



JOY TO THE WORLD!

DECEMBER LAMPLIGHTER



A BITTER SWEET HOLIDAY SEASON

One of my fondest memories from childhood was getting to go to my paternal grandmother's house for Thanksgiving and/or Christmas. Spending the majority of the year with just my mother and maternal grandmother, it felt almost normal to be in a house filled with folks, laughing, loving, and eating together with tremendous joy. In fact, when I think of many of my happiest memories, either of my grandmothers was inevitably involved. Though they were very different people, they both loved me fiercely and left an indelible mark on my life.

As I write this article in November, I find myself drowning in these recollections of the holidays with these women as I examined the altar flowers my mother and I purchased in order to honor them at Central. My maternal grandmother, Erma Lee Gillespie, was my rock and my anchor through the storms and challenges of my childhood; she held our small family together when we were too foolish to know we should love one another. She made it into her 80's and passed away a week or so after my wedding in August of 2012, holding on until she knew that I would be taken care of for the rest of my life. It was one of the hardest things God has ever pulled me through, but I had my other grandmother, so I knew I could withstand it.

Three years ago, I had the great pleasure of spending Thanksgiving with my paternal grandmother, Jewell Fields, in Cleveland, where she was able to meet Stephen, my husband, and Gabriel, my son. It was a wonderful time and a blessing for all of us! And then, two years ago, I was one of several ministers chosen for the honor of presiding over her funeral service. My entire family on my father's side came together to mourn a fallen icon, and we celebrated her incredible and indelible influence on each of our lives.

This Thanksgiving, my little family and I are planning to head back to Cleveland to spend the holiday with my paternal grandfather in the house he shared with my grandmother for longer than I have been alive. I confess to having mixed feelings about this particular visit. On the one hand, I am so thrilled that my Papa (grandfather) can meet my new son, Ezra, and reconnect with my eldest son, Gabriel. We are very excited, but I know it won't be the same. The joy will be there, but it will be tinged with sorrow because even though we know Big Mama (grandma) is with the Lord now, it pains us that she is no longer here, and her absence is keenly felt.

I share this testimony for anyone for whom the holidays hold both great joy and great pain. As human beings, we are complex enough to feel both, and often at the same time. One feeling does not cancel out or discount the other, but they allow us to enjoy the entirety of the human experience. Jesus, who was fully God but also fully human, also embodied this complexity. At the Passover before His death, Jesus felt terrible sorrow for what He knew was about to happen. But He also felt indescribable joy because He knew what would become of His sacrifice, namely, that He would be paving the way for us to live with Him for all eternity. God



created us with the ability to experience these contradicting emotions because we are made in His image; in other words, these feelings are not a bug in our faith, rather, they are a feature of the complexity and the intricacy of His creation! After all, someone much wiser than me has noted, “It is no coincidence that tears are caused by both pain and joy.”

So, this holiday season, I encourage us all to trust in God and in His plan and choose to thank Him for the hard times as well as the joyous times because in all times, we can praise Him. Joy and pain are not so very different, and however you are feeling this holiday season, know this: when your Father looks at you, He wouldn’t change a thing. You are perfectly and wonderfully made, and your Father loves you. However you feel about the holidays is just fine, and there is no one way to feel about this time of year. We are all on this journey together toward Christ, and I encourage you to reach out to someone if you want to express joy or grief this holiday season, or just need some company. May He bless us all richly as we go!

Blessings,
Pastor Ashley Flores

PLAYING LOVE: WAVES OF ROMANCE AND MUSIC



In the film *The Legend of 1900* written and directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, there’s a moment so beautifully crafted that it’s hard to forget: a pianist, a melody, and a fleeting connection through a ship’s window. It’s the kind of scene that makes you want to believe in love at first sight - or at least in the power of music to capture what words can’t.

In the scene, 1900, an enigmatic music prodigy who grew up on an ocean liner, sits at an old upright piano during a recording session, improvising flashy, almost aimless runs. Outside a beautiful young lady looks into her own reflection on a porthole which for her is also a one-way mirror. As 1900 turns his head to the porthole and his eyes fall on the girl, the magic begins. His playing softens into a melody that feels as if it’s been waiting to be awakened and found. 1900 never received any formal music training, but the music flows from his fingertips so naturally, channeling raw emotions. He’s a man of few words, but his music speaks everything for him. Ennio Morricone’s score works its wonders here: the left-hand arpeggios imitate gentle sea waves, while the melody rises, tender and contemplative. It’s a moment of pure connection, whether real or imagined.

