

## Quotable Quotes

There are two seasonal diversions that can ease the bite of any winter. One is the January thaw. The other is seed catalogues. *Hal Borland*

New Year's Day is everyman's birthday. *Charles Lamb*

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.

*Bill Vaughan*

Life is what we make it, always has been, always will be.

*Grandma Moses*

A life without cause is a life without effect *Barbarella*

Human skins have many colors, but human blood is always red.

Tomorrow begins today.

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

*Oscar Wilde*

Winter is not a season, it's an occupation. *Sinclair Lewis*

Cherish your human connections: your relationships with friends and family. *Joseph Brodsky*

We are exactly where we have chosen to be. *Vernon Howard*

I never worry about diets. The only carrots that interests me are the number you get in a diamond. *Mae West*

I've been on a diet for two weeks and all I've lost is two weeks.

*Totie Fields*

If it weren't for the fact that the TV set and the refrigerator are so far apart, some of us wouldn't get any exercise at all.

*Joey Adams*

Muscle come and go; flab lasts. *Bill Vaughan*

My bottom is so big it's got its own gravitational field.

*Carol Vorderman*

Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live.

*Jim Rohn*

Time and health are two precious assets that we don't recognize and appreciate until they have been depleted. *Denis Waitley*

Celebrate what you want to see more of. *Tom Peters*



# Prairie View

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God With Us

Luke 2: 8-11-*And in the region there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, and the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the City of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

In this text it was the shepherds who first heard the message about Jesus' birth. Why the shepherds? Because God is to be found in the places of dire human need. The Advent season confirmed that God comes to us right where we are. God does not ask us to clean ourselves up or to straighten ourselves out. The fact is that we can not go where God is, but God comes to us where we are. God comes to us through people with all of their handicaps, ordinariness, and disabilities -- especially the disability of poverty. The Advent season tells us that God cares for all people. Through Jesus, God is Emmanuel, who comes to us by the roadside in the normal, daily events of everyday life. It is like the woman who in the ordinary activity of her day comes to draw water from the well. In her daily routine she encounters Jesus at the well and her life is forever changed. It is like Matthew sitting in his tax office conducting his business as he does every day. In that normal, ordinary, everyday setting he meets Jesus and follows him, never to return to the office again. The same is true for us. Christ comes to us right where we are, amid all of our human entanglements. It is hard for us to think of God in such ordinary terms.

Leo Tolstoy tells the story of a cobbler, whose name was Conrad, a godly man who made shoes in his humble shop. One night the cobbler dreamed that the next day Jesus was coming to his shop. He got up early the next morning and went to the woods to gather green boughs to decorate his shop in order to receive so great a guest. He went to the bakery to get some bread and he also purchased some milk. He waited all morning and the only thing that happened was that an old man shuffled up, asking to rest. Conrad saw that his shoes were worn through, so he brought the man in. "I'll give you a new pair of shoes," he said and put on the old man the sturdiest shoes in the shop before sending him on his way.

He waited through the afternoon and the only happening was that an old woman under a heavy load of firewood came by. She was weary and, out of compassion, Conrad brought her in and gave her some of the food he had prepared for his special, anticipated guest. She ate with relish, for she was hungry. Refreshed, she went on her way. As night came a lost child, crying bitterly, into his shop. The cobbler was annoyed by the child's presence, because he felt it necessary to leave his shop and take the child to his home. As he returned to his shop he was convinced that he had missed his Lord. Sadly, he sat down, and in his imagination he lived through the moments with Jesus as he imagined they might have been. He thought to himself, "What a great time it could have been."

Conrad cried, "Why is it, Lord, that your feet have delayed in coming? Have you forgotten that this was the day?" Then softly in the silence a voice was heard: Lift up your heart for I kept my word. Three times I came to your friendly door; Three times my shadow was on your floor. I was a beggar with bruised feet; I was the woman you gave to eat; I was the child on the homeless street. (Stories shared by John A. Stroman)

The light of the world became flesh and came to dwell amongst us. Each generation has been charged with sharing the good news. We have been given an important mission. In this New Year, may we as a community find new ways to serve the Lord. May we always be aware of the presence of Emmanuel-God With Us.

