

Merry Christmas!

Faith Matters

December 2018

Pastor's Page



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As I write this shortly before Thanksgiving Day, the celebration of Christmas is already well underway in our culture. Store displays have been up since Halloween. The Hallmark Channel has been showing Christmas movies for a month already. Some houses display Christmas lights and Christmas catalogs clog the mailbox. Christmas events and family travel are set on the calendar. It is, as the old song says, "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year."

Because of that, I feel like a bit of a crank for sounding a cautionary note about all the warm feelings around Christmas. Without doubt, all that sentiment is wonderful, but here's the problem. If Christmas gets reduced to nothing but sentiment, all of its real power and significance drains away. The Gospel proclaims that Jesus was not just an unfortunate kid born on the wrong side of the tracks nor is the story of his birth simply meant to pull at our heartstrings. If we have only warm, fuzzy feelings about Christmas, we have not grasped it yet—or better, it has not grasped us yet.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian who was executed by the Nazis, wrote this about Christmas. "We have become so accustomed to the idea of divine love and of God's coming at Christmas that we no longer feel the shiver of fear that God's coming should arouse in us. We are indifferent to the message, taking only the pleasant and agreeable out of it and forgetting the serious aspect, that the God of the world draws near to the people of our little earth and lays claim to us. The coming of God is truly not only glad tidings, but first of all frightening news for everyone who has a conscience. Only when we have felt the terror of the matter can we recognize the incomparable kindness. God comes into the very midst of evil and of death, and judges the evil in us and in the world. And by judging us, God cleanses and sanctifies us, comes to us with grace and love."

Shiver of fear? Frightening news? Terror? That sounds more like a haunted house at Halloween than the Christmas stable! But Bonhoeffer was right. All through the Bible, whenever God appears to people, their first reaction is terror, and for good reasons. The sheer holiness of God should, by all rights, simply consume sinners and destroy them. That is why the first words God speaks are nearly always, "Do not fear," as an assurance that He has come to bless and not to do harm.

Likewise, since God Himself came among us—indeed became one of us—in the child Jesus, it should also terrify us, for our sinful human nature cannot withstand the holiness of this divine child. To know that he is Emmanuel, God with us, should signal judgment, purging and condemnation for sinners.

Only in light of that frightening reality does the Christmas Gospel truly become "good news of great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10) In fact, Martin Luther suggested in a Christmas sermon that Jesus was born as a baby in part to remove

~ Continued on page 2 ~

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CABLE CH. 10
SUNDAYS 10 A.M.
AND 5 P.M.
TUESDAYS 5 P.M.
THURSDAYS 10 P.M.

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all fear of his coming. "See how God... places before you a baby with whom you may take refuge. You cannot fear him, for nothing is more appealing to humans than a baby. Are you afraid? Then come to him, lying in the lap of the fairest and sweetest maid. You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust him! Trust him! ... Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to judge this gurgling baby and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save."

As you celebrate Christmas again this year, may the prospect of a holy God coming among us fill you with a holy fear that illuminates just how surprising, gracious, and loving the gift of Jesus truly was. For as that good news washes over you, it will truly make this "the most wonderful time of the year."

Grace and peace,
Pastor Scott

stump the pastor

Q: We mostly hear about Mary and Joseph at Christmastime. What happened to them afterward?

A: The Bible does not say when Mary and Joseph died. Luke 2 notes that Joseph was still alive when Jesus was twelve years old, but he is not mentioned after that.

When Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth, Mark 6 records the crowd asking, "Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary?" If Joseph were still alive, Jesus would almost surely have been identified as his son, not Mary's. Because he leaves the Biblical scene so quickly, Christian art has often portrayed Joseph as being much older than Mary.

The Gospels do not say much about Mary, either, during Jesus' ministry. At one point, Jesus was told that his "mother and his brothers" were calling for him, but he refused to see them and declared his followers to be his family. We do know, however, that Mary was there at the end. John 19 records Jesus from the cross lovingly placing her in the care of the Beloved Disciple. The last mention of Mary in the Bible is in Acts 1, where she and Jesus' brothers are listed among the first believers gathered together after Jesus' ascension and waiting for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. Many other traditions about Mary arose among later Christians, but it is not clear if they are historically grounded or sprang from Christian imagination.



From the Director of Music and Worship

Music is in full swing this holiday season and there is still much to be a part of! Choir will be doing an array of Christmas pieces and we will be having several musical offerings this December from various guest musicians. Although we have a lot on the books, it is not too late to join in on the fun! We can always use more singers for choir, and if you or someone you know has something they think is worthy to offer up in a service, please contact me or a member of our worship team to organize a time to meet! I can't wait to start showing you all what is in store this December, but in the meantime I hope you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Blessings,
Will





“Faith Seeks Understanding” **Learning Opportunities for Adults**

Technology and the Bible

The family of Faith Lutheran is being encouraged to join the Bibleopoly challenge to read the Bible in 2019. One way to take on that challenge is to use new technology like on-line Bible apps. Those apps are only the latest chapter in the Church’s long history of using the latest technology to spread God’s Word. This Digging Deeper session will look back at some of the technological advances the Church has used to increase access to God’s Word. Meeting in the Faith Center.

