

# The Spire

Monthly Newsletter

December 2018

[www.spcah.org](http://www.spcah.org)



Southminster  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## *Worship in December*

### **December 9:**

9:00 a.m. Traditional Worship

11:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship

### **December 16:**

10:00 a.m. Single Worship, featuring  
Annual Children's Christmas Pageant

### **December 23:**

10:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship

7:30 p.m. Traditional Candlelight Service

### **December 24:**

4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Family Candlelight Service

### **December 30:**

10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship



## Preparing for the Unknown

*While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.* ~ Luke 2:6-7

This is the scripture passage I will preach on Christmas Eve, my last service with you. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we also celebrate all the hopes and dreams that come bundled together in this amazing gift: the gift of the Christ child wrapped in bands of cloth.

This gift is God—God in the flesh, entering our world in human form; divinity and humanity intertwined in one. The question for us to ponder in this time of Advent is whether we will let ourselves move beyond the Christmas trappings of parties, food, and the abundance of presents, or simply and quietly let God into our lives, not just on one day but every day. You know what this means. It means you will have to journey into the “unknown” and willingly face your fears, doubts, and assumptions. But doing so allows you to dream of the plans Christ has for your church, for you, and for each one of us.

You are not a stranger to “unknowns.” You have endured over two years waiting for your new pastor to come, and you have survived not one but two interim pastors who have both been “unknowns.” Way to go and congratulations. I have witnessed your strength and perseverance, and I am truly moved by how much you love and care for each other. Next month you will face another “unknown,” and I know without a doubt that you will be ready to embrace your new pastor and celebrate the unique gifts he will bring to your church. As I leave, please know that I will always remember the time we have had together with great tenderness and thanks giving. What a blessing it has been for me to journey with you. Merry Christmas!

Celebrating the birth of Christ!

Barbara



## PC(USA) Christmas Joy Offering



During this Advent Season, we celebrate our leadership past, present, and future through support of the Christmas Joy Offering. We do so because church leaders greatly impact our lives of faith, walking with us down the path to be more like Jesus. We want future leaders for the church and world, like those educated at our Presbyterian-related schools and colleges, equipping communities of color to reflect the wideness of God’s intended diversity, and we want those church leaders and their families who find themselves grappling with a critical financial need to have the resources they need.

### Our Gifts at Work

#### Supporting Our Past, Present, and Future Leaders

- \$1.1 million of gifts from 2017 are being used to provide critical financial support and grants for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in their times of need.
- Income supplements from the Board of Pensions helped 312 households, assisting retired church workers, and surviving spouses with means to provide for themselves.
- Housing supplements helped 255 households stay in their homes, afford assisted living, or long-term care.
- Shared and Emergency Grants helped 362 households facing times of great financial need or uncertainty due to unforeseen circumstances.

#### Preparing the Way for Future Leaders

- \$1 million of gifts from 2017 are being used to provide education and leadership development skills at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.
- Many of the students attending Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color are the first in their families to enroll in higher education.

We ask that you consider a gift to our Presbyterian leaders by donating through the Christmas Joy Offering this month. Thank you for your generosity.



## Dear Friends,

*Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.* ~ Luke 6:38

Happy Advent! This is the season when we prepare to receive God's greatest gift on earth, the sending of his son. Jesus came to seek us and to save us. Jesus came to show us the way we are really supposed to live. So in the hustle and bustle of this season, don't miss experiencing God's presence, active in your life and in the world. Pick up an Advent family devotional in the welcome area and work through it as an individual or family. This devotional includes children's activities, but the message for each week is for adults. So whatever your age, you will find meaning in it!

