

At Countryside Covenant Church, we are a Community  
growing in the Grace and the Truth of Jesus Christ as we ...

- Worship
  - Disciple
    - Serve
      - Multiply



VOLUME 19, ISSUE 12  
December 2020

## Sacred Places of Christmas and Revelation in Review

- Pastor Jon Black

### Sacred Places of Christmas

One of the most beloved Christmas songs is "I'll be Home for Christmas." We can all think back to Christmases past and conjure up warm memories. We might think of specific places like eating Christmas brunch with our family in our homes of upbringing; going over to our grandparent's house on Christmas Eve and having to wait patiently for what seemed like hours for grandma and grandpa to finish opening their presents so that we could go back to playing with the cousins; or Christmas shopping with loved ones in our hometown shops lit with Christmas lights and the sounds of Christmas carols playing in the stores.

This Advent, we will be focusing on the theme of "Places." There are many significant places mentioned in the story surrounding Jesus' birth: Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Egypt, the manger, the fields, the Temple, heaven, and earth.

This Advent, we will unpack the meaning behind some of these sacred places and what significance they have in our lives.



### Revelation in Review

What was I thinking when I decided to preach through the Book of Revelation during a contentious election and politicized pandemic? Well, I guess things couldn't get any messier.

Over the weeks, we unpacked many key themes in the Book of Revelation. Despite the various beliefs regarding how and when the end time events will play out, all believers can agree on the primary truths of Revelation.

First, it is the Lamb of God who came for us, lived for us, died for us, came back to life for us and will return for us....so that we can be with him forever and ever.

Second, until he returns, we are to live our lives in the same manner that he lived his life, according to the way of the Lamb; namely, the way of sacrificial living for God and for others. This is how we will experience victorious living as overcomers, conquerors for Christ even when we encounter difficulties.

We overcome our enemy by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony; not by the ways and methods of this sinful world (control, manipulation, violence, retaliation, etc).

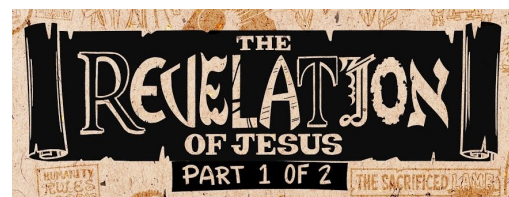
*Jesus taught "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it."*

- Luke 9:23-24

There are two New Testament passages that best sum up the book of Revelation and the Way of the Lamb that we are called to live out - (Phil 2:5-11 and Rom 8:31-37). Take time to meditate on these passages with Revelation in mind.

Third, we know the end of the story. Jesus has already won...and he guarantees our victory (even when it feels as though we are on the losing side at times). We will experience the greatest comeback in all history.

Finally, I would like to recommend an excellent video resource from The Bible Project that best summarizes what I've tried to unpack these past several weeks from the Revelation sermon series. This video resource reviews the themes of every book in the Bible. The Revelation summary comes in two parts (12 minutes each). You can google **The Bible Project – Revelation** on your computer or cell phone and it will direct you to the website or to the YouTube video.

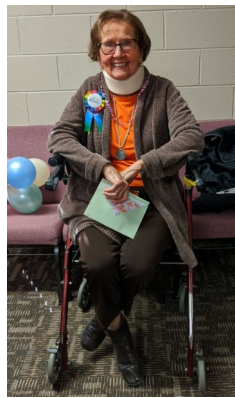




*Every person 55 plus  
growing in relationship  
with Jesus Christ and  
serving in His kingdom  
ministry.*

Our Covid-19 Cov Talk Event was well attended, both on-line and in person with over 120 people total! Dr. Sheila Gorman and PA Erika Selzer shared their experience and medical expertise on Covid-19 and its impact on our community. Amy Brunk moderated the discussion and fielded questions from our audience ranging from masks to self-care to how the infection spreads to our hospital's methods. To view the interview, go to Countryside's Website and look for the "Covid-19 Updates" button on our front page.