*Happy New Year and God Bless, Connie*

### The Prairie View

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**Sunday Worship: 9 a.m. (Traditional)**

**11 a.m. (Casual/Contemporary)**

**Pastor:** Rev. Connie Green

**Associate Pastor:** Rev. Jason Butterick





## Seeking God's Vision

When he [Barnabas] came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to God with steadfast purpose. Acts 11:23

I recently explored Bethlehem with a friend who lived there before the construction of the 30 foot concrete wall that snakes through the city. Back then, people generally moved freely to and from Jerusalem, just a few miles

to the north. Tourists flooded the city not just at Christmas time, but year round. Farmers tended the orchards and fields that had sustained them for centuries.

Today, the separation wall and its system of permits and identification cards generally exclude Bethlehem residents from crossing to Jerusalem, and discourage visitors from entering. The wall creates a very different landscape. The main road into town is blocked by the wall, so the neighborhood which used to welcome visitors driving in from Jerusalem now resembles a ghost town. As we followed the wall around and between homes and closed-up shops we tried to imagine how it might feel to live in this neighborhood today.

On my way home from my volunteer work at the Palestinian Lutheran schools one day, as I crossed the checkpoint to return to Jerusalem (a privilege of holding a US passport), I feared that I have little hope to offer our students, who have experienced so much trauma and humiliation. Who am I to tell them there is a better future ahead? I felt ashamed that I could not even visualize Bethlehem without the wall. In that moment, I asked God to show me a vision of Bethlehem freed from the wall. I had come to the realization that I couldn't do it myself – I did not have the answer.

Later that same week, I saw the vision I had asked for. Many visions, in fact: paintings, collages, comics, and quotes painted on the wall. The graffiti is the work of both local and international artists. One mural pictures people opening the wall by pulling down a giant zipper; my favorite portrays the giant panels of the wall falling toward the viewer, with a clear view of Jerusalem on the other side, and a ladder to heaven revealing God's love to the people. It is the work of the faithful in this conflicted land who seek God's vision above all the cruelties imposed by human hands and dollars.

We pray together, as in the old Irish hymn, "Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me save that thou art." Please, God, reveal to us the potential you see in your creation. You are what matters – we want to witness your truth in this messed up world. Your powerful vision of peace has the last word.

*Rev. Emily Goldthwaite Fries is an ordained minister of the UCC who has volunteered through Global Ministries to accompany our partners of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.*



### **Disciples of Christ Statement of Identity:**

**We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.**

### **Four Priorities of the 2020 Vision:**

1,000 new congregations— 1,000 transformed congregations—The leadership development necessary to realize these new and renewed congregations—All within a context of being an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church.

## Notes from the Associate Pastor

It is what it is, but it will become what you make it.

The year we call 2011 is over. All the joys, sorrows, laughs and losses are at an end. Whenever it happens, it will now happen in 2012. No corrections, changes, or additions can be made to 2011 anymore (unless you have yet to approve minutes from a December meeting!).

Sometimes, it is hard to move emotionally and/or spiritually from a particular year. An unexpected loss can bring unexpected cost. Perhaps you know someone who has never moved on from 1982, or 1992, or some other significant point in their lives. For the person who has never moved, it probably seems that everyone has moved away, embracing each year just as before, untouched and apparently unmoved by the event. Usually there is conflict when one is trying to move the other to embrace life a little sooner than the other wants to do it. Well meaning people tend to push at other's problems easier than confronting their own anxieties, doubts, and fears. Sometimes our selfless "service" is only serving ourselves.

Each side of the argument between emotional and/or spiritual inertia and energy has its positives and their negatives. One answer does not seem to fit all situations. All situations do not seem to fit all answers. And between the two, the clock continues its ticking away of life being lived or not.

One can dissolve into an endless soup of "what if's" in life. What if this had happened differently? What if I had responded to it differently? Sometimes the what if's of life block out the what for's of life. With what I now have, with all that I have become in the last 365 days, what can I now do with it? Two choices seem to offer two paths. You can accept and learn from it, or deny and blame for it.

I can choose to be a heart attack victim. Or I can choose to be a heart attack survivor. I can choose to live in my past life, or I can choose to live towards my future life. The ability to choose in life is perhaps its greatest gift and risk. Certainly our choices come with consequences, but we choose nevertheless.

So in 2012, what choices are you going to make? Will you choose to embrace life as it is, or life as it was? Are you satisfied with your spiritual life and journey? Are there changes that you cannot confront in the journey ahead? God is calling ahead of us on our journey, leading us to a deeper life of meaning and value. In this fragmented world, we should seek the wholeness that only God can truly offer to us.

Perhaps you need to accept a part of the past as unchangeable now. You may be missing much of the present by dwelling too long there. And God, who is the beginning and end, the Alpha and Omega, embraces you, your past, your future, and your life, fully in the arms of God's own wounds.

