



# The Visitor

*Schoharie Reformed Church*

*December 2020*

*Pastor Mike & Pastor Sherri*



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## The Healing of Advent

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

*-Matthew 1:23*

One of the favorite songs of the Advent/Christmas season for Pastor Sherri and Pastor Mike is a song by an artist named Chris Rice entitled, *"Welcome to Our World."* Take a moment to read and reflect on the lyrics:

### Welcome to Our World by Chris Rice

Tears are falling, hearts are breaking  
How we need to hear from God  
You've been promised, we've been waiting  
Welcome Holy Child.

Hope that You don't mind our manger  
How I wish we could have known  
But long-awaited Holy Stranger  
Make Yourself at home

Please make Yourself at home  
Bring Your peace into our violence  
Bid our hungry souls be filled  
Word now breaking Heaven's silence  
Welcome to our world.

Fragile finger sent to heal us  
Tender brow prepared for thorn  
Tiny heart whose blood will save us  
Unto us is born.

So wrap our injured flesh around You  
Breathe our air and walk our sod  
Rob our sins and make us holy  
Perfect Son of God  
Welcome to our world.

This song seems to speak to the deep need for Christ's presence to be experienced anew in our hearts and in our world because there are many "tears falling and hearts breaking" within us and all around us right now. In so many ways 2020 has been a difficult and challenging year. Several people we know have lost loved ones to this terrible, on-going pandemic. We have even lost a couple of beloved people we have known in these past several months. Others have lost employment or had to close businesses that were their life's dream, and sense of purpose. Others have dealt with the loss of significant events that could not be held, and others are continuing to face the changes and challenges that this pandemic continues to cause for us and for others. New routines, new things to learn, and the constant changes of protocols and procedures, along with the worries and threats of lockdown have all caused fatigue and frustration along with the rises of anxiety and depression.

There also continues to be a lot polarization going on within us and around us. We have seen and felt political polarization, and polarization about racism and the varying reactions that continue to go on around us and within us. It seems like the divides keep growing while our abilities to empathize with others, share our convictions with kindness, and nuance our perspectives keeps shrinking. We have also had other health concerns, losses, changes, and struggles during these times as well.

But the good news of Advent is that even into a pandemic, during political turmoil, racial unrest, as well as personal pains, griefs, losses and changes, we are invited to welcome anew the reality of Immanuel, "God with us" into our world and into our hearts and our lives! Christ comes to heal, to bring peace into our violence, to feed our hungry souls, and to make us holy. The challenge for us is to do the work of preparing our hearts and lives to welcome Christ anew in this Advent season.

Throughout this season of Advent, we are going to look together at the theme of "The Healing of Advent." We invite you to join in our "Cloth for The Cradle" Advent activity, which was adapted from the Iona Community in Scotland. You can do this activity on your own, or with your church family on Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm by Zoom. A packet will be coming to you shortly (if you haven't received one in church already) so please look for one to be dropped off to you or to arrive in the mail.

Our prayer in this Advent season is that the celebration of Christ's coming and the hope, peace, love, and joy that Christ brings through his presence will be a source of comfort, courage, and healing for you, your family, our community, and world in this Advent season.

As we prepare to welcome Christ anew this Advent, may we take some intentional time to prepare to welcome God into our hearts and our world!

Welcoming the healing of Advent,

*Pastor Sherri & Pastor Mike*



### *Interim Treasurer*

We want to inform the members of our congregation that there has been a change in the position of treasurer for the church. Liza Toborg is now serving as our interim treasurer. We extend our gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to Sue Herchenroder for her years of dedicated service to her church family and we offer Liza our support and prayers as she undertakes this new role.

