

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
149 Main Street
Madison Heights, VA 24572



MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

No. 1

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George B. Harris, Minister
Email: bernerdharris@yahoo.com
mhcc16@yahoo.com
Church Telephone: (434) 845-3855
Minister's Telephone: (434) 215-4846

Pam Hubbard
Music Director

Brenda Harris
Administrative Assistant

We Turn Off the Lights

In a way Christmas reminds me of a bolt of lightning. It shines a bright light, it comes and goes very fast, and sometimes it can even scare us. Now that it is behind us we can reflect upon what a joyous time of the year it really is. We can marvel at the splendor of God's love for us like we can marvel at the splendor of a bolt of lightning, and we can focus our thoughts on the impact God's gift has on our lives and the lives of those around us.

I take this opportunity to point out that some of our non-biblical traditions distract us from the Bible stories and the true meaning of Christmas. However, I do respect most of the traditions as they call our attention to a celebration of the birth of Jesus. The patriarchal culture of the day celebrated the birth of a male child. But Jesus had no earthly celebration. Therefore, I am glad that we are able to provide a celebration in his honor. I am glad it is the greatest birthday party of all and that it is a big annual celebration. While we party and celebrate this joyous time of the year lets us remember and consider what a sad time it is for those that have recently lost a loved one. For them, Christmas just isn't the same as it used to be

I sometimes wonder what it would be like if we had the opportunity that was given to George Bailey in the Christmas classic *It's A Wonderful Life*. He was given the unique opportunity to see what the world would be like if he was never born. From this new perspective he is able to realize how much he has impacted the lives of those closest to him. After witnessing the powerful effect he has on his community, loved ones, and friends, he then began to understand just how wonderful life truly is. The daily life of a Christian is much like that. God calls us all to do the good that needs to be done in the world around us. The light is for everyone to see. The light I am referring to is Jesus. In John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (NRSV). With Christ as our role model in life we too are the light. This is taught in **Matthew 5:14** Jesus said, "You are the light of the world" (NRSV). Jesus shined the light of the love of God on us and we are responsible for shining that light on others.

We spend a lot of time making the Christmas season special: decorating our homes inside and out, giving presents to the ones we care about, increasing our outreach, and offering Christmas cheer to strangers. When it is all over, we have the task of undoing all we have done: taking down the decorations and cutting off the lights. As we put Christmas away for another year I have some thought provoking questions:

- As we cut off the lights of Christmas do we also cut off the light of the world?
- Do we put our faith away to be pulled out again next Christmas?
- Is our version of faith only a seasonal thing?
- Do we limit our faith to the celebration without standing firm in faith?

You have choices in life just like George Bailey had choices in the movie *It's A Wonderful Life*. A parallel lesson is learned in the Christmas classic *A Christmas Carol*. You get to choose where you are in your journey of faith and you can choose how you will impact those around you. Christ came as the light of the world and teaches his disciples to continue to carry that light. Jesus further teaches in **Luke 11:35** "Consider whether the light in you is not darkness" (NRSV). The gift of God to the fallen world is not seasonal thing and it will never end. Let the light of the Lord shine through you into the world for others to see all year long.

George