



# The Messenger

December 2014



## *Pastor's Ponderings*

With thanksgiving, let's recognize the folks who supported our homeless hospitality week in November; and those (many who are the same people) who organized the Hunger Harvest dinner this year. And the faithful in Falls City who organized and prepared the Community Thanksgiving meal that served 280 meals this year, and brought a real cross-section of Falls City residents to the tables at the Community Center.

With thanksgiving, we appreciate those who have pledged financial support of Christ's Church's budget for 2015, and look forward to additional pledges. We need to hear from you soon, so we can prepare our financial plan for next year.

With anticipation, we gather in worship and fellowship during Advent. You will see some changes in the worship format for the season, with singing and silence a little more prevalent than the spoken word. We hope that every heart can "prepare Him room," with these opportunities to draw on the intelligence of the heart.

Blessings in this Season of Peace.

Blessings.

*Becky*



**Christ's Church Methodist & Presbyterian United  
& Falls City United Methodist Church**

**In Remembrance**



**All Saints Day** at Christ's Church, November 23, 2014



Christ's Church Boy Scout Troop 38's annual Christmas Tree Stand is open. Their tree stand is located in the parking lot across from Petals and Vines at the corner of Broad and Main Streets in Monmouth. Hours are: Mondays thru Fridays 4pm to 7pm, Saturdays 8am to 7pm and Sundays 11am to 7pm. Delivery will be available. Come on down and support our scouts as well as to get a very fresh Christmas Tree!



The **Salem Community Choir** will again perform in our Christ's Church Sanctuary on December 14 at 3pm. One of our own choir members, Sue Badgett, is a long time member of this choir. Ask Sue for more information about the Community Choir and/or this concert. Donations, of course, are joyfully accepted



Christmas caroling this year is open to everyone who wants to bring cheer and comfort to others this season – no choir membership needed. Just bring warm hearts and a cheerful disposition (and warm clothes). Afterwards we all gather at Sherry's for Christmas Cheer and chili. Yum. If you would like to participate but need to share a ride with someone, call Sherry Pittam – and know you are making this season more special for others. Seasons Greetings!

**Christ's Church (CCMP)**  
 Methodist & Presbyterian  
 412 Clay Street W.  
 Monmouth, OR 97361  
[www.christschurchmonmouth.org](http://www.christschurchmonmouth.org)  
**Televised on: WIMPEG**  
 Channel 18  
 5am-6am, Sun. through Sat  
 3pm-4pm, Sun. through Sat

**Falls City UMC (FC)**  
 United Methodist Church  
 PO Box 473  
 242 N. Main St.  
 Falls City, OR 97334  
[www.fallscityumc.org](http://www.fallscityumc.org)

**OFFICE**  
**Hours:** M–F, 9am-12pm  
**(503) 838-1724**  
 email: [ccmpunited@gmail.com](mailto:ccmpunited@gmail.com)

**Pastor Becky Strader**  
 Becky's cell: (802) 454-8304  
 email: [ccmppastor@gmail.com](mailto:ccmppastor@gmail.com)

**Newsletter Editor: Joy Brown**  
 email: [jrbrown@me.com](mailto:jrbrown@me.com)

***Welcome! No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey . . . you are welcome here.***



**Handmade Christmas Presents!**

Interested in crafting hand made presents for loved ones? Check out Friday's Arts & Crafts with Sherry! Lots of fun and different possibilities – and some materials are provided.



## Sock it to Hunger!

Our “Sock it to Hunger” campaign, as of Nov. 30, has officially begun. Sock it to Hunger is a tradition started at CCMP by Jo Yeager.

By putting our spare change in socks, then putting those together, we come up money for grocery gift certificates to put into the Christmas Baskets. That lets people buy fresh, perishable food that we cannot other wise include the baskets.

The idea stems from “the widow’s mite” where the smallest of coins, added together, form a significant contribution in the service of others.

Let’s see how much we can accumulate by doing this one small thing!



## Exciting news from the Stewardship Team!!!

The church has received a very generous gift to replace the carpet in the sanctuary. The work will begin on Monday, December 8 -- so we need to move everything out of the sanctuary after our worship on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. Please plan to stay after worship and do a part of it -- the work will be organized so that there is something everyone can do! The new carpet will be in place for our worship the following Sunday, Dec. 14, and for the choir concert that afternoon. We are so grateful for this amazing Christmas gift to the church!

