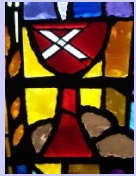


Happy new year!

"Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

ISAIAH 43:18-19 | BELIEVERS4EVER.COM



Minister
Rev. Mark Willis
markswillis@gmail.com Office
(816) 616-9746

Organist and Pianist
Emily Yeh

Secretary
Open

SERVICES:
SUNDAYS:

8:30 a.m. Suspended
10:00 a.m. ONLINE
10:45 a.m. Suspended
SUNDAY SCHOOL:
9:00 a.m. Suspended

9401 Johnson Dr.
Merriam, KS 66203

(913) 432-2390 &
(913) 432-5676

E-mail

merriamchristian@gmail.com
www.merriamcc.org

MERRIAM CHRISTIAN CHURCH DISCIPLES OF CHRIST



Dear Friends,

I met recently with Board members on a Zoom call as we discussed when we might be able to re-open the church for In-Person Worship safely and responsibly. Given that we had five members who had been present in worship contract Covid and one pass away in the past two months, it is, to say the least, an important and serious discussion. During the conversation, one Board member noted that when she had talked with a member of the congregation, they wondered aloud, "Who is making these decisions?". This is an important question and it is important that we all understand the answer.

In many denominations, decisions are made in a hierarchical structure, meaning a bishop or other denominational authority figure makes decisions that are handed down to congregations. However, Disciples of Christ are a congregationally-based denomination, meaning the congregation holds the ultimate say in leadership and direction. You, the members, select and elect the Elders and Deacons who form

our Board. They are chosen from the congregation, nominated and voted on at the annual Congregational Meeting in late October, to serve.

We are a church of less than 100 people. You know the Elders and Deacons. They are friends and family. Those who serve are US, nominated by US, voted on by US.

If you feel called to offer your wisdom and perspective to discussions like this, we need you there. You can volunteer to serve as a deacon or elder when nominations are made in the fall. At the congregational meeting, if not already nominated, you can be nominated from the floor and voted on. Even if not selected to serve in this manner, the Board meetings are open meetings. Any member can attend Board meetings and participate in discussions, though only Elders and Deacons may vote.

At times decisions to not meet in-person are made by myself and the Board chair (For instance, during inclement weather). At other times, this fall for instance, leadership in the form of Elders, Deacons, Trustees, and Committee Chairs are brought in to weigh in.

Continued on next page

Pastor Mark's Message

Continued from page 1



And at times the whole congregation is asked for input, as we are currently seeking.

These are difficult times, and we are dealing with big decisions. Please know that neither myself, nor our current leadership take these decisions lightly. We try to weigh all the factors and make the best decision for the church. At times we will get it wrong, and

at times we will get it right. But through it all, we move forward together, as church; as Disciples.

Please be in prayer for our current leadership, and for the decisions they must wrestle with. Pray for wisdom, for compassion, and for grace on each one who answered the call to serve the church this year in this way. Surround them with your love and your kindness as they seek to guide us as best as they can this year. It will not be an easy year, just as the last one was not an easy year. But we face it together, whatever may come.

God Bless and Stay Safe,
Mark

Pastor Mark's *Prayerful Meditation* mid-week video (12/28)

As the year comes to an end, we breathe a collective sigh of relief. It was quite a year indeed. Take a few short minutes to pause your day and spend a moment in God's Word from the Psalms. Use this time to reconnect with God and remind yourself of God's presence in your life.

This week's meditation comes from Psalm 47



Worship Online Only Jan 3, 2021

All In-Person meetings and services are cancelled through Jan. 3, 2021. **The Board is asking the congregation for feedback on continuing online-only services or returning to in-person and On-line combined.** The Board will meet next Tuesday, Jan. 5th, to discuss and make a decision on moving forward. If you would like to participate in the meeting, please contact Pastor Mark or Jackie Watts for info on how to join the meeting.

Please be in prayer for your Elders and Deacons as they wrestle with this difficult decision in these trying times. Be in prayer for all of our church family, that people are safe until the vaccine can arrive for all.



Special ON-Line Meeting of Church Leadership

Tuesday Dec. 29, 2020

Held by Zoom: Pastor Mark Willis, Jackie Watts, Pam Boyd, Donna Rankin, Bob Pape, Joel Beaver, Carole Prentice, Allen Watts, Emily Hooker, Dixie Wheaton, Michelle Land, Jan Pankey, Anita Collins, Irene Heavin, David Roebuck, Greg Spiegel, Mike Nichols

Jackie opened with prayer.

The current numbers of COVID virus are high, vaccine is going slow, anticipate after holidays there will be increased cases. The situation is basically still the same as a month ago.