As we prepare to receive the gift of Jesus' birth, we need to think about the gifts we give to His church. If you have not yet turned in your pledge, please do so in the coming weeks. Pledging, whatever the amount, expresses your commitment to the work of Christ's church. Your pledge will help the church's programs, outreach to the community, and to keep the lights and heat on, the amount of which is all based on the pledges we receive. Your pledge helps us create a budget based on a known amount. We can't write our next chapter on unpledged giving. If you like to place an offering in the plate every week, we really appreciate that and are grateful for your generosity. But we can't create a budget on weekly offerings. That is why we need our members to make a pledge. I understand the struggle of pledging. If you didn't get the chance to hear my sermon on November 18, please click on the link and take a listen. <https://spcah.org/sermons/what-does-the-lord-require-of-you/>



In addition to our pledges, another instrumental part of Southminster's next chapter is receiving our new senior pastor, The Reverend Matt Gearke. Pastor Barbara Gorsky has done a wonderful job preparing all of us for Matt's arrival. It has been a delight to work with Barbara, and I hope you will be here when we thank her for her wonderful service on Sunday, December 23, following the single 10:00 a.m. worship service. God has prepared us well, and we will step into the new year with excitement, as Matt begins his ministry here preaching on January 6, 2019.

Wishing you a Christ-filled Advent,

*The Reverend Elizabeth (Liz) Nickerson  
Associate Pastor*

## JOE AND MARY: A CHRISTMAS WEDDING

Sunday, December 9, 1:00 p.m. wedding cake & matinee - tickets \$10



**Tickets still available for Sunday's matinee:  
Don't miss out - Order your tickets today!**

**To purchase tickets:**

go to [www.spcah.org](http://www.spcah.org)  
or call 847-392-1060





## Dear Friends,

The fresh laden winter wonderland last week took me by surprise and quickly turned my thoughts toward Christmas merry making and preparing for a long winter. Then I thought about all the many new opportunities that lie ahead in the coming year. Next year we will begin a new chapter for our church family by welcoming a new pastor and his family! During this busy December, we have only one event planned for the Youth on Friday, December 21, when we will head out into the local community on an adventure to find crazy Christmas light decorations. We'll then return to church for some hot cocoa and cookies. I encourage all families to find time this month to unplug and do things together, like playing board games, making cookies, playing music, or singing songs. Be mindful of this time and enjoy the break from school and all the regular activities. We are often so busy that we miss out on these memory-making times with our families. Wishing you all a joyous December!

In Christ,

*Kari*

Youth Ministry Director

## Crazy Christmas Light Tour

All youth are invited to join in the fun of our Crazy Christmas Light Scavenger Hunt! Beginning at Southminster on Friday, December 21, at 7:00 p.m. we'll break into groups and travel the area taking pictures of houses with crazy amounts of Christmas lights and decorations. Afterward, we'll gather together for hot cocoa and cookies and see who won the scavenger hunt.

Invite your friends, and put this fun Christmas event on your calendar today! We'll need parent drivers, so parents, please RSVP to [kari@spcah.org](mailto:kari@spcah.org) to let her know if you can drive.

**November's Youth Night** included two rounds of Romans and Christians and, once again, completing in a Top Chef Bake-Off! It just so happened to be the birthday of our Judge, Thomas VonOesen, and Pastor Liz's husband, Matt! So we surprised them with Birthday Cake entries. Below are some pictures of the youth's hard work and Thomas enjoying the fruits (or cake) of their labor!





## Dear friends and families,

Merry Christmas! It is such fun getting ready for our Christmas festivities here at Southminster. I'm deep into Christmas pageant rehearsals and teaching our young children the nativity story-line and the first verse of the good ol' standard Christmas Carols. I'm hearing comments like, "How do you pronounce Magi?" "What are the words to 'Away in a Manger'? "I've never sung 'O Little Town of Bethlehem before.'" My goodness! I can't remember a time when I didn't know these things! It's such a joy and sweet reminder that the old Christmas carols and even the story of the nativity is new, new, new to our young children! Just because we've heard the old story and sung the traditional songs a thousand times, it should not diminish the importance and beauty of the birth of our savior. The children remind me how wonderful it was and still is.