**Our Hospitality Week,** where CCMP hosted four families and provided a warm, safe place to sleep, good company, good food, and valued support for others, was successful.



Perhaps the Salem based Hospitality Program will allow us to be part of this mission on an annual basis.

Although we touch the lives of these families in perhaps incalculable ways, what

they give back to us is just as much, if not more, meaningful.

We can all be thankful for the many people in this church who stepped forward to help make this a success.



Pastor Becky invites you to come to **Advent** “Potlucks and Devotionals” at the parsonage on December 7, 14, and 21 at 6pm.

We will enjoy the *koinonia*, or fellowship of gathering, and have an opportunity to pray and sing together – and maybe a learning activity, too!

Please email Becky at [ccmppastor@gmail.com](mailto:ccmppastor@gmail.com) if you plan to attend (to help her arrange for enough chairs); and even if you haven’t RSVP’d, come, anyway.

(And read more about what the Advent Season means on page 7.)

## REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS

### SUNDAY

- 9:00am **Fellowship** (FC Friendship Room)  
 9:20am **Worship** (FC Sanctuary)  
 10:00am **Prayer & Meditation** (CCMP Prayer Studio)  
 11:00am **Worship** (CCMP Sanctuary)  
 12:10am **Fellowship** (CCMP Upper Room)

### TUESDAY

- 7:00pm **Boy Scouts** (CCMP Basement Hall)  
 7:00pm **Committees** (CCMP Library)  
 7:00pm **FC Board** (FC Friendship Room)

### WEDNESDAY

- 8:00am **Lectionary Discussion Group** (Independence Grill)  
 5:30pm **Joy Bells Practice** (CCMP Sanctuary)  
 6:30pm **Choir Practice** (CCMP Sanctuary)

### THURSDAY

- 7:00pm **Thursday Book Study** (Monmouth, S. Pittam)  
 7:00pm **Spanish Church** (CCMP Sanctuary)

### FRIDAY

- 6:30pm **Arts & Crafts with Sherry** (Monmouth, S. Pittam)

### SATURDAY

- 9:00am **Adventist Church** (9:00am-8:00pm, CCMP)

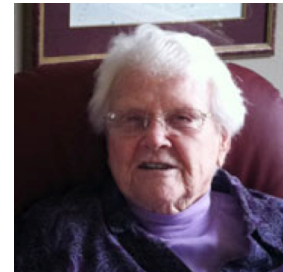
## MONTHLY EVENTS

- Dec. 2 **Peace, Justice, and Mission Team Meeting**, 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday (7:00pm, CCMP Library)  
 Dec. 3 **Horizons Bible Study Group**, 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday (1:00pm, Heron Pointe, Small Dining Room)  
 Dec 3 **Western Compass Fundraiser** at Burgerville  
 Dec. 3 **Western Compass Fundraiser**, (5:00pm, Burgerville)  
 Dec. 5 **Polk Community Free Clinic**, 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday (7:30am)  
 Dec. 7 **Advent Dinner & Devotionals**, (6:00pm, Parsonage)  
 Dec. 9 **James2 Dinner**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tue. (5:00pm, FC Friendship Room)  
 Dec. 14 **Second Sunday Potluck** 11:00pm, FC Friendship Room)  
 Dec. 14 **Salem Community Chorus**, (3:00pm, CCMP Sanctuary)  
 Dec. 14 **Advent Dinner & Devotionals**, (6:00pm, Parsonage)  
 Dec. 20 **Caroling and Chili Feed, CCMP** (5:00pm, TBA)  
 Dec. 21 **Board Meeting, CCMP**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tue (12:30pm, CCMP Library)  
 Dec. 21 **Advent Dinner & Devotionals**, (6:00pm, Parsonage)  
 Dec. 24 **Submission Due Date** for January Newsletter  
 Dec. 24 **Christmas Eve Service** (5:30pm, FC Sanctuary)  
 Dec. 24 **Christmas Eve Family Service** (8:00pm, CCMP Sanctuary)  
 Dec. 24 **Candlelight & Communion** (11:00pm, CCMP)  
 Dec. 25 **Christmas Day** (Office closed, no Book Study. Celebrate!)  
 Dec. 27 **Polk Community Free Clinic**, 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday (7:30am)  
 Dec. 30 **James2 Dinner**, last Tue. (5:00pm, FC Friendship Room)