Pastor Mark's recommendation is in person worship be cancelled for another month with online worship services to continue.

The discussion was as follows:

- ♦ Several people have indicated they want to wait until after the vaccine is out.
- ♦ We have an older congregation, inclined to wait.
- ♦ Think we will lose a lot of people if we do not have in-church services.
- ♦ At the rate of the spread of virus, think we need to wait.
- ♦ If masks are not worn, feel uncomfortable.
- ♦ Go to work and have children going to school, do not want to put others at risk.
- ♦ Miss church, would love to be back.
- ♦ Afraid to go back, not safe until the vaccine is out.
- ♦ Risky, number of cases increased in community & expect spike after holidays.
- ♦ Mixed feelings. Would like to be back,

but do not want to put others at risk. Hearing of more people contracting virus, including relatives.

- ♦ Agree in general, however, maybe there is some other way to provide in church service to individuals who want to come. Suggest make calls to members to see how many would like to come.
- ♦ Miss communion at the Table.
- ♦ Not happy the possibility in church services closed for another 30 days.
- ♦ When live streaming/filming worship service, could it be open to those who want to attend? Will put Pastor Mark, Emily and Allen at risk.

Conclusion:

Shepherds will call their flocks and get opinions of all the congregation.

There will be live stream/online church service on Sunday, January 3, with NO IN CHURCH SERVICE.

Another Zoom meeting will be held Tuesday, January 5, to discuss the results of the phone calls to the congregation and to make decision for January.

Prayers:

Prayers requested for **Irene Heavin, Alpha Wickham, Judge York and Chief of Police York in KCK** and families whose parents/in-laws were killed in car accident on Christmas Day, Bob's **niece Jennifer Wilson** and **Emily's sister Linda Collins both hospitalized with COVID**, everyone on recent prayer list, all of Merriam Christian family.

Praise:

Anita Collins has first great grandchild, Donna Rankin has a new great-great nephew.

Pastor Mark closed with prayer

Pastor Mark's Message

In case you missed any of Pastor Mark's messages sent by email, here are the last two weeks!

Dec 20th, "The Completely-Made-Up-Imaginary Innkeeper"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KC5mnjhp_4Q&t=1732s

Dec 27th, "A Service of Carols"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koDcMMhXOpU>

Children's Worship and Wonder by Christina Stokes



Dec 27th "Christmas"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC5LG-vd3Y4>



MCC VIDEO LIBRARY

For all of Mark's video sermon messages and children messages & Christina's Worship and Wonder videos please click this button



DON'T FORGET TO SHARE study sessions and Sunday Services with someone.



[A Promise is A Promise](#)

[What's in a Name](#)



Calendar

Sunday - Jan 3rd

10:00 Worship, Online only

Thursday– Jan 14th–

**Newsletter article submission
deadline**

Sunday - Jan 10th

10:00 Worship, TBD

Sunday - Jan 17th

10:00 Worship, TBD

Sunday - Jan 24th

10:00 Worship, TBD

Sunday - Jan 31st

10:00 Worship, TBD

Thank You

FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART

Thank you for all your acts of kindness and support. The food, phone calls, prayers and cards mean so much and have helped me get through the long days.

God bless my church family.

Irene Heavin

Multiple options of how you may give your tithes and offerings

- Write a check.
- <http://www.easytithes.com/merriamcc>
- Text giving: 913-444-6397

“There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”

PROVERBS 23:18

The Good News:

It doesn't matter how we finished off 2020 — 2021 and all future years to come are filled with hope, faith, and love from the Lord. We just need to believe.



All In-Person meetings and services are cancelled through January 3 2021. The Board is asking the congregation for feedback on continuing online-only services or

returning to in-person and Online again. The Board will meet next Tuesday to discuss and make a decision on moving forward. Please be in prayer for your Elders and Deacons as they wrestle with this difficult decision in these trying times. Be in prayer for all of our church family, that people are safe until the vaccine can arrive for all.

Those Needing Prayers

- Continue to keep **Irene Heavin** in your prayers. She deeply appreciates all the phone calls, they help her get through each day.
- **Lucy Walker is doing rehab** at Shawnee Gardens. Her blood pressure meds were adjusted and are causing some difficulties. Pray for her and her doctors as they work through this.
- **Bob Owens**, could use prayers, and if you are able, he would appreciate a call.
- **Pastor Mark** had outpatient surgery on his left foot two weeks ago. Recovering nicely, got the stitches out, on crutches for two more weeks. Pray for his poor wife who must continue to wait on him for a little bit longer.