MaryAnn Foland

## *Thank You for Blessing Your Pastors*

Thank you so much for the incredibly gracious outpouring of your love and support during the Pastor Appreciation and the “bless your pastor” campaign. We felt truly blest and were very surprised indeed! We received a beautiful spread of flowers, many heartfelt cards, an Amazon gift card, along with a large, very generous cash gift. We are so incredibly thankful and appreciative to be serving our LORD with you. These have indeed been very difficult times for everyone, especially leaders. The patience, deep listening, seeking understanding, generosity, humility, confession, and forgiveness you have all been showing each other, as well as us, has been inspiring! No one knew what it would be like to be the church in a pandemic. No one wants this and we all wish it would be over, and yet, in many ways, the Schoharie Reformed Church has continued to demonstrate resilience and a commitment to being people of the Jesus Way, even in the most difficult circumstances. You are a blessing to us!

Pastors Sherri and Mike



## *Food Pantry*

The Food Pantry continues to assist many families in the area. Items needed include canned fruit, tuna fish, pasta, pasta sauce, canned ravioli/beef stew/soup/spaghetti o's/chili with beans, vegetables, applesauce, instant potatoes, boxed macaroni & cheese, peanut butter, jelly, granola bars, cereal, jello packs, pudding packs, snack crackers. Special items of need are cleaning supplies, paper products-paper towels/toilet paper. Hand soap, toothpaste, shampoo and shower soaps are also needed. Items may be dropped off at SUPC on Tuesdays or Thursday from 12noon till 2:00pm or they may be left between the doors of the SUPC educational building. Donations may be left in the Narthex of SRC on Sunday mornings. Monetary donations are appreciated as well, checks may be written to “Schoharie Valley Food Pantry”. Volunteers are needed to help with the Food Pantry, if able, please contact Diane Walion at 518-868-4629.

**The Food Pantry is open Tuesday & Thursdays, 12-2pm**

Thank you for your donations!



## Happy Advent!

In these strange and difficult times let's creatively celebrate the season and each other!

Church Family Advent Zoom Party

Bring an ornament for a "show and tell" time of sharing.

**Saturday, December 12**

**6 - 7 p.m.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84181483221>

## Clothing Drop-Off Shed

*Is temporarily closed* due to the coronavirus, the operator has temporarily closed the Clothing Drop-Off Shed. This is unfortunate because the shed provided a nice little income source for the Church. In the meantime, please hang onto your donations. We are looking forward to the re-opening of the Clothing Drop-off Shed and will keep you up-dated of all changes.

## Thank You



**Greetings Schoharie Reformed Church**, Thank you for your recent donation to Camp Fowler. For over 65 years the outdoor ministry of Camp Fowler has been foundational for the faith formation of children who have attended. It is here that they not only hear the Good News, but they begin to experience it. At Camp, the words of Job, the parables of Jesus, and the theology of Creator-Redeemer-Sustainer begin to take shape in the lives and actions of children and you adults. At Camp, we not only learn about our faith, we sing and live it as well.

We believe churches like yours can benefit from spending time at Camp Fowler: children attending camp, adults working as volunteers or staff, and small groups going on retreats bring us together in powerful ways. Time at Camp gives us an opportunity to "ask the beasts and the birds..." with time and space to perhaps hear an answer.

As the church continues to find ways to witness to the world, Fowler becomes a wonderful resource for reaching beyond our church walls and small communities. Here, children, youth, and adults make connections, ask questions, ponder doubts, and practice the way of the Christ. This is challenging work.

Thank you for partnering with us in this challenging and exciting time to be about the work of "asking beasts and birds" (which are the names of our cabin areas). We are partnering with you in raising the next generation of Christ followers as God leads them into the heart of the world's needs.

Walk in Balance,

Rev. Kent Busman, Executive Director

Sincerely,

Josey Beird, Development Coordinator

**The Joshua Project** thanks you so much for your generous donation to the Joshua Project. It will go along way to help the neediest people in Schoharie County.

As a 100% volunteer, 100% privately funded, ecumenical organization, The Joshua Project is truly blessed to receive the support of our community. Again, thank you for your generous donation.

Sincerely, The Joshua Project.