## December Birthdays

- 12/03 Dot Turnbull  
 12/05 Jim Beard-Leeper  
 12/07 Georgia Wildfang  
 12/09 Pat Jaffer  
 12/14 Lorraine Wells  
 12/15 Howard Grund-Clampit  
 12/19 Shelby Case  
 12/29 Lisa Fowler  
 12/31 Bev Davis  
 12/31 Joyce Moser

### Dorothy (Dot) Turnbull



If you know Dorothy (Dot) Turnbull, you may want to wish her a very happy birthday this week. December 3<sup>rd</sup> is her 90th birthday! More than 10 years ago Dot moved to a retirement home in California, so not everyone will know her now, but she is a fascinating person who spent many years in mission work in Thailand and Egypt. She and her husband were pillars in our church for many years and a blessing to all of us. She came back to Monmouth about two years ago to live with her daughter, Janet Sheldon. Dot has not been in good health so we don't see her at church, but many of us hold her in our hearts.

Happy Birthday, Dot!





### In Memory

Lillian Humphreys, 89, of Independence died Thursday at Willamette Valley Hospice in West Salem from complications from a fall. She was the first of her Norwegian family to be born in the United States. She met her husband, Leonard. D. Humphreys, during World War II while still attending Salem High School in 1942; he proposed and she said “no.” She graduated in 1944 and went on to nurses training. During the war she and Leonard wrote every day.

After the war, a trip to visit his parents in Coos Bay by bus was planned. While waiting for the bus to leave Portland, they flipped a coin to decide between two marriage options. As the dime was in the air, Lillian called out “if it lands on end, we’ll get married tonight.” It hit the pavement, bounced and stood on end. Leonard grabbed it up and called the minister. Their marriage lasted 64 years until his death in 2010. They had made Independence their home for the past 38 years.

She worked as an LPN, and then worked for the English Language Study Center in Monmouth as a host family coordinator. Through her work there over the next 30 years she met and hosted more than 150 international students. She often made quilts and pillows for Habitat for Humanity silent auctions and handmade quiet books for her grandchildren.

Survivors include her children, Susan, Michael, John and James; 14 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; and extended family.

Her Celebration of Life was held Nov. 9 at Christ’s Church in Monmouth. Contributions are suggested to Ella Curran Food Bank in Independence, Goodwill Industries, Habitat for Humanity, and Mercy Corp.

*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

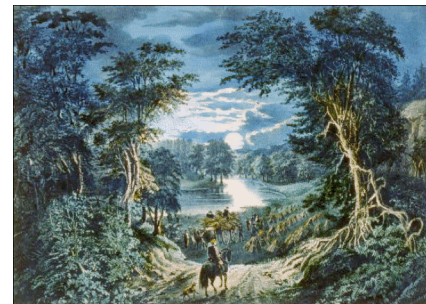
*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

*He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*





## CCMP Annual Christmas Baskets

Christ's Church will offer **20 Christmas Baskets** this year. The Moser's are taking the lead role so call them for more details on what is needed, including food items or drivers, etc.

In addition, half of the offering from the Salem Community Chorus on December 14 Concert will support Christmas Baskets.

Items for the baskets can be dropped off at the Church. In order to be delivered in time, items need to be brought to the church by **December 17**. Needed food items are listed on the right.

### Needed Donations

#### BASICS

- Stuffing (boxed)
- Bag of Potatoes (5 lb. bags)
- Gravy (canned or packets)
- Canned Vegetables
- Onions
- Rolls / Biscuits (mix or pkg.)
- Dessert Mix (cake, frosting, etc.)
- Gift Certificates for perishable items

#### OPTIONAL

- Cereal
- Cranberry Sauce (canned)
- Granola Bars or Snack Bars
- Peanut Butter
- Mac 'n Cheese or other pkg. dinners
- Ramen Noodles
- Bags (Dry Rice, Noodles, Pasta)
- Canned Chicken/Tuna
- Canned Soup
- Flour (5 lb. bags)
- Sugar (5 lb. bags)



Our church has had a **mission** partnership with both a Presbyterian and a Methodist missionary for many, many years. We send \$400 to each of these partners every year.

