

# “The Messenger”

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DECEMBER 2022

## “MERRY CHRISTMAS!”

Yes, this is the common salutation to people at this time of year as most are busy with decorating, celebrating, shopping, and listening to familiar carols sung on the radio. There is an air of excitement as the holiday draws near and people relish in the embrace of feeling merry.

For some, unfortunately, Christmas this year will not be merry at all. These people have fallen on hard times and haven’t got two pennies to rub together, much less a place to bed down. Some have lost their jobs and are worrying about living from one week to the next without a steady source of income. Some have found their marriages dissolved and now must face life alone. Some have lost loved ones and for the first time in a while they face the holiday season without their partner or their child. Some have been deployed overseas and will not be able to spend the Christmas excitement with their family and friends. So, you see, for a number of people, this will not prove to be a Merry Christmas.

However, for all of us, sad or merry, alone or amidst family and friends, poor, or ones who have money in their pockets – to truly remember the real meaning of Christmas – namely the birth of the Christ Child – the gift from God that brings hope and comfort and reassurance to all of us, no matter what condition of life we find ourselves in – our hearts should ring out with a merry refrain to God, for what He has done for us! While it doesn’t remove the sting of sadness or feeling of dejection, it does reassure us that He is with us to

give us comfort and strength in the good times and bad times of life. He is the perfect gift for each of us because this gift addresses the needs we have now.

So, God's gift to us can help us get into a merry spirit about life – about our life in particular – and help ease the pains we are going through and show us that our lives matter; that our lives are important to Him and should be to us and our families; and this makes living our lives to the fullest extent imperative to showing God how much we appreciate His gift to us so that we can give back the gift of ourselves to Him in humble service and joyful adoration.

Thus, we truly can all have a Merry Christmas; and thus, Sue and I and the rest of the Staff extend this greeting to all of you this holiday season!

Shalom,

*Pastor Rich*

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

6 – Brandi Adams Spitler

14 – Ruby McQuade

27 – Brielle Adams

**GREETERS**

4 – Julie Ratliff

11 – Larry Adams

18 – Rick Lyons

**LAY READERS**

4 – Abbey Breeding

11 – Marsha Minge

18 – Cindy Burnett

25 – Sue Luh

24 – Chuck Clark

25 – John Williams

## **CHRISTMAS SPIRIT** by E.C. Baird

I am the Christmas spirit!

I enter the home of poverty, causing pale faced children to open their eyes wide, in pleased wonder. I cause the miser's clutched hand to relax, and thus paint a bright spot on his soul. I cause the aged to renew their youth and to laugh in the old, glad way. I keep romance alive in the heart of childhood and brighten sleep with dreams woven of magic.

I cause eager feet to climb dark stairways with filled baskets, leaving behind hearts amazed at the goodness of the world. I cause the prodigal to pause a moment on his wild, wasteful way, and send to anxious love some little token that releases glad tears – tears that wash away the hard lines of sorrow.

I enter dark prison cells, reminding scarred manhood of what might have been, and pointing forward to good days yet to be. I come softly into the still, white home of pain, and lips that are too weak to speak just tremble in silent, eloquent gratitude. In a thousand ways I cause the weary world to look up into the face of God, and for a little moment forget the things that are small and wretched.

I am the Christmas spirit!

## **SALVATION ARMY REQUEST**

This plea has been sent to all churches: They are asking us to buy a voucher to help feed and care for as many people as we can. A gift of \$18.75 will provide food for 15 meals; \$28.75 – meals for 23; \$47.50 – 38 people can be fed. If you wish, please take a voucher found on the table at the back of the church. These vouchers are due back by

December 24<sup>th</sup>. The Salvation Army is located at 1914 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. in Middletown.

### **OUR MONTHLY MISSION**

**Christmas Fund – Veterans of the Cross** – provides pension supplements, health premium subsidies, and emergency assistance to active and retired clergy families. You can place your donation in the offering through December 25<sup>th</sup>. Your generosity in this mission and the Salvation Army voucher is greatly appreciated!

### **CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

This year, we have two services – one at 4:30PM on Christmas Eve and the other at our regular time on Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup>.

Our Christmas Eve service will include special music from different artists and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. It will culminate with the annual Candle lighting Ceremony. Our Christmas morning service will be one in Carols and Readings and have the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We hope you and your families will be able to attend one or both services to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

### **OUR WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

4 – “Vision of Peace – but First, a Change of Heart!”

