



December 2013

Volume 12

Rainbow Notes

Hope United Methodist Church



Joy To The World

When is a Christmas carol not a Christmas Carol? When it doesn't focus on the birth of Christ, perhaps?

Isaac Watts based this text on the last half of Psalm 98, which celebrates the coming of the Lord to judge the world in righteousness. The psalmist calls on all creation to sing and shout for joy at His coming. There is nothing in the psalm or in Watts's paraphrase that specifically mentions the birth of Christ, just the Lord's return in judgment.

So should we stop singing this at Christmas? Not at all! This hymn celebrates God's involvement with his people—and this work of God began at the stable in Bethlehem. At Christmas we need bifocal vision. We need to look back and praise God for the glorious gift of His Son, Jesus. But we should also look forward to Christ's return, when God will bring a righteous conclusion to all things. Then we will begin to fully enjoy the "wonders of His love" for eternity.

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music. Psalm 98:1-4.

Taken from The One Year Book of Hymns.

The Story of the Christmas Tree Ornament

According to tradition, the first tree was brought indoors in Strasburg, Germany, in 1605. It was the first time a tree was brought indoors to celebrate. Germans decorated it with paper roses and lighted candles. Families worked to outdo each other with their decorations. Eventually, the tradition of a decorated tree indoors spread beyond Germany. Christmas tree ornaments began in the 1800s in English households, although not as we now think of ornaments. They first began as items easily found in nature, such as nuts, fruit or pine cones. German families began to bake gingerbread or other hard cookies in different shapes. Americans strung popcorn or cranberries into strands to string around the trees. Families in the United Kingdom crafted lace or paper into unique shapes to place upon the tree.



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FROM THE PASTOR

Luke begins his Gospel story in an interesting manner. He recounts that when Tiberius Caesar was in power, Pontius Pilate governor, Herod tetrarch of Galilee and his brother Philip Tetrarch of Abilene, in the High Priesthood of Annas and Ciaphas... (Luke 3:1-3). It doesn't seem that interesting but in a specific time and place God began to move through people, at first John the Baptist. But then God began to move through disciples, and tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners. What Luke wants us to think about is how is God moving through us when Obama is president, Dayton Governor.....

Sociologist Robert Bellah, author of *Habits of the Heart*, is impressed by the power of religion. He once said, "We should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a new vision of a just and gentle world. The quality of a culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision and act on it."

Christians make up far more than two percent of our town, far more than two percent of Massachusetts, far more than two percent of Americans. So, why don't we have a greater effect: on issues of the environment, on justice for the needy, on the quality of life on Rice county? Could it be we need more courage to act on our commitments? We have just celebrated Thanksgiving and the faith and courage of the Pilgrims. To be a Pilgrim means to stand up for what you believe.

Times are tough for many people. Yet we have the words of hope. Times are seemingly dark, but we have a light. The day seems to be routine, yet we have a journey into unknown territory if we are willing to go. We, on behalf of others can make a difference not just by the big things, finding the cure to cancer and common cold, solving the energy shorting. But we can make a difference in our time, like Luke, John and so many other did in their by what we believe and what we do and the courage we live.

One of my favorite Peanuts comic strips is the one that came out some years ago just a few days before Thanksgiving. Lucy's feeling sorry for herself and she laments, "My life is a drag. I'm completely fed up. I've never felt so low in my life."

Her little brother Linus tries to console her and he says, "Lucy, when you're in a mood like this, you should try to think of things you have to be thankful for; in other words, count your blessings."

To that, Lucy says, "Ha! That's a good one! I could count my blessings on one finger! I've never had anything and I never will have anything. I don't get half the breaks that other people do. Nothing ever goes right for me! And you talk about counting blessings! You talk about being thankful! What do I have to be thankful for?"

Linus says, "Well, for one thing, you have a little brother who loves you."

With that, Lucy runs and hugs her little brother Linus as she cries tears of joy. And while she's hugging him tightly, Linus says, "Every now and then, I say the right thing."

In the year 2013 when Obama was President, Dayton governor, the word of God came to you and me, what will we say about it.....? See Ya Sunday!

Pastor Houck

Hope's Happenings

The First Advent Sunday has passed. Our tree is decorated and the sanctuary is beautiful. If you have an ornament you would like to share please bring and place on the tree during the singing of the first hymn. If you wish to take it home following Christmas be sure and take it from the tree on Sunday December 29th.