*Love, Jason*

## Opportunities to Learn

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### **DISCUSSION GROUP CONTINUES ITS SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND THEIR PRACTICES:**

The Discussion group has continues its study of Orthodox Christianity at 10:15 am. A Field trip to the Greek Annunciation Church in Decatur is being planned as part of the study.

**SUNSHINE CLASS BIBLE STUDY:** Those interested in a weekly study of selected scripture passages should consider joining the Sunshine class during the Church School hour. Iona Watts and Paul Kater serve as your teachers.

**PRIMARY (Grades K-3rd) CLASS:** Amanda Butterick & Peggy Bergen serve as primary class teachers. The curriculum is based on a Biblical theme.

**ADDITIONAL CLASSES:** There will be several new learning opportunities during 2012, including our annual soup and scripture course during Lent. Look for announcements of upcoming opportunities in the Sunday bulletin and *Prairie View*.

**EXERCISE GROUP:** For more than ten years, a weekly exercise program has been offered at Prairie Avenue Christian on Wednesdays at 10 am. Led by Peggy Bergen, a retired physical therapist, participants work-out with free-weights, utilizing every major muscle group during the scheduled time. They would love to see you work on your New Year's resolution in their company!

**ZUMBA CLASS:** The Latin-dance based aerobic exercise program is offered here on Monday & Wednesday evenings at 6:15 pm. Barb Hodges & Stephanie Hodges, certified Zumba® instructors, serve as leaders.

**CHURCH LIBRARY AND CHILDREN'S LIBRARY:** Materials may be checked out at any time. Please be considerate in returning your materials in a timely manner. Books for children are located on the second floor, adjacent to the primary classroom.

## News from the Pews

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**THANK YOU:** A very special thank you to the people of the church who came to visit and bring communion to my mother, Verla Smith. She enjoyed your visits and looked forward to them. Thanks again. *The Family of Verla Smith*

The ministerial staff of Prairie Avenue Christian Church appreciates the kind cards and gifts received during this holiday season. *Rev. Connie Green & Rev. Jason Butterick*

Raymond and I want to thank you to all everyone at Prairie Avenue Christian Church for the large tray of fruit and homemade cookies. *Raymond & Mildred Evans*

It was a big surprise to have the Prairie Avenue Church Choir singers to come and sing Christmas Carols to Raymond & I. It was very thoughtful of all of them. Thank you. *Raymond & Mildred Evans*

**CONGRATULATIONS:** To **Theresa Bergen**, daughter of Peggy Bergen, who was married in December. To **Dale Parks**, celebrating his 90th birthday on December 21. To **Stephanie Hodges**, who graduated with her Masters in Social Work from the University of Illinois in December, and is employed at McKinley Court as their social worker.

**MAXINE GRIFFITH'S ADDRESS:** Maxine Griffith is recovering from hip surgery at Hickory Point Christian Village. The address of the facility is Hickory Point Christian Village, 565 W Marion Ave, Forsyth IL 62535. She is in room 105

**CHURCH BOARD MEETING:** The first church board meeting of the year will be held on **Tuesday, January 3 at 7 pm**. Membership of the general board is composed of board officers, elders, deacons, trustees, committee chairs and chairpersons of men, women, and youth group. A review of responsibilities for the coming year will be given.

**CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP:** The Christian Women's Fellowship will return to its regular meeting time of the third Tuesday of the month on **Tuesday, January 17 at 7 pm**. Helen Kater and Kay Trotter are in charge of program and refreshments.

**CHRISTIAN MEN'S FELLOWSHIP:** The Christian Men's Fellowship will return to its regular meeting schedule on the third Tuesday of the month on **Tuesday, January 17 at 7 pm**. Following a short business meeting, the dartball tournament will resume.

**2012 CHURCH DIRECTORY:** The 2012 Church directory will be distributed January 15 during worship. Please review the draft copy of the directory in the Education wing hallway prior January 8. New shepherd/prayer chain list and Deacon's serving schedule will be included.

**ELDER'S MEETING:** The next meeting of the Elders will be held on **Sunday, January 29 at 6 pm** at Rev. Connie Green's.