For me, this is one of the most romantic scenes in *The Legend of 1900*, with Morricone’s music leading the way. The composer, who gave us so many unforgettable film scores, infuses this movement with both longing and intimacy. The melody of “Playing Love” seems to speak directly to

the heart, carrying an emotional weight that transcends the scene itself.

As you listen to “Playing Love” this December, let the melody carry you and bring warmth to your heart. Whether it reminds you of the rhythm of the sea, a fleeting glance, or the beauty of a moment, it’s a piece that invites you to pause and reflect.

This holiday season, may your moments be filled with music and connection - timeless as the waves, and as unforgettable as 1900’s playing.

Blessings, Dr. Shiyu Wang



"THE SON OF GOD BECAME A MAN TO ENABLE MEN TO BECOME SONS OF GOD." -C.S LEWIS

I love this time of year! As we conclude what remains of November, and move on to the greatest time of year, it's hard not to get excited about the Christmas season. I know for me I love all the decorations, the food, the classic clay-mation movies, ugly sweaters and of course the presents!

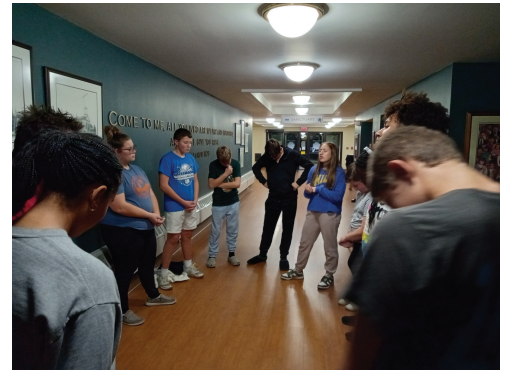
But as much as I love all these things, what truly makes this season the best, is the yearly reminder, of how much God truly loves us. God, the almighty, king of kings, lord of lords, humbled himself and became a child in order to embody the truest form of love. It's what Christmas is all about!



Knowing that I am tasked to make sure our wonderful group, is reminded of that. This month, we will conclude this year, by focusing on the being a blessing, a real gift to others. This month our group will be partnering with Harvest house on December 18th to spread the love of Christ, by acquiring supplies, assembling handbags and passing them out to the community at the Harvest House. Our group is excited for this opportunity to be a blessing to our community.

This past month we learned a lot by looking back in the Old Testament and then looking into the New Testament on how Jesus said or did things that reflected, important events of the past. It was great, we also concluded our November meetings with our cooking with Angie class. We taught our youth how to create thanksgiving meals and then donate those meals to a local shelter. Thanks to Angie and the wonderful parents that came out to help with this great opportunity to give back. Overall November was great for our group!

For this month not only will we be teaming up with Harvest house, but we will also be having a first ever scavenger hunt on Dec 1st, our youth will be challenged with puzzles and quizzes to see what they have learned this year! We will then “Christmas it up” with our annual Oasis Christmas party on Dec 15th. There we will have games, food, an ugly sweater contest and an epic white elephant exchange as well. We will also be passing out mission trip info for the upcoming year as well, so do not miss!



Oasis will then take a small break and on January 15th, return in the New Year with a kickoff party, welcoming students back to the New Year! I'm excited to see where God chooses to lead our group and the amount of growth that will come from it. Special thanks to all the parents who have helped or have supported our group, and thanks to you, church family! Thank you all for your prayers and donations to our group, together we can empower the next generation of believers! Praise God!

Blessings
Stephen Flores II
Youth Director of Oasis Youth Ministry

CENTRAL ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS



Central ELC Warm Glow Candle fundraiser THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone that purchased candles or donated to Central Early Learning Center during our Warm Glow Fundraiser. We were able to raise \$864 to go towards ensuring that we continue providing the best resources and opportunities for our little ones. Pick-up for all items will be the first week in December.

Rock Solid Thanksgiving Bags THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who donated food items for this year's Rock Solid Thanksgiving. With your support, we were able to help over 200 families have a Thanksgiving meal. Central has been partnering with RSM on this project for many years and our congregation has been extremely generous. Again, we thank everyone for their support.



