



Hood River Valley Christian Church Newsletter

541-386-2608 hrcchurch@gmail.com
www.hoodrivervalleychristianchurch.com

and on Face book

December 14, 2022

Sunday Worship Time

10:30am Worship

Minister

Rev. Alicia Speidel 541 601-1949

aliciaspeidel@gmail.com

Church Administrative Assistant

Kathy Holmson office hours as needed

hrcchurch@gmail.com

Website: www.hoodrivervalleychristianchurch.com



Christmas Program

Children and Youth Christmas Play Sunday December 18 during Worship

CHRISTMAS DINNER at the church! Invite your friends! December 18, 11:45am after the children's program and worship. The main course will be provided. **Please bring a side dish or dessert to share.**

Advent Study What Are You Waiting For?

A special four-session Advent study will replace the Sunday morning lectionary study beginning Sunday, November 27. Rod Parrott will lead participants in an wide-ranging investigation of the developing expectations of Israel between the Babylonian captivity and the time of Jesus. Sessions will meet in the Vista Room from 9:30 to 10:15. Bring your questions and curiosity.

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

9:30am What Are You Waiting For? Advent Study Meets in Vista Room

9:45am New Book Study group This class meets in the Fireside room downstairs.

Nursery Room is available for young children 0-4 years.

10:30am Sunday Worship with Christmas Play

11:45am Christmas dinner

Links

Wednesday Dec 7 <https://www.facebook.com/100064940580441/videos/1223083015288642>

Sunday Dec 11 <https://www.facebook.com/100064940580441/videos/837294170874161>

Monday Dec 12 <https://www.facebook.com/100064940580441/videos/685111703089883>

Tuesday Dec 13 <https://www.facebook.com/100064940580441/videos/5809175755841642>



WEATHER RELATED CANCELLATIONS A reminder: If weather conditions are stormy, some meetings and Thriftshop may cancel. In general, if local schools have cancellations, church activities may also cancel. Call your group leader before you venture out.



Christmas Special Offering will be received December 11 & 18

All funds received in the Christmas Offering go to the budget of the Christian Church in Oregon and SW Idaho Regional Church to support programs of the regional church.

You can give to the Christmas Special offering by....

- ❖ A designated gift through your congregational offerings
- ❖ A gift online at www.oidisciples.org (link on bottom right of home page)
- ❖ A gift sent by mail to PO Box 19466, Portland, OR 97280

Weather got you stuck at home? You can send your Christmas greeting via email and make a donation to the HRVCC Help A Neighbor Fund by mail or next time you're at the church.

Christmas Cards



Sign our All Church Christmas Card

Send your Christmas greetings to friends at church in our church newsletter. Forms are on the table in the lobby.

- **Write:** Your name & Christmas greeting and put it in the basket on the table.
- **Sent greetings by email, too** hrcchurch@gmail.com
- **Donate:** You save money for cards & postage by sending your Christmas greetings this way, so drop a donation in the basket with your greeting.
- **Donations go to:** HRVCC Help A Neighbor Fund.

Christmas Greetings will be published in the December 21 newsletter

About Church Giving

Online Giving To donate online to Hood River Valley Christian Church, go to <http://www.hoodrivervalleychristianchurch.com/donate/> and make a donation

Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement App

on your Smartphone or tablet. A onetime gift can be made or you can set up online giving on a regular basis.

USPS Mail You can also give to Hood River Valley Christian Church by mailing a check to: HRVCC

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Katy White

Jennifer Burbank Roch

Kathy Meredith

Bonnie McCollister

Layla Gaffney

Sharon Cook

Nola Hardman

Lauree Winfield

Vicki White

Courtney Erickson

Jinx Woods

Stacey Jubitz

Sue Mitchell

Jerry Sawyer

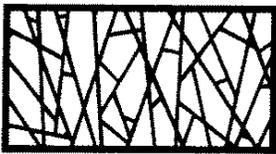
Bev Thomas

Judy Kenyon

Sharing a Christmas message from Dana Branson:

Dear Ones, I don't believe I'm going to get Christmas cards prepared and mailed this year, but I want you to know I think of you all often. I miss all my Hood River friends - I miss my HOME! My mother is on hospice as of early October and it appears she will not see the new year. This makes me and my family very sad, but the quality of her life has been marginal for quite some time and I know she's tired. If you would please say a prayer for her to pass peacefully I would be grateful.

