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Jesus is the Greatest Gift

“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16)

Dear brothers and sisters

Christmas is a time of giving. It means Christmas is a time of shopping. This year, just like every year, millions of people go and buy gifts for their loved ones. Gifts are very important in our lives. They bring joy to each and everyone’s heart as we express our love and appreciation. It is so great to give and to receive gifts.

Two thousand years ago, at Christmas, mankind received the greatest Gift. This Gift is entirely different from those gifts that we can purchase in stores or online. There is one Gift that meets everyone’s need, one Gift that will never wear out, never break or require repair. There is one Gift that you do not have to return. A Gift that is appropriate for a small child or a teenager, an adult or a senior loved one. Boy or girl, man or woman, rich or poor, it makes no difference. The Gift we all need, the most valuable Gift of all, is that baby in the manger. The One that Christmas originally was about.

On Christmas we celebrate the fact that God gave us the Gift of His Own Son, Jesus Christ, so that through faith in Him we could be forgiven of our sins and have eternal life. “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”, says the Word of God (Jn. 3:16).

The Gift that the Father offers us is to know His Son, Jesus Christ and to have fellowship, a relationship with Him. Maybe you have never heard before that it is important to have a relationship, fellowship with Jesus. Perhaps it sounds a little strange for you to spending time with Christ, as if He would be a flesh and blood person, someone you could see and hear and touch. Well, no it isn’t like that. We don’t see Him with our physical eyes. But that doesn’t make our fellowship with Him any less real. Christ is present, He is with us. His Spirit lives in us. He speaks to us through the Bible and we speak with Him through prayer.

People sometimes think of Christianity as nothing but a set of burdensome responsibilities. Doing things that people would rather not do. Like going to church, when they would rather stay home, reading the Sunday paper, watching football, cleaning the house, or cook. Some people see the
Christian life as keeping a lot of rules, a lot of “do’s” and “don’ts” (mainly “don’ts”). Or if people view Christianity more positively, they might see it primarily in terms of the benefits it can bring, like improved relationships, stronger marriages, guidance in raising children, emotional strength to deal with trials, difficult people, and circumstances. However, the essence of Christianity isn’t about rules, or “do’s and “don’ts”, or even blessings. The essence of Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Yes, the Christian life brings many benefits, like joy, peace, hope, and love…. But they all come through Christ. They all flow from our relationship with Him.

Knowing Christ is worth more than anything else in this world. We will never be disappointed by Him. He is that treasure, He is that pearl of great value. He is God’s Gift to us, this child in the manger, and He is worth more than anything else we could ever possess. This Gift of the Father is available to everyone, but God doesn’t force Him on anyone. We must decide to receive this Gift. We must take the package, open the box, and accept it as our own. We each must make the decision to receive Jesus Christ into our lives.

Now, maybe you “opened” that Gift years ago, you had a fruitful relationship with Christ, but lately the Gift has been “sitting on the shelf,” you don’t spend time with the Lord. You have been too busy, or too distracted, or too hurting to give Christ the time and attention you know He deserves. Or maybe for you that Gift is still “under the tree,” wrapped and waiting to be opened.

Dearly beloved, I want to encourage you, please don’t leave Christ on the shelf. Don’t leave Him under the tree. Take Him into your heart and into your life, even now. That Gift from our heavenly Father has a tag with your name on it. What better time would be than Christmas to renew your commitment to Christ, or to begin a new life of fellowship with Jesus Christ?

Yours in Christ

Rt. Rev. Dr. Csaba Krasznai
Bishop

The United Church of Christ organized a trip to Europe in September of 2017 for commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. I was also invited as a Conference Minister, to participate in the European Partners Visit. The group visited five European countries on their trip: the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Hungary, Italy, and Germany.

The UCC leaders planned a three day trip, from September 16-18, to Budapest, Hungary. On the first day the delegation visited the Refugee Ministry & Kalunba Social Services Nonprofit Ltd. of the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH). They met with the leader of the RCH Diaconal Office’s Refugee Integration, Ms. Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy who shared about her work for the refugees in the city. The group was impressed by the RCH’s dedication to welcoming the strangers. Following the meeting at Kalunba, the delegation visited the Reformed Church at Kálvin Square which was the first church of the Reformed Church in Pest. After the Kálvin Square church visit the delegation went to see the Reformation Jubilee Exhibit of the National Museum.