Pastoral Visits

Do you know someone who could benefit from a visit? Let us know! We do our best to connect with all of our members but sometimes miss important information. If you or someone you know is in the hospital, has had surgery, or could just use a home visit, call the church office at 765-962-8543. We don't know unless you tell us!

Endowment Committee

As we move forward enjoying all God has provided, we need to make sure that all of our bases are covered.

- Do we have a will that clearly spells out our desires?
- Do we have proper insurance? Home, auto, and health?
- Are our investments in line with our needs now and in the future?

If you have any questions or concerns your Endowment Committee is available to meet with you.

- Planning: Do it for yourself, do not leave it to others.
- Funeral Planning: Have you established plans?
- Advanced Directives: Medical instructions in case of incapacity.
- Banking: Are you getting the best rates on your accounts.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND SERVICES

From festive gatherings to special services and community events, Central is ready to spread joy and make memories! Keep an eye out for all the ways you can join in and share God's love this season.

Our Neighborhood Christmas Festival - Saturday, December 7th

All Church Christmas Luncheon & Pastor Doug Appreciation- Sunday, December 15th

Longest Night Service - Saturday, December 21st 6:30pm

Christmas Eve Service - Tuesday, December 24th at 6:30pm

Christmas! - Wednesday, December 25th (Church will be closed 25th - 26th)

New Years Eve - Tuesday, December 31st (Church will be closed 31st - 1st)

Stay Connect with all things Central on our Facebook page
facebook.com/richmondcumc

HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

DOROTHY BROADWELL

MARY ANN BROOKS

ANN CASHNER

SANDI COX

DOUG JAMISON

KATHY KHAMIS

PAM MERCHANHOUSE

PAUL RIDER

JEFF SHERIDAN

TRICIA SHERIDAN

SARAH WRIGHT



2025 Altar Flowers

If you would like to place an order for Sunday altar flowers, please contact the church office at 765-962-8543. Flowers are \$25 and are billed through Jack Daggy Flowers. Many orders are standing from previous years so please check with us to ensure we have the correct dates for your orders in 2025. If you have any questions, please contact the church office.

Get involved!

Want to get more involved on Sundays? There are many ways to get involved with Sunday worship including; Hospitality, Ushers, Communion Helpers, Scripture Readers, Choirs, and more! There is a job for everyone. If you are interested in any of the areas listed above or have ideas, please contact the church office at 765-962-8543

