

Trinity Lutheran Church

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December 2007

Pastor's Ponderings



Dear Christian friends,

If Mary and Joseph were to see a modern Christmas, they might very well wonder what the festival was about. The story of the Infant in the manger, of the Wise Men and shepherds, is so tinselized over with parties and decorations, Christmas presents and commercialization, that one has to dig deep to find the real meaning.

Yet getting ready for the newborn King does not mean that children have to go without their presents under the tree, mailmen without their truckfuls of Christmas cards and packages, or supermarkets without their rows of scotch pines. If the child of God really understands the reason for his celebrating, there is nothing

wrong with celebrating. But if he celebrates just to be celebrating, without knowing why, then Christmas is no longer Christmas.

This is the problem that generation after generation of God's people have faced. Very early in the life of the church there was considerable discussion whether Christ's birth, as opposed to His death and resurrection, should be celebrated at all. Origen (c. 185-254 AD), one of the earliest and most respected theologians, argued that Christ was not a Pharaoh and that to remember His day of birth might well class Him as an earthly prince, not as God.

Apparently other churchmen agreed, because in the chief centers of the church the birthday of Christ was not a part of the Christian calendar until centuries after Easter and Pentecost were well established. By the early 300s, however, Christmas began to be celebrated regularly. It commemorated not only Christ's birth (technically, The Nativity), but also His baptism and His second coming—the latter a theme that dominated the whole of the church's thinking. As in the case of other early Christian celebrations, it was not a historic anniversary of a certain event but a celebration of God's gifts to us in Christ.

Over the years, many traditions and customs have become part of the Christmas celebration. Mistletoe was borrowed from the Druid priests who used it as a part their winter sun worship. The popularity of Christmas trees today is credited to Martin Luther. Caroling, wassailing, and feasts with a great quantity and variety became popular in England. With the supply of food and drink so plentiful, the behavior during the days of Christmas often got out of hand.

In Puritan England the followers of Cromwell openly preached against the wild merrymaking, arguing that it was a disservice to Christ. Because of the dancing connected to the carols, all singing at Christmas was banned. With the Civil War in 1642 came further drastic reforms. Celebrating Christmas in any form, even if it were with a service in church, a Bible reading at home, or the singing of hymns round the hearth was considered heathen and banned. Parliament passed laws banning Christmas and making it a workday; shops were to remain open; Parliament was to sit; services of any kind were forbidden. No one could light any more candles or eat any more food than he did on any other day.

The Puritans had a great influence in America as well. For the first 10 or 20 years the Puritans of Massachusetts were so much in the majority that they were able to influence the who pattern of the American Christmas. For 40 years these new Americans, including those who were not of the Puritan persuasion, worked on Christmas Day. They only exemption was for those who wished to stay and home and meditate, though on one occasion Governor Bradford disciplined certain men who confused meditating with playing ball. The singing of carols and hymns was also banned. Though a mass of new

settlers continually weakened the Puritan stranglehold, Christmas did not become a legal holiday in Massachusetts until a few years before the Civil War.

We might laugh at the excesses that they went to curb the excesses of Christmas celebrations, but to tell the truth, the Puritans were not wholly wrong. A Christmas without Christ was no Christmas at all. The birth of the Savior had in some times and some places been an excuse not to thank and worship Him, but to feed one's belly and get drunk. The Puritan's mistake was that in casting out the excesses of Christmas they had also cast out the Christ Child.

My prayer for you during this Advent and Christmas is that in the midst of the excitement and trimmings you might still be able to focus on the Christ Child. Have fun and enjoy this special time of the year with your family and friends, but take the time to thank and worship Him during the many services we have at Trinity this month. Remember how He came to earth as one of us, lived a perfect, obedient life in our place, suffered and died on the cross for our sins, rose victoriously from the grave, ascended into heaven at the Father's right hand, from which He will come again on the Last Day to raise us and all believers to everlasting life. In all your gatherings and celebrations this month keep Jesus Christ and His work of salvation as the center. In this way, you may celebrate in true Christian freedom and to God's glory. "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

In Christ!

Pastor Moeller

P.S. Here is a listing of the special worship opportunities at Trinity this month. Please join us!

Advent & Christmas Services

Midweek Advent services ~ Supper each week from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 5th at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 12th at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 19th at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday School Christmas program ~ Sunday, December 16th at noon

Trinity Learning Center Christmas program ~ Friday, December 21st at 7:00 p.m.

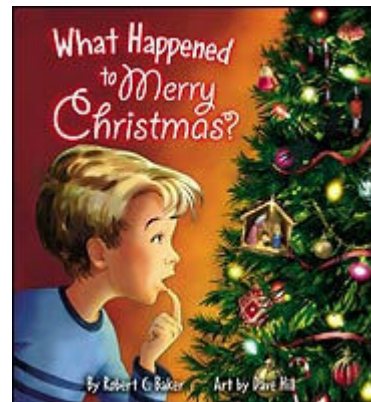
Christmas Eve worship service ~ Monday, December 24th at 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Day worship service w/communion ~ Tuesday, December 25th at 9:30 a.m.

What Happened to Merry Christmas?

Christmas seems to be under attack from what some have called "secular fundamentalists." Presumably to avoid giving offense, businesses forbid their employees from wishing customers "Merry Christmas," retailers substitute *Holiday* trees for their Christmas cousins, and some school districts have transformed Christmas break into winter break. This visually-stunning picture book for children asks, "What Happened to Merry Christmas?"

As Christmas becomes more commercial and secular, Christian parents are increasingly challenged to teach about the real meaning of the day and about celebrating our Savior's birth. In this story for children ages five and up, children can learn about a little boy who discovers that Christmas truly is everywhere we are. For those who believe, the message of God's love in Jesus and the story of His birth are still found in the symbols and traditions of even a modern Christmas.