On Sunday morning the UCC leaders participated at the worship service at St. Columba’s Church of Scotland. Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President of the UCC delivered the sermon. In his teaching Dr. Dorhauer expressed that by how we deal with strangers will also demonstrate how we want to live our lives. Following the service, the UCC delegation had a meeting with Rev. Aaron C. Stevens, Minister and Rev. Njeri A. Wagana Hughes, Associate Minister of the church. Rev. Wagana Hughes was the first pastor from Africa who was ordained by the Reformed Church in Hungary. There was a presentation about the history of the congregation and then questions were asked about the current ministries and work in a multicultural and multiethnic church. The congregation currently has 40 children speaking 15 different languages.

On Monday morning the UCC leadership had an informal breakfast and discussion with Kearstin Bailey, a Global Mission Intern of the UCC who is serving the RCH since October of 2015. She shared her work and experiences in Hungary with the group. After this the delegation held meetings with the Department leaders of the Synod Office. Rev. Tamás Kodácsy, former chairman of the Council of the Eco-Congregation, gave a thought-provoking presentation about the work of the Eco-Congregation Movement and Mission. Then Rev. Eszter Dani gave a presentation about the Roma Mission and Ministry in Hungary.

Continued on page 8
In Memoriam

Rev. Imre A. Bertalan

The Reverend Imre Andrew Bertalan, 67, passed away while surrounded by loved ones on August 29, 2017 at Latrobe Hospital in Latrobe, Pennsylvania after a brief illness. At the time of his death, he was the Executive Director of Bethlen Communities in Ligonier, Pennsylvania.

Rev. Bertalan was born on October 4, 1949 in New Brunswick, NJ to Margaret Kosa Bertalan and Reverend Dr. Imre G. Bertalan. Imre grew up in Passaic and New Brunswick, NJ, where his parents and maternal grandparents, Margaret Blum Kosa and Rev. Andrew Kosa served Hungarian-American church congregations. He graduated from New Brunswick High School in 1967 (go Zebras!). After high school, Imre attended his beloved Rutgers University for his BA and received his Master of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1977.

Throughout his life, Imre was deeply dedicated to the American-Hungarian community. He served as a community organizer in the historically Hungarian Birmingham neighborhood in Toledo, OH and was a leading figure in the American-Hungarian communities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

A devoted pastor, Imre served Hungarian Reformed congregations in Toledo, OH, Allen Park, MI, and Beaver Falls, PA. In 1999 he accepted the role of Executive Director at Bethlen Communities in Ligonier, PA where he joyfully and faithfully served until the time of his death. Imre met the love of his life, Magdalene (Baba) J. Ujvagi, and they married in 1980 in Toledo, OH. They were happily married for 37 years and together lovingly raised five children.

Imre is survived by his wife, Baba and his children, Sára (Jeff), Magdi (Jose), Juli (Dylan), Gitti (Brian), and Imre. Survivors also include his sisters, Lillian Bertalan (Dr. Michael De Pettrillo) and M. Sarah Bertalan, and five grandchildren, Vince, Alma, János, Jaxson, and Mateo. Imre was preceded in death by his parents, Margaret Kosa Bertalan and the Rev. Imre G. Bertalan.

Imre touched many lives with his gentle and encouraging demeanor. He will be greatly missed by all who were blessed to know him. Those who sought his counsel in times of stress or trouble will always remember the comfort of hearing him say, “Everything will be alright.”

A memorial service was held at 11 a.m. in Calvin United Church of Christ, Toledo, on September 23, 2017 where the family will greet friends beginning at 9 a.m. A Special Memorial service was also held in Ligonier during the Bethlen Communities Fall Board Meeting.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to Bethlen Communities, Ligonier, PA, Calvin United Church of Christ, or the Hungarian Club of Toledo, OH.

Praying for the Reign of God

Text: Matthew 10:7 “. . . proclaim the good news, the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

The Christian year is composed of Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Eastertide, Pentecost and the Pentecost season. Which season is left out of that list? Advent, the beginning season of the Christian year, and the one not yet fully enacted.

