

“She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” (Matthew 1:21-23)

December 2021

Merry Christmas Christiania family!

Jesus' birth brings God into a new relationship with people; God is, indeed, with us. Remember, the gift of Christ's presence is God's most wonderful action of love for people. In loving God and neighbor, Jesus is present with and aware of their needs and concerns. We hope you'll **join us** both in person at Christiania and Online to celebrate Christ's birth in **Worship on Christmas Eve (3:00, 4:30 and 9:00 pm) and on Christmas Day (9:00 am)**.

Christiania continues to live out a **legacy** of **connected community, service, and generosity** for over 160 years. We are blessed in so many ways. Like our great ancestors of faith, Abraham and Sarah, we are **“Blessed to be a blessing”** (Genesis 12:2-3). Thanks to all who continue to serve and nurture on behalf of God in this community of faith and beyond. In our nearly two years of pandemic ministry, much has changed, but that which is most important remains: we are the body of Christ, seeking to live and love as he did.

This fall, Council President Bruce Mohn challenged us to consider **increasing our giving**; both to finish 2021 strong and to fully support the ministries God has made us responsible for in 2022. He asked that we each consider increasing our giving during the last months of this year by 10% or more and also consider increasing our 2022 giving by 10% or more if we're able. Whatever your gifts and abilities, please know all contributions are welcome and appreciated.

The new year provides an opportunity to reflect on the past and **consider our intentions** going forward. We can consider the nature and quality of our relationships and ask: How am I present in my relationships with family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, others of the church, and God? How would I like to be present? It's a great time to think and pray with those closest to you and ask: How will we serve and support our church in the coming year? How will we use our time, talents, and resources? Will we continue in what we've always done, or will we look at this with a fresh, new vision and intention?

Christiania's 2022 Stewardship theme is **“Stewardship is Heart Work.”** Our strength and endurance come not from ourselves but as gifts from God. People of Christiania are known for service, generosity, and connected relationships. Thank you for your financial support and the time you continue to share—it has made a difference to God and this community. If you share the dream of growing with us, we invite you to join us in dreaming and imagining what God is doing in our midst (*“God is with us”*). We're dreaming of greater connectedness like new people reading Scripture in worship, a bigger choir, more helpers in the kitchen, and more people contributing to the budget we approve. We are dreaming of people committing themselves more intentionally: worshiping and giving more regularly and increasing their support. We're also dreaming of simple acts of service: inviting others to worship, reaching out to those in need, sharing coffee with a stranger, and new people serving on Council and Ministry Teams.

Stewardship can come in many forms. We serve self, family and church family, friends, coworkers, and God. How would you like to serve this year? When setting goals and intentions **ask God how you can challenge and stretch yourself**. When we're focused and concerned with our own comfort, it can be difficult to concern ourselves with needs beyond our own. Focus on self-comfort can make change and growth impossible. But if we are challenging ourselves in just one area we can stretch beyond the status quo and change can occur.

If all of us **set a stretch goal or challenge**, together our **"Heart Work" will accomplish much**. Where can you stretch? Do you sing to the radio? If so, come to choir. If you like to cook: how about sharing a dish on a Wednesday evening? When you consider the budget, can you increase your support? How about adding the price of a coffee a day to the collection plate? If you are blessed in a way to be able to afford more, please consider it. With every increase we are richly blessed.

Here are two verses to meditate on as you consider your intentions and goals for the New Year: ***"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"*** (Philippians 4:13); and ***"But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength..."*** (2 Timothy 4:17a). Together, in partnership with one another and God we can accomplish so much.

Many of you have already submitted your Estimate of Giving as well as your Time & Talent—for this we **thank you**. For those who have yet to submit, please continue to prayerfully consider how you will use your gifts of time, talents, and the financial resources that God has entrusted to your family in the year to come.

The **enclosed envelope** can be used for **Christmas Gifts, End-of-Year Gifts** as well as submitting your **2022 Estimate of Giving (Stewardship Goals)** and your **2022 Time & Talent (Interest Form)**. **Submit completed forms and gifts in the enclosed envelope and place in offering plates at worship, drop off at church, or in the mail.**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Lori, Joel, and Pastor Jon

Lori Clausen and Joel Ruen, Stewardship Team

Pastor Jon Rhodes