

# HERE'S HOPE

DECEMBER EDITION 2015

Dear Friends,

After thirty-two years in ministry, and many more years before that being active in church, I sometimes think that I know the Christmas story so well that I don't need to read it again...or even hear it again. I mean, just how many times do you want to read the same story over and over again?

I love reading books. I carry them around with me all the time; I have a number of books on my cell phone and I listen to them when I am driving. My vision of heaven would be a library filled with all the books ever written and eternity to read them. But I know that unless it is an amazing story, I don't want to read a book I've read before, over again.

The Christmas story is one of those stories that is amazing. It is one that never gets old. It is one that I could hear over and over again...and each time get something new out of it. All I have to hear is those beginning words from the Gospel of Luke, "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered." and my spirit begins to rejoice because I know I'm about to hear the greatest story ever told.

Think about it for a moment...here we are, living in and around Lakewood, NJ, USA—a really tiny part of the huge planet we live on. We are here at this time in history and there have been millions who have come before us and there will be millions to come after us. And yet, it is to us, here, at this time, in this place that God sends God's only begotten son in order to save us—even us! Sometimes this sounds too good to be true. Sometimes this sounds unbelievable. All of the time it sounds wonderful!

I cannot imagine spending a Christmas Eve without going to worship. In fact I haven't missed a Christmas Eve service since 1988 when I came down with a very nasty kidney infection and had a temperature of 102. I was forced to stay home and think about all that was happening in the church. I want to be there to hear that story again; to hear the beautiful carols we sing, to watch as the Sanctuary becomes bright with candles while we sing *Silent Night*.

This year, I hope you will all make it a priority to come to one of our Christmas Eve services. Come and listen as the words of this beautiful story surround you and envelope you with truth, warmth and love and believe what the story means to us and to our children and to all the people of the earth. God loves you! God knows you by name. God wants to be in your life. God wants to walk with you along your life's journey.

Thanks be to God for the matchless gift of the baby born in Bethlehem! Christmas Eve services are at 5:30 and 7:30 in the Sanctuary. I look forward to seeing you.

Christmas Blessings,

*Barbara*



## Longest Night Service

The Longest Night Service is for those who have experienced loss in their lives. It will be held on December 6, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. Through Scripture, music, prayer and lighting of candles, we will take a few moments at the beginning of the Christmas season to acknowledge our loss and to hear again the words of comfort and hope through the birth, death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

If you or someone you know has experienced any kind of loss in your life, you will find this service to be a meaningful time to “cast your care upon the Lord.”

**All are Welcome!**

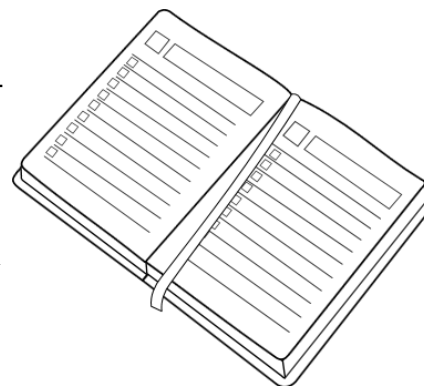


## Christmas Eve Services

Christmas Eve Services will be at 5:30 and 7:30

## Fellowship Fund Raiser

The Fellowship Committee is selling a 10” x 11” “God’s Glory Date Log Planner.” This is a 56 page planner that includes a 14 month full size calendar with two *King James Version* bible verses and inspirational images on every spread. There is also a reading plan to read through the Bible in a year, monthly planning note pages and perforated lined notes pages and much more. The cost for the “God’s Glory Planner” is only \$5.00.



See Carol Urm if you are interested in getting one.

## Something to Think About:

“A high school student wrote to ask, “What was the greatest event in American history?” I cannot say. However, I suspect that like so many ‘great’ events, it was something very simple and very quiet with little or no fanfare...The really important ‘great’ things are never center stage of life’s dramas they’re always ‘in the wings.’ That’s why it’s so essential for us to be mindful of the humble and the deep rather than the flashy and superficial.”