Many think of Advent as four Sundays waiting for the celebration of Jesus’ birth. So it is. But that’s not all. In Advent we prepare to receive Christ as a baby in Mary’s arms; we also prepare to receive Christ’s reign yet to come. This year, as usual, the Advent texts for December 3 and 10 speak of the Advent yet to come. (See Mark 13:24-37 and II Peter 3:8-15a.)

What is the first request we make in the Lord’s Prayer? Not, “Hallowed be thy name.” God’s name is already sacred. The first request is, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We scarcely need reminders that this prayer remains significantly unfulfilled.

But where is the reign of God? When is its arrival? Cynics call one of the great embarrassments of the Christian faith the failure of this expectation—the second coming of Christ, the coming of the reign of God.

Christians have made some responses to this criticism. One response stresses that the reign of God will come if the church in faith and hope persists. It’s an evolutionary process.

One cannot over-estimate the optimism about the soon arrival of the reign of God that prevailed in the American church in the late 1800s up to 1914. Ernest Shurtleff, graduating from Andover Theological Seminary,
in 1888 wrote, “Lead On, O King Eternal.” The second stanza concludes:

For not with swords loud clashing,
Nor stirring beat of drums;
With deeds of love and mercy,
The heavenly kingdom comes.

When WWI came all the optimism was blown to smithereens. Now in various quarters that optimism again appears. Martin Luther King put it this way: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but bends toward justice.” But in terms of the biblical record, such optimism is not warranted. The 20th century was morally lamentable and the 21st is not off to a great start.

The other major response to the criticism about the delay of the reign of God is more prevalent in Western Christian expressions today. It was expressed in fiction by two California authors, Jenkens and Lahay, called, The Left Behind Series, which sold millions of copies. In this scenario God will suddenly say, “That’s enough!” Then Christ will descend on the eastern skies and those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb will cast off the pull of gravity and join the Lord in the air. And thus will begin the reign of God. This is the most common teaching in today’s church.

This also is not good biblical teaching. A key verse in St. John’s gospel reads, “For God so loved the world—the cosmos—that he gave the only Son . . . .” (John 3:16) It makes no spiritual sense that God would say, “I’m done with all civilized history. I’m just saving this remnant from the burning.”

So what are we meaning when we pray every Sunday as Jesus taught, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done”? We’re living by faith! We’re taking the risk of hope! We’re believing the poet, Stephen Phillips, had it right when he wrote:

And Christ shall charm and soothe, and breathe and bless,
The roaring of war shall cease upon the air,
Fall of tears and all the voices of sorrow,
And he shall take the terror from the grave.

And he shall still that old sob of the sea,
And heal the unhappy fancies of the wind,
And turn the moon from all that hopeless quest,
Trees without care shall blossom, and all the fields
Shall without labor into harvest come.

We’re looking for signs of the reign of God, as when Anwar Sadat of Egypt went to Jerusalem in search of peace, as when the Apartheid policy in South Africa fell with very little bloodshed, as when Angela Merkel, daughter of a Lutheran pastor, opens the door of Germany to thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing for their lives.

We do not understand the mystery of the reign of God. But surely when Jesus of Nazareth entered those towns with his disciples, the reign of God was coming to pass. And when we, his disciples today, in word and deed, say, “Jesus is Lord,” the reign of God approaches. When we take the loaf and cup in hand and partake, we celebrate the hope of the reign of God.

And so we pray again. And we hear the seventh angel of Revelation blow his trumpet, and loud voices in heaven, speak words of hope, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he will reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15)

David B. Bowman (Rev.)

Congregational Appreciation Luncheon

The United Church of Christ in Bridgeport, CT held its Appreciation Luncheon on Sunday, October 15, 2017. This event takes place every October when the congregation honors one of its own members for their faithful and dedicated service. The individual chosen is a devoted church member, leading an exemplary Christian way of life.