Requests for Family and Friends:

- **Carol Vann's sister Kathi** passed away unexpectedly. Please keep Carol and her family in your prayers.
- **Donna McEndree's sister Deloris Bell** as she was admitted to the hospital this week with **Covid**
- **Jackie and Allen's son Stefan** recently had surgery on his shoulder, now in rehab.
- **Mike Nichols and Casey Meyer** work with Wyandotte County District Court Judge, Delia York and Kansas City, Kansas Police Chief, Michael York. Judge York's mother and father were killed in a car crash on Christmas day. Please keep the York family in your prayers.
- **Carole Prentice's brother Steve** is in the latter stages of Parkinson's
- **Pam Boyd's sister & brother-in-law** tested positive for **COVID**.
- **Bob Pape's niece Jennifer Wilson** has **Covid** and is struggling with it.
- **Emily Hooker's sister Linda Collins** has been hospitalized with **Covid**.
- **Jacque Willis' aunt Dr. Cathy Anderson** has been hospitalized with **Covid**.

- **Connie Hennigh's daughter Christy Johnson** is in the hospital with pancreatitis.

+

PRAISE:

- **Anita Collins** is celebrating her first great-grandchild Coraline Jordan! Praises!
- **Donna Rankin** has a new great-great nephew! Blessings!

We pray for all those who are sick, or are afraid they will get sick. We pray for all those without adequate health insurance who live in fear of injury or disease. We pray for all those on the front lines, healthcare professionals putting their lives at risk to serve. We pray for all the scientists working to find answers and a vaccine. May God's healing spirit be upon our world during this pandemic.

For all those whose employment is being affected, changed, and hampered by the current crisis. Let them not walk alone in this scary time, but let them feel the prayers and support of the great cloud of witnesses surrounding them as they traverse this difficult path.

For our churches. Help us to find our way forward to be the serving living embodiment of the Body of Christ in difficult and trying times.

++++

Names added to the prayer list will remain on the prayer list for one month. Let the office know if a prayer request needs to stay on the list for longer or shorter than one month.



