

Covenant Life Link

Preparing for Christmas

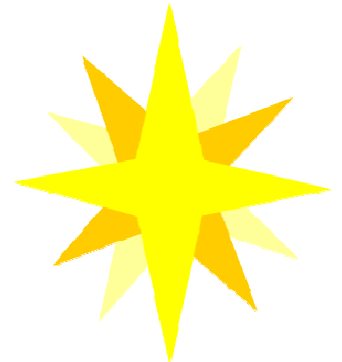
“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” – Jn. 1:1

Before there was anything, there was God. In the void of nothingness that was existence, God was. And then He created everything. Into this world of His creation, He chose to put a man and a woman and then command them to fill the earth. They chose to turn away from their Creator, to ignore Him and His instructions and to live for themselves. But God wasn't done with them yet.

Naming Himself their Father, He acted in the world again and again to bring His creations, His children, back home to Him. Through floods and feasts, rivers and seas, with mighty works and mighty words, God the Father, called to His children that they might return to Him. And again and again, they, we, chose our own way, chose to ignore this call and these deeds so that we might have our so-called “freedom”.

So God the Eternal One, God the All-Powerful, knowing from the beginning that this was our destiny, decided to work His greatest act ever. One evening in a little town called Bethlehem, He became the most helpless of His creations, a human baby. Jesus was born, crying, unable to feed Himself or even to control his flailing arms. Jesus came into this world as we all do, naked and helpless.

As we prepare our hearts and our minds to celebrate once again this Christmas, we remember the scope of what Our Creator did for us that night. We remember that this helpless 20”, 7.8 lb. baby contained in its tiny heart the very Heart of God, which has longed for us from the beginning. Jesus came to bring you back to your loving, heavenly Father and that is something to celebrate this Christmas.



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It is that time again! As announced during our November 20th service, registration is now officially open for Summer Camp 2012 at Covenant Harbor in Lake Geneva, WI, and at Covenant Point in Iron River, MI.

Skills camps that are offered for some ages often fill up fast so please review the detailed list of skills offered on the website for middle school campers. You may want to register as soon as possible for those camps. Also, please keep in mind that there are early registration discounts if registered and paid in full by March 15th that you will want to consider as well as a Bring-a-Friend discount. If your friend is new to our camps then you both get to take advantage of this discount!

We are continuing our exciting 'Every Kid a Camper' program at Hillcrest so please do not let \$\$ be the only issue holding up this camping experience for your camper. Hillcrest will cover part or all of your expense and you will have the opportunity to repay part or all of the assistance received. It really is that simple. Please see me regarding this wonderful program.

If you register on your own online, via fax, or in the mail – please let me know so we can track and post for all to see the dates we will have campers at each location.

Please review both websites listed below to find the dates that work for your camper:

Covenant Harbor Bible Camp: www.covenantharbor.org

Covenant Point Bible Camp: www.cpbc.com

Also, please feel free to contact me at (815) 787-9404 or at amyromans12v12@gmail.com with any concerns or questions you might have.

As we seek to give meaningful gifts this Christmas season you might want to consider that assistance toward a camping experience can be a truly wonderful Christmas gift for a child!

Thank you!

Amy Wessel – Hillcrest Camp Booster

From Stewardship

Adult Sunday school has been viewing and discussing a video called The Advent Conspiracy. It is a grass roots movement trying to change the way we celebrate Christmas. It has four principals:

1) Worship Fully

Remember that God came to the shepherds first and they were the first evangelists using their mouths to spread the good news. The magi were next and they gave out of their abundance to honor the Messiah. Worship Him fully keeping in mind the reason for the season.

2) Spend Less

The fastest growing religion isn't Islam or Christianity, but consumerism. People are going in debt trying to please one another in the Christmas season with material things that won't bring lasting happiness.

3) Give More

Giving gifts is not bad. But let's give of ourselves really thinking about the person we love and doing so trying to build a loving relationship.

4) Love All

Christ came for everyone.....spending time with family this time of year is one of the things I love most about Christmas. But Jesus came to save everyone, not just the ones we love to spend time with.