This year two members, Sal and Helen Maniscalco were honored. They are long-time faithful and dedicated church members. The couple was married in the basement church located at State Street and Hancock Avenue 72 years ago. One year later, our present church building was built on the corner of North and Laurel Avenues. Helen has been part of our church family from birth, confirmed by Rt. Reverend Stephen Bessemer. She was part of the Ladies Aid Society for many years, helping to bake Hungarian delights and lending a hand to make stuffed cabbage. Sal is always ready to lend his helping hand when needed. He is part of the property committee, and has great business knowledge. His assistance is invaluable when it comes to creating church contracts, solving real estate issues, and knowing whom to contact for property repairs.

In June 2017, Sal and his twin brother Tom celebrated their 95th birthday. A wonderful article was written in our local newspaper, the Connecticut Post on their journeys in life. God has truly blessed them not only with longevity but a youthful attitude and the energy to live productive lives.

Sal and Helen are the epitome of having a Christ-centered marriage. Their love and respect for each other speak volumes. It is a joy to know and love this couple, and we ask the Lord to continue to shower His abundance upon them.

The announcement of their selection began our luncheon and a certificate of appreciation, flowers and a gift were presented from the congregation. It was followed by a chicken paprikás lunch. Thanks to Bill Bero and Sandra Stasko who prepared and served the lunch. It was a wonderful day!

Submitted by James Ballas
The American Hungarian Reformed Presbyter’s Association

AHRPA RECOMMENDATIONS COMMITTEE
REPORT 2017: Paul Bodo, Chairman

It is recommended that:

1. A copy of these recommendations be mailed/emailed to the attention of the Secretary of the Consistory and be read to the congregation of all our churches. Further, it is requested that these recommendations be published in the Calvin Synod Herald.

2. The Vice Presidents gather from each church in their districts an updated list of church chief elders, consistory secretaries and/or a designated contact person’s mailing and/or email address.

3. The Presbyters’ Association will donate $100.00 to the youth camp.

4. The Presbyters’ Association will donate $100.00 to the Trenton Mission Trip Fund.

5. Our churches do whatever they can do to support the Bethlen Communities annually which may include a Bethlen Sunday.

6. The AHRPA Treasurer will send out a notice by mail/email in January to all our churches that their annual dues are $3.00 per Presbyter. Included with this notice/email should be the AHRPA Treasurer’s name and address. The President’s invitation to the AHRPA Conference should also include a reminder of the annual dues per Presbyter along with the AHRPA Treasurer’s name and address.

7. Our churches should inform each other by mail, email, or other technology, upcoming Hungarian cultural and other church events in a timely manner so that we may support each other’s events.

8. Lay leadership in all churches should be encouraged to attend their classis meetings, Synod conferences and workshops so that they may grow in their faith journey to be better prepared to serve the Lord.

9. All churches reach out to their communities for service and mission to God.

10. The next meeting of the AHRPA will begin at 9:00 a.m. with a church service Saturday morning in the Chapel, before beginning our regular meeting and will conclude our business meeting on Sunday no later than 11:30 a.m.

11. The American Hungarian Reformed Presbyter Associations next meeting will take place earlier in 2018. The meeting will be August 11 and 12, 2018. MARK YOUR CALENDARS.
CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING

THE SEVENTY-NINETH MEETING
of the
CALVIN SYNOD CONFERENCE
of the
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

will be held from Tuesday MAY 15th through Friday MAY 18, 2018 in LIGONIER, PA

The Annual Meeting will open with a Service of Worship and Holy Communion on May 15th at 9:00 a.m. at the Bethlen Home Chapel in Ligonier

Subsequent sessions will be held at the Ramada Inn, Ligonier
The attendance of every elected pastor serving a Calvin Synod congregation is expected, unless excused
Each member congregation is expected to send and official Lay Delegate,
and may also send an Alternate Delegate
The attendance of every Ordained Minister with Standing in Calvin Synod is also expected.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

Rev. Gabor G. Nitsch
General Secretary
Obituary of Rev. Imre A. Bertalan

The Rev. Imre A. Bertalan of Ligonier, the son of a Hungarian immigrant, the husband of a Hungarian immigrant and a minister of the Hungarian Reformed Church of America, was proud of his heritage and his leadership at the Bethlen Communities in Ligonier Township.

