

### Important Dates

Christmas Eve  
Service 7pm

Winter Retreat is  
cancelled



## The Sent Ahead Gift

Elder Charles Moore



Christmas alone. Her husband had died just a few months prior from a slow-developing cancer. Now, several days before Christmas, she was almost snowed in by a brutal weather system. She felt terribly alone—so much so she decided she was not going to decorate for Christmas.

Late that afternoon the doorbell rang, and there was a delivery boy with a box. He said, "Mrs. Thornhope?" She nodded. He said, "Would you sign here?" She invited him to step inside and closed the door to get away from the cold. She signed the paper and said, "What's in the box?" The young man laughed and opened up the flap, and inside was a little puppy, a golden Labrador Retriever. The delivery boy picked up the squirming pup and explained, "This is for you, Ma'am. He's six weeks old, completely housebroken." The young puppy began to wiggle in happiness at being released from captivity.

"Who sent this?" Mrs. Thornhope asked. The young man set the animal down and handed her an envelope and said, "It's all explained here in this envelope, Ma'am. The dog was bought last July while its

mother was still pregnant. It was meant to be a Christmas gift to you." The young man then handed her a book, How to Care for Your Labrador Retriever.

In desperation she again asked, "Who sent me this puppy?" As the young man turned to leave, he said, "Your husband, Ma'am. Merry Christmas."

She opened up the letter from her husband. He had written it three weeks before he died and left it with the kennel owners to be delivered with the puppy as his last Christmas gift to her. The letter was full of love and encouragement and admonishments to be strong. He vowed that he was waiting for the day when she would join him. He had sent her this young animal to keep her company until then.

She wiped away the tears, put the letter down, and then remembering the puppy at her feet, she picked up that golden furry ball and held it to her neck. Then she looked out the window at the lights that outlined the neighbor's house, and she heard from the radio in the kitchen the strains of "Joy to the World, the Lord has

Come." Suddenly Stella felt the most amazing sensation of peace washing over her. Her heart felt a joy and a wonder greater than the grief and loneliness.

"Little fella," she said to the dog, "It's just you and me. But you know what? There's a box down in the basement I'll bet you'd like. It's got a little Christmas tree in it and some decorations and some lights that are going to impress you. And there's a manger scene down there. Let's go get it."

What love this husband showed his wife. He looked ahead, even beyond his own death. He looked to a time that she might be especially sad and forlorn without him, Christmas time. So out of his love he sent ahead a gift in the hope that it would fill a void in her life that was left by his death and give her some encouragement to go on. His plan was in place even though she didn't know it. The plan involved a little puppy that wasn't even born before his death.

Long ago God out of love put a plan in place for us, a plan to bless us, to encourage us, to fill the emptiness of our lives, to in fact save us. God's plan involved the birth of His Son, because only God's Son could chase away the

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darkness and despair of our lives and give us hope and a renewed joy.

Like the delivery boy, God sent Angels to announce the gift, **"And the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'" (Luke 2:10-11)** The gift was God Himself wrapped in swaddling clothes who would be the Savior of the world.

The man thought of his wife and out of love sent her a puppy. God thought of us and out of love sent us a far greater gift in Jesus. **"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us," (1John 4:9).** That is what the Christmas story is all about. It is at its essence a love story about God who is willing to sacrifice his most prized possession, His only begotten Son, because of His love for us.

Know this, that the gift of Jesus is a gift that keeps on giving. Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us." Jesus promises us that He will never leave or forsake us. Like the love letter that accompanied the puppy, God's word is a constant reminder of His love for us. Like the puppy that held the promise of years of companionship, the baby Jesus that Mary once held in her arms holds the universe in place! That infant's flesh housed the Almighty God. Amen!

### Michigan Report Tim Begeman



At the time of this writing, we are in round two or three of Covid-19 lockdown. I lost count. I thought being stuck at home during this would give me time to catch up on years of neglected projects around the house, then I realized that lacking the time was not the real reason these projects got neglected. It's my indefensible incessant slothfulness.