**Dear Sisters and Brothers**, Thank you for your faithful support for Operations Christmas Child. In this difficult year it is especially important for children around the world to receive a message of hope.

Thanks to people like you, many will have a tangible representation of our Heavenly Father's love.

Stay well, my friends!

With gratitude and prayers for God's blessings. Mary Lou, OCC Church Relations





## *Buildings & Grounds*

### **Fall Clean-Up**

After being rained out the previous weekend, Fall Clean-Up on November 7 was very successful. A large turn-out of members made short work of the leaves, cleaned out the landscaping, trimmed branches, and generally had a good time making our property look well kept.

### **Winter stuff**

**Snow** After a 1" snowfall, our snow plow contractor plows the parking lot and shovels the steps, ramp, and street sidewalk. Lesser amounts, however, are our responsibility - so please be encouraged to grab a broom and/or shovel for the nuisance snows that pop up all winter long. Don't wait for someone else to do it. Especially keep the steps and ramp clear so the sun can do its thing thereby reducing usage of ice melting agents.

Note that we use plastic shovels (without steel edges) to minimize damage to the wooden steps and ramp. When necessary, there is a beige plastic tote full of magnesium chloride on the Heritage House porch. Compared to rock salt, magnesium chloride is less corrosive to the steel fasteners holding together the wooden steps and ramps.

**Heat** Both buildings have programmable thermostats. If you need to raise the temperature for an event, simply press the up arrow until the desired temperature shows (typically 68°). And remember to turn it down when you leave. If the schedule needs permanent adjustment AND you are comfortable doing so, then go ahead and change the program. If not, contact Dave Toborg.

## *Remembering Mary Stephens*

Our Church received a wonderful card and a generous donation from James "Jim" Stephens in memory of his late wife Mary Stephens. "Be filled with Wonder...be Touched by Peace. Wishing you the Blessing of Peace, Love and Joy at Christmas".





## *Cold Weather and COVID Planning*

The Consistory of the Schoharie Reformed Church has met regularly throughout the pandemic and has been navigating all of the difficult decisions that are important to be made for our spiritual, mental, emotional, AND physical well-being during a pandemic. Please thank your consistory for this difficult work for which none were prepared. They are a diverse group that span the varied and polarizing perspectives, yet have refused to polarize, have continued to pour through loads of information, have listened well to each other, have remained open to feedback and have tried to take into account all perspectives, and have unanimously made most decisions.

The consistory has decided, beginning November 15, we will use these benchmarks for gathering in-person and when we will meet online.

If the predicted high for the Sunday morning (using weather.com) is 20 degrees or less, we will move to online worship through zoom only for that day. (We are required to leave windows open for ventilation as a part of our safety plan.)

If the county threat level rises to orange or red based on the rate of infection and number of cases, we will move to virtual. Similarly, if the school goes virtual due to the virus levels, we will also move to virtual at that point as well.

Additionally, as a reminder of our in-person safety plan: Anyone who has been in person in the church buildings that displays symptoms must report your symptoms to the church office as soon as they occur, be tested, and quarantine. Should anyone who has been in person test positive, we will also move to virtual for two weeks and do a thorough cleaning.

We have been so fortunate that the weather on Sunday mornings has cooperated with our plans, however, we know January is likely to change that, if not before. Please note that several of our sister churches and nearby school districts have had cases of COVID positive persons and have had to go to virtual worship for a time. Safety protocol seem to be making a difference! Thank you for your prayers and continued support of each other. We will continue to get through this together!



## *Christmas Eve Candlelight*



This year due to the pandemic our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will look different. We want to be open and accessible to as many people as possible for this special time of worship and celebration. Because we cannot accommodate a community Christmas Eve service in our sanctuary, we are exploring some alternative worship options for our Christmas Eve Candlelight service. Our current plan is to create an online worship service that anyone can access from home at any time they chose on Christmas Eve or later. We are also exploring the possibility of having a brief outdoor Christmas Eve service with masks, and physical distancing in our church parking lot where we would have a brief time of worship including lighting candles and singing. Please stay tuned for more information as plans become finalized. Thank you for your grace and understanding during this ever-changing time.

