

BOYCOTT



XMAS



celebrate christ

What is **Xmas**? It is what we've done to Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. We have made it a season of stress, traffic jams, and shopping lists. And when it's all over, many of us are left with presents to return, looming debt that will take months to pay off, and a feeling of emptiness and missed purpose.

Stressmas

Impersonalmas

Checklistmas

Consumermas

Trafficjamas

Gotta-buy-everyone-a-gift-even-if-they-don't-want-it-**mas**

**WHAT HAPPENED TO
CHRISTMAS?**



Remember Christmas? That time when we celebrate the birth of a savior who came to turn empires **υμωρ-επισδν** with a revolutionary love that is still changing the world this very minute?




**WHEN
DID
THAT**

**BECOME
MORE
IMPORTANT
THAN
THAT?**

**AND NOW FOR THE
GASPING FACTS...**

Americans spend an average of **\$450 Billion** a year each Christmas. That's about **\$900 per family**. Most of which gets returned anyway. Most of which is put on the **credit card**. Most of which **isn't paid off** even by the time the next Christmas rolls around. Told you. Gasp!

[is that the story god had in mind at christmas?
is that the christmas you've always dreamed of?]



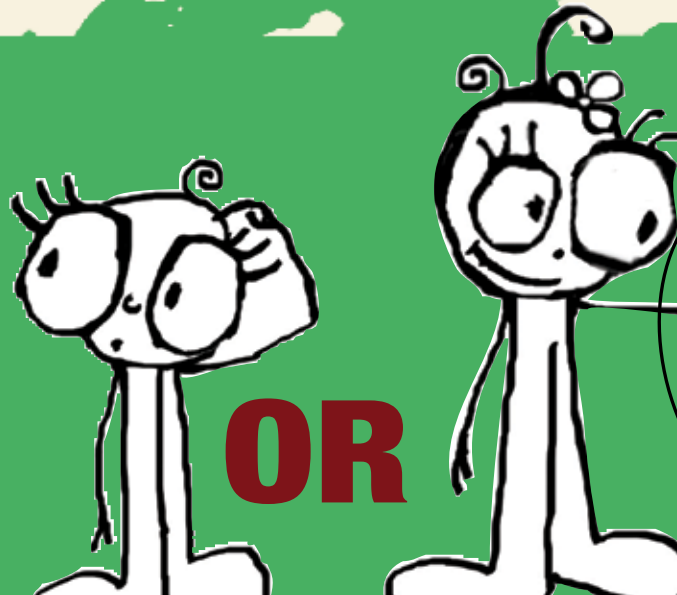
**Jesus said,
“I have come that they might have life in
all its fullness!”**

At Hempfield United Methodist Church, we have decided to **Boycott Xmas**, and once again **celebrate Christ** and the full, rich, and joyful life he came to bring. Join us as we **rethink** what Christmas is all about.

**Freedom. Restoration. Joy. For everyone (including little old you).
This is what was on Jesus' agenda. This was his gift to the world.
This is what we all long for, and why we are called to worship Jesus
during the advent season in big, bold, world-changing ways.**

[*so what kind of christmas
are you looking for?* **]**

**An Advent season of
suffocating in a pile
of to-do lists and
presents that have no
meaning and certainly
won't make it in the
photo albums.**



**An Advent season of
huge awestruck worship
that honors Christ and
(brings you closer to
the ones you love the
most while saving lives
in the process.**

[WORSHIP FULLY]

It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. This is the holistic approach God had in mind for Christmas. It's a season where we are called to put down our burdens and lift a song up to our God. It's a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a king is celebrated with each breath. It's the party of the year. Entering the story of advent means entering this season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

[SPEND LESS]

Before you think we're going all Scrooge on you, keep reading. How often have you spent money on Christmas presents for no other reason than obligation? How many times have you received a gift out of that same obligation? Thanks, but no thanks, right? We're asking people to consider spending less this Christmas (maybe buying one less gift-just one). Sounds insignificant, yet many who have taken this small sacrifice have experienced something nothing less than a miracle: They have been more available to celebrate Christ during the advent season.

[GIVE MORE]

God's gift to us was a relationship built on love. So it's no wonder why we're drawn to the idea that Christmas should be a time to love our friends and family in the most memorable ways possible. Time is the real gift Christmas offers us, and no matter how hard we look, it can't be found at the mall. Time to make a gift that turns into the next family heirloom. Time to write mom a letter. Time to take the kids sledding. Time to bake really good cookies and sing really bad Christmas carols. Time to make love visible through relational giving. Sounds a lot better than getting a sweater two sizes too big, right?