We raised money for this mission project through the traditional soup and bread meal, which followed the November 9th church service.

It was enjoyed by all. Even though our speaker, Kevin Elmore, was ill, we were able to view some of the delightful videos from his trip to Germany to perform his original work highlighting the story of Noah's Arc.

If you are interested in doing more than donating food, come on down to the church Thursday evening, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>, to help pack the Christmas baskets. The baskets will be moved on the following day, Friday, Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, to the Christmas Project gathering spot. From there the baskets will be delivered to families in need.

These baskets provide more than food. They provide affirmation that each family is valued. They demonstrate that people are remembered – not forgotten or discarded. For many of these families, the baskets allow them to truly celebrate Christ's birth and God's love.

The potluck also provided an opportunity to donate to our church's outreach programs, locally, denominationally and globally, including supporting our mission projects in both denominations; the Erbeles in Alaska and the Presbyterian Frontier Foundation.



Remember, in Falls City, our Christmas Eve Service is at 5pm. We will enjoy traditional lessons and carols. In Monmouth our family Christmas Eve worship at CCMP begins at 8pm and also includes candle-lighting and "Silent Night." Beware: You may be urged to gather outside at afterwards to sing, "Go Tell It on the Mountain"! Refreshments will follow the service. Another quiet Monmouth Christmas Eve Service will be offered this year at 11pm. Candlelight, communion, and piano improvisation by Marlene Cox will be a lovely part of the service.



### Stephen Ministry Talk

Stephen Ministers are laypersons that are trained to give one on one Christian care to those in need during a difficult period in their life. We have Stephen Ministers in Christ's Church who are ready to serve. But I want you to know more about the big picture! We just received updated statistics.

More than 600,000 laypersons in over 12,000 congregations have been trained as Stephen Ministers. There are over 65,000 Stephen leaders who have been trained at a leadership-training course.

Stephen Ministries has conducted over 200 Leadership Training Courses since 1978. More than 12,000 congregations worldwide are enrolled in the Stephen Series. They represent 170 Christian denominations and come from all 50 states, 10 Canadian provinces and 24 other Countries.

In 2015, Stephen Ministry is celebrating 40 years of carrying out its mission to equip God's people for the work of ministry. The founder is Kenneth Haugk.

Please remember that Christ's Church is looking for someone to take the leadership-training course in 2015 so that they can strengthen our ministry here. Maybe God is calling YOU to do this!



In a related issue, "**Blue Christmas**", is an event held for those who have lost a loved one during the year. They are encouraged to gather at First United Methodist Church in Salem on December 12th at 7PM to remember and share and hopefully get through the holidays a little more easily. Some of us will be going. Contact Jo Ann King if you would like to go. 503-838-6603

## The Meaning of the Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is a Christian tradition that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent. It is a circular candleholder that typically holds five candles. During the season of Advent one candle on the wreath is lit each Sunday until all of the candles, including the fifth candle, are lit on Christmas Day. Each candle represents an aspect of the spiritual preparation for the celebration of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Most Advent wreaths use three colors of candles – purple, pink, and white. However, some may use blue in place of the purple.



- **1st CANDLE** – (purple) **THE PROPHECY CANDLE or CANDLE OF HOPE** – Our hope comes from God. *“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 15:12-13)
- **2nd CANDLE** – (purple) **THE BETHLEHEM CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION** – God kept his promise of a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Preparation is to “get ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome you, O God. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: *‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God’s salvation.’* (Luke 3:4-6)
- **3rd CANDLE** – (pink) **THE SHEPHERD CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF JOY** – The angels sang a message of JOY! *“...and she gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same county shepherds abiding in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. And the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for, behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which shall be to all people.’”* (Luke 2:7-11)
- **4th CANDLE** – (purple) **THE ANGEL CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF LOVE** – The angels announced the good news of a Savior. God sent his only Son to earth to save us, because he loves us! *“For 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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* (John 3:16-17)
- **5th CANDLE** – (white) **“CHRIST CANDLE”** – The white candle reminds us that Jesus is the spotless lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins! His birth was for his death, his death was for our birth. *“I tell you the truth; no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:1-8)



### **More Symbolism: Jerusalem's Temple Mount: A launching pad for holy wars?**

Vicious cycles of violence often begin here. Violence at the Mount is heating up right now. Its importance to three different religions is crucial to understand.