In September Gabe Vargas popped the question to his longtime girlfriend Sierra and she elatedly acquiesced. Their intention is to have a destination wedding in August of 2021.

Aurine Moore underwent a surgical procedure which was the first step in having a cochlear implant installed. Soon she will be able to hear even the quietest political dog whistle.

Roy Joel Valentine has with the help of Elder Moore and Dave Fedor moved into close proximity of the vast Monroe metropolis. He has been one of our congregation ever since.

In October Terrie Fedor had a seemingly inconsequential trivial tumble which she thought nothing of, but, soon after she developed an eye issue, which she is recovering from slowly, so pray for her complete and utter recovery.

On October 13<sup>th</sup> Peggy Charles had a surgical procedure on her back to relieve pain she has been experiencing. Pray that this procedure has a long lasting ameliorating outcome.

Alex Miller the son of Leslie and Tom had ear surgery in October which is a matching procedure he had on his other ear earlier. Even though he was a little apprehensive about the operation he conjured up loads of courage and came through it fine.

Speaking of Alex, he and his sister tried out for respective sport teams in their school, Alex tried out and made a running club and Rebecca tried out and made the volleyball team. Congratulations to both.

Melinda Begeman has been afflicted with persistent insensitivity and shooting pain in her right hand so on October 22<sup>nd</sup> Melinda's had successful carpal tunnel surgery. She can now shake her fist at anyone who may deserve a sound castigation or correction pain free.

Brian Begeman's son David has moved from Big Sky, Montana back to his native land, Michigan. Where he is currently working as a pizza master builder. Hopefully the Michigan Governor's current edicts will not have a deleterious outcome on his future employment.

Speaking of Michigan's shutdown, due to the ongoing school situation, Joe & Kathy Smeltzer will be doing some virtual teaching for their grandchildren, Caleb and Jeremiah. That's what happens when you have unlimited underutilized teaching skills and grandchildren in need of those skills.

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Katie Begeman, daughter of Jeff and Melinda, after many years of chronic unexplained pain has been diagnosed with fibromyalgia. Around this same time she started working for Instacart, which is a grocery delivery and pick-up service. She can name her own working times and hours which is made to order for her needs. Good work Katie!

Daniel Sottile, son of Rachel, got a new job at Nexient in Ann Arbor after many crash courses in computer coding. He seems to excel in all endeavors. Congratulations Daniel!

On November 7<sup>th</sup> we joined the Petersburg Church of God Seventh Day for their annual Thanksgiving observance and we all had a blessed time even though we were all individually veiled with surgical masks. There were a sprinkling of poignant Thanksgiving related elucidations leading up to the special guest speaker, Rex Miller. The title of his talk was "Never Lacking in Thanks". He pointed out many of us are more apt to look at the negative rather than the positive. We take God's goodness for granted. He used Psalm 65 as an example we should all follow to see God as our provider and protector. He also talked about when Jesus fed the five thousand and those fed were excited about a continuing supply of free food, but Jesus mentioned to them "He is the Bread of Life" and many left. Christ should be our center not ourselves. We are in the body of Christ and we are children of a sovereign God.

**CHURCH OF THE  
LORD OUR  
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

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## **We will be having our Christmas Eve Service.**

You have two ways of joining us for the Christmas Eve service at 7 PM December 24th. You can attend the service in person (we ask that all who attend wear a mask) or you can join us on Facebook Live.

Due to Covid restrictions we will not be having the fellowship time and food after the service.

To watch the service, open Facebook and search for "United Church of the Lord our Righteousness" to find our Facebook page. The live stream will start around 6:45 PM. The video will stay up on our page so you can watch it anytime.

If you can't find us please feel free to email me at [jbegeman@centurytel.net](mailto:jbegeman@centurytel.net) and I can send you a link.

Jeff Begeman

What's every parent's favorite Christmas Carol?  
Silent Night

What do you call a snowman that can walk?  
Snow-mobile.

Do you know any bird that can write? Answer: Pen-guine.

People are so worried about what they eat between Christmas and the New Year, but they really should be worried about what they eat between the New Year and Christmas.

Good resolutions are simply checks that people draw on a bank where they have no account.