[LOVE ALL]

When Jesus loved, He loved in ways never imagined before. Though rich, he became poor to love the poor, the forgotten, the overlooked and the sick. He played to the margins. By spending less at Christmas we have the opportunity to join Him in giving resources to those who need help the most. When Advent Conspiracy first began four churches challenged this simple concept to its congregations. The result raised more than a half million dollars to aid those in need. So, this isn't a theory based on good intentions. It's a movement that's saving lives.

First Week of Advent

Worship is the human soul's natural response to God. It is the joyful opening of the heart to all that God is and all God has done. The season of Christmas is filled with opportunities to worship. All we need to do is open our eyes.

First, spend a little time each day to see the beauty in the world around us. Rekindle the joy of living in God's world. For example, there is a sense of excitement and wonder the first snowfall. God covers the world in a beautiful pure white blanket. The sounds of the hustle and bustle of the world are stilled in the quiet. Children scream with delight at the sight of the first snow and run to the closet to get bundled up to go play. As adults, we can lose this sense of wonder and designate the snow as a nuisance we have to shovel. This year, let's decide to worship God by enjoying the wonder of his creation again. Let's look at the world with new eyes again. Let's take time to pause throughout the day and see that we are immersed in God's world and see the beauty all around us. Let us thank God that we are alive and decide again to enjoy the life God has given.

But also, Christmas is a time to realize again the wonder that God has entered this world. God decided to write himself into the human story in the person of Jesus Christ. The angelic host called the shepherds to join with them in worship. The wise men knelt before the Christ child to acknowledge him as savior of the world and gave not only the gifts they had prepared, but gave the worship of their own hearts. Let us do so as well. The mantle of worship has been passed to us. We are the ones who are alive today, and each of us is called to worship. Each day, let us give to Christ the honor that is due him. Let us open our hearts and thank him for coming into this world to be our Savior.



Ideas for you to Worship Fully:

Throughout the season of Advent, begin each day thanking Christ for coming into our world to save us.

Pause throughout the day, give thanks to God for His many kindnesses.

Read Luke Chapter 2 and John Chapter 1 to remind yourself of Christ's birth.

If you have a crèche or nativity scene, place it in a prominent place in your home. Place a card before it with the words of John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Gather with your loved ones to watch the movie, *The Nativity Story*.

Second Week of Advent

Spend Less...and free your resources for things that truly matter.

Let's face it: we spend way too much money at Christmas time. We have turned the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ into the world's greatest materialistic feeding frenzy. What started as a few small surprises tucked away in stockings hung by the fireplace has turned into a mountain of presents that nearly obscure the Christmas tree. And each year the price tag gets bigger and bigger. Here are some statistics:

Americans spend over 450 billion every year on Christmas. In comparison, it is estimated that for only 24 billion, we could provide treatment and prevention of AIDs for the entire continent of Africa for one year.

It's time to say, "stop!" It's time for the people of God to see the problem and offer a solution. The answer begins with us. We need to stop sending ourselves deeper and deeper into debt. We need to spend less on Christmas so that we can free up our resources for the things that truly matter. But how? It is going to take some careful thinking and some bold decision making, but if we are truly determined, we can get control of the holiday rather than have the holiday control us. Here are some suggestions:

The Christmas Contract:

Decide in advance how much will be under the tree with a Christmas Contract. Every person in the family can get a pre-determined group of gifts using fun categories:

- One special gift for each person.
- One new thing to wear.
- A new book to read.
- A gift-card to your favorite place.
- Something good to eat.
- A new family game to play.
- A special place to go together.

You can control spending in advance by carefully selecting the categories. Once gifts have been purchased, you are finished. Put the credit cards in the dresser drawer, put your hands in the air, and slowly back away.

The Gift Exchange:

To further curtail spending, secretly draw names from a bag. This works well in large families where there is not much money to spend. Each person selects a name from a bag and secretly buys a present for that person. This breaks the pattern of having every person in the family buy a present for every other person.

The point in each of these examples is to get control of our spending. We spend too much on Christmas. We also need to break ourselves of the expectation that on Christmas Day we should get everything we want. The materialism of the holiday simply does not honor Christ. Be bold, be creative, but most of all be courageous enough to challenge the materialism of our culture. God will bless you if you do!

The \$20 Gift Challenge:

Put a limit on the amount of money spent on each person. It doesn't matter the figure (the figure of \$20 can be adjusted), the fun is to see what can be brought with this amount. Again, here is the principle of figuring out in advance what you are going to spend.

Make your gift:

Today we can buy just about anything we want and find it comes in twenty-nine colors. It's easy to say, "Here, I went to the store and bought this for you; they even wrapped it for me." The rare gift is the one that is custom made by the person who gives it. Think about how you can make Christmas special by a gift you will make yourself.



