



January 2024

Volume 132

KNOX NEWS

It might not be the most relevant time to be talking about gardening, but it seems like the right time to be talking about cultivating faith in a rocky world.

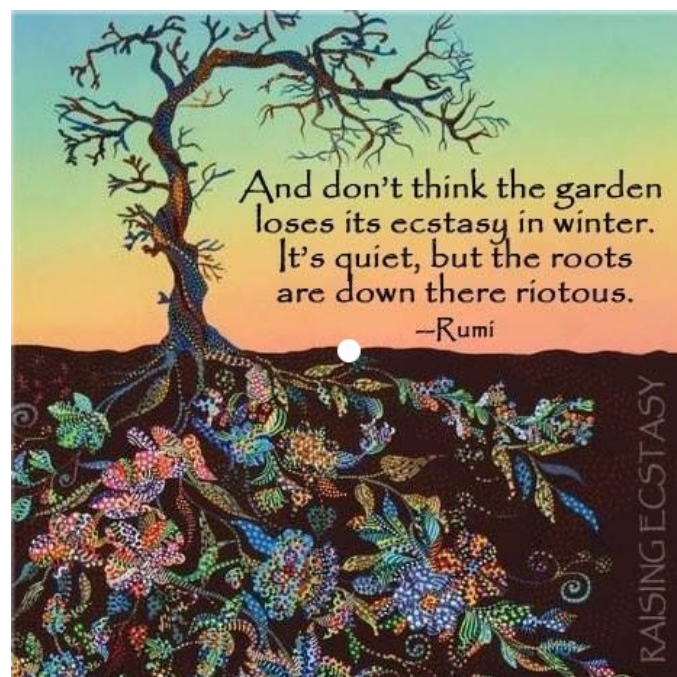
Jesus spoke of a sower going out to sow seeds. Some fell on the path, some on rocky ground, some amongst thorns, some on good soil (producing a harvest exceeding the sower's wildest dreams) *Mark 4:1-20*.

We may be far too familiar with all that blocks God's word and way from entering and strengthening our life; too much frenzied activity, too little depth, too much trouble, too many allurements – we get it. But what about the good soil? What does it take to cultivate good soil?

The good soil exists in each of us. In that we were created in the image of God, our soul is designed to attend to God's voice, God's word, God's will. In ways we do not always know and in places we cannot always see, God's word is taking root and bearing fruit. It takes a miracle to just get a tomato and it takes a miracle for the word of God to take root in our lives, bring understanding, prompt action, and equip devoted disciples.

Our part in the miracle of growth is to stay close to Jesus and make sure the traffic, shallow thinking, and unhealthy attachments don't block the potential of the word and way of God to renew faith and transform life. We live in a rocky world, and fortunately, the Sower, keeps sowing seeds and inviting us to cultivate faith and watch miracles happen, beyond our wildest dreams.

Tom



January 2024

JANUARY CALENDAR

January 8

Session & Deacons
7pm—Trinity Hall

January 9

Women's Small Group
7pm—Lounge

January 16

Planning Meeting w/ Committees
11:30am—Trinity Hall

January 23

Community Meal
5:00—Drive-thru

Stephen Minister's Meeting
7pm—Lounge

January 25

NOICA Cooking Club
6pm—Trinity Hall

January 28

Healing Prayer Meeting
11am—Lounge



JANUARY HYBRID WORSHIP

January 7

Communion Sunday
Intergenerational Service
Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan
Mark 4:1-20
A Sower Went Out to Sow

January 14

Healing Prayer
Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan
Mark 4:21-25
Hidden Light

January 21

Rev. Dr. Tom MacMillan
Mark 4:35-41
Still the Storm in Me

January 28

Dr. Jon Fancher
Mark 5:24-34
The Quest for Healing

CALVIN UNIVERSITY LECTURES

The Spiritual Growth Committee has decided to offer this information about a series of 15 lectures at Calvin University online during the month of January.

These speakers have been curated nationally to speak of issues that are trending and often address concerns of the Christian Community. Online, go to January Series at Calvin University and look up the speakers and daily lectures, at 12:30 PM for 15 weekdays, mid-January. These lectures will broaden your horizons in the world and make you aware of how many authors and scholars are impacting the world. The month of January has traditionally been time for professors and students alike to look up, look out, travel, and become more informed of God's world. Contact Glenn Ploegstra with questions at gsplloegstra@att.net.