“His Hungarian heritage was really important to him, and passing it on was important,” said his daughter, Julia Bertalan of Toledo, Ohio. “It’s definitely instilled in all of us. A little bit of him will live in all of us.”

Rev. Bertalan, 67, died Tuesday, Aug. 29, 2017, in Excela Health Latrobe as a result of complications from cancer.

He was born Oct. 4, 1949, in New Brunswick, N.J., son of the late Imre G. and Margaret Kosa Bertalan. He graduated from Rutgers University in New Brunswick and from the Princeton Seminary in New Jersey. He was an ordained clergyman for both the Hungarian Reformed Church of America and the Calvin Synod of the United Church of Christ.

Rev. Bertalan did not set out to be a minister when he graduated from seminary in 1977. Instead, he initially became a community organizer in Toledo working for a neighborhood group in the late 1970s, Julia Bertalan said. “He was very involved in the Hungarian community in Toledo, New York and New Jersey,” she said.

He was called to be a minister in a Toledo church and later served a church in Allen Park, Mich.

Rev. Bertalan came to the Ligonier area in 1999 to serve as the executive director of Bethlen Communities, which was founded by the Hungarian Reformed Federation. “He saw his work at the Bethlen Communities as going way beyond the home. He saw it as a cultural center and wanted it to be a meaningful gathering place for Hungarian-Americans ... that continues and passes on the tradition,” Julia Bertalan said.

Rev. Bertalan was active in the Ligonier Valley, formerly serving as president of the Rotary Club of Ligonier. He was a member of the Ligonier Valley Association of Churches and the Ligonier Valley Ministerial Association. He was an advocate for Ligonier High School sports teams, where his son, Imre Bertalan, was a starting center on the 2006 Ligonier Valley football team. He and his wife, Magdalene Ujvagi, had dinners for the team. She immigrated to the United States in December 1956, a month after the end of the Hungarian Uprising against the Soviet Union.

Rev. Bertalan was planning to retire in three years and return to Toledo, where he intended to be a community organizer, Julia Bertalan said.

“His work was his passion, and he loved his Busch beer and watching sports,” she said.

In addition to his wife of 37 years and his daughter, Julia, he is survived by daughters Sara Davis of Toledo, Ohio, Magda Bertalan of Madison, WI and Margit Bertalan of Fayetteville, NC; son, Imre E. Bertalan of Toledo; and five grandchildren.

A celebration of life service was held in Ligonier during the Fall Board of Director’s meeting on October 23rd. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorials in Rev. Bertalan’s memory be made to the Bethlen Communities, 125 Kalassay Drive, Ligonier, PA 15658.

European Partners Visit

Continued from page 3

After the presentations, the delegation visited a Roma Mission Project at the Budapest 8th district called “Te meg én” (You plus/and I). This is an after-school center for Roma youth. Rev. Istvan Lakó, assistant pastor of the Budapest Józsefváros Reformed Church and leader of the mission, gave a presentation of this very blessed and in the same time challenging project. Later on Rev. Bálint Bacskai, lead pastor of the church, joined us and greeted the members of the delegation. They started the “Te meg én” ministry five years ago. At the beginning it was an outreach program mostly to Roma people. First they started a Religious Class at the local public school for Roma kids. The leaders of the mission noticed that more and more students showed up each time in the Religious Class. Therefore they decided to open an office for the work of the After School Program. Currently the ministry has 30 children and 30 volunteers. Each child needs an adult assistant in order to work with them effectively.

Toward the end of the last day spent in Budapest, the UCC leadership met with Rt. Rev. Dr. István Szabó, Bishop of the Dunamellék Church District of the RCH. We heard a presentation about the work and ministries of the Reformed Church in Hungary and also the challenges that the Church faces day by day.

