

DECEMBER



The most wonderful time of the year is upon us! You will be invited to attend your child's Christmas program later this month. Be sure to look for more information coming home from your child's teacher.

Thank you to everyone who participated in Operation Christmas Child. Your gifts will surely put smiles on many children's faces this Christmas! Thank you also for your generosity to a local food pantry – your donations were especially welcomed, needed and appreciated.

Registration for the 2024-2025 school year begins Dec 1st for church members and Dec 4th for all currently enrolled families. Please be sure to get your application in promptly as most classes fill quickly! Applications are accepted on a first come basis. Please put your application and \$60 check (\$50 registration + \$10 School Shirt) in a large manila envelope (do not fold – we want them to stack in order) and place in the mailbox by the front door. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the registration process.

And thank you for spreading the word about our school! So many new families come because they hear your testimony about the kind and loving care as well as excellent education your child is receiving. I appreciate your kind words. Thank you!

Weekday Playgroup, a church run program for 1-2 year olds, is also registering for next year. If you have a younger child, please call Angela Pagano at 908.790.1919 or email her at weekdayplaygroup@thecornernj.com for more information.

We are closed for the **Christmas Holiday** from December 18th-January 1st. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to school on January 2nd and 3rd.

We are waiting for quite a few **flu shot records**. Please remember that if your child is not yet 5 years old, in order to return to school in **January**, we must have flu shot documentation or a note from you claiming religious exemption or a note from your doctor claiming medical exemption. Please see me if you have any questions.

Notice: The children go outside to play when the weather permits, so please send in appropriate attire for outdoor play (labelled). Please be mindful of your children as you enjoy the playground after school.

You are warmly invited to attend **Christmas Eve Services** with us.
Here is the schedule:

Christmas Eve

4:00 PM – Children’s Service in the Sanctuary
8:00 PM – Traditional Service in the Sanctuary
10:00 PM – Contemporary Service in the Ministry Center

Christmas Hope by Holley Gerth

“I pull the nativity set from the box, releasing it from its blanket of bubble wrap. The pieces are ceramic. Pure white. The donkey is missing half an ear. It belonged to my grandmother and every year I think of her when I set it on my shelf.

She had polio at age twenty-eight and spent most of her years in a wheelchair. I loved the patterns her wheels left in the carpet, like a trail to somewhere secret and magical.

A pastor came to visit her in the hospital. He said, *“Frances, this can make you bitter or better.”* She would always say, with a twinkle in her eyes, *“I chose better.”* I run my fingers across the baby in the manger as I tell myself this story again. The Jesus in this nativity will always mean *hope* to me because of it.

It seems every nativity set comes with a story. Maybe it’s an heirloom full of memories, a special purchase on an outing that brings back a cocoa-scented moment, a relic from childhood with beloved dust in the cracks, a gift from a friend that came in a package with a red bow on top.

What I love about all these nativities is that Jesus is unique in each one. In my nativity He is *hope* and to someone else He might be a reminder of *peace* and to you He could be *comfort and joy*. Oh, who He is doesn’t change. But how His love reveals itself in our lives is different in each of our hearts, each of our homes. This is beautiful to me. A kind of Christmas mystery that I will never fully understand on this spinning, broken earth.

I arrange the pieces of the nativity. I step back and smile. Then I set Jesus at the center, exactly where He should be.”

I believe this is a reminder of how it should be at Christmas – Jesus in the center. After all, his birth is the reason for our celebration. But I know how easy it is to get distracted by the shopping, wrapping, baking, parties and the list goes on and on. So I hope each one of us, myself included, will make the time to slow down, reflect, and thank God for the precious gift of his son, Jesus.

Wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas,

Lorie