I hope you will join us for our single worship service and Children's Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 16, at 10:00 a.m. to see for yourself the celebration of Jesus' birth through our children's fresh young eyes. It may just make new again those lovely carols for you!

Grace and Peace,  
**Ms. Jill**  
Children's Ministry Director



I hope you'll join us for our single worship service and  
**Children's Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 16, at 10:00 a.m.**  
to see for yourself the celebration of Jesus' birth  
through our children's fresh young eyes.  
It may just make new again those lovely carols for you!

## *Family Fun Night December 5, 5:30-8:00 pm at Southminster Presbyterian Church*

You're Invited to a Family Christmas Party!  
Enjoy a buffet dinner, contests, games, and Grinchy-green fun  
with the original movie *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

This is a casual gathering. Come when you can and stay as long as your family likes.  
Meet downstairs in the Community Room and Fellowship Hall.

Please RSVP by Sunday, December 2, to Jill at [jill@spcah.org](mailto:jill@spcah.org)



## Upcoming Sunday School Schedule:

December 30: No Sunday school  
January 6, 2019: Sunday school resumes



## You're invited to join in a small group discussion that asks the tough questions we all wonder about

Does Life Have a Purpose? Is There a God? Why Does God Allow Pain and Suffering?  
Is Christianity Too Narrow? Is Jesus Really God? Is the Bible Reliable? Can I Know God Personally?

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### The 7 Big Questions

Southminster Presbyterian Church - in the chapel  
10:10 - 10:55 a.m. Sundays, January 13 through February 24, 2019  
For information, email Bob at [Lievph@aol.com](mailto:Lievph@aol.com) or call 847.312.1649

### Coffee and Conversation for Women

Southminster Presbyterian Church - in the chapel  
1:30 - 3:00 p.m. Tuesdays, January 8 through February 19, 2019  
For information, email Jean [jeanlward6107@wowway.com](mailto:jeanlward6107@wowway.com) or call 847.271.8087

### Explore With Us

Mt. Prospect Historical Education Center  
101 S Maple, Mt Prospect (Parking & Entrance Off Busse Road)  
7:30 p.m. Tuesdays, January 8 through February 19, 2019  
For information, email Dennis [dennis.rich007@att.net](mailto:dennis.rich007@att.net) or call 224.520.2831  
or email Todd [tpeterson403@comcast.net](mailto:tpeterson403@comcast.net) or call 773.892.6798

### Tuesday Nights for Women

Southminster Presbyterian - The Oasis (2nd floor)  
6:30 p.m. a light dinner will be served after yoga / 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Explore God  
Tuesdays, January 8 through February 19, 2019  
For information, email Kathy at [kagudonis@gmail.com](mailto:kagudonis@gmail.com) or call 847.287.8518

### SPC's Thursday Night Men Exploring God

Southminster Presbyterian Church - in the chapel  
7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Thursdays, January 10 through February 21, 2019  
For information, email Dennis at [dennis.rich007@att.net](mailto:dennis.rich007@att.net) or call 224.520.2831

### The Bible Bums Explore God

Southminster Presbyterian Church - in the Loft (downstairs)  
6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Mondays, January 7 through February 18, 2019  
For information, email Ed at [egud1@aol.com](mailto:egud1@aol.com) or call 847.732.5627

## Gun Violence Vigil



Join your Faith in Action team at a vigil to end gun violence at **Countryside Unitarian Church, 1025 Smith Street, Palatine, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 11**. This is one of dozens of events being hosted by gun violence prevention and interfaith groups in communities across the nation this month. Contact Cindy Greenwood at [cngrnwood@gmail.com](mailto:cngrnwood@gmail.com) for more details.