This short three-day visit in Budapest gave a wonderful insight for the members of the UCC delegation into the community life, ministries and works of the Reformed Church in Hungary. It was a thought provoking experience and blessed trip. We are especially thankful to Rev. Balázs Odor Ecumenical Officer of the Synod Office and his assistant, who were our guide during this visit, for their professional job.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Csaba Krasznai
Rev. István Lakó leader of the „Te meg én” Roma Mission Project

Dr. John C. Dorhauer presents a gift to Bishop István Szabó

Bishop István Szabó gives a presentation about the ministry and work of the RCH

Rev. Aaron C. Stevens gives a presentation to the UCC delegation

Rev. Aaron C. Stevens, Dr. Csaba Krasznai and Dr. Peter E. Makari

Dr. Krasznai by the Memorial Plaque of the Hungarian Galley Slaves at the Synod office of the RCH

Rev. Balázs Ódor, Rev. Njeri A. Wagana Hughes, Rev. Aaron C. Stevens and Dr. Csaba Krasznai

Group picture at St. Columba’s Church of Scotland
The Reformed School Choir of Pecs had Choral Performances in Cleveland

The Reformed School Choir of Pecs dedicated their performance to commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. The choir comprised of 46 members and were invited by the First Hungarian Reformed Church, Walton Hills, OH. The leaders and members of the church, and also the Hungarian community of Cleveland made a lot of preparations for this event for months. By the work and generous support of different churches, especially the Lorain and West Side Reformed churches, and the Cleveland Hungarian organizations and the Hungarian Government, the choir held two performances in the United States.

The Choir of the Reformed School of Pecs was established in 1995 and they travelled throughout many locations, however, it was the first time that they performed in North America. On August 17th the Hungarian Reformed Church of Lorain and on August 18th the First Hungarian Reformed Church of Walton Hills hosted the choir members and teachers of the Reformed High School.

The teachers and the students arrived the afternoon of Wednesday, August 16th from Budapest to Toronto and then, five hours later, they arrived to Cleveland by bus they have rented. The students were hosted by generous and helpful families, and the teachers were hosted in a hotel sponsored by generous church members. Among the teachers were Dr. Péter Kádár Executive Director, Péter Molnár School Principal, Tamás Pap Conductor, Dr. Judit Hoppálné Erdő teacher, Kinga Megyesi-Schwartz English teacher, and Miklós Gaibl assistant. On Thursday and Friday the event organizers made every effort to show the different sights of the City of Cleveland to the students and the teachers. After a short shopping trip the choir members and teachers travelled to the Galleria where they tasted real American foods and then they visited the Hungarian Museum.

Thursday afternoon they visited the famous Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the “fortress” of the American music history. They saw the many famous artists’ clothes, instruments, and personal items, such as Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Elton John, Jimi Hendrix, and Taylor Swift. They could watch films about the famous old concerts and they could listen to the hundreds of discs of those they liked. At the top of the Hall of Fame the students and teachers could gaze at one of the Five Lakes, our Lake Erie.

On Friday the choir visited the Hungarian Cultural Garden and had a short choir performance for our generous hosts. Then the Natural History Museum gave many wonderful surprises for the group. They could see exhibitions of ancient customs, ethnic groups, and animals. In the outdoor mini zoo they could befriend with today’s birds and animals. After visiting the museum the owners of the Balaton Restaurant hosted and provided the choir with delicious Hungarian style foods. The choir sang the Table Blessing which was greatly appreciated by the guests of the restaurant. In the afternoon, the choir visited the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church where Ft. András Antal priest warmly welcomed the group and gave a presentation of the history of the church and the Hungarians who lived on the Buckeye Road. The last stop of the Friday sightseeing was the old Reformed Cathedral, the previous building of our church, to which we are so proud of.

The most important, on both days, was the evening choral performance. They entered into the sanctuaries with singing the Laudate Omnes Gentes Taize song. Then they lined up in four with the leading of Conductor Tamas Pap. In the repertoire there were mostly Hungarian songs and hymns, as well as, English. Many songs and hymns were from the Hungarian Reformed Hymnal. We could hear the beautiful musical compositions of Claude Goudimel, Maróthi György, Gárdonyi Zoltán, Berkesi Sándor, Kodály Zoltán, Johann Sebastian Bach, Tillai Aurél, Pap Tamás and Michael Praetorius. A short English description or Bible passage was read right before each song and hymn. At the
Jézus a legnagyobb ajándék