The Widow's Connection, Countryside Staff, and friends gathered in the church parlor to celebrate Betty Brandsted's 99th birthday. Words of wisdom from the guest of honor reminded us of the goodness of God and the blessings of a life well-lived. Congratulations, Betty, and thank you for your Godly example! **Widow's Connection will meet at church Tuesday, December 1 at 9am.** Please wear a mask as we are in Phase 2 of Covid.



Due to our present Phase 2 Covid-19 status, Crescendo's Christmas Party on Dec. 8 is cancelled. Instead, participate in the **Wednesday, December 2 "All Church Christmas Caroling Event"** which will be done safely and effectively as an alternative celebration and service to our shut-ins. The event is outdoors and you can travel in your own car.



For ideas on how to have a meaningful holiday with your grandkids whether near or far, see the website LegacyCoalition.com. They have dozens of articles and podcasts on grandparenting, retirement, and more!

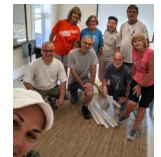
One of my favorite authors and thinkers is Craig Denison of Denison Forum. He has a top 10 list of how to live missionally, and I'll be sharing these from month to month in the Pulse.

### 10: Discover Your Personal Mission

Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote, "The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for." (The Brothers Karamazov)

The first step to living missionally is discovering what is uniquely motivational in life for you specifically. Every day we have the choice of letting our task list rule us, or bringing our unique calling to those tasks. And discovering your personal mission is the defining first step in seeking to live on purpose, rather than simply getting by.

God has a unique calling for you, a true purpose behind everything he's called you to. You are on this earth at this specific time and place for a real reason. And if you'll create space for his guidance, God will show you who you are, how he's made you, and guide you in accomplishing your purpose here. Contact Lynn Black for a conversation about your gifts!



### Upcoming in 2021...

**CovTalk on McPherson Housing Coalition's Tiny Home Community**, building affordable housing for those needing a hand up in our community. Learn about our At-home Missions Project in March with cement work, construction, painting, electrical work, meal prep, etc.

**Santa Fe Trail's 200th Anniversary Commemoration Events** – dates forthcoming

**April weekend retreats**, either working at Covenant Cedars to open the camp or a spiritual retreat and prayer walk at the brand new state park, Little Jerusalem Badlands.





## *Ministry to Women*

*"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").* Matthew 1:23

Our newest Bible study, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* causes us to focus on this Advent season as we set aside time to celebrate that Christ came to us as a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and to look forward with anticipation to the moment when He will return as our triumphant King. It's a season to rejoice!

The other day I googled the question, "how do I prepare my heart for Advent?" Our King has come, and we celebrate His coming with the Advent and Christmas season. So I have determined to prepare my heart for Advent in these three ways:

### 1. Rest

I understand *rest* is not synonymous with this season, but a restful life will be a stress-free life. And I'm all about stress-free. I have decided to make time for rest this Christmas season. I will not let the rush interrupt my time of rest. Whether that's nap time, going to bed early, or saying no to crazy "gift wrapping" ideas. Rest will be a priority this season. Will you make time for rest this season?

### 2. Say 'No'

Saying "no" to some of the "usual" things may be easier this year. And I'm hopeful that saying 'no' will free up the opportunity to say 'yes' to the really important things.

### 3. Get into God's Word

I think I may have heard the Christmas story approximately 1,233,902 times. But God's Word is still alive, still breathing new truths to our hearts. So I am determined to read the familiar passages with fresh eyes, asking the Lord to meet me in His Word. Will you try it? I promise God will reveal something special. He never fails! His Word is a light in the darkness. From the beginning, God wanted to bring light to the world.

In the Old Testament we find promises of a coming Messiah. He would be a light to shine into our dark world full of sin. For so many years God was silent, but light suddenly burst forth! Jesus, who came to earth to show us the Father, is the Light of the World. Darkness seems to pull out the light, leaving us feeling somehow empty.

So how do we fill our hearts in the middle of darkness? The truth of God's Word!

I encourage you to join me during the busy advent season, to find stillness. Remain quiet and seek rest. Reflect on the

glory of Christ – the redeeming Lamb and Son of Righteousness. The King of Glory has come. Let's shine a light in the darkness.