The recent synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, prompted the pastors, council, and staff of Southminster to write a letter to the Fence Post editor at the *Daily Herald*, extending our condolences to the Jewish community and letting them know of Southminster's ongoing fight against hate. Click here to read the letter: [Southminster-letter to the editor](#). Rabbi Ilana J. Baden from Temple Chai in Long Grove, Illinois, responded with a personal letter to Southminster thanking us. Please read her letter here: [Letter from Temple Chai](#). If you would like to get involved with Southminster's Faith in Justice efforts, please email Cindy Greenwood at [cngrnwood@gmail.com](mailto:cngrnwood@gmail.com) or Linda Waycie at [lwaycie@wowway.com](mailto:lwaycie@wowway.com).

## Christopher House Family-to-Family

Please remember to wrap all gifts purchased for Christopher House Family-to-Family Mission Project, mark with family identification number, and return them to Southminster on **Saturday, December 8**. Our delivery truck heads out that day at 8:00 a.m. NOTE: Late drop offs will not be delivered. Please bring your gifts to the chapel before 8:00 a.m.!

Thank you for your generous support and for making Christmas merry for families in Chicago. If you have questions or need more information, email Suzanne at [mike@mulligan1983.com](mailto:mike@mulligan1983.com).



## The History of Christmas Songs



Engage your spirit with the Christmas season in this interesting, and informative Advent Adult Discipling series, "The History of Christmas Songs." How did our best-loved songs come to be? What's the story behind the music and the lyrics?

### December 9:

O' Little Town of Bethlehem  
Silent Night  
Oh, Holy Night

### December 23:

Mary, Did You Know?  
Go, Tell It on the Mountain  
I Wonder as I Wander

You are also invited to join us when we take a break on **Sunday, December 16**, to enjoy the Children's Christmas Pageant.

## Welcome Pastor Matt Gearke

What a wonderful worship service on Sunday, December 2, when our congregation had the opportunity to listen to our pastoral candidate, Matt Gearke, preach for the first time and to then vote him in as Southminster's new senior pastor! A joyous celebration followed with handshakes, hugs, congratulations, and cake. Pastor Matt will begin his tenure at Southminster on January 2, 2019.

Thanks go out to our PNC who worked tirelessly, searching for a candidate who would meet the needs of our church and our congregation. Also a big thank you to Pastor Barbara for serving our church so wonderfully during her time as interim pastor.

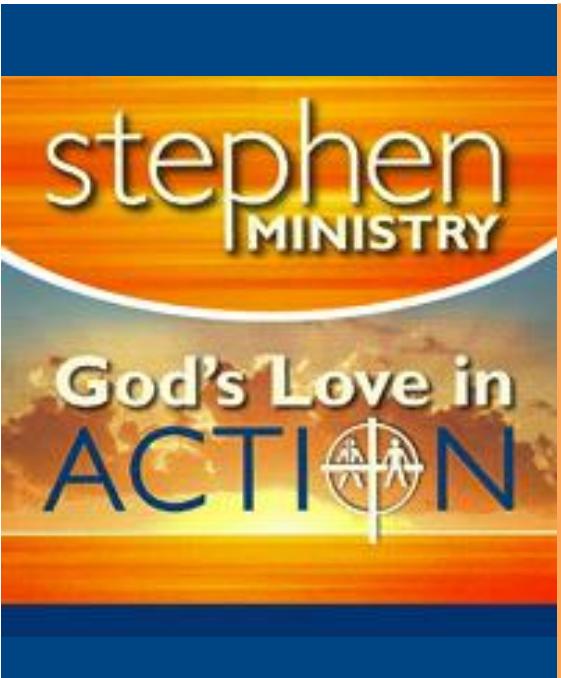
It's an exciting time at Southminster! Let us rejoice in Jesus' birth and trust in His plan.

*For I know the plans I have for you,* declares the LORD, *“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” ~ Jeremiah 29:11*



Pastor Matt with his wife, Jessica, and their four-year-old daughter Hilde.





Some years are hard. Maybe you've lost someone dear. Maybe you're in the middle of an illness or injury. Or maybe things just aren't going well right now. If that's you—or someone you know—here are some ways to make the holidays a little bit easier.



**Approaching the Holidays during a Tough Year**

Let people know—share your limitations ahead of time.

