall lead them. The children will come to worship, then the parents will join them. This way the whole family can come to Christ."

Before worship every Sunday there is a time of Bible study and discipleship, when together members delve into the Word of God. Then they share a meal together, Thai and Laotian food faithfully prepared every week by several women in the church. They open their doors to anyone, which is how the homeless men living behind the church came into the community. The congregation had already been reaching out to the homeless population, Dechawan says, taking turns with several other area churches in hosting a half-dozen families—white and Hispanic—helping them out with food and temporary housing until they could get settled into apartments. Then a few of the men living on the street heard about the Sunday dinner and began joining in, sometimes staying for worship, sometimes not. And gradually a few began coming early for the Bible study before dinner.

"Many of them suffer from addictions," the pastor says, "and sometimes a man would come into Bible study half-drunk." But no one was turned away.

First Thai-Laotian Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas is based at Westminster Presbyterian Church, which holds three other Sunday services: morning worship in English, afternoon services in Spanish and Taiwanese. Everyone was cordially invited to the love supper before the 9th anniversary celebration service. "We are part of a multicultural church," says Dechawan. "We all join together for worship on World Communion Sunday, and also on Thanksgiving Day. That day we have a meal also, for people who have nowhere to go to eat. I usually cook four or five turkeys. Last year, we fed 80 people."

For more information on the office of Asian Congregational Support, which resources congregations such as First Thai-Laotian Presbyterian Church, visit the office's [website](#) or [email](#) Mei-hui Chen Lai.