Please consider joining us for **A Woman's Night of Service on Monday, November 30**. We'll assemble projects that will be distributed to the women's shelters, the Food Bank, Christmas basket recipients and to single moms. Our goal will be to social distance and have stations set in different areas ... gym, Student Center and Room 5.

And be sure to pick up our gift to you this Advent season! They'll be handed out at worship services on November 22 and 29 as well as in the office. You'll want to get it before December 1 if at all possible.

Even in this season of uncertainty when the brokenness of our world weighs heavily upon us, we can rejoice too. We can be a people full of joy even now. Emmanuel will come to us again. We can trust it because He said it. He promised, *"Yes, I am coming soon."* (Rev. 22:20a)

Blessings to you, Linda



### Christmas Food Baskets

Our church family will distribute Christmas baskets to those who would be helped by such gifts of love. If you have a name of a family that we should consider giving baskets to, please let Linda in the church office know. The deadline to bring food items is December 16th.

Any of the following items may be brought and placed in one of the boxes either in the foyer or the library area. These are just a few suggestions. Other items are welcome.

- \* Canned vegetables & fruit
- \* Canned meats (tuna, chicken, etc.)
- \* Canned & boxed soups
- \* Paper products (toilet paper, Kleenex)
- \* Peanut Butter, jam, jelly
- \* Crackers, cereal
- \* Cake mixes, frostings
- \* Bath soap, laundry soap
- \* Flour, sugar
- \* Rice, beans, pasta
- \* Coffee, tea



## Adult Christian Formation

With Phase 2 of Covid-19 we have gone to Zoom for all adult CF classes until January 2021. Contact your CF teacher or Lynn Black for your class' Zoom link.

- 8:45 am That the World May Know (201) with Bob Williford
- 10 am Immerse New Testament (301) with Jerry Rogers and Jacob and Bobbie Kaufman
- 10 am Develop Leaders (401) with Jeff Houston and Tony Wedel
- 11 am Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage (201) with O'Dells and Blacks

Precepts for Women and Books of the Bible plan to resume Jan. 3rd in person.

**New Adult CF in 2021! Parenting Your Adult Child (201) with Gordon Mohn.** Address issues such as when to rescue and when to not, letting go, how to keep your faith when your child seems to be abandoning theirs, how to forgive yourself for parenting regrets, how to move into an adult-adult relationship with your children, how to pray for your adult children, hurdles to independence, and much more. This class will be entirely on Zoom.

**New Adult CF in 2021! Spiritual Parenting by Michelle Anthony; for Parents of Young Families (201).** Experience a fresh, meaningful parenting approach as you think intentionally about what kind of family you want to be. Learn practical ways to create an environment in your home where conversations about God are central, natural, and formational. Get ideas for quality dinner conversations, activities, growth for yourself, and more. Format TBD due to Covid 19. In-person preferred, but Zoom is an option.

## Connections Team

The first five minutes in a new space are mission critical for people deciding whether or not a church is for them. **God can use you** to be the first step in someone joining our church! Are you naturally friendly? Do you enjoy helping people find what they need? Can you offer an "elbow of hospitality" to our people as they arrive for church? Let Lynn Black know that you are interested in helping to create a warm, welcoming environment at Countryside by greeting folks as they arrive for church, either in person or on-line. 620-241-4499 contact Lynn Black.

## COUNTRYSIDE'S CANCELLATION POLICY:

In the event of inclement weather, notices will be posted on tv stations KSN, KAKE, KWCH, KNGL-KBBE Radio as well as our Facebook page or the church's website [www.csidecov.com](http://www.csidecov.com).



## Thank You's

Countryside Church,  
Thank you so much for the prayers & flowers I received. I am thankful it is behind me. God is good.

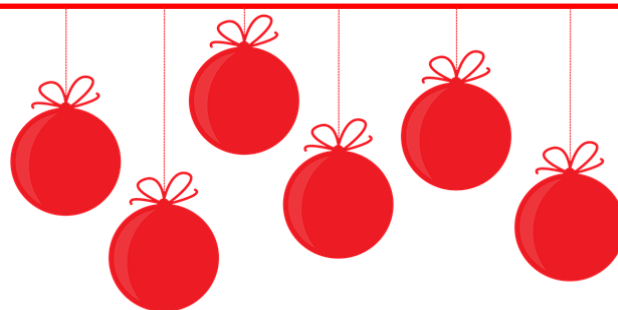
Charlotte Becker

Thank you for all the wonderful ladies who came to celebrate at the baby shower! We had a great time and lots of laughs with y'all. All the generous gifts are much appreciated.