11 – “Look and Stay the Course”

18 – “God with Us”

24 – “Silent Night? Not Gonna Happen!”

25 – Service in Carols and Readings

**THE TWENTY-SECOND OF DECEMBER** by William Cullen Bryant

Wild was the day, the wintry sea  
Moaned sadly on New England's strand,  
When first, the thoughtful and the free,  
Our fathers  
trod the desert land.

They little thought how pure a light,  
With years, should gather round that day;  
How love should keep their memories bright,  
How wide a realm their sons should sway.

Green are their bays; but greener still  
Shall round their spreading fame be wreathed,  
And regions, now untrod, shall thrill  
With reverence, when their names are breathed.

Till where the sun, with softer fires,  
Looks on the vast Pacific's deep,  
The children of the Pilgrim sires  
This hallowed day like us shall keep.

## **THE INTERCHURCH CLOTHES CLOSET**

As we wind down another year, the Closet has been going along nicely. Many clients have been given the opportunity to find clothes to keep them warm and for their children to have clothing for school. They are looking for more volunteers to sign up and help at the Closet.

Our special thanks go out to the volunteers – Jim Rockwell from our church, who has been here since June, 2021; the ladies from the Catholic church, of which Joanne has been here since the Closet started in March, 2021; and Rick from the Lutheran Church.

At present, it is best to call first to see what clothing is needed – rather than just bringing it in; as the room available for additional clothes is limited right now. The Closet is open Tuesdays from 10-1pm.

We thank those of you who have donated items to the Closet and appreciate your continued support of this mission.

## **THE EMPTY STOCKING**

Funny how we reminisce about Christmas's past and the feeling we had as we went to bed on Christmas Eve. No, we didn't have visions of sugar plums in our brain – but rather, what presents we would find under the tree come morning.

Then when that morning arrived, we jumped out of bed – often at a very early hour and headed right for the tree. But of course, we had to wait until our parents were awake and ready to sit around the tree. Sometimes that seemed like an eternity! Then we would first go to our stocking, which was hung up somewhere in the house (as we had no fireplace) and often we found trinkets of candy and small toys filling

that stocking. But somehow there was always an empty stocking by its side, and I wondered what that was all about.

It was explained that this stocking belonged to the Christ Child, whose birthday we were celebrating. While everyone got a bunch of things stuffed into their stocking – His stocking was empty.

However, we were the ones to fill it up for Him. We were to fill it with our love and devotion and commitment to His cause for humanity. What a huge obligation thrust upon a small child! Yet, the more I thought about it, the more it made me proud to be asked to do this! What a perfect gift for *the perfect gift!*

Thus, in scurrying around trying to find varieties of trinkets to be thrust into the stockings we have set up for our children and or grandchildren, that their eyes may glimmer with excitement over the treasures they find; let us not forget to fill that empty stocking for the One who's love we can treasure all our lives and whose love will fill us with excitement never known by material gifts as we celebrate this special birthday boy in our hearts and consciences. So, it behooves each of us to fill that stocking full of our love as a special gift for a special person – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **BIBLE STUDY NEWS**

We have finished the Book of Revelation! Hallelujah! Now we are studying the Book of Luke. We meet on Tuesdays at 1pm. We invite you to join us for this study group. We will not meet the week between Christmas and New Year. We will meet on December 6, 13, 20th and then resume on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **PRAY FOR THESE PEOPLE**

Francis Stountenborough, Judy Brewer, Sandy Clift, Ruby McQuade, Charlene Hale, Judy Curtis, Linda Britton, those who will spend the holiday alone, those who have lost loved ones this year.

We should also remember those men and women in the Armed Forces who are serving overseas and unable to be home with their families.

Above all, pray that the Child of Peace we celebrate, is honored with peaceful attitudes among the peoples of this world – not just during this season – but everyday!

## **THE ANGEL TREE**

This year, I want to try to do something that I have done in another church I served in – I talked with the Activities Director from Majestic and ran by him the idea that our church would like names from him of residents who have no family and to get a wish list from them of things they would like for Christmas. He loved the idea and will have a list for me on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November.

Anyway, I will make up angels with names on it of these residents and their wish list and it will be great if as many of you as possible could take an angel (found on the tree in the sanctuary) and buy one or two gifts for them – then wrap them and bring them back to church on Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup> and I will deliver them to the Home.

The Activities Director told me there are a lot of indigent people there who have no family and their wants will be small – but at least we can bring some joy to them at the holiday time.