



ST JOHN AMELITH

PARISH NEWS

December 2022



What is it about Christmas that Means So Much?

Of all that I remember of childhood, the clearest memories center in Christmas. My mother baked what seemed to me ten dozen different kinds of cookies which I then delivered around the neighborhood to shut-ins and neighbors.

We couldn't hang ornaments too low on our tree because the dog's tail would sweep a few each year onto the floor. The Christmas morning menu of sliced oranges, stollen, and sausage had to be the same each year.

Also in Altadena, the town where I grew up in Southern California, we had Christmas Tree Lane. This was no ordinary street, mind you. Many years back someone planted a mile of Deodar trees—a variety of giant cedars which grew to more than 250 feet tall. The lower canopy of branches were so broad that cars could drive the length of Santa Rosa Avenue underneath the "Christmas trees" on either side.

The Deodars planted in 1883 are decorated each year with huge colored lights, and thousands of visitors come each December night to drive Christmas Tree Lane (on the National Registry) five blocks from my house.

I treasure those days. I still hang a homely stocking which was mine back then. Just recalling some of those memories brings tears to my eyes.

What is it about Christmas that evokes so much in us? The tenderness, the warmth, the joy?

I'll tell you what it is.

Each revisit to the celebration discloses an exquisite wonderment. It isn't just me and you who were once children. Our Savior was born a child

too, an infant under the twinkling stars. He not only came for us but as one of us.

Christmas is the sweet reminder that God's gracious gift of a child—the Divine Christ Child—is the one who connects us to everything which is precious and endures.

The crimson color of a stocking may fade with years, but mine has amazingly become more dear. One or two of the Deodar trees may yield each year to winter winds and fall, but they are taller in my memory.

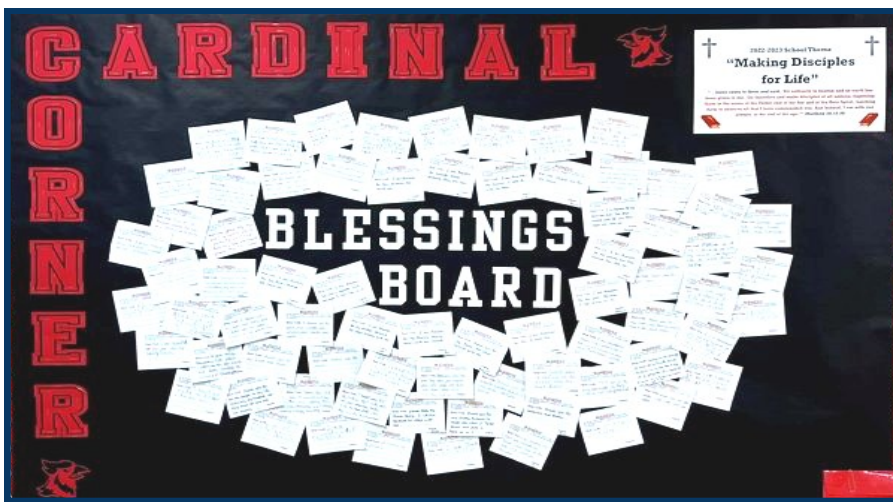
But Christ's birthday does not wane with the years. Just the opposite. Christmas radiates a halo of happiness and peace which unfolds afresh with each renewed telling of the Christmas Gospel.

The Baby is eternal [1 John 5:20]. And Christ Jesus never lost his innocence or his gentleness for us. Indeed, our childhood is not a bygone phase either but our present condition as God's sons and daughters. We are children whom our Heavenly Father loves. We've received the kingdom of God as children [Mark 10:15].

And the reason why the aroma of cookies and pine needles, the luster of colored lights, and the gentle music of a Bethlehem lullaby still summon our hearts to sing is because Christ was once born there in a stable just as God had promised. God gave us his most precious gift—His Son—so princely and so bounteous that every other delight and joy has followed Him.

Have a blessed Christmas Nativity, dear St. John friends.

Pastor Reed



SJA students wrote prayers thanking God for particular blessings, or asking God to bless someone else.



Hurry...and Peace

...And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger...

...But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart...

These two familiar lines from the beloved Christmas story are a beautiful study of what we all experience at this special time of the year.

Like the shepherds, we run around in haste from wonderful activity to the next; all in an attempt to experience the "perfect" Christmas. We're busy at school too! Not only are the halls filled with the happy sounds of Christmas program songs and recitations during the school day, our gym and music room echo sounds of three new basketball teams, youth events, a music recital and music lessons and flute choir rehearsals. Our school building is a lively hub of activity both during and after school hours!

Like Mary, who sat peacefully and contemplatively in awe and wonder and worship, we too have moments

of silence and peace during this Christmas season. While those moments may not necessarily happen as much during the school day as the teachers would like 😊, teachers are regularly leading and modeling peace and pondering the wonders of God's love to their students. We create times of prayer and quiet worship. As we study and review the symbols of Christmas and new nuances of the ageless story, our students and staff grow closer to the God who came close to us as a baby in a manger.

Mrs. Pat Hambaum



Mr. Schimm playing for his students at the end of their recital on Tuesday, November 22.

What is It?

St John Kindergarteners recently illustrated their Bible story on the classroom whiteboard. Do you know the story based on their pictures?



Symbols of Salvation



Evergreen trees? Lights? Angels? Manger scenes? Wreaths? What are all these things doing in the church during Advent? Why is there so much green, red, and white? Please join us to hear why in church Thursday, December 15th at 6:30pm. The students of St. John Lutheran School will present *Symbols of Salvation*, telling how all of these things we do in Advent point to Jesus, the reason for the season!

Our church has been refreshed with two beautiful new Christmas trees donated by Dave and Joyce Helmreich in memory of their son, Robbie, who passed away Christmas Eve 35 years ago at the age of 3 1/2. The previously donated tree was becoming more difficult to decorate, so we thank them for this wonderful gift to St. John.

There are several church pews available for purchase at \$10 a foot or best offer. If interested, please speak with Tom Rohde or Gary Kloha.

The 2023 Offering Envelopes can be found in church mailboxes or in the back of the sanctuary. If you cannot find your envelope or would like one to be issued to you, please see Jim Meddaugh.



**Valley
Lutheran**
HIGH SCHOOL



Valley Lutheran's upper level Art students have been hard at work designing and painting these holiday themed mural boards. They are partnering with the Saginaw Land Bank which seeks to protect and secure vacant properties in Saginaw. Our students turn otherwise plain boards into an aesthetically pleasing display! We are so grateful for the tangible way our artists can use their time, talents, and skills to serve our community. We invite you to keep an eye out for these and other VL created mural boards around Saginaw this holiday season!



Call Committee Update

Interview questions have been prepared and now the Call Committee is arranging times with Pastors to speak with them regarding their current ministries and strengths, as well as share information with them about St John Amelith. The plan is to conduct interviews in early January and have the first Voters' Meeting to extend a Call on January 22. Your continued prayers throughout the Call process are so important. Please pray for the Lord's guidance and direction in meeting this date.

Minutes from the last Voters' Meeting on November 20, will be available by December 18 for members to read. Please bring any corrections to the next meeting on Sunday, February 19 at 10:45 a.m. for approval.

Thank you to everyone who gave generously to the Thanksgiving Food collection for people in need. The items gathered have been given to a local food pantry as well as to the Tony and Trish House for hospice care.

Rooted in God's Word, Growing in Christ's Love, Branching Out to Serve, Bearing Fruits of Faith

Contact Us

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What is It?

Jesus heals the paralyzed man.
Mark 2:1-12