In Him,

Budget



cloudy with specs of sunshine

Trustee's Report

Financial:



Through November 20, year to date donations are \$20,000 below budget. Spending is essentially on budget, so we will need increased giving in December to cover our budgeted expenditures.

Fall Work Day:



Thank you to the 25 members and friends that worked together on November 12 at the Church Fall Work Day. We were able to rake all the leaves and accomplish other jobs preparing for winter. We also washed all windows (inside and out) and cleaned most of the ceiling light fixtures. Finally, we removed unattractive stickers from the new multipurpose room tables.



New entrances walks:

New cement entrances and stairs have been completed at both the main and north entrances. They were funded out of the Sinking Fund.

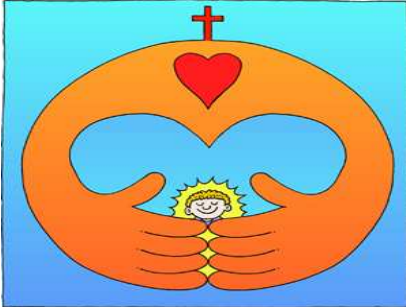


Year-End Closing:

We will close the church books on December 30, so all requests for 2011 bill payments and/or expense reimbursements must be in the Treasurer's folder in the Church office before 5 pm on such date. Please remember that 2011 unspent budget authority does not carry over to 2012.

Bruce Bickner, Mort Carrel, Bob Donaldson, Jessie Flippin, Ron Grimm, John Guio, and Ed Peterson

LOCAL MISSION OPPORTUNITIES



Have you felt called to service? There are many opportunities available. You could distribute kitchen supplies to needy families through the Love INC Kitchen Ministry. You could be a Big Brother or Big Sister. There are also opportunities to serve at Habitat For Humanity, Hope Haven, the Salvation Army, Network of Nations, a mission trip into Chicago, and more.

If you are interested in these opportunities or others, contact one of Hillcrest's Mission Committee-- Manny Diaz, Pat Kevin, Steve Klopfenstein, Mark Rassmussen, and Larry Wood.

Feed My Starving Children

Dear Church Family,

Thank you for your love, support and volunteer efforts for the Make a Difference 2k11 Event which took place November 17- 20th. We wanted to share some final numbers with you all:

Over 3,400 volunteers from our community came together and packed 754,704 meals in four days. The meals packed will feed 2,068 starving kids for an entire year. Amazing - amazing - amazing!!!!

In His Service,

Greg and Sherri Howells



"Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me." - Matthew 29:11

Message from the Chair

Dear Hillcrest Family,

As the year comes to an end, I want to thank all the boards for the work they have done this year and for the work they continue to do each day and into the coming year. Hillcrest Covenant Church has so many people who are constantly ready to say “yes” when an opportunity arises for service, whether it is within our congregation or with an outside organization.

One of the goals the Executive Committee has discussed recently is to begin to “celebrate” the positive things that are happening in our congregation. We tend to get so focused on what we should be doing, that we lose sight of all the good things that are happening. We as leaders are looking at ways to share this with the entire congregation, through personal testimonies, videos, one on one encounters, and small groups. Watch for these moments and let’s celebrate and praise God together.

We are continuing to look at and discuss how people come into our congregational family. We are exploring the different ways to connect and what that means from a leadership level, down to the board and finally congregation level. Connecting and caring for one another is one of the key areas. The boards are looking at how we can do this better.

Hillcrest Covenant Church’s Long Range Plan was approved and boards have been working on and prioritizing the 20 objectives from the plan. We want to achieve our mission to be “united by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind; love our neighbor as ourselves; and go into all the world and make disciples.

Some of those objectives are being worked on now or have been completed. As we start the 2012 year we will be sending out a plan update and how the objectives are proceeding or evening possibly changing. If you have question on the different objectives please contact me or any of the different boards to find out how they are doing or offer to help them with the objectives

I want to personally thank Larry Schultz for heading up the Budget Committee this year. Larry does a great job working with all the boards to put our budget together. Each year that Larry has been involved in the budgeting process we have little or no issues getting the budget approved. He is truly using his gifts for detail and mathematics and his great team approach. Thanks again to Larry for taking on this role and to all who worked on the budget for 2012.