„Úgy szerette Isten a világot, hogy egyszülött Fiát adta, hogy aki hisz Őbenne, el ne vesszen, hanem örökké élete legyen.” (János 3:16)

KEDVES TESTVÉREIM

Karácsonyot össze szoktuk kapcsolni az ajándékkozással, az ajándékkozást pedig a vásárlással. Ebben az évben – mint ahogy az előző években is – milliók fognak vásárolni az üzletekben, hogy szebbnél-szebb ajándékokat vegyenek szeretteiknek. Az ajándékkozás elengedhetetlenül fontos az ember életében. Örömet hoznak mindannyiunk életébe azáltal, hogy kifejezzük a másik iránti szeretetünket, hálánkat. Jó ajándéket kapni és adni.


Karácsonykor azt ünnepeljük, hogy Isten az Ő szent Fiában, Jézus Krisztusban adta a legnagyobb ajándékot számunkra, hogy bűnbocsánatot és örökké életet kapjunk. „Úgy szerette Isten a világot, hogy egyszülött Fiát adta, hogy aki hisz Őbenne, el ne vesszen, hanem örökké élete legyen” (Jn. 3:16) – mondja Isten igéje.

A keresztény lényege a Jézus Krisztussal való kapcsolat. Igen, a keresztény lényeg sok áldást hozhat az életünkbe, mint öröm, békesség, reménység, szeretet... De mindezt Krisztuson keresztül kapjuk. Mind-mind a vele való kapcsolatból fakad.

Ismerni Krisztust mindennél fontosabban ezen a világon. Őbenne soha nem csalódunk. Ó Isten Ajándéka számunkra, ez a gyermek a jászolban, aki sokkal többet ér mindennél.


Sok ember azt gondolja, hogy a kereszténység nem más, mint terheket ránk rakó felelősségformázás. Hogyan meg kell tenni dolgokat, amiket egyébként nem tennének meg. Mint például a templomba járás, amit szívesen kihagynának, vagy néznek a sütőt, vagy takarítanának és főzének. Jópára vannak, akik a keresztény életet azzal azonosítják, hogy mennyi szabályt kell betartani, hogy miket lehet és miket nem lehet megtenni. Főleg nem tenni, ugye? Vagy vannak, akik a keresztény lényegét ennél sokkal pozitívvabban látják azáltal, hogy mennyi áldást kapnak azon keresztül, mint pl. a növekvő kapcsolatok, erősébb házasságok, útmutatás a gyermekekkel, érzelmi támogatás, hogy feloldogozzuk a megpróbáltatásokat, vagy a nehéz emberek vagy körülmények kezelése. A kereszténység lényege azonban nem a szabályokról szól, vagy arról, hogy miket lehet és miket nem lehet megtenni, vagy éppenséggel, hogy mennyi áldást kapunk azon keresztül. A kereszténység lényege a Jézus Krisztussal való kapcsolat. Igen, a kereszténység sok áldást hozhat az életünkbe, mint öröm, kékkesség, reménység, szeretet... De mindezt Krisztuson keresztül kapjuk. Mind-mind a vele való kapcsolatból fakad.


Talán évekkel ezelőtt már „kinyitott” azt az Ajándéket, mert gyűlölső kapcsolatot lett Krisztussal.
Viszont egy ideje az Ajándék ott "csücsül a polcodon", használatlanul, nem töltesz már időt az Urral. Elfoglalt lettél, más dolgok kötik le a figyelmedet, vagy éppenséggel meg lettél sebezve és nem adod már meg azt az időt Jézusnak, amit megérdemelne. Vagy az is lehet, hogy még mindig ott van ez az Ajándék „a fa alatt” és arra vár, hogy kibontasad.

Kedves testvérem, arra szeretnélek bátorítani, hogy ne hagyd Krisztust a polcon vagy a fa alatt. Fogadd el Őt a szívedbe, az életedbe, akár most. A mennyei Atya ajándékán a te neved van. Lenne-e alkalmasabb idő, mint karácsony ünnepe, hogy megújítsd a Krisztussal való kapcsolatodat vagy, hogy elkötelezd magadat neki és egy új életet kezdj vele?

