



## 2023 Christmas Eve Offering

Each year we receive a Christmas Eve offering toward a special ministry or need. We receive the money starting in December and through our Christmas Eve service. This year's offering will go to the Crete Collective. I encourage you to visit the Crete Collective's website at [www.cretecollective.org](http://www.cretecollective.org) to read about this ministry.

The Crete Collective is a group of churches that help to **plant new gospel preaching churches** in primarily black and brown communities that have been largely neglected in the church planting effort. The vast majority of churches planted, and resources spent on church planting have been spent in the suburbs of America and have neglected the inner city. Yet, the inner city contains large concentrations of people who need Jesus and the community of a local church. Our giving to the Crete Collective can help.

I (Pastor Eric) went to a two day conference sponsored by the Crete Collective and was very impressed by the passion and purpose that I saw and heard at the conference. I was able to talk with the leaders of the Crete Collective, church planters that are being funded by the Crete Collective and other leaders of churches that support this effort financially. I believe this is a great ministry for us to invest some of our resources.

You will hear more about this in upcoming weeks, but I encourage you to visit the website and also to ask any questions that you may have. Please pray about supporting this year's Christmas Eve offering for the church planting efforts of the Crete Collective.

God Bless,  
Pastor Eric

## Don't Miss Out on Learning Together

This quarter we have **new Sunday School classes** and a **new start time!**

Our **Winter Quarter Sunday School classes** will **begin on Sunday December 3<sup>rd</sup>**. Classes will be held from **8:30 - 9:15 am**.

Zach Showers will be leading a **Word Studies** class using Bible Project theme videos to explore common biblical words and how they are used throughout scripture. This discussion based class will bring a new depth of knowledge and understanding of words in the Bible we have been using or hearing our whole lives.

**Angels: Agents of Heaven** will be led by Vicki Bastian. In this class, participants will search the Scriptures for the ways that angels are involved in our world and our lives as messengers, servants, and protectors.

We will continue our New Testament book studies with **I and II Thessalonians** led by Steve T. Buttorff. The lives of the Thessalonian Christians were transformed by the power of the living God; this study will examine the message of Paul to these believers and what we can learn from their infectious faith, hope, and love.

**The Meaning of Marriage** will be led by Brian and Donita Keister. This class will focus on strengthening the foundation of marriage relationships, as well as providing practical ways we can make marriage work better in our lives. It is for those who are married or those who see marriage as a possibility in the future.

Pastor Eric will be leading a class on **Philemon** that will explore the relationship between Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus while deepening relationships among class participants. This class will be offered **BOTH** during the **regular Sunday school hour AND** after the regular worship service at **10:45 am**.

Stacy Reitenbach, Adult Sunday School Coordinator

## Welcome New Members



On Sunday, November 5, we received 4 new members into our congregation. **Myles Mast** and **Mike Powell** were baptized. **Nate Stanford** and **Rose Summers** joined through reaffirmation of faith.

Please show your support with a warm welcome to these new members of our congregation.

## Women's Christmas Gathering

December 6

6:30 - 8:30 pm

We will be filling gift bags for the residents at Rolling Hills Healthcare & Rehab.

Please bring an hors d'oeuvre or dessert to share. If you wish to participate in a cookie exchange, bring 2 dozen cookies.



## WE'RE COLLECTING

**Free & Clear  
Laundry Detergent  
(liquid and pods)**

for Dwell's Hope Chest Foster Closet  
in honor of  
National Adoption Awareness Month.

Please place your donations in the bin marked "Dwell" through the month of November.

More astonishing than a baby in the manger is the truth that this promised baby is the omnipotent Creator of the heavens and the earth.





## Church Council Meeting Summary

We had an important church council meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup>. More than 80 people participated in the meeting as we discussed and agreed on some very important things. Below is a brief summary of what was accomplished:

1. We **approved** our **2024 church budget**. The 2024 budget is about \$30,500 less than the 2023 budget. There was very little discussion on the budget itself.