Message from the Chair (continued)

December is a great time to reflect on the past year and to get together with family and friends to celebrate the Christmas season. As we enter this very busy time I pray that we all take or find time to shut out the hustle and bustle of Christmas to focus on what our wonderful Father has given us, His Son, and that he is here with us. Our family has had a lot of discussions this past month about the Advent Conspiracy and how we are looking at the Christmas holiday. My prayer is that we can all find that time to be with one another to praise our Father and to quiet the busyness of Christmas, to be on the watch for Jesus and how he touches our lives and the lives of others around us.

Come enjoy the fellowship of our church family during this next month at these wonderful events;

December 4th Hillcrest's Smorgasbord and evening of fellowship and music
December 10th Hope Haven Christmas Party
December 11th All church Christmas Caroling
December 24th Christmas Eve Service.

May we continue to lift each other up in prayer and care for one another through service, kind words of encouragement and the love that Christ has shared with all of us.

Your Brother in Christ,
Robert Ferguson
Church Chair

December 2011 Sander Prayer and Praise

Dear Friend,

Thank you so much for your faithfulness in lifting us up in prayer over the past year. We look back and see God at work around us and we see your strength and faithfulness in prayer for us. We want you to know how much you are loved and appreciated for partnering with us in this way.

1. We praise God that Mary Lou was able to lead the pastoral couples of the North Coast Region in a day of retreat and then joined them, and their children, for a year-end celebration on the Caribbean coast. Pray for Mary Lou and Gary as they lead the pastoral couples of the South Coast Region in their final gathering, December 2-4, in Monteria. We will be celebrating this year of ministry with the pastoral couples and their families in the Antioquia (Medellin) Region on December 12. We celebrated our year of ministry in Cundinamarca (Bogota) in November. We praise God for this year of ministry with these special groups of those who minister in the Covenant Churches of Colombia.

2. Praise God for Yvonne DeV Vaughn, the Director of AVA: Advocacy for Victims of Abuse, her husband, William, and Teresa Hillis, who came to Colombia and taught 50 people/coaches (seen above). These coaches were trained to be AVA advocates on behalf of those who have been hurt and shamed because of abuse, and to share these teachings in their churches, in their homes and in their communities. Praise God that this international partnership took some big steps forward. It was a very blessed and special conference.

3. Thank you for your continued prayers for Mary Lou and Gary as they are getting their calendar together for their three-month Home Assignment, February – April of 2012. Dates and trips are coming together and we are encouraged for this time in the U.S.

4. Praise God that all of our adult children and spouses and one boyfriend will be together for the Christmas holidays in Medellin. We are looking forward to this great time of celebration together as a family.

5. Pray for the Men's Ministry work/mission/outreach team from First Covenant of Sacramento who are busy planning their time to work and minister in the Cordoba area, January 6-14 of 2012. This next month of December is key to planning and to putting the details together.

Love, Mary Lou and Gary

Announcements



There are still seats available for the Rockford Symphony Orchestra event on Sunday, December 18th. If you are a retiree or would just like to come along for an enjoyable afternoon of holiday music, please sign up on the sheet in the narthex or call Wendy Kuryliw at 815-758-4709.

The Rockford Symphony Orchestra will be joined by the Mendelssohn Choir in performing great seasonal music and you will also have the opportunity to join in a sing-a-long of carols and holiday tunes....optional, of course.

DATE: Sunday, December 18th

WHERE: Coronado Theater, Rockford. Rides and carpooling available (see sign up sheet in narthex). The theater is handicapped accessible.

TIME: Leave the church at approximately 1:30 p.m., the performance begins at 3:00 p.m.

COST: \$15.00 per person. Payment should be given to Wendy Kuryliw as soon as possible.

If you have any questions, please contact Wendy at 815-758-4709.