Love, Aleasha, Kaesie & Mackynzie

We deeply appreciate all the heartfelt prayers and every care and concern for all our family in this, our darkest hour. But even in the darkness, the Lord's light surrounds us.

Jack & Doris Wells



## Church Life Update

### Wedding:

Teagan Pacey & Dylan Baldwin,  
October 17



### Birth:

Devlyn Dae, born to Levi & Kayla Sides,  
October 25

Tesni Faye, born to Spencer & Amanda Brown, November 11

### New Members:

Bob & Linda Andersen, Laura Bruce, Nate Johnson, Tina Larabee, Lucas & Larissa Neece, Kelly & Kathy Nelson, Philip Radatz, Dee & Phyllis Scherich, Tricia Sondergard, Bob & Donna Stucky, Bonnie Thiessen.

**The following couples will be celebrating milestone anniversaries! You are welcome to send them a card to celebrate!**

Dec. 18: Dave & Jaymie O'Dell-50th  
(P.O. Box 1032, McPherson)

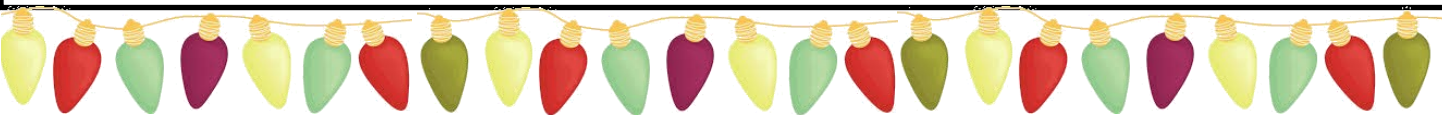
Dec. 20: Paul & Wanieta Penner-65th  
(957 15th Avenue, McPherson)

## December Lifestumin Schedule

- 2 | 6:30 pm Edge Youth Group (Grades 6-8)  
8:00 pm Ignite Youth Group (Grades 9-12)
- 9 | 6:30 pm Edge Youth Group (Grades 6-8)  
8:00 pm Ignite Youth Group (Grades 9-12)
- 10 | 6-8 pm Ignite Service Project
- 16 | 6:30 pm Edge Youth Group Christmas Party (Grades 6-8)  
8:00 pm Ignite Youth Group Christmas Party (Grades 9-12)
- 17 | Lifestumin Volunteers at Angel Tree



In an ever-changing world, we give thanks to God who is still at work and seeing us through another season of navigating the unknown. Lifestumin has adjusted our Wednesday night youth group schedule to keep everyone safe and socially distanced. Edge is gathering from 6:30-7:30 pm and Ignite from 8-9 pm. Students are asked to keep their masks on while in the building and socially distance. I am proud to say the students continue to do a great job of this! Edge students were able to gather with Salina First Covenant at the beginning of November for a prayer walk and fun at The Alley. We finished the day helping a member of our church by cleaning up leaves. Edge and Ignite also helped pack shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. There are so many ways to continue to serve the world around us, especially in this season of Covid. As we head into December, students will have many opportunities to serve. Students are invited to volunteer as bell-ringers in partnership with the Salvation Army at the north door at Dillons, look for sign-ups. Ignite is partnering with the Optimist Club to shop and wrap gifts for teens in need in McPherson County. We will do this on Thursday, December 10th from 6-8 pm. We will also have the opportunity to help organize donations for distribution for the McPherson County Angel Tree on Thursday, December 17th. We will continue to gather on Wednesdays in December for youth group, however, in-person Christian Formation classes on Sunday mornings have been canceled through Christmas. Students participating in Confirmation are continuing on Zoom, Sundays at 10 am. Please contact Kelly if you need the information for the link. Please refer to the church website and church app under Student Ministries to stay up to date on upcoming events. You can also follow us @Lifestumin on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for announcements. Text @lsminfo to 81010 for text updates!