Fred Rogers



## A CHRISTMAS PLAY AND POT LUCK DINNER

**Save the Date: December 20th**

'Twas the Light Before Christmas is a full presentation that is prepared and performed in two hours, complete with props, music, movement and acting. Everyone is invited to join in the fun and experience the Christmas story in an exciting new way!

### **It is fun and simple...**

- Step 1** - At 4:00 families, friends, couples, individuals young and old sign up and are put in groups. They are given a scene to rehearse, make props and laugh a lot.
- Step 2**—The Performance! At 5:00 everyone is welcome! The groups will come together to present their scene and everyone will enjoy hearing the Christmas story.
- Step 3**—At 6:00 enjoy a Pot Luck Dinner with the performers and everyone who came to see the performance.

Any questions about this new and exciting Christmas play just see Sharon Green.  
Carol Urm will be organizing the Dinner

**Donations of hats, gloves and scarves will be collected at this event**



Thanksgiving  
Food Baskets

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who so generously donated to the food baskets for the Veterans Center. The baskets were delivered on Monday and we know they will be gratefully received by those who have served our country so faithfully.

## Building and Grounds News



Over the past year many improvements have been done to the church property. New front steps on the Church, new back steps on the Manse and a new roof on the Fellowship Hall...all paid for out of the Virginia Blinn Memorial Fund for which we are

## Christmas Giving Tree

We will again be collecting Christmas presents for children in need. One is a teenager who is involved with the Interfaith Hospitality Network, another is a family with the Jackson Food Pantry and several homeless children from Clark School in Lakewood. Please return the unwrapped gifts with Christmas tag from the tree attached to the present. We would like to have them by Sunday December 13th but will accept some on December 20th if needed.

**Thank you for your generosity to this project.**

The Mission Committee

*“Blessed are those who die in the Lord. Yea, and their works do follow them.”*

Our condolences go out to the family and friends of Winnie Mikkelson and James Callahan. We would also like to extend our sympathy to Dorothy Futyma and family on the death of her son, Kenny

**THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

The plea went out and you stepped up to the plate. The “ADOPT - A- BILL” request was very well met. Thank you for your current and past contributions.

Administration. Committee

# WHO TO CONTACT

FOR:	PHONE	CONTACT
Hope Church	364-8318	Susan in the Office
Pastor at home	244-1299	Rev. Barbara Hicks
Pastor's cell #	245-3690	Rev. Barbara Hicks
Clerk of Session	657-8181	Joyce Miller
President of corporate matters	814-1837	Hillary Bryce
Treasurer	942-0780	Tammi Beyer
Music Director	275-1937	Irina Bessedá
Sexton	349-4090	Jim Marks
Senior / Junior Youth Group	(908)229-5989	Peggy Wuestneck
Here's Hope	364-8318	Susan in the Office
Veterans Food Donations	367-6627	Ken Williams
Flowers	364-2182	Carol Urm
Quilting Group	928-0121	Laura Johnson
Redevelopment	349-4090	Jim Marks

# Church Office Hours

The Rev. Barbara Hicks' Office hours are as follows:

Monday through Thursday:  
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**Friday: Off**



**The office phone number is  
732-364-8318**

Pastor Hicks is always available by phone,  
At home 732-244-1299 or by cell phone,  
732-245-3690.

## December Birthdays

Chris Earle, Aidan Stoner,  
Will Bryce, Aimee Lyden,  
Laurel Flockhart,  
Pamela Flockhart,  
Mandy Miller  
Bonnie Green-Di Giantomasso

If anyone's birthday was omitted at any point throughout the year please let the office know and it will be added to the list



## Session Members 2015

Steve Blaho	732-370-9045	Janine Gorsak	732-901-1549
Sharon Green	732-276-6527	Carol Johnston	732-370-8340
Sally Krutulís	732-703-3013	Hillary Bryce	732-814-1837
Donna Smith	732-938-2857	Tony Travisano	732-928-4934
Peggy Wuestneck	908-229-5989	<b>Clerk of Session</b>	
		Joyce Miller	732-657-8181