Third Week of Advent

With all of the business of the season, “give more” sounds outrageous. How can we possibly give more, when what we have done to Christmas is make it into a season of frantic business? We give of our time and energy to the material things of the holiday. We have to get the house decorated, buy all the presents, and plan for all the cooking, and coordinate our travel. Who has time for anything or anyone else?

Jesus did. Jesus came into this world and gave of himself to the people around him. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and taught us the way to a new relationship with God. He went to the homes of the social outcasts and invited them to new life. All of us are blessed because Jesus opened his life to others. But all too often at Christmas time we give of our time, energy, and resources only to people who are in our closed circle of family and friends. What about people outside this circle? What about the needs of the world? We are part of the human family, and there are members of our larger family that are in need. If we claim we are followers of Christ, we need to follow the lead of Christ and learn to give more: more of our time, more of our resources, more of our attention, more of our love.

There are those outside our current circle of family and friends who would be blessed by your time and attention: the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the marginalized. There are people in the world that would be blessed by a financial gift. This Christmas, let's break open the circle and learn to give more of who we are so that others might be blessed. So how do we do this...?



Give Your Presence:

We need to be with each other. To hear each others voice, to see another's face, to hold another's hand. It is one of the ways we are reminded that we are not alone. When you make time to be with someone it is a **gift!**

Think about ways that you can creatively spend more time with others. Is there is neighbor you have been meaning to get to know? A senior that may need help with leaf raking? A single mom who could use someone to do a load of wash? Someone who is struggling with health problems who might need some help cleaning?

Commit to volunteer in the community. one time each month this year.

Practice a random act of kindness to someone you encounter in your daily life - at the grocery store, gas station, work, gym or school.

Give Your Attention:

Relational giving means that we pay attention to the other person. We think about who they are and what they care about. Over and over again in the Gospels, Jesus demonstrated relational giving. He simply liked people. Not only that, he intentionally cultivated those relationships. He listened. He noticed. He did everything that people in a hurry forget to do.

When you are spending time with others, slow down. Truly listen to what the person is saying. Ignore the clock and focus completely on the moment.

Giving is risky!

The gift God gave to us cost him everything. What does that mean for us as we give to one another? Relational gifts will cost us time and energy, but there is also the risk that our efforts may not be appreciated or misunderstood. We must consider that Jesus gave himself, knowing full well that some would reject or misunderstand him. Part of giving relationally is realizing that our heartfelt attempts may not be appreciated. Hopefully they will be, though, as often even the crustiest of hearts will soften with personal gestures.

Fourth Week of Advent

Love all..What will be your “Christmas gift to the world” ?

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16).

Just as God loves the world, so we are called to love the world as well.

This Christmas, we are challenging our members to give a “Christmas gift to the world”. It may be a decision to give of your time to someone who needs it. It might be a benevolent project your family takes on. It may be a financial gift toward a global need. It might be something in your own neighborhood. The point is that God has richly blessed us with many gifts: time, talents, energy and resources. We are stewards of all these gifts, and we are to use them to bring blessing to others.

But it all begins with love. Whatever is the focus of our love will also be the recipient of our resources. We can be certain of God’s love for the world; the real question is do we share in this same love? Here are some ideas to help get you started:

Give to the Building Hope Advent Project:

Building Hope is about developing a connection with a community of Kenyans who chose to form a United Methodist church because our member, missionary Julie Campbell, and our congregation are United Methodist. We believe that God is calling us to reach out in faith and form a partnership with this new church. Our prayer is for God to guide us in potentially building an ongoing relationship with this church and community in Kenya so that Hope UMC will become a beacon of God’s love and hope in Kenya.

During our Boycott Xmas Advent series, you will have the opportunity to learn more and donate to this project. You can support Building Hope in two ways:

- 1) For each \$15 or more donation, you will receive a “Building Hope” ornament to place on the sanctuary Christmas Tree. For your donation, you will be helping to equip the newly formed Hope UMC church with chairs, an altar or a brick to help build their church building. Ornaments will be available on December 6th in the lobby.
- 2) For a longer term donation of \$65 per month for one year, groups, families and individuals, can commit to sponsor an AIDS orphan in the village, through Life for Children Ministry (Julie Campbell is affiliated with Life for Children and the Mission Society). You will also receive a “Building Hope” ornament to place on the sanctuary Christmas tree.

We hope to fill our sanctuary tree with the Building Hope ornaments, to serve as a reminder of the beautiful gift we can give to our sisters and brothers in Kenya, all in the name of Jesus.



LOVE
ALL

Give to the Nothing But Nets Campaign :

Our elementary kids in Kidstuf and Kids Konnection have launched a ministry service project to support Nothing But Nets, a charity that provides mosquito nets for children living in mosquito-infested areas of the world.

Christmas Eve Food Drive:

Start collecting non-perishable food for our second annual Christmas Eve food drive. Ask your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers to contribute.

