



Connections

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Our mission as Christ Community Covenant Church is to glorify God and seek His will for our personal lives and our lives together.

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Connections is a monthly publication of Christ Community Covenant Church, Owatonna, Minn. Articles for Connections must be submitted by the 15th of each month to Betty Wells.



Monthly Musings from Pastor Brent

The Ultimate Gift

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16

Christmas is a time to give. It is the tradition during this time of the year for giving, and over the course of the days and weeks of Christmas celebrations we give a lot. Obviously, we give gifts, we also give parties, and we give our time and energy. Most often we give in abundance, and the question that calls for an answer is "Why do we give?"

Often we give because it is expected. The office party or the annual church social is playing a game where gifts are required. Everyone is expected to bring a gift to exchange as a part of the activity. In a different setting, we are planning a Christmas gathering with a group of friends or extended family, and we feel that we have to bring a gift or two so we will not be embarrassed if we receive a gift and did not bring one to give in return. It would be even more humiliating if we received gifts and someone in the group had to go home with nothing. Moreover, it gets increasingly complicated when we try to determine the monetary value in giving and receiving gifts. Out of duty we don't want anybody feeling slighted by the value of the gift they received in comparison to the one that they gave. We give out of obligation. We might even say that we give out of guilt. After all, 'tis the season.

This often leads to the next scenario where we want to give, but in our desire to impress the recipient, we give lavishly; we purchase gifts that are beyond our means. We love the intended recipient and we want to do something "special" but our joy in giving turns sour and becomes a burden instead, resulting in the loss of joy.

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Monthly Musings from Pastor Brent (continued from page 1)

Often in everyday life we ultimately give for our own self-preservation. We give to people, causes and programs that will benefit ourselves in the end. We donate to politicians that will vote on our behalf for our good and to political causes that we agree with and will benefit our family and friends. I know that it is more complicated than that, but this is the basic principle.

The story that promoted the concept of "Pay it Forward" was inspiring and thought provoking. However, in reality, the reason for paying it forward was so that a benefit would come back to the individual who initially gave. As a young boy, I voluntarily washed dishes for a friend and neighbor as a gesture of "paying it forward" in hopes of a kind word of thanks. However, when the kind word never came, I was greatly disappointed showing my real motive in giving. Yes, I washed the dishes for them, but I was selfishly anticipating their gratitude for myself.

Why do we give? We most often give gifts with "strings attached." We want something in return for the gift that we give. However, in His love for us, God gave with no strings attached. He gave His one and only Son so that we might have eternal life. In response He gives us a choice to receive or not to receive the Gift of His love. He only asks us to believe but leaves the decision up to us. Since

He knows the outcome at the end of time, He wants us to believe and He hopes that we believe in His Son; but it is completely our decision.

God did not "have" to give, and no one was expecting Him to give. The Bible says that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). He did not give beyond His means. His only Son was the ultimate gift that He could have given. He did not give out of guilt or even to "pay it forward" because God is perfect in every way. God gave His only Son out of true love for each of us. He gave because He loves us.

Christmas is more than a time to give; Christmas is a time to love. In whatever way it presents itself, we can give out of love for God and for each other because Christ gave Himself for us. By the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in us, let us therefore pray and think and determine how God wants us to celebrate Christmas this year as we learn what it means to give in love.



The annual Christmas Eve Vespers will be on Wednesday, December 24 at 5:00 pm. Through song and Scripture we will again focus our worship on Jesus, the Christ Child who was born to be one of us. Bob Blankers and Romaine Moore will lead us in worship from the organ and piano in the singing of Christmas Carols. Along with several selections of special music and the collective readings of the Christmas story, we will gather once again around the manger to reflect on the wonderful gift of God to us at Christmas time.



December 24
5:00 pm



KICY Salmon Dinner

Dennis Weidler, the general manager of KICY radio, will be with us once again for a salmon fundraising dinner on Friday, January 23, 2015. This will be a wonderful opportunity to learn about the recent developments at the radio station and to hear of the continuing ministry throughout western Alaska and eastern Russia. An outstanding dinner of Alaskan salmon will be served as well. (They don't know what they are missing, but there will be an alternative of chicken available for those who do not care so much for salmon.) There is no charge for the dinner, but a donation will be received that evening for the ongoing ministry of KICY.

All those interested in attending this gala event need to talk with Janette Hoffman or Hildie Kehler to sign-up for the dinner. Whether you are planning on hosting a table of eight or attending as an individual or couple, it is essential that you talk with one of these ladies to register your attendance for the evening.



Come Join Us For Wild
Alaska Salmon.

January 23, 2015

Much to be Thankful For...

As we enter into the season of Christmas, just coming off of Thanksgiving, we are reminded of all that we have to be thankful for. Long lists, could be made for each and everything from the past year of 2014. We are thankful here at camp this season for a successful year of ministry. We had a great Summer and now Fall season with groups. We had a great kick off to the Solid Rock Discipleship Program and students already filling out applications for next year.

We all do have so much to be Thankful for...

We pray for a very Blessed CHRISTmas season for all of you!

The LBBC Staff



Come Sail Away With Me!

Couples' Retreat -- February 13-15, 2015

We invite married couples to come aboard for a weekend of fun and romance as we set sail and take time to enjoy the Son. This weekend will be an opportunity for you and your spouse to relax, rest and rejuvenate your relationship while you let the on deck crew serve you.

Speakers Bob and Pam MacRae from Moody Bible Institute are excited to come share and encourage couples and they use their background in marriage and family ministry and love of Jesus.

Cost: \$205 per couple for onsite housing

NEW! this year for the couple looking for a bit more adventure, we are opening up our Eagle Ridge cabins.
Cost: \$110 per couple.

Check out our website online for more information and to register today!! www.lbbc.com

Early Bird Registration Deadline is February 1st!