2. We **approved** the goal of **paying off our building debt** by the 2024 auction. The Ministries Coordinating Team (MCT) was authorized to spend up to \$100,000 of our current General Fund balance (currently about \$206,000) as part of paying off the debt. When combined with the debt retirement line item of \$50,000 approved in the 2024 budget, we anticipate the money we raise during our March church auction to be sufficient to pay off the member loans and cemetery fund loan. This will be an exciting time for our church family.

3. After much discussion we **approved changing our Sunday morning schedule**. We will have one worship service beginning at 9:30 am and our Sunday school time will be from 8:30 - 9:15 am. The 8:30 am time slot will have Sunday school for children, youth and adults. There will be one Sunday school class offered at 10:45 am for adults. MCT appreciates all the discussion and comments we received before and during the meeting. Over 92% of the voting members agreed with this decision. We recognize that this decision was not something we all agreed on and we want to continue to work with those who are concerned. We will evaluate the new schedule at the end of the quarter.

4. We approved Pastor Eric spending approximately 6 weeks in 2024 in Florida with 3 weeks of that being designated as remote work. Pastor Eric is able to work on sermons and other office things while he is in Florida. His plan is to go to Florida near the end of the month on an every other month schedule.

5. We discussed our current work relationship with Pastor K. Eric is working about 40 hours per month in exchange for the use of the church parsonage. All agreed that this arrangement is working well.

6. We did not take time to hear verbal reports from the pastoral team; however, those reports are in the meeting handout.

7. Pastor Eric stated that we are monitoring some potential changes in our Church of the Brethren denomination. We will keep the congregation informed of any changes and will begin a dialogue on recommended actions as MCT monitors the situation. If you have any questions about this, please contact the pastoral team or a member of MCT.

The meeting was one of the more animated meetings we've had in several years. We thank everyone who participated, and we believe that the meeting was held in a spirit of love and openness to one another. We are glad that these characteristics are the fabric of who we are at Buffalo Valley.

Eric Reamer for Ministries Coordinating Team



## Sending the Love of God

We did it! Between physical and monetary donations, we were able to reach our goal. A big thank you to all those who participated in this year's collection for Operation Christmas Child! As a church, we are going to be sending 413 shoeboxes around the world. That is 413 lives that will be touched by this wonderful mission.

As we continue into the Christmas season, I ask that you take the time to pray over these shoeboxes. Pray that each child who receives a box will not only feel blessed with new items but will **feel the love of God!** Pray that these boxes will serve as a witness to both the children and their communities. Once again, thank you to everyone who has participated and prayed over this mission!

God Bless,  
Kelsey Zimmerman

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

--- Matthew 19:14



## Young Adults (18-30 yrs)

I (Pastor K) have been connecting with some of our young people who are in college or working in our area. I love to hear what is going on in your life, and see where God is leading - sometimes I can even offer coaching or space to process and figure out next steps. If you (or someone you know) would like to connect, please let me know.

We have a Messenger chat group (BVCOB Young Adults) to help communicate and share news - message me if you want to be added!

Pastor K

## Christmas Eve Service

December 24

6:00 pm



Jesus and Others and You  
What a wonderful way to spell JOY!  
Jesus and Others and You,  
in the life of each one of us  
"J" is for Jesus; for He has first place.  
"O" is for Others we meet face to face.  
"Y" is for you, in whatever you do.  
Put yourself third and spell JOY!

David Jeremiah



## Youth News

### Upcoming Youth Events in December!

- December 3 - YaYA Planning Meeting  
at 10:45 am (No Youth)
- December 10 - Youth 3 - 5 pm (Games)
- December 17 - Youth Christmas Party 3 - 5 pm  
(Look for more details as we get closer!)
- December 24 - NO YOUTH CHRISTMAS EVE
- December 31 - Youth Lock In  
from 8 pm to 8 am

First Annual Apple Pie Fundraiser Update - final numbers are being tallied but we believe we made close to \$1,200 on the apple pie fundraiser! We sold over 60 pies. **Thank you** to those who bought pies, donated apples or money to offset the cost of pie ingredients, those who donated pie making tools, and especially to those who came out to help prepare the pies! We couldn't have done it without you! We received a lot of positive feedback on this fundraiser and hope to do it again next fall.