I have no idea what the future holds for me - I'll be settling mom's affairs, trying to help my brothers get settled into a routine and visiting Hood River often - if not moving back that way. I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and all the best in the coming year and always. Thank you for your kindness!
Love, Dana



The Pastor's COLUMN

At Christmas time Would you like to donate a new pillow to be given to the warming shelter guests as gifts for Christmas? We are in need of 8 more pillows. If you would like to donate or have one purchased for \$30 from the local mattress company, please let Pastor Alicia know. This is a great way to show we care.

How is Christmas in less than two weeks? How are the candles in the Advent wreath almost all lit? How have most of the Advent hymns been sung? How is this all possible? It seems like we ask these questions every year when Christmas is right around the corner. It seems like it always sneaks up on us or comes barreling in. It seems like we are never ready. And yet, Christmas always arrives no matter what. It always becomes December 25. The birth of Jesus Christ always occurs.

If this is the case, then why the stress? Why the anxiety? Why the staying up late to get everything done? Why the panic as the countdown continues? I'm not entirely sure. It would be great to shift our thinking, to channel our stress and to view the steps in different ways. It would be great. So why not? Why not breathe more deeply? Why not celebrate the countdown? Why not think of our loved ones and those we cherish, focusing on the memories we will create and the memories we already have? Why not do our best to push aside the stress and anxiety for hope, peace, joy and love? Why not?

There is absolutely no reason not to. There really isn't. So, how is Christmas in less than two weeks? Because it is. And because the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is what makes it all so. The celebration is drawing us together, drawing possibilities together, drawing creation together. Think of those gifts as Christmas day approaches. Think of the connections. Think of the love. And breathe. Breathe a whole bunch because Christmas is coming and we will celebrate.

Alicia



Advent Schedule
AT HOOD RIVER VALLEY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sunday December 18 **FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT - Love**

9:30am Sunday School
10:30am Children and Youth Christmas Play
11:45am Christmas Fellowship Dinner

Wednesday December 21 **LONGEST NIGHT at Down Manor**

6:00pm Worship with silence, prayers and candle lighting

Saturday December 24 **CHRISTMAS EVE For all ages**

7:00pm Worship with candlelight, carols, communion, & choir

Sunday December 25 CHRISTMAS DAY wear pajamas or comfortable clothes

10:30am Worship

Sunday January 1, 2023 NEW YEARS DAY

10:30am Worship

Sunday January 8 **Epiphany Sunday**

10:30am Worship & undecorating the church

Pastor Alicia's sermon from December 11, 2022

Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-10 & Matthew 11:2-11

In the December edition of "The Christian Century," at the very back of the magazine, is a brief commentary by Lil Copan, a painter and editor, on a piece of art. The art is a rough painting of three silvered bowls stacked on top of each other decreasing slightly in size. The artist is Jan Richardson. The commentary is entitled, "Jan Richardson's That We Might Receive This Joy." Listen to a little bit of Copan's explanation.

"Jan Richardson explores a question many of us carry without knowing how to articulate it: How does joy work? 'These days,' [Richardson] writes in a women's retreat booklet called The Sanctuary between Us, 'I find myself curious about what it means to approach joy as a practice, and to receive it as a grace that God offers I have been pondering how practicing joy involves asking for it, preparing a place for it, praying to be open to it so that we can recognize it when it appears.'"

"To approach joy as a practice." "Asking for it." "Preparing a place for it." "Praying to be open to it." "Recognizing it when it appears."

That sounds like a pretty good checklist of how to pay it forward with joy. This really is how we are to be when it comes to joy. Because joy is hard to describe and define. We may get it inside of here and yet, putting words to it is challenging. How do we communicate it? What emotions do we use? What examples? How do we get to the essence of what joy is?

Yes, the joy candle has been lit. Yes, we responded to a simple litany about joy. Yes, we prayed for joy. And yes, there are hymns about joy. Still that doesn't necessarily provide all of the answers we need when it comes to joy. And if we are to embrace the progression Richardson outlines in her explanation of joy as a practice, then first we need some kind of definition.