Ask for help—family and friends can help lighten your burden.

Accept your feelings—whatever you're feeling is okay.

Pace yourself—do what you can, and try not to worry about what you can't.

@stephenministries

## Neighborhood Connect

### Loving People

These days, the word *love* has lost its value. Saying we love someone, or even feeling kind thoughts about them, is not really love. Love may sometimes *feel*, but it always *acts*. The Bible repeats this truth over and over. “*God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8); and, “*For God so loved the world that he gave . . .*” (John 3:16); and finally, “*faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*” (James 2:17). Action accompanies real love, but action can take very different forms as we interact with people widely different from us.

Loving our neighbor means loving those who are lovable or who are like us, those less fortunate or more fortunate than us, and also our enemies.

Let's face it, loving someone less fortunate can be difficult. We are more prone to judge them or not even notice them. But Jesus challenges us to be generous with our time and resources to those in need—whether it's a person who is lacking basic necessities, or a person who has plenty but is spiritually bankrupt. We're called to love people across every economic, spiritual, and ethnic spectrum.

There will be times when love may cost us more than we anticipated—it may require time and attention we'd rather use elsewhere; we may feel scared or pushed out of our comfort zone; we may even have to make a sacrifice that is painful. But when we keep in mind how much God loves us, loving others makes sense. As pastor Francis Chan writes, “Jesus is saying that we show tangible love for God in how we care for the poor and those who are suffering. He expects us to treat the poor and the desperate as if they were Christ Himself.”



Many of us have lifestyles that insulate us from “the poor and desperate.” Rather than absolving us, perhaps God calls us to deliberately put ourselves in settings, neighborhoods, or social gatherings where we can get to know and love those who are not like us.

~ *The Arts of Spiritual Conversations*

## With Gratitude, Southminster

Thank you for your generous Thanksgiving donations for the annual Food Drive for the Christopher House community. Here are our totals: 36 volunteers from 4 Presbyterian Churches filled 412 bags and were entertained after the meeting by the 5th/6th grade Christopher House Children's Choir.

With appreciation,  
Mission Team & Auxiliary



## Stitchers Group Concludes

Through much thought and regret, I am announcing that I will be stepping down as the leader of Loving Hands Stitchers. So for now, unless someone else steps up to fill this position, our ministry will disband. However, I encourage those ladies who were members to continue their charitable work, which provides them with a deep sense of accomplishment and is a blessing to others. If anyone wants to drop off items periodically at my home or at church, I will gladly distribute them to St. Alexius Hospital, Lemons of Love, the homeless, Christopher House, the Barnabus Room, and other destinations. If anyone is interested in leading the group, let me know and I'll meet with you to discuss how to reserve the library, how to access the church on Saturday mornings, and all other duties. I will also pass along our business cards and any other pertinent information.

Thank you to those who have helped build this ministry and who have supported its efforts. I wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas season.

*Jan Tossman*

## Dear SPC Faithful Family,



We would like to thank each and every one of you for the lovely gifts, your loving care and support, friendship, and continued prayers as we transition into our new homes in South Carolina. This is not a goodbye, but a "see you soon!"

Love,  
Nita, Laura, and Jame

## Care Ministry / Deacons for December

Every member and friend of Southminster is assigned to a parish, which is Overseen by deacons. Deacons can bring meals to you when you're sick, help provide transportation if needed, pray with you about a concern, or connect you with other resources at the church. Please call the deacons of the month who can connect you with our caring ministry and your deacon.



Sue Ziegler  
847.259.2930



Barb Taylor  
847.303.9301

Sue Ziegler and Barb Taylor are your Care Minister / Deacons for December

## For Your Marriage



Even if it's not your cup of tea, sometimes it's worth doing something with your spouse just because it pleases the other person. For example, watch her favorite movie or his favorite sport, try dancing together, take a lesson...

[foryourmarriage.org](http://foryourmarriage.org)