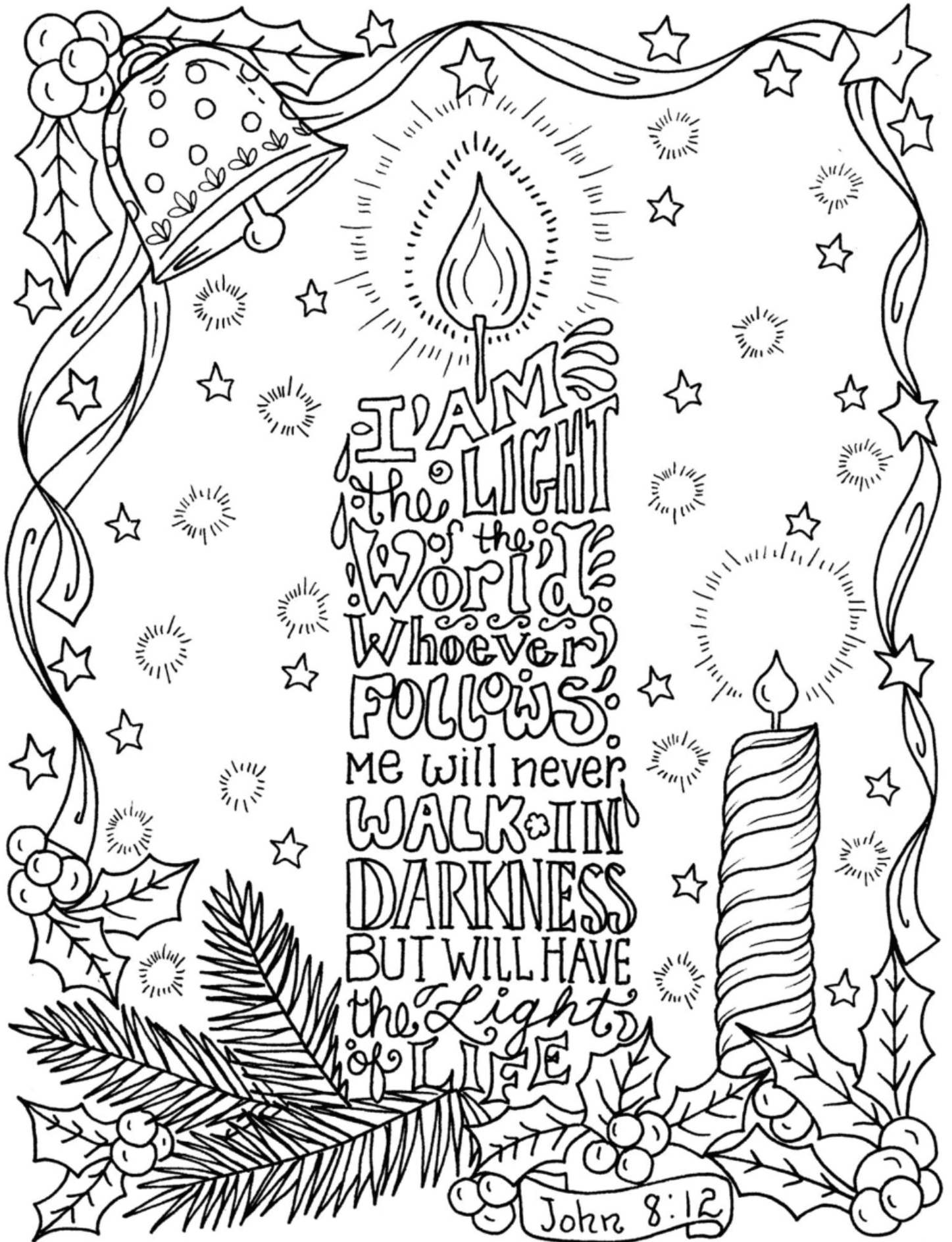


December 15th After Church Luncheon!

United Women of Faith will be celebrating Christmas and our church with an after-church luncheon on Sunday, December 15th. We thank everyone who supported our projects throughout the year. Join us for a light lunch right after church on December 15th in Fellowship Hall. We look forward to being in fellowship with you. UWF would also like to thank you to all who supported the United Women in Faith Pop-Up, pecan and noodle sales!

The Wisdom Study is back!

Join us Fridays at noon in the Memorial Room for a wonderful deep dive into the wisdom of the scriptures. Learn and discuss how biblical characters utilized or spurned wisdom, and discern in community how we can apply those lessons to our modern lives. During the month of December, we will delve into the Advent story and discover the biblical roots of the longing for a Messiah and the fulfillment of that longing in the surprising arrival of Jesus the Christ.



I AM
the LIGHT
of the World.
Whoever
FOLLOWS
me will never
WALK IN
DARKNESS
BUT WILL HAVE
the Light
of LIFE

John 8:12

DECEMBER 2024

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5 Low Vision 10:30am	6	7 Christmas Festival 4-6pm
8 Food Pantry Sunday	9 Mon. Morn. Con. 9am Trustees Mtg 6:30pm	10	11	12 Creative Hands 9am UWF 1pm Ad Council 6:30pm	13	14
15 All Church Christmas Luncheon	16	17	18 Lamplighter 10am Lunch Bunch 11:30am	19	20	21 Longest Night Service 6:30pm
22	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 6:30pm	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS CHURCH CLOSED		26	27
29	30	31 HAPPY NEW YEAR CHURCH CLOSED				

Sundays

Adult Sunday School: 9:00am
 Worship & Living Water
 Children's Church: 10:00am
 OASIS Teen group: 5:00pm

Mondays

Preschool 8:30am
 Women's Prayer 12:00pm
 Brianna's Hope 6:45pm

Wednesdays

Preschool 8:30am
 Men's Prayer 12:00pm

Fridays

Preschool 8:30am



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Christmas at Central UMC

Longest Night Service
December 21st at 6:30pm

Christmas Eve Service
December 24th at 6:30pm