DECEMBER RECAPS

Mitten Tree Donations

Thank you to everyone who donated new mittens, hats, scarves and socks for children and adults. And, thank you to Congregational Life for organizing the Christmas mitten tree donations. Our prayer has been that these items will keep families warm and remind them of God's love. The donations were delivered to these locations in Cleveland, Elyria and Lorain: 1) Garden Valley Neighborhood families, 2) Silver Spirits Women's Bible Study group, 2) Neighborhood Alliance Family Shelter, 3) Kanisha House Community Center.

Angel Tree

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Angel Tree program! Thanks to your generosity, we were able to help six North Olmsted families have a better Christmas.

Spirit Lake Shoeboxes

A big thank you to everyone who filled shoeboxes for the Spirit Lake Shoebox Christmas program this year; 91 shoeboxes filled with toys and goodies were sent to North Dakota to be distributed to children on the reservation. So many children were blessed by your shoebox gifts!

Jim Traxler Retirement

We formally wished a happy retirement to Jim Traxler, our Bell Choir Director, on December 10 during morning worship and at the annual Christmas Concert that afternoon. Then, like Jim has always done, he blessed us twice more by directing the Bell Choir on the third Sunday of Advent and led the Elders of Jazz for our Christmas Eve morning worship. The unique thing about Jim's gift of music to John Knox is that he kept "showing up" every time we needed a leader for one of our music programs. In his years with us he directed the Chancel Choir, the Bell Choir, the John Knox Brass and brought us the Elders of Jazz. His thank you note to the Worship Committee contains a statement worth sharing. "I have always tried to remember that we were performing for an audience of One, and hopefully lifting up the congregation in the process." Thank you, Jim. You have definitely achieved what you intended.

Happy Retirement!



Cultivating Faith IN A ROCKY WORLD

As 2024 begins, join us for our new series where we walk through the Gospel of Mark and seek ways to prepare the “soil” of our hearts. Using the parable of the sower in Mark 4 as metaphor for creating room in our lives for God’s seeds to take root, we will be examining the life of Jesus and Romans 12:1-2 to bring us closer to God and each other.



MENTAL HEALTH SERIES

We are happy to be hosting a three part series on mental health lead by Nancy Virden. Nancy is a board-certified coach and the founder of *Always the Fight Ministries*, a Christian mental health advocacy effort. This advocacy aims to inform churches and the general public on meaningful ways to support loved ones and friends who fight mental illness or abuse, draw a desperate population into the discovery of joy, and openly discuss the difficult topic of mental health with compassion. Nancy leads these discussions by combining her love for the bible and her desire to help those who are hurting.



These seminars will be held on Sunday February 18, March 17, and April 21 from 11:15 AM to 1:00 PM in Trinity Hall. All are welcome to attend one, two, or all three of these seminars. A light lunch will be served with each presentation.

Feel free to contact Tom Macmillan, Laurie Knowlton, Marty Cook, or Chris Hoffa with any questions you may have about this series.

BE THE BRIDGE

Be the Bridge Offerings

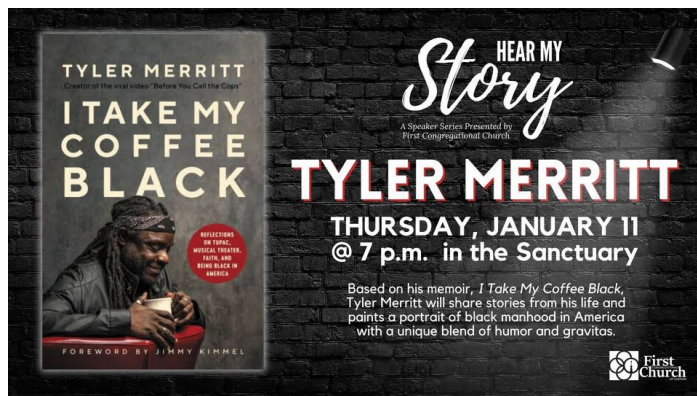
Congregational Church of Hudson on January 11, at 7 p.m. presents Tyler Merritt. Tyler Merritt, a Jimmy Kimmel favorite, is a Nashville-based actor, comedian, musician, and creator of The Tyler Merritt Project, who has multiple TV and movie credits on ABC, NBC, Netflix, Apple TV+, and Disney. His viral video "Before You Call the Cops" (released by The Tyler Merritt Project) has been viewed by over 100 million people worldwide. **Registration is required.**

**I Take My Coffee Black, An Evening with Tyler Merritt
Thursday, January 11 at 7 p.m.**

Sanctuary

**Advance registration required. Use link provided or
call church office at 330-650-4048.**

Books for sale and book signing following program.