The People and Places of the Christmas Story

Who was Herod? What was the manger like? What happened when the magi visited? Explore the key places associated with the Christmas story and the people that went with them, beginning in week one with Ray Vander Laan’s on-site video on “Herod the Great and Jesus the King.” Meeting in the office conference room and looking at:

1. Herod and his palaces
2. The Manger
3. The House and the Magi
4. The flight to Egypt

Bibleopoly

A Year-long Effort to Promote Spiritual Growth

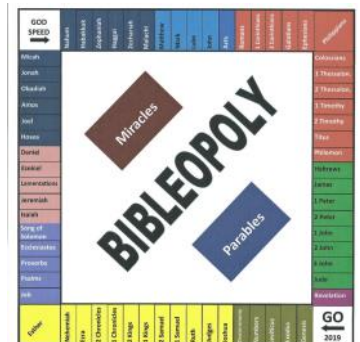
In research for their book *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth*, Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson set out to identify the key factors for spiritual growth. They used an independent market-research firm to survey people in a thousand churches and found that the Bible is the most important tool in our spiritual growth:

“Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture. If churches could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ, their choice is clear. They would inspire, encourage, and equip their people to read the Bible.”

Because of that finding, the Discipleship ministry team at Faith is encouraging every member to read the Bible in 2019. We are calling this year-long effort *Bibleopoly*. It will consist of Bible reading plans for teens and adults, as well as plans for parents to read Bible stories to children in 1st grade and below. Another plan will be available for children in grades 2 through 6.

Those who participate in this commitment to read are encouraged to place a sticker on one of the *Bibleopoly* boards to mark each book of the Bible that they read. The two boards will be located in the gathering spaces by the sanctuary and by the church offices.

“The Discipleship ministry team plans to track and report reading progress to the congregation throughout the year,” commented Andrew Weckwerth. “We hope that everyone resolves to read the Bible—New Testament, Old Testament or both, Bible stories for the youngsters—just to take a deep dive into the Scriptures in some way.” Look for the *Bibleopoly* boards and pick up your reading plan this month, so you are ready to start your reading challenge in January 2019.



The Mission of Money

As 2018 draws to a close, the financial situation at Faith Lutheran is, as always, a matter of good news and bad news. The bad news is that the church once again needs an enormous outpouring of gifts in order to break even this year. (The exact amount still needed will be provided in church each week.) The good news is that members and friends of Faith have stepped up and met that need, year after year. Again this year, Faith's leaders ask all of you to give generously as God has first blessed you, so that the church can have the resources it needs to do the ministry God has entrusted to us.



Upon This Rock



We have been talking for a couple of years now about the dream of paying off the mortgage on the new building by Faith Lutheran's 150th anniversary in 2020. Through steady, generous giving and several bequests, that dream has come ever closer to being a live possibility. The church started with a balance of \$3.2 million dollars, but by the end of this year, there will only be about \$808,000 remaining and the life of the loan has already been reduced by 12 years! This is a marvelous example of good stewardship. Thank you for investing so generously in the space Faith needs for its ministry! Please continue giving to the *Upon This Rock* capital campaign as the Lord blesses you to do so.

Upcoming Special Worship Opportunities

Mid-Week Advent Services

These Wednesday evenings services will continue weekly at 6:30 p.m. through December 19.

The service on December 12 will include the Sunday School children's program.



Christmas Services

Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24

2 p.m. Family Service

4 p.m. Simultaneous services in the Sanctuary and Foundation

6 p.m. Service in the Sanctuary

11 p.m. Traditional candlelight service with Holy Communion



Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25

10 a.m. Service with Holy Communion

Order a poinsettia to decorate the church in memory or honor of a loved one by December 17.

Seniors' Scene

Merry Christmas! Already? It may seem a bit soon to give that greeting to each other when we meet for our December Seniors' Potluck Group. We meet on December 6, 12:00 noon. Nope—not on the fourth Thursday this month; too close to Christmas Day and Christmas family festivities. That's the reason. We do this every year, but it's so easy to forget, with the fourth Thursday etched so firmly in our minds. So mark your calendar. Make your plans.



Also, make a mental note of the program (it's not spelled out on the green schedule sheet). We always want to have something a bit special to reflect the joy of the Christmas season. And we DO have something special. Christmas music, at the direction of our fairly new Music and Worship Director, Will Holt.

Will is going to introduce himself officially to us; something we always do with a new staff member. We'll find out what makes this Texan tick; where those marvelous musical talents came from. We've also asked him to share his beautiful tenor voice with us, for a solo or two. And then lead us in singing some of our favorite Christmas carols. By then, having been filled with good food, cheery fellowship and special music, we can go on our way inspired and joyful, ready for God to continue to fill us with His amazing Christmas Gift of grace.

SEE YOU AT POTLUCK!



Snow Birds

Are you a snow bird getting ready to head south to a warmer climate for the winter? If so, we want to keep you plugged in to all of the exciting things happening at Faith. How can you do that from your winter home?