Which when we are tackling these rather large concepts that seem to live in the cosmos without having a simple way to speak about them, we need to do our best to find some common ground with them. Then we will move together with a similar understanding, going through the steps or at least working on them so we know how to make joy a practice in our daily lives.

So that definition. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, as a noun joy means "(1) the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires: DELIGHT; the expression or exhibition of such emotion: GAIETY; (2) a state of happiness or felicity: BLISS; (3) a source or cause of delight." And as a verb joy means "to experience great pleasure or delight: REJOICE."

Okay, I think we can get behind these definitions. Joy is a particular state. It is delight. It is a feeling held deep within that radiates outward, impacting the one experiencing it and those around. It is contagious in effect. And it brings about a way of approaching life, one where even in the midst of the difficult times, there is a delight that weaves its way through all that comes.

Not a delight that the difficult times are happening, a delight in knowing joy exists, has been present before and will be present again. A state that is deeper and stronger because of where it comes from. Because it comes from God. The joy of God that is God and is a gift from God to absolutely everyone.

This joy then is worth asking for. It is worth saying, "I need joy. I would like joy. May I please have joy?" And not just once or twice, but over and over and over again. Repeatedly saying this is what I need. Making it a priority. Requesting it from God throughout all of the ups and downs.

For joy isn't only needed in those moments when we are struggling and aren't able to feel it. It is needed when we aren't even thinking about it. In those moments when we think we've got it all together, when we are happy as can be, however when that happiness is just on the surface level. It hasn't really sunk in deeper like joy does.

All of those moments we are to ask for joy. To openly and honestly proclaim this need and this desire. Because we are all deserving of it. No matter our situation. No matter our past. No matter our mindset. Joy is a gift for every single one of us all the time through everything. We have to claim that truth. We have to believe it. We have to know we are worthy of joy. Of joy in our lives. Really, it is there for all of us, so let's keep asking for it.

And as we ask for joy, we have to prepare a place for it. That goes with the believing we are worthy of receiving joy. We have to know this deep within. We have to open our hearts and our minds to welcome in this intense and life giving emotion. We have to create space for it. No one else can do that for us. We have to do it ourselves. We have to be intentional about it. To really be receptive to it where joy will be allowed to grow and develop. To set the groundwork and make those important preparations on all levels.

If we are able to move through these steps, then the next step is imperative. As Richardson detailed, "praying to be open to it." That seems pretty key to me. Praying to be open to joy. Asking God for guidance on how to receive it, on how to live in such a way that our lives are ready when joy arrives,

on how to be open in all aspects of our lives. With our minds, with our bodies, with our spirits. To welcome in joy when it comes knocking at our door.

Because while we may be able to define joy and while we may be able to ask for it and while we may be able to prepare a place for it in our lives, when it actually arrives, we may not entirely be open to it. We may not have as wide open arms as we think or imagine. Hence the need to engage in prayer to be open. To seek out God's assistance in making it so, the openness that is. The openness of who we are and what we are doing at each moment. The openness for joy to take hold, to remain and to flourish.

And the openness to recognize joy when it appears. That's the final piece of the movement for joy to be a practice in our lives. That we have taken all of these steps, that we are living all of these steps to be fully prepared when joy rises to the surface or creeps around a corner or comes bounding in. That we are able to see it for what it is and then that it makes a lasting impact, moving through all parts of who we are. That is the path with joy, the journey with joy, the gift of joy.

Because joy is a gift. Our scripture passage from the prophet Isaiah makes that tremendously clear as joy weaves in and out of his words. "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing." "And the tongue of the speechless sing for joy." "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Joy, joy, joy. In the land, in creation, in the people, in the lost and forgotten. Joy was throughout all of it. Joy was the common denominator. Joy was what made it all possible. Joy was the end result. Joy was what everything was to be moving towards. Joy was the gift. Joy.

It was to be the practice that drew everything together. It was all encompassing. And it is. We have to acknowledge that with every fiber of our being. And we have to proclaim it, to teach others about this gift, to share it widely and with abandon. To create those ripple effects of change.

So that the transformation and wholeness that Isaiah prophesied about becomes reality. To "strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. To say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!'" "For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes."

All of this because of joy. Because of embracing those steps where joy is the outcome, where joy settles in and takes up residence, where joy makes a name for itself, where joy shines ever so brightly.