The Christian Women's Connection will host a luncheon at noon on December 10th at the Moose Lodge, 1810 Fourth St. NW in Faribault. All women are invited. Nancy Reimann will speak on Christmas Giving. Learn about origins and meanings of our timeless holiday traditions. She also reflects on keeping our focus on the true meaning of Christmas. For reservations call 507-334-7481 in Faribault

Our 2013 and 2014 Finance and Trustee's Committee's will meet following morning worship on December 22nd. The purpose of these meetings is to elect a chairman. It will also be a time to say thank you to those who will be going off their committee's. Following these meetings the Council will meet briefly. The next Council meeting will be in March.

"Christmas gift suggestions: To your enemy, forgiveness. To an opponent, tolerance. To a friend, your heart. To a customer, service. To all, charity. To every child, a good example. To yourself, respect."—Oren Arnold
— Oren Arnold

Our Veteran's

- Albert P. DeCoux-Larry DeCoux's father
- Sidney J. Brown-Nancy DeCoux's father
- Gaylord (Pete) Shaffer-LaVoy Shaffer's husband
- Robert Leiser-Ellie Leiser's husband
- Virgil Christensen-brother of Ellie Leiser
- Marlin Christensen- brother of Ellie Leiser
- James Calverley-father of Carolyn Hanson
- Wyman Hanson-father of David Hanson
- Kurt Larson U. S. Navy 1997-2007
- Harold Schneider
- Michael Schneider



Pearl Harbor Day Saturday, December 7, 2013

"Rice County Food Shelf "Food of the Month"

- January-Soup
- February-Beans (caned or dried)
- March-Tuna
- April—Peanut Butter
- May—Pasta
- June—Pancake Mix and Syrup
- July—Crackers
- August —Cereal
- September—Mashed Potato Flakes
- October—Canned fruit and fruit juice
- November— Canned vegetables
- December—Rice

I would like to continue to gather names of our vets. If you have a friend or a loved that you would like to honor, please continue to leave names in my mailbox or e-mail

I will be out of the area for the months of January, February and March. Emily Carlson will be printing the bulletin. Articles for the bulletin are due by Thursday of each week. There will be no Newsletter during that time. Statements will be mailed out. Giving for December 29, 2013 will not appear on your statement.

Waiting and Watching



Theme: Jesus is coming again. 1st Sunday in Advent

Object: Advent Wreath

Scripture: "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars... At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Luke 21:25a, 27-28

It's official! We have entered into the Christmas countdown period. Every day now we will see it in the newspapers and hear it on the radio and television, "24 shopping days until Christmas," "23 shopping days until Christmas," "22 shopping days until Christmas." All around us there are signs that Christmas is coming. What are some of those signs?

- Stores are filled with Christmas decorations
- Santa is at the mall
- Christmas music is playing on the radio and television
- Christmas cards are arriving in the mailbox

Christmas parties at work, at school, and at church

There are plenty of signs that Christmas is coming, but 2000 years ago when Jesus was born, there were no big signs to announce that it was going to happen. There were no ads on the radio or TV saying "Coming soon! A Savior will be born in a stable near you!" When Jesus was born, many people were surprised! But as word of his birth spread, some people remembered that prophets had told them that God was going to send a Savior. They knew that this baby, born in a stable, was God keeping His promise.

Christmas is a not only a wonderful time to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is also a time to remember that Jesus promised that he would come again. We don't read much about that in the newspapers and we don't hear much talk about it on the radio or television, but Jesus told us to be prepared and to watch for his return.

As we look forward to Christmas day, we also look forward to the day when Jesus will come again. Today we light the candle of hope on our advent wreath. Just as the people of Israel found hope in the promises of God, we find hope in Jesus' promise that he will come again. Heavenly Father, we thank you for keeping your promise to send a Savior. We also thank you for the promise that he will return again to take us to our home in heaven. Amen.



Color the picture, then each day color one star beginning with number one.
(You could also use star stickers instead of coloring the stars.)

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On Christmas morning a woman told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a beautiful diamond necklace.

What do you think it means?" "You'll know tonight," he said.

That evening just before opening presents, the husband came home with a small package and gave it to his wife.

Delighted, she opened it only to find a book entitled "The Meaning of Dreams."

It was the day after Christmas at a church in San Francisco. Pastor Mike was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures.

Immediately, Pastor Mike turned towards the church to call the police. But as he was about to do so, he saw little Jimmy with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

Pastor Mike walked up to Jimmy and said, "Well, Jimmy, where did you get the little infant?" Jimmy replied, "I got him from the church."

"And why did you take him?"

With a sheepish smile, Jimmy said, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to little Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it."