### Update from Pastor Jeremy Bower:

This week marks about a month into our pre-deployment training here in Kansas. Once we complete this training, we will be given a break for Thanksgiving and then headed on a flight to Texas. We will stay in Texas for about another month and complete additional training as we prepare to leave for the Middle East. I have had many good conversations with our soldiers and leaders and have done a few counseling sessions for soldiers experiencing hardships with their families back home. I continue offering chapel service and communion each week. For the past two weeks, the message has focused on "Hearing God's Voice" and "Discerning God's Voice." My Religious Affairs Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), SGT Erik Wold, has volunteered to help lead musical worship during the services which has been an added blessing. I am grateful to have another Christian brother work with me side-by-side this year.



During this month, I met with each of our soldiers and validated their religious preference. +90% identify as some sort of Christian faith. Our unit only has 3 Atheists, a handful of Agnostics, and a few "No-Religious Preference." I look forward to ministering to all of our soldiers and pushing them to explore what they believe and why they believe it.

I had an opportunity to offer the invocation and benediction at a Purple Heart Ceremony in Hiawatha, KS for a Kansas soldier who was wounded almost a decade ago in northern Iraq. Additionally, our brigade commander, COL Paul Schneider, asked me to offer prayer at every single one of our daily update meetings which I feel honored to do. Things are going well and I do miss being home with my family and my extended church family. I really appreciate the love and support you are offering my family while I am gone. May God bless all of you until we see each other again. If you want to follow my unit and get updates with pictures and videos, please go to the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/130thFAB/>



# Countryside Kids



## KIDS CLUB

**1st-5th Grade**

**School days 8:00-11:30**

During the month of December we will be offering additional support to families as children transition to online learning. Children will bring their school work and devices and we will make sure they get connected to their classrooms at their scheduled times. **Space is limited and your child must have a spot reserved before they are dropped off.** Contact Amy for more info!

## KIDS TOWN IN DECEMBER



The Christmas season is filled with many celebrations but Jesus being born is the biggest reason to celebrate! Even though we have heard the story of baby Jesus many times by now, for your youngest kids, it's still a fairly new story that they usually only hear once a year. Help them feel the wonder and excitement of Christmas each week, in anticipation of the big day!

As many of you make decisions about what is best for your family regarding in-person attendance we want you to know that we are here to support you in whatever way fits your family. If you need take-home boxes for lessons contact Amy!

## SCHEDULE CHANGES FOR DECEMBER

While we are in phase 2 we have made some changes to our schedule. Please remember that masks are strongly recommended throughout our building.

- Kids Town will be at 8:45 a.m. on Sundays
- Kids Corner (nursery) during 8:45 a.m. service only
- Kids Praise during 11:00 a.m. service only

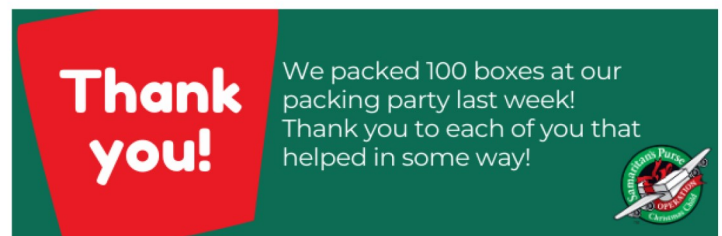
## CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE & APP

We post our emails that we send out weekly on our website and on our church app. So, instead of searching for that last email we sent you can always head to those two places, and in just a couple of clicks you can have our most recent announcements and info at your fingertips!



## KIDS LIFE

Kids Life will not meet during December. We will kick off again January 6th!



## PRESCHOOL STORY HOUR

**Ages 3 through Kindergarten**

**Wednesdays @ 1:00 p.m.**

Join us in Room 15 for an hour of reading, songs, and crafts. Caregivers are welcome to join us or enjoy a coffee in the Cafe during this hour.