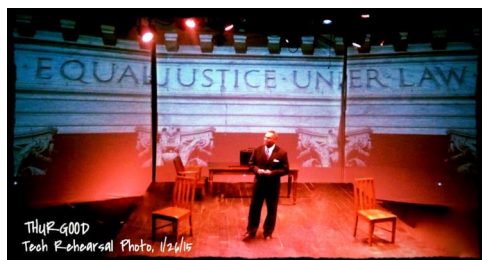


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Based on his memoir, *I Take My Coffee Black*, Merritt shares stories from his life and paints a portrait of black manhood in America with a unique blend of humor and gravitas. From growing up in Las Vegas in a multi-cultural community and realizing that he wasn't always welcome, attending a small Bible college in Santa Cruz because he thought they had a great theater program (they didn't), to his career as an actor, author, and activist, Merritt gives audiences a glimpse into his world, at turns laugh-out-loud funny, at turns unexpectedly candid.

Copies of *I Take My Coffee Black* will be available for purchase at the event and a book signing will follow the program.

Another Opportunity to Learn



A dramatic reading of the play *THURGOOD* comes To Forest Hill Church (3031 Monticello Blvd, Cleveland Heights) Saturday afternoon, January 20. The accomplished actor Greg White, who was understudy to the play *Thurgood*, by George Stevens last fall at the Allen Theater in downtown Cleveland, will give the dramatic reading. In 2014 Mr. White starred in the production of *Thurgood* that was put on by the Ensemble Theater (pictured). That performance arguably assisted Greg being named BEST ACTOR by Cleveland Scene 2015.

The doors will open at 3:00 PM. Light refreshments will be offered before the performance.

Please respond to racialequitybuddies@fhpresb.org. Afterwards, tables of six to eight will discuss the dramatic reading, the life of Thurgood Marshall, and his relevance today.

Get CONNECTED



Thursday, January 25

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Trinity Hall

Plan to join us as our friends from NOICA teach us more about their traditions and experience the tasty dishes they prepare.

Reservations are a must so our friends know how much food is needed.

You can reserve your spot now by contacting Connie Smith at connie928smith@gmail.com

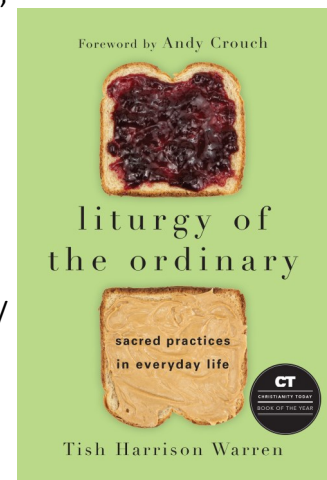
BOOK STUDY

In the midst of our ordinary days, our Savior meets us. In overlooked moments and daily routines, we can become aware of God's presence in surprising ways.

Trish Harrison Warren's book, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, she takes a look at parts of an ordinary day - waking up, brushing our teeth, looking for lost keys, sitting in traffic, making phone calls, etc. - and shows how we can find the sacred in the routine, even mundane, parts of our lives.

As the author states. "[God] knew I'd be in today as it is, in my home where it stands, in my relationships with their specific beauty and brokenness, in my particular sins and struggles."

In a short-term book study, with facilitator Vicky Slowik, we will explore how our daily lives shape us, and in those moments, through God's grace, we can see that we are God's beloved. Join us February 6, and 20, March 5 and 19 at 7:00 PM. A limited number of books are available for purchase in the church office. Cost is \$10/book. A sign-up will be sent in the coming weeks.