## *How SRC Can Receive Donations From Amazon*

Schoharie Reformed Church is now enrolled in *Smile.Amazon*. The church will now receive a donation from every Amazon purchase made by you when you use the Smile link!!

Access Amazon from your browser by typing in "[Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/smile)". Then select Schoharie Reformed Church from the "Smile" charities on the top left of the home screen and begin your shopping. After you proceed thru checkout the donation is automatically calculated and placed in the Schoharie Reformed Church fund.

Please share with family and friends, it's a great way to support our church while doing your online shopping.



## *Schoharie Christian After School Program*

As we approach 2021, we are grateful for the support you've shown our program and are looking ahead at our options and priorities for the future. Due to the decrease in enrollment and the increase in costs to ensure the safety for both students and employees, we are asking for your further support as we make some necessary changes.

Beginning January 1, 2021, the invoice cost will be increasing \$2 per day. While we have worked to keep costs low and keep this program accessible for anyone who wants to be a part of it, it has become clear that we need to make these changes in order to stay open. We are also pursuing all other funding options so we can continue to provide our services to the community, which is our mission and ultimate priority.

If you would like to donate items to help offset costs, we would gladly accept the following items:

- Paper towels
- Disinfectant wipes
- Pretzels
- Crackers
- Graham crackers
- Juice

Gift card for Walmart or Price Chopper to help buy weekly fresh produce and other perishables



Additionally, we are looking for any interested family and community members who could help organize and run fundraising ideas for the program. We are hoping to have at least two fundraisers in 2021, and ask anyone with experience and interest to help lead this work. This money would help offset the program's daily costs, and could also help us avoid further cost increases.

As always, we are proud to support the families and children in our community and hope to continue to do so through this year and into the future. Thank you for your continued support!

Schoharie Christian After School Program - Board Members



## Schoharie Valley Community Day Camp 2021

The Day Camp team met on Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> to begin preparing for summer 2021. We have pre-ordered the Adventure Island curriculum to review at our next meeting on Wed., January 20<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. We would love to have more people working with us to make Day Camp a wonderful experience for all the children in our community. Please contact Liza Toborg at 518-295-8554 for the Zoom link for this meeting.

Please check out the Day Camp section of the Schoharie Reformed Church website or check us out on Facebook under Schoharie Valley Community Camp. If you know of anyone in 10<sup>th</sup> grade or up that might be interested in a paid position, please have them fill out an application on the church website under the Camp heading. Volunteers will also be needed to help with everything from snacks to preparing materials to working with campers. We are also excited about the potential of a group of volunteers coming from Michigan this summer to help us.

Day Camp will run from July 19 – 23, 2021. Watch for the camper registration to go live in the new year. Please pray that God will provide us with all of the necessary resources to make Day Camp a wonderful time for children of all ages to learn just how much God loves them!



## Christmas Memorial Plants and Donations



Christmas memorial poinsettias will be available again this year. The plants will beautify our Christmas services while remembering special loved ones. The plants are \$10.00 each this year or you may choose to only make a donation while remembering special loved ones. Please complete this form and place it in the offering plate or mail to the church office or contact the church office at 295-8177 or email your order to [Schohariereformedchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:Schohariereformedchurch@yahoo.com).

You will be able to make arrangements to pick-up plants after Christmas.

We will accept orders until Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for helping to beautify our Christmas services while remembering special loved ones.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of:

In honor of:

In celebration of:

Number of plants: Red \_\_\_\_\_ White \_\_\_\_\_ Pink \_\_\_\_\_ Paid \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Owe \$ \_\_\_\_\_

No plants but please accept my donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Make checks payable to 'Schoharie Reformed Church'





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*December 2020*



**Sunday  
Worship Service  
10:00 A.M.**