## Regional Church News

### Staff Transitions at Regional Office

There are several staff transitions at the Regional Office at the end of the year. Beth Zumwalt will be retiring Dec. 31, 2011 with her last day in the office being Dec. 22nd. A reception will be held for her on



January 15, 2012, 3-5:00 pm at Eureka Christian Church. **Lisa Baker** joined the CCIW Ministry Team on Dec. 15, 2011 to fill the position being vacated by Beth Zumwalt. Lisa will be staff support for Communications, the Ministry Committee, Search & Call, and Regional Calendar. Please send news items to her at: [lisa@cciwdisciples.org](mailto:lisa@cciwdisciples.org) When you come to the Bloomington office, greet her and introduce yourself! **Connie Henderson** will fill a part-time support position on the CCIW Ministry Team beginning Dec. 26, 2011. She will be support for Summit and Mid-Winter Youth events and the Camping program. You can reach Connie at [connie@cciwdisciples.org](mailto:connie@cciwdisciples.org).

### REGIONAL ASSEMBLY, October 12-13, 2012 - Marriott, Uptown Normal, IL

The 2012 CCIW Regional Assembly will be held at the Marriott, Uptown Normal, IL, 6:00 pm Friday, Oct. 12 thru 3:00 pm Saturday, Oct. 13. Mark your calendars and make your plans now!!



- Early Registration begins 1/15
  - Late Registration begins 6/12
  - Registration ends 9/12
- Pre-Assembly Clergy Luncheon with Dr. Bill Lee at 12 Noon, Friday, Oct 12

### A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

By Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President

O God of infinite creativity...

At the beginning of this New Year —winter for so many—the rich brown earth is even now preparing to burst forth with a spring of possibilities and new life.

Though the human eye cannot see it, you continue to bless the earth with new beginnings.

We praise you!

Bless us with new beginnings, we pray.

Where we have lost sight of your Reign breaking in —even now at hand—Renew our vision.

Where we have faltered in reaching out to our neighbor in love, missing the moment to extend a hand of wholeness, Renew our courage.

Where we have allowed cynicism to dry our bones and sinews.

Renew our hope.

At this beginning of a New Year, dear God, our arms are still warm from cradling the Babe of Bethlehem.

Help us to keep that memory strong.

Strengthen our arms to welcome your many children into communities of love.

Prepare our hearts to burst forth with a spring of possibilities and new life.

Stir us to be and share your love with the same vulnerability, the same humble expectation that brought you into the world in person.

Help us, your church, your disciples, to be harbingers of your reign of justice and of peace fully emerged.

O God of infinite creativity, at the beginning of this New Year, we know that you are about to do a new thing. Help us to perceive it. And to join in.

In the name of Jesus, your greatest new beginning, we pray. Amen.

## Opportunities To Serve

**THANK YOU:** We would like to thank Prairie Avenue Christian Church for the recent donation of \$200 worth of new socks and underwear to the Dove Children's Clothing Room. As you know, the Clothing Room is a place where families may select free, good quality clothing for their children, as well as new underwear and socks. We are always in need of new socks and underwear, and appreciate your efforts. Joan Meeder RSVP Director & Susan Sistler RSVP Program Specialist

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MEET & GREET:** You are invited to meet Jim Walters, the new Executive Director of Dove, Inc. on Thursday, January 26, 3 to 6 pm at the Dean Simcox Conference Center, 302 S. Union, Decatur (the former Anna B. Millikin home). Jim succeeds Ray Batman, who retired after 33 years of service.

**2012 SERVING SCHEDULE FOR GOOD SAMARITAN INN:** Prairie Avenue Christian Church, in partnership with First Lutheran Church, will serve the luncheon meal at the Good Samaritan Inn on the following dates in 2012: **Saturday, March 17; Saturday, June 2; Saturday, September 22, & Saturday, December 1**

### Serving Others 2011

January 2011 Community Service Hours	114	Food Pantry Items	69
February 2011 Community Service Hours	122	Food Pantry Items	77
March 2011 Community Service Hours	170	Food Pantry Items	63
April 2011 Community Service Hours	176	Food Pantry Items	149
May 2011 Community Service Hours	144.5	Food Pantry Items	86
June 2011 Community Service Hours	211.75	Food Pantry Items	39
July 2011 Community Service Hours	89.5	Food Pantry Items	100
August 2011 Community Service Hours	157.75	Food Pantry Items	119
September 2011 Community Service Hours	160.25	Food Pantry Items	80
October 2011 Community Service Hours	195	Food Pantry Items	94
November 2011 Community Service Hours	142	Food Pantry Items	63
December 2011 Community Service Hours	111.75*	Food Pantry Items	120

\*=preliminary total