

Shepherd's Staff

October 2024

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m

OPERATION Christmas Child

Source: [https://s3.theark.cloud/sp-comm-arkfiles/website/images/2024-hub-pages/img/Operation Christmas Child Overview Script.pdf](https://s3.theark.cloud/sp-comm-arkfiles/website/images/2024-hub-pages/img/Operation%20Christmas%20Child%20Overview%20Script.pdf)

Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan's Purse, an international relief organization led by Franklin Graham. Since 1970, Samaritan's Purse has helped people in need around the world in Jesus' Name. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "And you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."



The mission of Operation Christmas Child is to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to children in need around the world, and together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and make disciples of the nations.

Operation Christmas Child equips and empowers local churches all over the world to share the Gospel. In the United States and 10 other countries, churches play an essential role in packing and collecting shoebox gifts that are lovingly filled with toys, school supplies, and personal care items by individuals, families, and groups. Internationally, Operation Christmas Child in-country volunteers are part of leadership teams that identify and partner with local churches to distribute the shoebox gifts. In places where there are no churches, the teams have the joy of introducing the Gospel and sometimes starting churches. Operation Christmas Child would not be possible without an incredible network of trained volunteers. Local volunteer teams collect shoebox gifts within sending countries. Volunteer teams in receiving countries share the Gospel, distribute shoebox gifts, and make disciples.

After boys and girls hear the Gospel at fun outreach events, they're invited to participate in The Greatest Journey, the 12-lesson discipleship program that Samaritan's Purse developed. Trained local volunteers teach the children how they can know God, grow in their faith, and share it with others. The Lord is moving through these events and classes as children learn to tell their friends and family about Jesus Christ. This multiplies the impact of the Gospel in households, communities, and around the world.

In 1993, Operation Christmas Child began with a request to fill shoeboxes with gifts for children in war-torn Bosnia. With the help of Ross Rhoads, the late pastor of Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, 28,000 shoebox gifts were collected that year.

Operation Christmas Child has since collected and delivered over 220 million shoebox gifts to children in more than 170 countries and territories. Praise God! But there is still a great need for boys and girls to hear the Gospel. There are currently over 2 billion children in the world under the age of 14.



Shoebox gifts open doors for the Gospel around the world. Local believers tell the boys and girls about God's Greatest Gift, Jesus Christ, during an outreach event. The trained volunteer teams give each child a surprise shoebox gift along with a Gospel booklet called The Greatest Gift. The booklets are in the children's own language and include Scripture passages and the message of salvation in a child-friendly way. The Greatest Gift booklet is available in 107 languages, with more translations in process. In 2023, ministry partners shared the Gospel at over 118,000 outreach events. Over 40 million children have enrolled in The Greatest Journey discipleship program. If they all stood holding hands, the line would wrap around the circumference of the earth almost two full times. After completing all 12 lessons of The Greatest Journey, children attend a graduation ceremony where they receive a certificate and colorfully illustrated New

Testament in their own language. In 2023, over 2.7 million children reported making decisions for Christ while attending The Greatest Journey. Praise God for how He is transforming hearts and entire communities!



You too can send Good News and great joy as part of a joint effort with churches around the world. By packing shoebox gifts, you're helping to spread the Gospel. Remember to make each shoebox gift fun, full, and personalized. Anyone can participate by filling an empty shoebox full of fun toys, school supplies, personal care items, and a "wow" item, such as a doll or soccer ball. The "wow" item makes a joyful first impression when the child opens the shoebox. A \$10 donation per shoebox helps cover shoebox collection, shipping, processing, training local volunteers, and Gospel materials.

Be sure to personalize the gifts so each child feels unique and special. Consider including a letter and a photo of you or your group. And don't forget the most important thing you can add to a shoebox gift—prayer! As you pack each shoebox, pray for the child who will receive it.

During **National Collection Week, November 18-25, 2024**, local volunteer teams will collect the gift-filled shoeboxes at more than 4,700 drop-off locations. There are **drop-off locations** in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, including ours **at Parkersburg CRC**.

You can also build a shoebox online year-round. These gifts go to hard-to-reach places where there is little to no access to the Gospel, where strict customs regulations require a specifically packed shoebox, and to remote areas where many people have never heard the Name of Jesus. Every \$25 provides a child with a shoebox gift and the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Build a Shoebox Online at samaritanspurse.org/buildonline.