### Looking ahead to December...

On Friday, **December 1** the Children's Ministry Team will be hosting their annual **Gingerbread Night**. This is a great opportunity for youth to serve at this event. Help is needed restocking candy and making Christmas trees (using cones and icing) throughout the evening. If you are able to help that night please contact Angela Zimmerman!

Sunday, **December 31<sup>st</sup>** the youth team is going to have a **lock in!** Activities will start at 8 pm on New Year's Eve and go until 2 am. From 2 am to 7 am there will be a rest/sleep time. We will then have breakfast around 7 am. Parents can pick up their youth at 8 am. Please bring a snack and drink to share. You should also bring a sleeping bag. And as always, **WE WELCOME ADULTS WHO WANT TO HELP!** Just let us know! 😊

Stacy Mast, Youth & Young Adult Team Leader

*From Your Lead Pastor,*



### Lessons from a Schedule Change

As you know we are changing our Sunday morning service schedule on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Sunday school will be at 8:30 am and worship at 9:30 am. We had a lengthy church council meeting on this issue on November 5<sup>th</sup> and there were some things that I learned from that that I wanted to share.

1. Most of us are passionate about our church. I was encouraged to hear the voices of many who want to be here in worship on Sunday. A change to that schedule was important because you want to continue to be with this community.

2. You are not afraid to give your thoughts/comments/questions. Whether it was via email, or in person before or at the meeting, many of you were willing to share your thoughts. That's vital for any church community. Very early in the history of the early church we see conflict arising over the neglect of the Greek widows (Acts chapter 6). Those affected were willing to speak up. When a church community considers a change and people are silent about it, the leaders of that community lose out on important perspectives.

3. You trust church leadership. I know that the change is not what some of you wanted but you expressed to me and others that you were willing to follow the direction of those who proposed the decision. Let me put in a plug for continued involvement in church leadership. We strive to have various ages and perspectives represented on our leadership teams and we encourage all of you to seek to add to our leadership lists.

4. We can come to a consensus. The final vote on our schedule was 52 yes and 4 no. That's a very high percentage. We came to that significant consensus by listening to one another and making some adjustments to the original proposal. I think this is how the church puts itself in the best position to make the best decisions. We strive very hard to find a solution that can work for everyone, or at least almost everyone. Church leadership set the bar pretty high to make a decision because we believe that if we talk to and listen to each other, the Spirit of God can guide us. We won't always correctly discern the leadership of the Spirit. In this case, I think we did but perhaps we are in this change for a season. As you know

we will evaluate this change and your comments on it. I'm confident that if we need to adjust we will.

As a pastor it feels good to me to know that we can make decisions like this together. Being able to listen to one another, even those with whom we disagree, being willing to not take offense to the words of others because we know their hearts are important. It's a joy to serve with all of you.

God Bless, Pastor Eric

## **BVCOB Youth & Young Adults:**

**PIT** *"Together passionately pursue  
& demonstrate the transforming life of Christ."*



Drawing Near to Christ in Advent  
(From "Draw Near" with *A Sanctified Art*)

This year I did not have (or take) the time to collect Advent reflections and writings from our Church Body. But I would still like to provide an Advent Devotional that we can all share in. This is a devotional from "A Sanctified Art," which uses reflection, art, poetry, and coloring to walk through Advent. I appreciate the way art and poetry help me see and experience familiar passages from different perspectives, and coloring helps me slow down to reflect and interact with Christ in a new way. If this is not your preference, don't worry - there is a traditional daily devotional as well.

We will have devotional books available at church through December; and through our BVCOB Facebook page I will share art and poems and coloring pages that go along with this theme of "Drawing Near" to God in Advent. It will pair nicely with our Advent Sermons and the Children's Christmas Musical - "Signs of Christmas." I look forward to "Drawing Near" to God and each other this Advent.

