



Central
District
Conference

A conference of
Mennonite Church USA

focus

KNOWING
CHRIST'S LOVE
- ANSWERING
GOD'S CALL

DECEMBER 2011

CDC congregations celebrate the season

Advent - a time to watch and to wait and a time to act

*A*nticipation is sometimes the best part of an experience, writes Steven Yoder in the First, Bluffton, December "Menno-Life" newsletter. He continues... *The question we need to ask ourselves is: What do I expect this season to yield in my life with God? Rather than thinking only of my personal gain, it is also essential to ask: What are my hopes and dreams to make ours a better community?* "Advent is a time to anticipate and a time to act. Advent is a time to watch and wait. And act. Sometimes God comes to us when we finally do something that puts us "out there." What do you expect during Advent?"

Chicago Community

*A*s Advent began the congregation held a poetry hour during its Sunday "second hour." Members were invited to bring a poem or two to share with others. Then in early December the congregation held its annual meeting and indoor picnic.

Southside Fellowship

*U*sing the theme "Angels and Light," Southside will celebrate Christmas Eve with a 4 p.m. service. Members are invited to bring an angel or two (statue, ornament, icon, painting, et cetera) for use during the service.

Salem

A December Giving Tree carries a "seat cover" theme. Members of the congregation have collected "all sizes, styles and colors" of underwear for men, women, teens and children. The collection goes to People to People. Also, ornaments are available for members. These remind everyone to do an unexpected deed of kindness to someone else. Upon doing the deed, the member may tack the ornament on a tree on the church bulletin board.

Shalom Congregation, Harrisonburg, Va.

*C*hildren of the congregation choose Mercy House as a charity to support during Advent. The Christmas Eve service will be an informal retelling of the Christmas story with the singing of carols. Members are invited to bring greens or poinsettias to decorate the worship area and be prepared to help read scripture.

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A time to watch and to wait and to act

Paoli

During the third Sunday of Advent a new adult Sunday school class began using the book “Insurrection: To Believe is Human, to Doubt, Divine,” by Peter Rollins. A Longest Night service takes place Dec. 21. On Christmas Day the congregation will hold a simple service focusing on singing together and hearing scripture passages. A Christmas dinner follows the service. Following the dinner will be a time for playing games or working on a service project for the Kinshasa orphanage in the Congo.

Boynton

White Christmas gifts for various organizations and persons will be collected on Christmas Eve. The Christmas Eve service focuses on candlelights. During Advent Mennonite Women collected items for Mennonite Central Committee’s health kits.

Lima

A diaper and baby wipe collection for Heartbeat of Lima is the congregation’s Advent project. Heartbeat is a ministry that connects struggling mothers with needed services, support and assistance.

Silverwood

Allan Rudy-Froese, Assistant Professor of Proclamation at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, preached during the Third Sunday of Advent. On Dec. 18 the Worship with Jonell Small Group invited congregation members to join them in singing carols for residents at The Maples.

First, Champaign-Urbana

During Advent a “solidarity” oil lamp at the front of the sanctuary symbolizes First’s Sister Church relationship with El Divino Redentor Church in Bucaramanga, Colombia. Prior to Christmas, members of the Junior High Youth Fellowship put together backpacks with toiletries and cold weather items collected from church members. The backpacks go to men and women who visit The Daily Bread Soup Kitchen.

Assembly

On Dec. 22, the longest night of the year, marking the winter solstice, members are invited to the meeting-house for a 7 p.m. service of scripture, music and acknowledging the pain and sadness present in the midst of the holiday season. On Christmas Eve members will hold a simple supper followed by a brief family-friendly service at 6 p.m.

Oak Grove

White gift offering suggested options during Advent include Central America Medical Outreach (CAMO), Oak Grove Compassion Fund, Habitat for Humanity and Oak Grove Outreach. A mitten tree in the foyer is a collection point for socks, underwear, towels, wash clothes, pot holders and mittens donated to People to People.

Hively Avenue

The Hively family and Preschool’s Advent project is newborn kits. These are distributed by Mennonite Central Committee to hospitals, clinics and refugee camps to assist mothers in giving their children a good start. This year’s Christmas Eve service includes an invitation to the congregation to bring items to share: musical numbers, poetry and readings. A special part in the service involves participation by children.

Cincinnati

During Advent the congregation has collected a children’s offering to support the Children’s Home of Cincinnati through its adopt-a-class program. Children of the congregation collect this offering each Sunday of Advent.