John Knox Church

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRY

Night in Bethlehem was met with a lot of excitement from our Sunday School kids as many volunteered to play a role in our live nativity. Julia was Mary, and Henry was Joseph. Ava and Lyla were angels. Meanwhile, David, Micah, and Sam were shepherds who had two sheep, a donkey, and steer to watch over! All of them were committed to their roles and were outside in the nativity scene with breaks to grab a hot cocoa and do the indoor activities. Inside, our youth volunteers were Maria, Riley, and Tina at the ornament decorating table. Jonah and Jordyn showed kids how to make a Lego star, and Goliath, the camel was watched over by King Chris and King Stephanie. Fun was had by all!

We want to take advantage of this opportunity to give thanks to the many people who make our Sunday School and events possible!

Thank you Christian Education Committee: Susanne Bendoraitis, Leanne Dewyer, Chair, Brad Harbison, Sue Twining, Sue Isaac, Lori Haag, Beckie Tweedle, Denise Pappu, and Melissa Stobe for their valued guidance and suggestions for our events in 2023!

A HUGE thanks to our Sunday School teachers Sue Twining and Wendy Kaiser, and also for their assistants: Sandy Legg, Sue Isaac and Julie Harbison. Thanks also to Lori Haag and Karen Koza for their help with the Sunday School too! You all make our program a success with your kindness and engaging conversation with the kids!

Welcome Back to Denise Pappu who leads our Toddler Time! Stop by to say "hi" to her Thursdays at 10:00 AM. She has lots of plans for Toddler Time in 2024!

Happy New Year! As you welcome in the new year, here are a few family faith formation ideas you could try to celebrate the new year.

Family Practice 1: A Gratitude Cafe. You will need paper (the bigger the better), crayons, pens, etc. For this time, get a special drink for each person (cocoa, coffee, fun soda). Gather the family around and explain that we are going to do a prayerful art experience where we thank God for 2023. In the middle of the paper, you can write "2023" or "Grateful 2023". Invite each person to take a section of the paper and write or draw their favorite memories from the year for which they are especially grateful. Play music and give people time to doodle, chat, draw, and enjoy remembering together. When people feel ready, go around and share the moments you were grateful for, end with a short prayer thanking God for a great year, and inviting God to be present in the new year.

Family Practice 2: Cell phone prayer. Invite everyone to gather around for a time of gratitude for the past year. Instead of paper and pencils, bring all the devices that you take pictures on in your family. Take time to go through your photos of the last year, sharing favorites, laughing together, and enjoying time. At the end, share one hope for the new year. Close with prayer thanking God for the past year and inviting God to be a part of this year.

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John Knox Church

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRY

Join us for Intergenerational Worship, January 7, at 10:00 AM. The JKPC staff is working hard to make these services intentionally intergenerational. The Remix Band will lead worship and, instead of a sermon, short messages with Pastor Tom. We will end the service with communion. We hope to see you there!

Youth Happenings: Youth Group January 7, 4:00-6:00 PM. Kicking of the New Year with Boba, Church Wide Hide and Seek, and introducing our new series: *Faith in a Rocky World*. Each youth group will be looking for ways to notice God in our lives and activities that can help us. Hope to see you there. We will meet in the Youth Room.

Youth Sunday School: Youth, join us for youth Sunday School each Sunday at 10:00 AM, during worship. This season, we will be working on planning the youth service. This is a meaningful time and so fun to be creative with others. The youth service will be March 3. We meet each Sunday except for intergenerational services, January 7 and February 4.



Youth Group Calendar

Youth Sunday School Sundays 10:00AM, except for intergenerational services, January 7 and February 4

January 7	Youth Group 4:00-6:00 PM
January 21	Youth group, 4:00-6:00 PM
February 4	Youth Group Movie Night. 5:00-8:00 AM w/ pizza
February 18	Youth Group - Time TBA
March 3	Youth Service, 10:00 AM. Stay to go out to lunch- celebrate a great job!
March 17	Youth Group 4:00-6:00 PM



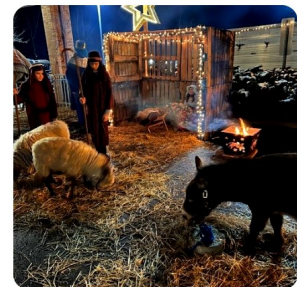
Christmas Concert

2023



Night In Bethlehem

2023





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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE

You're not alone.
God cares about you. So do we.