It's the possibility of what is to come, what might be with God, how the world around will change and how our lives will change. It's looking to the future while at the same time creating it in the here and now. Moving the dial a bit. Changing the landscape. Paying it forward with joy. Another important step to take this Advent season and truly throughout the entire year because joy is a profound practice to live and an incredible journey to be on. Joy. It is transforming.

FISH Food Bank Coordinators Newsletter December 2022

The other day I heard someone say "Doing something for others, is the most wonderful feeling." I thought WOW, this person had it right. This time of year, brings out the desire to make sure all our friends and neighbors have plenty of food on their dinner tables. And thanks to the many generous individuals in our area, we are able to ensure that many families have food.

It is interesting to note that over the 2022 year we have seen a slight decline in the number of individuals and families served at the FISH Food Bank from last year. However, when you look at the number of individuals served in November 2022, you will find the number of individuals served were up 48% over November 2021. So, one has to wonder if everything is finally catching up to our families in this area such as the increase in prices at the grocery store and at the gas station. Unfortunately, or fortunately, we are seeing many more seniors who are accessing our services.

For example, in one family both adults worked all their lives and were involved in the community. Now they are seniors and there was a health issue with the husband so now they are struggling to get by. Unfortunately, this family is embarrassed to have to access our services but fortunately their son-in-law will pick up the food for them.

On the positive side, we had a family come and said they had to add a new member to their family; they had a new baby about a month before. This little guy was a preemie and had not been out of the hospital very long. He had to be one of the tiniest guys I have seen. Some even wondered if he was doll, he was so small. But he was doing great and it was a pleasure to serve them. He brought a smile to everyone's face. Another thing makes us smile is all the wonderful food drives that is being held all over Hood River County. The food we receive this time of year helps us feed families all year long. It is fun to see who is stepping up to help. There are too many different food drives to list but everyone from kindergarten classes to high school students, real estate offices, choir and dance events to businesses. Every little bit helps and everything is very much appreciated!

We are often asked which would we prefer, money or food items. The answer is both are equally desirable. We buy much of the food, often time locally, plus the food we get from the Oregon Food Bank is at a discount. However, much of the food items we get in a food drive is different from what we can buy so it is fun to have the extra items. If you are looking to buy there is a list of popular items on our website.

Wishing you and your family a very Happy Holiday Season!

Billie Stevens
FISH Food Bank

Position Opening at FISH Distribution on Monday Nights

Barb Williams has been the car greeter and organizer at the Monday night distribution at the Hood River site since we reopened in the spring. Barb is now ready to take a long vacation in Mexico this winter and then would like to retire from this position. She has done a wonderful job during sun, rain and snow. (What else would you expect from a retired mail carrier??)

What this does is leaves an opening on the Monday night distribution. Starting on January 9, I will need a new individual to help at distribution in the parking lot. The time is from about 2:45PM to about 5:00PM every Monday night. The job is to greet the cars as they come into the lot, give them a number to put on their car and then help notify them when it is their turn to come into the food bank. There are usually two people working together on this job. And when it is really cold or too hot you can always watch for cars from inside the FISH building. We are flexible and if you want to take a vacation, we do allow you to go.

So, if you know anyone who would like to get further involved with FISH this would be a great opportunity. Please help spread the word and let anyone know who is interested to contact me at 5412-490-5109. Thanks.

Special Thanks to Rotary for Lighting Up the FISH Food Bank

I wanted to send a special thank you to Rotary members, Paul Crowley and John Weting for putting up the Christmas lights that Rotary member that Jeff Apland donated last year to FISH. Lights around the Hood River FISH building create a warm and welcoming site, especially because it is getting so dark early. Now that the weather is cold and wet the lights help put a smile on everyone's face. Thank you so much!

Holiday Giving in Our Hood River Community

Here are some local service organizations in our community that appreciate extra giving during the holidays—along with their contact information. You can make donations direct to the organizations or through your church offering (please indicate where you are donating in the memo of your check.)

FISH Food Bank fighting food insecurity in the Gorge – Donate non-perishable food, hygiene items, pet food, household paper & cleaning items (paper towels, dish detergent, etc.) at the FISH Hood River site—FISH Food Bank 1130 Tucker Road. Or drop off at the church.