**Children's Library** 

During the month of December we will be working on our children's library. This will be a new fun space and we will have lots of new books for kids to enjoy!

**December**

**2 | Caroling and Cocoa Event 6-8 PM**

**6, 13 | Kids Town @ 8:45 a.m.**

No Kids Life in December



## LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

Hi All –

As we approach the end of 2020 (yes – it is already December) we will remember 2020 as the year of change. The Covid pandemic has had such an impact on our lives and I find myself weary of thinking about it, focusing on it, talking about it, and having to make decisions related to it. However, ignoring it is not what God expects of us nor how we demonstrate God's love and provision for us during these times of change. To that end, the Staff and the Leadership Team are continuing to monitor the situation and adjust Church activities accordingly. As I have said before, I appreciate the diligence and passion these teams exhibit in seeking God's guidance and direction for Countryside. Please continue to pray for us as I am sure the roller coaster ride is not yet completed. I know that God has a plan for Countryside, not only to take care of ourselves, but to be the light of hope to others who need to see God's work and to feel the touch of Jesus upon their lives.

Speaking of Covid – because of the up-tick of cases in McPherson and the recommendations of our community leaders, we continue to adjust our activity schedules. Our Church Staff has done an outstanding job of providing updates via email, announcements, and phone calls to keep everyone updated on these changes. Please continue to look for emails and announcements as additional changes are communicated.

As you are already aware, we cancelled our annual Harvest Festival meeting which was scheduled for November 22. One of the primary purposes of this scheduled business meeting is to review, discuss and approve the church budget for the coming year. We will be incorporating the budget discussions in the upcoming annual meeting which is scheduled for January. Please be aware that copies of the proposed budget are available at the Information Center at the church for your review prior to the annual meeting.

I want to say thank you to our pastors and staff for the tremendous work they have done during

the year making sure that we stay connected. This has been a challenging time for all of us and the staff have done a great job doing a lot of “out of the box” thinking to meet the challenges. We are truly blessed with the gifts and talents that God has given to these folks as we strive to do the work for which God has called us.

Our mission can be found in the instructions that God gave Moses on the mountain – “Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5-6). The job of the priest is to know who God is and what the world is like knowing that he is in control of all things.

It is my hope and prayer that all of us will take opportunity to refresh and reconnect with family during the holidays.

In Christ's service, Bob Williford



### November 2020 Attendance (includes online attendance)

	Christian Formation	Worship
November 1	190	394
November 8	179	379
November 15	17	332
November 22	—	346
November 29	—	TBD

### November 2020 Giving

November 1	\$18,637.32
November 8	\$14,935.91
November 15	\$11,792.18
November 22	\$14,378.51
November 29	TBD
<b>Total Y-to-D</b>	<b>\$948,328.59</b>
<b>Giving vs Expenses Y-to-D</b>	<b>\$6,976.26</b>

**Countryside Covenant Church**  
P.O. Box 765, 940 E. Northview Road  
McPherson KS 67460

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Your December Newsletter is here!!



*Countryside Covenant Church is a body of believers with a heart for Jesus Christ.*

## ***This Month at Countryside***

Worship Services at 8:45 & 11:00 a.m.  
Christian Formation Classes, 10:00 a.m.

### **DECEMBER EVENTS**

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 1                | Widows Connection                             |
| 1                | Ministry Coordination Council Christmas Party |
| 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 | Men's Coffee                                  |
| 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 | Celebrate Recovery                            |
| 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 | Prayer Group                                  |
| 2                | Caroling and Cocoa/Advent Event               |
| 5, 12, 19        | Women's Coffee Connection                     |
| 15               | Widow's Christmas Brunch                      |
| 20 & 27          | No Christian Formation Classes                |
| 24               | Christmas Eve Candlelight Services            |



### **Countryside Staff**

Jon Black, Senior Pastor

Jeremy Bower, Associate Pastor

Amy Brunk, Children's Ministries Director

Connor Gibson, Worship Arts Director

Kelly Morrow, Student Ministries Director

Lynn Black, Adult Ministries Director

Linda Totman, Church Administrator

Kim Goering, Office Assistant

Kristi Monroe, Children's Ministries Assistant