It is the holiest site in the world for Jews, the third holiest for Muslims — a place where millions of people have prayed for a millennia. Yet, often, it is a launching pad for deadly attacks and counterattacks.

### **There's actually no temple at the Temple Mount?**

Right. There is a remnant of a retaining wall that helped support the Jewish temple. What is known as the Western Wall buttressed the Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. There are no remains of the First Temple, which was built by Solomon, the king of ancient Israel and Judea, and destroyed in the sixth century B.C. by the Babylonians.

### **Why was the First Temple built?**

King David wanted to build a permanent resting place for the ark containing the Ten Commandments, a task that fell to his son, Solomon. In ancient times,

the Jewish high priest would enter the temple once a year on Yom Kippur to pray to God on Israel's behalf. Orthodox Jews still pray three times a day for its restoration. (For more information, go to the following link on the Presbyterian Church website:

<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/11/21/jerusalem-temple-mount-launching-pad-holy-wars/>)

Remember the upcoming study trip to Israel and Palestine planned for February 23<sup>rd</sup> - March 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. Contact Pastor Becky or the Methodist District office for more information.



The Dome of the Rock, built over the site of the Second Temple that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.



Looking for a New Year's Resolution that provides service to others? Would you like to do something that benefits

every member of Christ's Church? Perhaps you are you interested in learning new skills, like something that will make you savvier in making and producing your own home videos? Yes, tis true, CCMP's Communications Team continues to hope additional volunteer(s) will be able to join their numbers, maybe even just once a month. This is an opportunity that may, with your resolve, benefit you as well as benefit the church and all who participate.

### **LEADERS WITH INFLUENCE**

**GIVE** WHEN THEY DON'T HAVE TO.

**CARE** FOR OTHERS.

**GROW** CONTINUOUSLY.

**LIVE** AUTHENTICALLY.

**EMPOWER** OTHERS.

**MANAGE** HARDSHIP.

**SERVE** WITH HUMILITY.

©1991-2014 Lolly Daskal www.lollydaskal.com Lead From Within™

## Praying “in Jesus name”

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” – Colossians 3:17 NRSV

Why do we often say, “In Jesus’ name we pray” at the end of our prayers? Is it necessary, is it a “magical incantation”, or is it something more complex?

While we may think of a name as simply a word or a label, the Hebrew/Jewish culture from which Christianity grew has a long history of understanding a name as a much richer concept. A name represents the essence of that which is named. In Judaism, the name of God especially is treated with the highest respect. “Because a name represents the reputation of the thing named, a name should be treated with the same respect as the thing’s reputation. For this reason, God’s Names, in all their forms, are treated with enormous respect and reverence in Judaism” – jewfaq.org

(See the full article at <http://www.jewfaq.org/m/name.htm> It is very interesting!)

We have this understanding in English also. Having a “good name” is valuable. It means praying in a way consistent with Jesus’ (God’s) character. “Concretely, this suggests that no matter what words we say at a prayer’s conclusion, if we pray for *the utter* annihilation of our



enemies, this is not ‘in Jesus’ name.’ Specifically Christian prayer always reflects the character of the one who called us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us.”

Saying, “in Jesus’ name we pray,” at the end of our prayer is as much a challenge to us – “are we praying in accord with Jesus?” – as it is an affirmation of our relationship with Jesus through faith.

Praying in Jesus’ name *also* means that we pray in unity with Jesus, joining our voice with his in the prayer *that he is always praying*. But again, there is a difference between saying that, “Jesus is one with us” and saying “we are one with Jesus”. “If we really offer prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, we are no longer speaking simply for ourselves; we speak as those joined with the crucified and risen one.”