Szeretettel Krisztusban:

Ft. dr. Krasznai Csaba
püspök

Clevelandban koncertezett a Pécsi Református Kollégium Énekkara


Az Amerikában és Magyarországon próbáltak meg megmutatni a templomok és a városok közötti kapcsolatot.


Mind a Lorain-i, mind a Walton Hills-i gyülekezet tagjai vacsorával és szeretetvendégességgel készültek, ahol lehetőség adódott személyes beszélgetésekre, ismerkedésre is. A kórus szombaton reggel indult tovább, folytatva turnéját Torontóba. Hisszük, hogy maradandó élmény marad mindannyiuk számára az itt töltött idő.

S ha már nem tarthatjuk itt őket örökbe, hogy minden vasárnap vezessenek bennünket Isten dicséretében, ahogy ezt a vágyát Ft. dr. Krasznai Csaba a köszöntésében kifejezte, szeretettel ajánljuk ezt a nagyszerű kórust másoknak is.

**Krasznai Bea**

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Pálmai Zsuzsanna konzul köszönti a vendégeket

A pécsi kórus fellépése a Lorain-i egyháznál

Dr. Kádár Péter a kollégium főigazgatója köszönti a vendégeket
Beginning of the performance in Lorain Rev. Peter Toth Dean of the Lakeside Classis, Rt. Rev. Dr. Csaba Krasznai in Walton Hills, and Ms. Zsuzsanna Pálmai Consul from the Consulate General of Hungary in Chicago greeted the guests along with and Dr. Péter Kádár who expressed his heartfelt thank you to those who organized the event and provided generous support. The collected donations were offered to support the new building project of the Reformed School of Pecs. At the end of the performance the guests burst into applause and thanked the students for the wonderful work they did. The finale was that the forty member choir stood around the pews of the sanctuary in a huge circle and they said good bye with a beautiful English song, Viva La Vida (Coldplay).

Both the members of the Lorain and Walton Hills church prepared a delicious supper and then a reception which gave opportunity to have personal conversations and to get to know the choir better. The choir continued their trip on Saturday morning and travelled back to Toronto.

We strongly believe that the performances and the time that many of us spent with the choir gave a long lasting and pleasant experience. Since we could not keep them here with us for good so they would lead us in singing the hymns at the Sunday worship services, as Dr. Csaba Krasznai expressed it in his greetings, then we highly recommend this wonderful choir to others, too.

Beata Krasznai
Ft. Andras Antal greets the choir members and teachers

The choir at the entrance of the Buckeye Road Reformed Cathedral

Choir performance at the Walton Hills Church

The Choir members by the Reformation 500 banner

Participants and guests at the choral performance at the Lorain church
Calvin Synod Homeland and Overseas Mission

Mission Coordinator:
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TRANSYLVANIA
1. The Sekely Miko Reformed High School in Sepsiszentgyorgy is asking financial support for their school.
2. The Backarmadarasi Kis Gergely Reformed High School in Szekelyudvarhely, Transylvania is asking financial support for their school.
3. Fund Reformed School and help poor people in Transylvania Reformed Assistance Committee (TRAC)
4. School Fund in Kolozsvár, Transylvania. The School Fund is coordinated by Ms. Gabriella Nadas.
6. Fund the Roof Fund in Szekelyudvarhely as requested by Zsolt Tokes, principal of the school.
7. The Hungarian Reformed Church of Nagykároly-Kertváros (Carei) in Transylvania is asking for donations for their construction project of a new church building and parsonage. Further information is available at the following website: http://kertvaros.freewb.hu

UKRAINE
1. Support the Good Samaritan Orphanage and School in Nagydobrony in their mission work.
2. Support the food pantry name “Crumbs for Lazarus” to feed the hungry in Csap as requested by Rev. Janos Balogh.
3. Center for children’s Evangelism Center burned in Carpatho-Ukraine, which provided spiritual growth for 100s of children. The BeregCamp workers voluntarily offer their services. The request is made to us to help the rebuiding of this center. Donations may be sent to our Synos Treasurer for this cause.

Please send donations to the Calvin Synod Treasurer: Kérjük adományaikat a Synod Treasurerhez küldeni.

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440-221-5334

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