Operation Christmas Child



This past week 52 shoe boxes from Hillcrest were delivered to the collection center. These boxes, full of love and our gifts are now on their way to children around the world. Thanks to everyone who participated in this special project. I'm wondering if any of the kids who received manna packs last year are receiving Operation Christmas Child boxes this year! Continue to pray for these children as they receive their boxes, which will include the gospel message in their native language.

CHRISTMASTIME AT HILLCREST COVENANT CHURCH

Here is a listing of our all-church events going on this Advent season at Hillcrest Covenant Church.

We invite you to take part in any and all events as we celebrate the birth of our Lord together.

Christmas

Smorgasbord



“Not just for Swedes anymore,” our Christmas Smorgasbord is a dinner of epic proportions. Join us on **Sunday, Dec. 4 @ 4:30pm** for punch and then dinner with the family. We will have many old-fashioned Swedish favorites like Korv and rice pudding, and a host of other not-so-Swedish foods as well. Bring the whole family, invite some friends, and join us as we feast and celebrate together.

All Church Christmas Program

Everyone is welcome to take part in our Christmas program this year. Right after the Smorgasbord (at 6:30pm to be exact) we'll continue the celebration with songs, readings, and poetry. If you'd like to contribute something, you can sign up in the foyer or contact Wendy Kuryliw to get on the program.

Christmas Eve Worship Service

Saturday, December 24 @ 5:30pm

Come and celebrate the birth of our Lord
with a festival of lessons and carols.



We're hosting a Christmas party for the children of Hope Haven! On Saturday, Dec. 10 they'll meet at Hillcrest from noon to 2pm for activities and games, a special Christmas shop where they can “purchase” gifts for their family members with play money that we will provide, and of course food! We need a lot of helpers to serve these kids this Christmas. Please sign up on the sign-up sheet in the foyer at church.

Here We Go a Caroling!

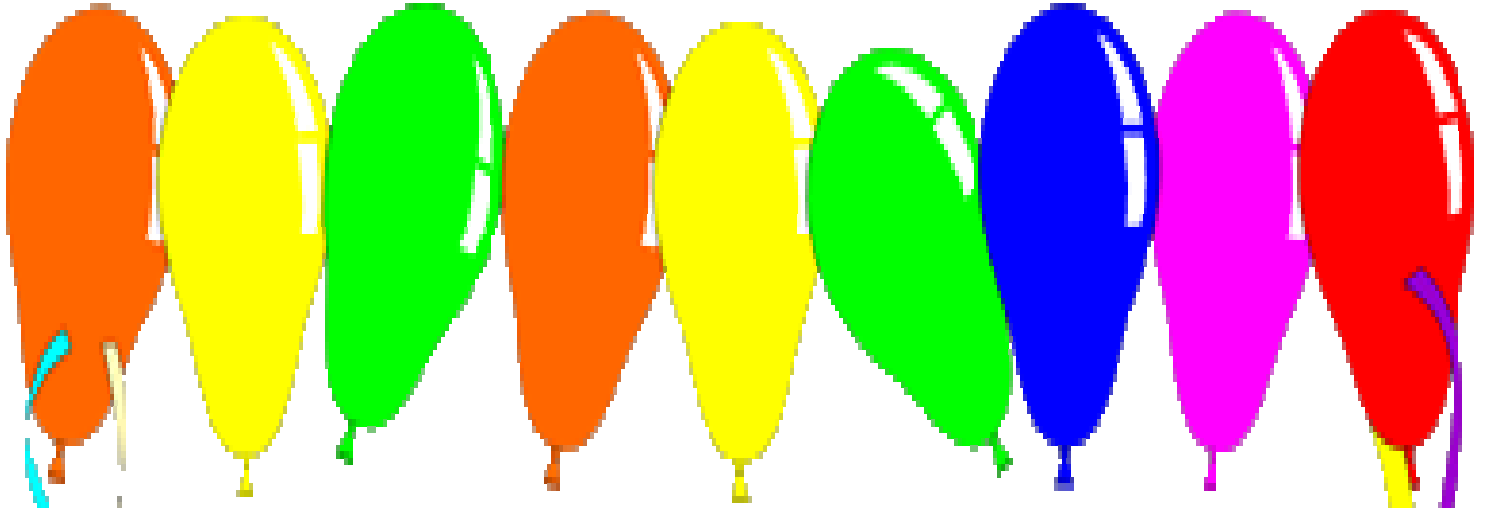
Whether you love to sing or just want to hang out with your friends, join us for our Christmas Caroling party! On Sunday, Dec. 11 we'll meet at church at 4pm to get our music together and then go caroling in our neighborhood

and for some of our members. When we're done, we'll finish up with some hot cocoa at church. Dress warmly





Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Worship 4:00 PM Shift 6:30 PM High School Youth Group	28	29 2:30 PM High School Hang Time	30 6:30 PM AWANA <i>Grace's Girffri ends</i> 6:30 PM X4J 8:15 PM Choir Practice	1 2:30 PM Middle School Hang Time 6:30 PM <i>Christian Formation</i> 7:00 PM Missions Meeting 7:30 PM <i>Vitality Team</i>	2 5:00 PM X4J Christmas Shopping	3 7:30 AM Men's Breakfast and Bible Study 9:30 AM <i>Christmas Brunch</i>
4 Communion 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Worship 4:30 PM Smorgasbord/Christmas Program	5	6 2:30 PM High School Hang Time 6:30 PM <i>Deacon Meeting</i>	7 5:00 PM AWANA Leadership Meeting 6:30 PM AWANA <i>Grace's Girl-friends</i> 6:30 PM X4J	8 2:30 PM Middle School Hang Time 7:00 PM Music and Worship Meeting 7:00 PM <i>Outreach Meeting</i>	9	10 7:30 AM Men's Breakfast and Bible Study 12:00 PM <i>Hope Haven Christmas Party</i>
11 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Worship 4:00 PM All Church Christmas Caroling 6:30 PM <i>High School Youth Group</i>	12 7:00 PM <i>Stewardship Meeting</i>	13 2:30 PM High School Hang Time	14 5:30 PM X4J Mentor <i>Christmas Party</i> 6:30 PM AWANA <i>Grace's Girl-friends</i>	15 2:30 PM Middle School Hang Time 7:00pm Executive Committee Christmas Party	16	17 7:30 AM Men's Breakfast and Bible Study
18 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Worship 11:30 PM <i>Senior Trip</i> 6:30 PM High School White Elephant	19	20 2:30 PM High School Hang Time	21 6:30 PM <i>Grace's Girffri ends</i> 6:30 PM X4J 8:15 PM Choir Practice	22	23	24 5:30 PM <i>Christmas Eve Service</i>
25 Christmas Day Newsletter Finishline 10:45 AM Worship	26 Office Closed	27	28	29	30	31



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

7 - Leslie Sander (dau. of missionary)

Jasmin Corbin

12 - Joshua Larson

12 - Larry Schultz

13 - Elizabeth Potts

14 - Gail Mehalic

15 - Carole Minor

16 - Sue Guio

16 - Caleb Ihm

17 - Kim Severson

18 - Diane Watson

20 - Mark Cordes

20 - Olivia Kevin

20 - Ryan Severson

23 - Heaven Diaz

24 - Mary Kuryliw

28 - Lynn Vogl

30 - Don Code

31 - Gordon Erdman

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12-David & Amy Wessel

16 - Gene & Sharalyn Kowitz

17 - John & Gail Mehalic

20 - Ivan & Noni Jones

22- Don & Elizabeth Potts

27 - John & Sue Guio

28 - Robert & Beth Ferguson

Pastor: Steve Larson

Phone: 815-756-5508

Associate Pastor: Jen Zerby

Fax: 815-756-5546

Minister of Music: Victoria Young

E-mail: hillcrestcov@comcast.net

Administrative Assistant: Jasmin Corbin

Website: www.hillcovch.org

Church Office Hours: 2pm-6pm

Hillcrest Covenant Church

1515 N. First St.

DeKalb, IL 60115



HillcrestCovenant
C H U R C H



We're on the Web!

www.hillcrestcovenantdekalb.org