The scripture above from Colossians is the final word in a long description of our being transformed from our old life to new life in Christ (Colossians 3: 1-17). “In Jesus’ name” here means much more than speaking the name “Jesus.” It means being transformed more and more into the image of God as revealed in Jesus. By praying in Jesus’ name with humility and awe we are opening ourselves to being joined with Christ. We are surrendering ourselves to the way in which God works in the world.

– Linda Grund-Clampit

## The Upper Room Academy for Spiritual Formation

As news of the decision in #Ferguson comes in this night, these words from Thomas Merton seem appropriate:

*"Instead of loving what you think is peace, love other [people], and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are warmongers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed, but hate these things in yourself, not in another."* - from New Seeds

of Contemplation

Let us acknowledge that racism and injustice are very real symptoms of our collective habit of not seeing one another as fellow human beings but as classes, races, aliens, and faceless others. Let us admit that there is no way to avoid the pain of this situation regardless of the outcome because life has been lost. Let us claim our own personal collusion and perpetuation of these habits and systems and therefore own and feel the resulting pain. And may that give us the resolve to refrain from vilifying others in the aftermath of this

decision but instead to allow the pain to open our eyes to see one another and love one another.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen. (from the Book of Common Prayer)

#blacklivesmatter #ALLlive  
smatter

---

## What do our churches say about immigration?

Check the following sites to find out what our denominations are saying about President Obama's Executive Order regarding immigration.

<http://www.umc.org>

<http://www.pcusa.org/news/>

Here's the start of one article on how churches in general are reacting – and leading – on immigration.

WASHINGTON (RNS) While Republican leaders blast President Obama for taking executive action on immigration reform, some prominent evangelical leaders are welcoming the president's plans to keep about 5 million undocumented immigrants from being deported.

Evangelicals are a key voting bloc for the GOP, but on immigration some are taking a pragmatic step away from the party. They include Hispanic leaders such as the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez who say the time has come to manage what has become a "de facto humanitarian crisis" for millions of immigrants.

"This merciful action takes place because for years our government, under the leadership of both parties, failed miserably as it pertains to immigration," said Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference....

*Religion News Service | By Adelle M. Banks Posted: 11/21/2014*

<http://www.religionnews.com/2014/11/20/evangelicals-mixed-bag-obamas-immigration-move/>



We did not have as many articles this month, in large part to people prioritizing Thanksgiving and family. And that is as it should be.

After focusing on all we are thankful for, now we approach the coming Advent Season that is a time to pause and reflect, and a time to look forward with hope.

Looking forward makes me think about the future of church. I came across the following article and decided to share some excerpts with you.

**Church: Does Size Matter?** *By Tom Schultz in Holy Soup*

"We've been seeing the Wal-Martization of the church. Wal-Mart moves in and the local merchants die," professor and author Leonard Sweet said at the recent recent [Future of the Church](#) summit.

Sweet, who often writes and speaks on trends that shape the future, doubts that the current growth in megachurches will continue..."The megachurch has not understood the shift from performance to participation."

...Fewer people, particularly Millennials, are actively out seeking a churchy place to sit. More are disconnecting from any religious affiliation.

But they remain quite interested in spiritual things. "Spiritual, but not religious," they like to say. So, I no longer use the term "seeker." I think "spiritually open" is a more definitive term. They're not out seeking. But they're open to engaging in a real conversation about God. And that means, as Sweet indicated, participation. They want dialog, interaction, and a safe place to ask questions and express doubts. And they rarely find that in the current large-church model.

...So, is bigness the salvation of the American church? I suspect large churches will continue to occupy a place on the American landscape. But smaller congregations will more easily and naturally be able to provide the authentic, participative, intimate community that people increasingly crave.

Does size matter? Maybe not in the way you'd think. Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren talks about church size in the new film [When God Left the Building](#). Take a look at this [brief clip](#) from the film.

So, what this commentary tells us is that intimacy, meaning, and participation are more readily achieved in a smaller church – a church that becomes a church family. Intimacy and fellowship, being able to explore spirituality with others, opportunity for mission, and active participation are key aspects of churches that continue, independent of a megastar pastor because the *people* in the church *are* the church. (And remember, most new people come to a church because someone invited them.)

I thought that was worth sharing with you. (FYI, "Holy Soup" is an online blog.)