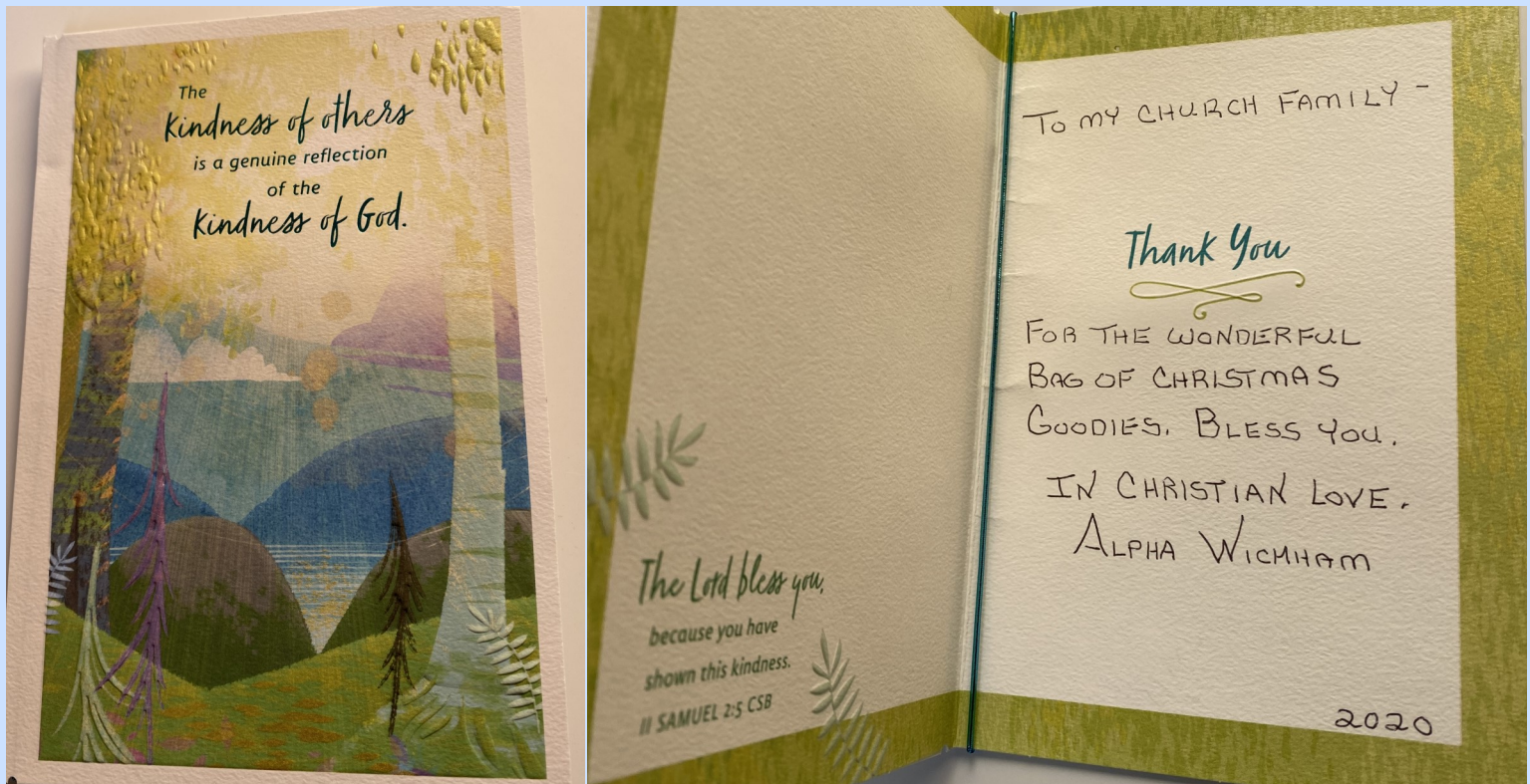
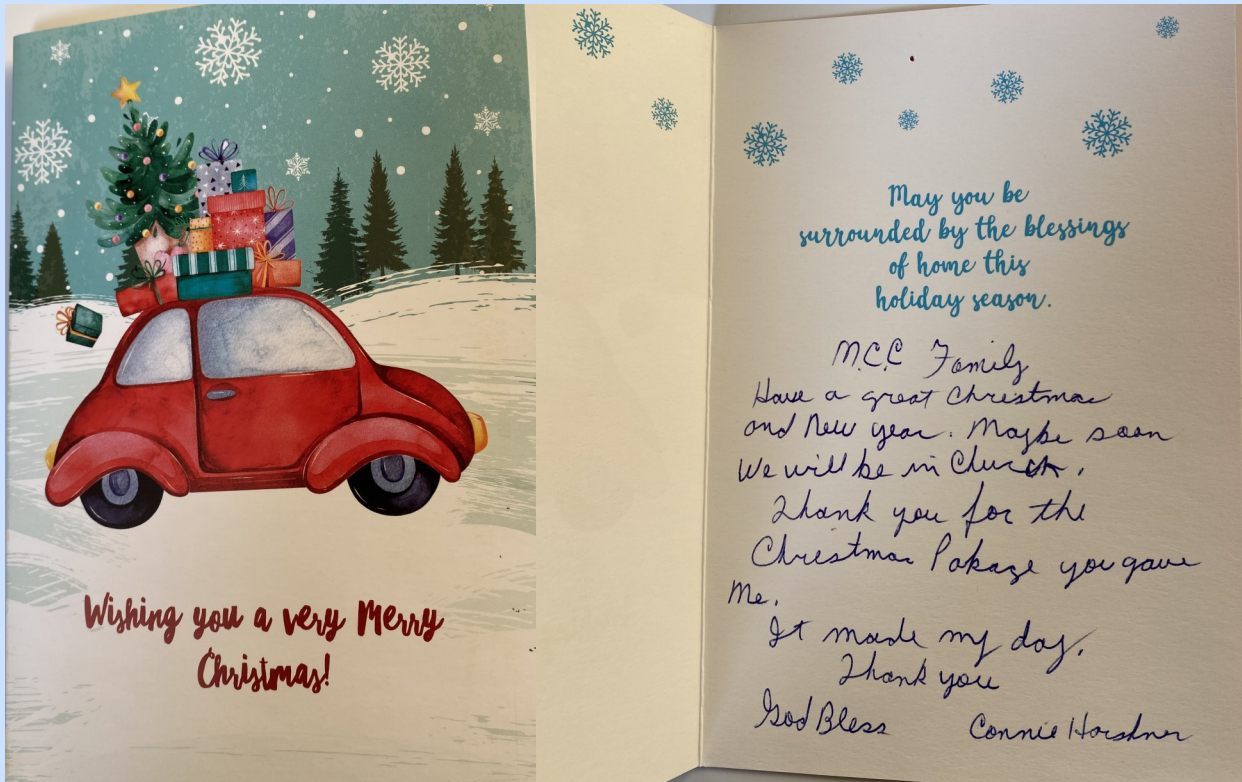
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your



requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

[Philippians 4:6-7](#)

Thank you Notes for Christmas Care Packages delivered this Christmas Season



Coloring Sheets from the Children

We asked the children of the congregation to complete the coloring sheets included in their family's Thanksgiving cards & mail them back.

We hope you enjoy their works of art they did for you!

Thank You Kids!

