

# COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE MIDLANDS

***Unapologetically Christian, Unapologetically Progressive***

## *Pastor's Paragraphs*

### WILL OUR CHRISTMAS BE TRANSFORMATIONAL?

Ah, Christmas! That incomparable season is upon us again, and it particularly is a special time in most churches. But will it be special *enough*? The truth is that the majority of us don't need to go to an average church to celebrate Christmas, because we already know just about everything that will happen, *including* what will be *said*! Will we hear anything new? Probably not. Challenging? It's not likely; but almost surely there will be some words about Mary, Joseph, a baby, a manger and, possibly, some travelers who brought gifts that were not particularly appropriate for a baby. You might even hear a word about angels or a bright star that was able mysteriously to move so people could follow it. Of course, if we are lucky, the service might be beautifully done and even heartwarming. But transformational? Rarely—if ever.

I have always loved Christmas, and I still do. I appreciate the many Christmas services I have attended and in which I happily have participated. But were they *transformational*? Again, for most of the people there, I think not.

But if Christmas, like Easter, is one of the most important celebrations of the Christian Year, shouldn't it be at least *somewhat* transformational? Shouldn't there be *something* in the experience that is more than merely a routine observance, something that might be considered a powerfully significant, life-changing message from God for us? That would be *ideal*.

Consequently, when we gather for our Christmas worship service this year, I will be delivering a *recondite* sermon. Recondite? You probably don't hear that word used very often, but, basically, "recondite" refers to something that is *not known or understood* by many people; and when I use it to refer to my Christmas sermon this year, it means that I will be dealing with what I believe is the most significant spiritual truth in the entire Christmas message, but, ironically, one that is rarely mentioned in churches! Therefore, sadly, it is *unknown* to a majority of Christians—no matter *how* many Christmas services they have attended! But if you are with us for our upcoming Christmas worship service, that important truth, hidden to most, will elude you no longer.

I hope my effort to explicate the profound, "recondite" issue to which I have referred will be a gift to us from the God of Christmas. Perhaps it can motivate *all* of us to anchor ourselves in God's master plan for a life that has the potential to fulfill us in ways that we have not dared to dream.

Let us hope, then, that *this* Christmas at CCM will open the doors of our spiritual perception in a way that, at last, can enable us to experience the *fuller* Christmas joy that God intended for us.

With love and the profound hope that our Christmas will be marvelously transformational, I remain, gratefully,

Your pastor and friend,

**John**

# IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM

*December, 2018*

*Please note that our gatherings this month  
will be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday  
INSTEAD of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.*

**Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month)**

**11:30 a.m. CHRISTMAS FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH**

One of the great joys of Christmas is to be able to share this special season with others. That especially is true when it comes to our *spiritual* family. So, to be able to connect with others over a delicious meal is a privilege that can add meaning to the life of each of us—which is why our Dutch treat Christmas Fellowship Brunch has become a meaningful tradition.

We are pleased to announce that we have been able to secure by-reservation-only space for our event this year at locally popular Myos on Forest. The address is 3250 Sunnyside Drive (at the corner of Sunnyside and Forest Drive) in Forest Acres, just across the street from Lizard's Thicket. Since the restaurant opens at 11:30 a.m., we will eat at *that* time instead of at 11:00 a.m.

Fortunately, we have been able to secure a slightly larger dining area than originally anticipated, so we have a few spaces left. Therefore, if you haven't had an opportunity to make your reservation(s) yet, you can do so by calling John at 331-9999 as soon as you read this announcement, and you'll be able to enjoy this event with the rest of you CCM spiritual family.

After we eat, our dear new friend, Heidi Turner, will be present to tell us how people celebrate Christmas in her native Germany.

We look forward to being with you and sharing good food and fellowship at our festive holiday celebration.

**Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Month)**

**10:00 a.m. CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE AND ANNUAL  
CANDLELIGHTING CEREMONY**

As indicated in our pastor's article in this newsletter, his message will deal with a powerful Christmas truth that you probably never have heard before. Since so few have, that may explain why many professing Christians have not experienced much *truly* meaningful transformation. So, during our time together today, it is our hope that we'll be able to leave with a deeper understanding of the Christmas reality than you have been able to experience previously.

Since we traditionally do not have our "talk-back" to the message after the Christmas service, we plan to adjourn earlier than usual—probably around 11:30 a.m. At that time, anyone who would like to go out for something to eat is welcome to be a part of our "Lunch Bunch."

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## *LOOKING AHEAD*

The new year—2019—is just around the corner, and CCM is already planning for it! Our New Year’s Worship will take place on January 9<sup>th</sup> and promises to be a vital time of togetherness. Our proclaimer for the day will be “one of our own,” Timothy Werts. Our pastor has invited him to share with us what he believes Jesus would probably want to say to our church—and to each of us individually—as we face the beginning of a new year, if *Jesus himself* were here physically to deliver the sermon.

Tim thought the suggestion to reflect on the aforementioned topic would be an exciting challenge, so we are delighted to announce that he accepted the invitation to bring our new year’s message.

As you know, Tim is one of our most thoughtful fellow travelers on our common spiritual journey. He reads widely, studies assiduously, and exerts the effort to participate in numerous spiritually—oriented retreats throughout each year. His reflections and the discussion following worship should be an extremely meaningful way to begin a new year together. We plan to adjourn at around 12:00 noon.

## ***GATHERING DATES***

You have told us that our announcing worship, enlightenment, and other gathering dates in *advance* is helpful. Those of you who take your spiritual journey seriously seem now to be marking those dates on your calendar and planning all other events and out-of-town trips so that they won't conflict with taking your relationship to God seriously by being present with us at CCM. We are happy, therefore, to supply our anticipated gathering dates for the beginning of 2019.

January 13 – Worship

January 27 – Enlightenment

February 10 – Worship and 21<sup>st</sup>  
Anniversary Celebration

February 24 – Enlightenment

March 10 – Worship

March 24 – Enlightenment

April 14 – Conversations  
with the Pastor

April 21 – Easter Worship

## ***CCM BIRTHDAYS***

We have two *known* birthdays this month. Dr. Norman Masters will celebrate on 12/11/ and our beloved former proclaimer, Dale Sessions, will commemorate his natal day on 12/14. Our love and best wishes are with both of you!

# CCM:

## REDEFINING WHAT CHURCH CAN BE *WHEREVER YOU ARE, THE DIFFERENCE IS WORTH ANY DISTANCE!*

### *Our Telephone:*

Senior Pastor: (803) 331-9999. Our mobile cell phone is more reliable than our landline phone, because it is on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If no one answers, it usually means that our pastor is in a meeting, in a counseling session, doing regular spiritual mentoring, or is involved in some other form of ministry; but he will return your call as soon as possible, so please be sure to leave a message.

### *Our Websites:*

CommunityChurchMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

*or*

CommunityChurchOfTheMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

*Our Mailing Address:* P.O. Box 6946, Columbia, S.C. 29260-6946

*Our Location:* CCM usually gathers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month, and any changes will be noted in our monthly newsletter. Please join us at the gorgeous Seven Oaks Community Center in beautiful Seven Oaks Park, 200 Leisure Lane (between St. Andrews and Piney Grove roads, just off I-26 West). When you enter the spacious parking lot, you'll see the main

entrance to our newly renovated building on your right. Once you are inside the Reception Area, our meeting locality is on your left. For updates on our programming, to verify meeting times, to learn about changes in scheduling, or for any pastoral need, please feel free to call 331-9999, night or day.

*ALWAYS, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!*