- 1) Make sure to call the church and update your winter address with start and end dates, so we can make sure you keep getting your mail.
- 2) Sign up for the weekly e-newsletter which will be sent to your e-mail box on Friday mornings.
- 3) Listen to the 8 a.m. services by logging into your computer, listening live on KDUZ/KARP's website.
- 4) Follow the FLC website and Facebook page to hear the weekly sermons and to see all that is happening

*If you have questions about any of these options to stay connected,
contact the office at 320-587-2093 or office@faithlc.com.*

See you in the spring!



New Hope Mission Society and Our Partners in India Give Thanks to FLC

A huge debt of gratitude needs to be expressed by the Board of NHMS to Faith Lutheran Church, to its members, and its Endowment Committee for an outpouring of generosity in 2018. **When the year is completed, approximately \$55,000 will have been given through this congregation for our outreach with the good news of Jesus Christ to Muslims in India.**

Members will have Individually given some \$20,000, with the remainder given through our mission budget, designating a portion of a major bequest for upgrading facilities at Bishara, and through the direction of the FLC Endowment Fund.

Our Lord directs us to bear witness to him in word and deed. We, without apology, are seeking to bring Muslims to Christ, helping the poor and those overwhelmed by recent dramatic flooding in the area our partners serve. Faith and its members have heard the call and responded faithfully.

In the coming year, Dr. Abdul Messiah, the son of the founder of the mission in India, Pastor K.K. Alavi, will be here continuing his studies to lead the mission and to share the story of this witness in many places. Pray for him as he now returns home for a couple months of work there and being with family.

UPDATE on NEWBORN KITS ~ Global Health Ministries

This past summer, some of our newborn kits were sent to a medical clinic in Liberia. The people at the clinic called the large box of supplies “joy in a box.” Already, over 60 newborn kits have been disbursed to women in need. When they received the kit, they not only wrote their name in the log book, but many also wrote of their deep appreciation.



On behalf of Global Health Ministries, thank you, Faith Lutheran, for providing materials used in the newborn kit ministry.

A recent look through donated supplies at Faith suggests that it is time to start assembling another batch of kits to send out. Items still needed to put Newborn and Hospice kits together are:

- 16 bath towels (new or gently used)
- 17 washcloths
- 16 baby receiving blankets
- 4 newborn caps
- 19 small jars or tubes of Vaseline
- 26 pick combs
- 36 nail clippers
- 162 Nexcare or Band-Aid bandages
- 23 toothbrushes
- 36 rubber gloves

If you can donate any of these items, please leave them in the church office, marked for newborn/hospice kits. Thank you for your continued generosity!



Thoughts and Prayers



Please remember all those who are
serving our country through active duty:

Braiden Bjorge (Marines - grandson of Sandy Curtiss)
Corporal Colin Bos (Marines, Camp Pendleton, CA - son of Dawn Bos)
Sgt. Jason Gaulke (El Paso, TX - nephew of Alice Fransen)
Petty Officer 3rd Class Mason Rutledge (Navy, Norfolk, VA - son of Lenny & Patti Rutledge)
Pfc Anthony Settergren (MN National Guard, Kuwait - son of Richard and Jean Settergren)
Col. Rob Skaar (Minneapolis/St. Paul Air National Guard - son of Dave & Marian Skaar)
LT Brett Stadsklev (Navy, Norfolk, VA - son-in-law of Judy & Tom Felber)
Corporal Nathan Thunstrom (Marines, Camp Pendleton, CA - son of Andy & Shelly Hedin and grandson of Dennis & Barb Hedin)
PFC Ryan Wersal (Army, Fort Meade, MD - son of Roger & Laurie Wersal)

Remember our Faith members in
nursing homes & health care centers:

Birchwood House

Ardell Novotny

Cedar Crest – Silver Lake

Patricia Lambert

Janice Rohrbach

Bernice Vorbeck

Lucille Wehking

Dassel Lakeside

Doris Betker

Harmony River

Margaret Alrick

Myrt Bauer

Pearl Betker

Irene Christensen

Betty Jensen

Ruth Moen

Karol Nolte

Joanne Olesen

Charlie & Harriet Thor

Dick White

Oaks

Arlyce Drahos

Ellsworth & Delores Lorentzen

Barb Ryan

Charlie & Harriet Wixcey

Pines

Margaret Grorud

Doris Strand

Prairie Senior Cottages

Pat Fimon

Prairie View (Hector)

Jerome Lindquist

Prince of Peace

Carol Otto

Woodstone

Don Fitzgerald

Betty Garberich

Lucille Yukel

Faith Lutheran Church

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FAITH
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

OUR MISSION IS:
BUILDING FAITH
*"EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY,
FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST"*
EPHESIANS 4:12

TO LIVE OUT THAT MISSION, GOD CALLS US TO:

- FOLLOW JESUS
- ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL
- INVITE ALL PEOPLE
- TEACH CHRISTIAN TRUTH
- HELP ALL WHO ARE IN NEED

Christmas!

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