Give Alternative gifts:

Visit the Gifts that Give Hope website at www.giftsthatgivehope.org or pickup a shopping list in the lobby. You can provide life-giving hope to people in our community and world through giving an alternative gift in honor of a friend or loved one.

WORSHIP FULLY

GIVE MORE

SPEND LESS

LOVE ALL

More great resources and ideas:

**Visit the HUMC Boycott Xmas Blog at
humclife.wordpress.com**

There you will find many ideas contributed by the people of HUMC. Do you have a great idea to share? We invite you to post it to share with others. Here are just a few ideas that are posted right now:

"...this Christmas, I asked only this... that my family would write their salvation story. My hope is that our relatives would share with my boys what was going on in their lives that lead them to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. I encouraged them to include any special thoughts or verses that are meaningful for their faith walk. Truly the greatest gift that they can offer to me this year was writing their story for my boys, and someday for their children."

"...In the spirit of giving more, here are some community needs that really could use some support: Community Homeless Outreach Center – CHOC is a daytime drop-in facility that provides a safe haven for chronically homeless individuals to rest, shower, launder clothing and receive help with accessing human services... From July 2008 to July 2009, the daily average number of visitors more than doubled, from 40 per day to 85 per day. BY THE END OF JANUARY, CHOC WILL RUN OUT OF MONEY AND WILL HAVE TO CLOSE.

In addition, food is still an issue in Lancaster County-I ask everyone to give to the local food banks. Plus, don't forget-we will be having our annual Christmas Eve food drive. Bring in a bag of groceries, and we will take care of getting the food to local food pantries."

"Love Jar: Start saving all of your loose change in a big jar, now and throughout the year. When you have accumulated a full jar, place the jar anonymously on the front door of someone who could really use it."

Visit www.rethinkingchristmas.org

This is a community site for people involved in the Advent Conspiracy movement to share stories and ideas for the season of advent. There are tons of great ideas, including:

"...For each of your relatives, recall a memory with them from your youth in which you never said thank you. Each letter can be unique, or can simply be started with "I remember when I was younger" and then proceed to write down as much about that memory as you can. At the end of the description, simply thank them."

"...A Gift to Jesus-Decorate/wrap a box and label it Gifts to Jesus. Write down acts of kindness that you did for others on a piece of paper and place it in box during Advent or all year long. On Christmas, open box and read these gifts to Jesus."

"... We have four kids and are trying to "rethink" Christmas this year for Advent Conspiracy. We usually will do 4 or 5 gifts per kid. This year, they each get one gift on Christmas and then I thought it would be fun to give a coupon book... personalized for each child. Each one will have a coupon to redeem each month. It may be "breakfast in bed" or "go out for a milkshake w/mom" or "hit a bucket of golf balls w/dad." You can go real simple or get more detailed. The key is that they get to redeem only one/month. This spreads out your cost over the year and gives you quality time with the kids. The big thing for me is that these will be one-on-one events w/either mom or dad since with four kids, that's sometimes hard to come by."

"...Write down some probing questions and put them all on strips of paper in a jar. Go around the room and have each person draw a question. Spend some time going down memory lane, hearing dreams for the future and celebrating each other's lives."

WORSHIP FULLY

GIVE MORE

SPEND LESS

LOVE ALL

More great resources and ideas:

Visit www.simpleliving.org,

This site is run by a non-profit organization that equips people of faith to challenge consumerism, live justly and create meaningful celebrations.. Here are just a few ideas from the many articles on the site:

"...At a family meeting talk about Christmas expectations. What does each of us really want? Who is going to do what? What is really most meaningful? Are we willing to spend less on ourselves and give more to the needy? Write down and post decisions and changes to discover."

"...Tend to your spiritual health. Slow down and take time to pray and meditate throughout the Advent season."

"...Build growing relationships with others for fun, conversation, volunteering, worshipping and celebrating."

"...Give alternative gifts. Give up to 25% of what you spent last year at Christmas to the needy...individuals, or groups locally, nationally or internationally. Buy crafts and clothing from developing countries, not from commercial importers, so the artisans receive a fair price for their work. Give of yourself, not just 'stuff' - a coupon book for future services (such as babysitting, etc.); something baked, sewn, handmade, composed, etc.; or a family service project, such as working together at a soup kitchen."

Fair Trade and Alternative Gift Giving Sites:

**www.giftsthatgivehope.org
(order forms available in the lobby)**

www.hopeinternational.org

www.equalexchange.org (sold in our Spirit Cafe during the month of December)

www.tradeasone.org

www.tenthousandvillages.com

www.greatergood.com

***Check back at the Boycott Xmas Table in the Lobby weekly.
We will place more ideas and resources as we receive them!***