Here is a 'Poetry Prayer' by Sarah Are to start us off:

### Draw Near to Wonder

"I wonder if the earth is waiting for a Messiah like I am -

Trees bending toward love,  
fireflies keeping a promise to be light,  
the moon returning over and over again  
with hope that the world will look differently this time.

I wonder if I'll ever really know when it happens -  
Those moments when God is in my midst.

Those all the time,  
everywhere,  
rare kind of moments that I'm terrible at  
trusting but know like a rainstorm.

I wonder, because I am human.  
I wonder, because *not* wondering leaves me stuck.

And I cannot be stuck in a world  
that separates children from parents,  
women from their bodies,  
and men from their emotions.

So I wonder.

Will the stars ever fall?  
Will I see you face to face, and you see me?  
Will the moon come back tonight and sigh, saying,  
"Ah yes. I can see that God is here. This is what  
I've been waiting for."

Peace, Pastor K



## **Annual Church Auction 2024**

Mark your calendars - Our highly successful and entertaining BVCOB Annual Church Auction is scheduled for **March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**.

Please start saving your items and sharing the date with your friends. We prefer that you save items until closer to the auction date, but if you have something that you need to donate now, give me a phone call. Please feel free to send pictures if you would like as people enjoy seeing all the items being collected.

Because of the large volume of items and space constraints we are again asking that you not provide any furniture or items that are more appropriate for a yard sale. Otherwise, we will accept most anything else of value (new or used) to be sold at our popular silent auction tables or at the live Auction. We do reserve the right to recycle, donate or trash items that are not appropriate for the sale.

We are encouraging families or groups to donate a theme bag or basket, meal or service as they are always great sellers and a lot of fun.

In addition to donating, and/or bidding if you would like to help with the sale in some way, please let me know.

Thanks for your support and watch for more news.

Steve Richard, Sbrichard1960@gmail.com

## Sermon Topics for December/January

During December we will focus on the theme "Signs of Christmas" and consider how the baby Jesus is a sign of things to come.

Then on December 31<sup>st</sup> through January we go back to Matthew, picking up in chapter 8. Here is our schedule:

Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>: The sign of humanity in Christmas  
Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>: Children's Christmas Musical  
Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>: The sign of humility in Christmas  
Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>: The sign of hope in Christmas  
Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>: Matthew 8:1-17

God Bless,  
Pastor Eric



### Family Gingerbread Night

December 1  
6:00 - 8:30 pm

Check with Pastor Donita  
for gingerbread house availability.

## Church Email Lists

**news@bvcob.com**  
BVCOB church news & events

**prayer@bvcob.com**  
prayer requests

**share-ads@bvcob.com**  
requests for help (moves, yardwork, rides,  
childcare, etc.), yard sales, items for sale, etc.

Did you buy your gift cards?



Beginning December 3, 2023

Sunday School for all ages  
8:30 - 9:15 am

Worship - 9:30 - 10:30 am

## LOOKING AHEAD IN 2024

January 13 – Women's Brunch

February 10 – Valentine's Banquet

March 2 – Church Auction

March 9 – Women's Brunch

March 28 – Love Feast

May 5 – Church Council Meeting

June 8 – Strawberry Festival

June 12 – Day Camp Beginnings

July 13 – 19 – Westernport Mission Trip

August 4 – Church Picnic

September 27 – Children's Fall Festival

October 6 – Love Feast

November 3 – Church Council Meeting

November 23 – Kettle Cook



## CHURCH CALENDAR

Please remember that the calendar in The Lamplighter is only a copy from the church events calendar. For the complete view of the current official calendar including facility in use items visit the church website, [www.bvcob.com](http://www.bvcob.com).

**The Lamplighter**

Buffalo Valley Church of the Brethren  
46 Brethren Church Rd  
Mifflinburg PA 17844

Return Service Requested

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8:00 AM - Worship Service  
9:00 AM - Fellowship Time  
9:20 AM - Sunday school  
10:30 AM - Worship Service