Donate online: <https://www.fish-food-bank.com/> or mail a check: FISH, 1767 12th Street, #147, Hood River, OR 97031



Hood River Shelter Services <https://hoodrivercares.org/> – supporting unhoused community members. Donate online: hoodrivercares.org or mail check: HRSS Warming Shelter, P.O. Box 1714, Hood River, OR 97031 Also accepting specific clothing items for donation. Please check the website for information.

Hood River County Christmas Project – Christmas food and toy assistance for Hood River County residents. Donate online: <https://www.hoodrivercountychristmasproject.com/> or mail check: HRCCP, PO Box 872, Hood River, OR 97031

Helping Hands Against Domestic Violence – domestic violence shelter and assistance. Donate online: <https://www.helpinghandsoregon.org/> or mail check: HHAV PO Box 441 Hood River, OR 97031

Hood River Emergency Voucher Program – provides vouchers for food, fuel, and lodging for travelers and people in need in our community. Donate online: <https://gorgeem.org/emergency-voucher-program> or mail check: Gorge Ecumenical Ministries, 400 11th Street, Hood River, OR 97031 (indicate in memo line Emergency Voucher fund.)

The Next Door, Inc. <https://nextdoorinc.org/> – Offering over two dozen programs supporting and empowering people in our community, including: Parenting support and education; safety net for children at risk of abuse or neglect and for victims of crime; health and wellness education; mentoring, education and treatment for high-risk youth and families. Donate online: <https://nextdoorinc.org/donate/> or mail check: The Next Door, Inc. 965 Tucker Road Hood River, OR 97031

Meals on Wheels – Delivers meals to people who have difficulty cooking or getting out of their home. Donate online: <https://www.hrvac.org/meals-on-wheels> or mail check: Hood River Adult Center, Meals on Wheels, 2010 Sterling Place Hood River, OR 97031

Columbia Gorge Habitat for Humanity - <https://columbiagorgehabitat.org/> Building and improving homes in the Gorge. Mail checks to PO Box 378, The Dalles, OR 97058

Giving within our Disciples Denomination Community

Disciples of Christ, Oregon/SW Idaho Region (Christmas Special Offering)

Supports programs of the Regional Church.

Give a gift online at www.oidisciples.org (link on bottom right of home page)

Mail a check: Christian Church in Oregon & SW Idaho PO Box 19466 Portland, OR 97280

Or give through your church offering.

Week of Compassion – donate online <https://www.weekofcompassion.org/donate.html> or mail a check: Week of Compassion P.O. Box 1986 Indianapolis, IN 46206

Or give through your church offering.

Church Calendar

Wednesday December 14

9:00am-Noon Quilters meet

9:00am-12:00pm Thriftshop

Thursday December 15

7:00am Men's Study

1:30pm Chime Choir, fellowship hall

Saturday December 17

9:00am-12:00pm Thriftshop open

Scriptures for Sunday December 18, 2022

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew:18-25

Sunday December 18 Fourth Sunday in Advent

9:30am Advent Study, vista room

9:45am Sunday Adult book study

10:30am Worship, with Children's Christmas program

11:45am Church Christmas dinner

3:30pm Hope and Life church worship

Tuesday December 20

10:00am Women's Bible Study

3:00pm TOPS Group

Wednesday December 21

9:00am-Noon Quilters meet

9:00am-12:00pm Thriftshop

6:00pm Longest Night Service at Down Manor

Thursday December 22

7:00am Men's Study

1:30pm Chime Choir, fellowship hall

Saturday December 24 Christmas Eve

7:00pm Christmas Eve service



Sunday December 25 Christmas Day! Wear pajamas!

9:30am Advent Study, vista room

9:45am Sunday Adult book study

10:30am Worship

3:30pm Hope and Life church worship

Monday December 26 – Monday January 2

Church staff vacations – church office closed – no newsletter Dec 28

Tuesday December 27

10:00am Women's Bible Study

3:00pm TOPS Group

Wednesday December 28

9:00am-Noon Quilters meet

9:00am-12:00pm Thriftshop

SERVING Sunday December 18, 2022

Elder this Week

Wes Bailey

Communion Preparer

Judy Hiatt

Coffee Hour

Jennifer Stager & friends

Deacons

Serving Team #1

Shar Wilkins, Betty Osborne

Tatum Wyatt, David Nash