Shoebox gifts then travel around the world, usually by sea containers, and are delivered to trained volunteer teams. People on these teams are from the receiving countries and distribute the shoebox gifts within their countries through church-based outreach events.

Shoebox gifts are collected from 11 sending countries. If every Operation Christmas Child volunteer gathered together, they would fill six football stadiums. Over 540,000 volunteers worldwide are involved in collecting, shipping, and distributing shoebox gifts. Nearly 213,000 of those volunteers live in the U.S. In total, more than 20 million children have made decisions for Christ as part of this ministry, including in hard-to-reach parts of the world. Overall, 50 million boys and girls have participated in follow-up discipleship.

Hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ can change children's lives—now and for eternity! One of the most meaningful Gospel truths for children to hear is how much Jesus loves them. He said in Matthew 19:14: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

You can be a part of sharing the Good News and great joy found in Jesus Christ with children around the world by packing a shoebox, building a shoebox online, and attending our local **packing party on Sunday, October 27, at 1:00 p.m., in the fellowship hall**. The celebration that shoebox recipients experience when they graduate from The Greatest Journey discipleship program can be just the beginning of the great joy in their lives when they ask Jesus Christ to be their Savior, follow Him as Lord, and tell others the Good News of His saving grace.



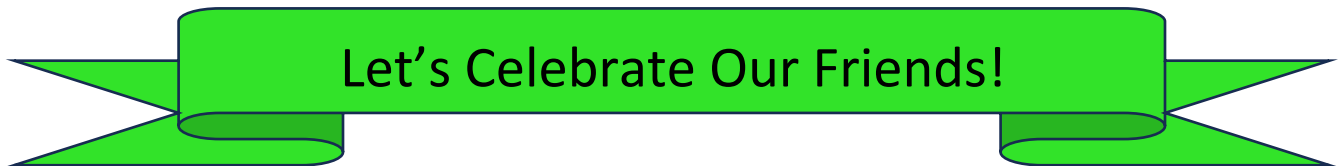


BE WATCHING FOR...

- Your opportunity to **donate items** to be added to shoeboxes at our upcoming Shoebox Packing Party!
- Details about the **Shoebox Packing Party** on **Sunday, October 27, at 1:00 p.m.** in the Fellowship Hall!
- Opportunities to **volunteer your time** to accept shoeboxes at our church during **National Collection Week, November 18 – 25, 2024!**



10/7 Twila Jansen
 10/8 Janet Venenga
 10/16 Stacy Ascher
 10/23 Ken Mehmen
 10/24 Kenneth Kramer



10/15 Ken & Rhonda Meester



Reminder: If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20th of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.

Let's try a Fall Fill In Puzzle! What is a Fill In Puzzle? They're a type of word puzzle that can be compared to a crossword puzzle. The difference is a fill in puzzle has no clues to solve. Instead, the answers to fill in the crossword like puzzle are given from the start. The challenge is figuring out where in the puzzle to put each word so that all the words can be fit into the puzzle. Your first word has been added to help get you started.

Have fun!

FALL

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|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <p>3 letters</p> <p>tea</p> <p>web</p> <p>yam</p> | <p>4 letters</p> <p>cozy</p> <p>crow</p> <p>fall</p> <p>leaf</p> <p>pile</p> <p>rain</p> <p>soup</p> | <p>5 letters</p> <p>acorn</p> <p>birds</p> <p>brisk</p> <p>crops</p> <p>frost</p> <p>wheat</p> | <p>6 letters</p> <p>chilly</p> <p>jacket</p> <p>season</p> <p>spider</p> <p>squash</p> | <p>7 letters</p> <p>blanket</p> <p>bonfire</p> <p>flannel</p> <p>foliage</p> <p>hayride</p> <p>migrate</p> <p>October</p> <p>tractor</p> | <p>8 letters</p> <p>football</p> <p>November</p> <p>pumpkins</p> <p>squirrel</p> | <p>9 letters</p> <p>scarecrow</p> <p>September</p> <p>sunflower</p> |
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Tree Valley Academy