Get this new book from Concordia Publishing House today!

Stewardship Thoughts

“God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “God is love” is the way the Apostle John describes God in 1 John 4:16. In the five chapters of his first letter St. John, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote eloquently about our God of love. And how does God show His love? He shows His love by giving! “God so loved the world that He gave...” is the Biblical expression of how God really shows His love.

The good news is that God loves the unlovable! He did not love the world because it was deserving of His love. Because of sin, the world of men was broken and stained by sin and all its consequences. Yet God loved His fallen world and was determined that sin, death and the devil would not have the last word! Likewise, God does not love us because we are so deserving of His love. The truth is quite the opposite! We are sinners and have been from before birth. Each day we confirm that truth with our sinful thoughts, words and actions. And yet God loves us. In fact, He loves us so much that He made that first Christmas so special—He sent His only-begotten Son into our world to be our Savior.

Christmas had its beginning with the love of God. And that love was shown in “giving.” Christmas is a celebration of God’s great gift of a Savior. Perhaps that is why we also celebrate Christmas by giving. After all, because of Christ Jesus, we are the children of God. St. John said that so well in the opening words of his third chapter: “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” Children bear the resemblance of their parents in looks and actions. In the same way we as God’s children are also to bear the family resemblance.

We love because God first loved us! We give because God has first given to us! So this Christmas as we give and receive gifts may we be reminded of the great love and gift of God in a Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. We can also give ourselves another gift by reading and reflecting on the five chapters of St. John’s first letter.

Merry Christmas! May the love of God shine upon us and may we reflect that love back to him and to one another as we freely and generously give to support the work of his kingdom and bring joy to others. In that way we demonstrate that we really are the children of God.

Fit for Life



Why is the world so messed up? Why does God let bad things happen to good people? If we all use the same Bible why are there so many different denominations? Does God still speak to us today? Is His Word reliable? Is it relevant for today? If these are questions that you have asked, please plan to attend “Fit For Life in Christ,” an exciting course in Christian growth that presents the Word of God in new and meaningful ways.

It is a course for those who are interested in membership in our church, or for anyone who wants to know what it really means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. We are beginning a new class soon. If you are interested in participating, please speak with Pastor Moeller, about a time that would work well for you and/or your friends.

How to Become A Member Of Trinity Lutheran

We extend the Sacrament of Baptism to all who have not been baptized—infants, children, youth, and adults. We invite those adults who are looking for a church home to come to one of our New Member Orientation classes. A new class will begin soon. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Pastor Moeller as soon as possible.

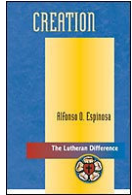
Upon completion of this class you may join Trinity Lutheran Church in one of the following ways:

- The Rite of Confirmation for those who have never been confirmed in the Lutheran Church.
- A Letter of Transfer is gladly accepted if you wish to transfer your membership from another Lutheran congregation.
- Reaffirmation of faith is for those who have been confirmed in a Lutheran church but have not been active in their former church.

TLC Bible Study

Pastor Moeller is leading a Bible study, which explores the weekly Bible stories the children will hear at Trinity Learning Center. While this is specifically intended to help the teachers and workers prepare, everyone from the congregation is invited to attend. Please join us each **Thursday at 5:30 p.m.**

Men's Bible Study

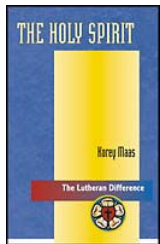


Because of insecurities about explaining particular doctrines or practices, some Lutherans may avoid opportunities to share what they have learned from Christ and His Word. Our Men's Bible is exploring "Creation: The Lutheran Difference" to identify how Lutherans differ from other Christians on the teaching of creation and will use the Bible to show why we differ. All men of the congregation are invited to join us each Monday morning at 6:00 a.m. for breakfast and Bible study.

Lifelight Bible Study

The Good Samaritan. The Prodigal Son. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector. These stories from Jesus—recorded exclusively by St. Luke—are some of the most beloved in Holy Scripture. But despite the popularity of these passages, many students of Scripture would find it hard to describe what's unique about Luke's account of Jesus' life. Please join the Lifelight Bible study each Wednesday at 9:30 a.m., as we study portions of the Gospel of Luke. This will not be a verse-by-verse commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke, but will instead highlight key passages and emphases that distinguish Luke's account from the writings of the other evangelists. Most important, it will provide a unique insight for understanding the birth, ministry, and passion of your Savior.

The Holy Spirit: The Lutheran Difference



"Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?"

"Sure . . . well, aren't all Christians filled with the Holy Spirit?"

As Lutherans interact with other Christians, they often find themselves struggling to explain their beliefs and practices.

The Lutheran Difference Bible study series will identify how Lutherans differ from other Christians and show from the Bible why Lutherans differ. These studies will prepare Lutherans to share their faith and help non-Lutherans understand the Lutheran difference.

All adults and high school students are invited to join us each Sunday at 10:45 a.m., as we discuss the work of the Holy Spirit.

Cold Weather! Warm Clothing!

LSS Refugee and Immigration Center in Sioux Falls welcomes refugees who have been forced to flee from their homes. They usually leave with little warning; with only what they can carry. One of the items that most do not have is warm winter clothing. We urgently need your help to continue to have warm outerwear to give refugees so they can attend school and English classes, go to work and do the many things required to support a family. Winter coats, boots, and gloves in **good, clean condition** are needed for men, women, and children. Donations may be put in the large box in the library.

Nutrition Meals

Trinity Lutheran is scheduled to serve Hartford Nutrition Meals on December 6, 27, 28 at the Senior Center. If you are able to help, please contact June Snyder (526-6681).

Pictorial Church Directory

Trinity Lutheran Church will be taking family pictures for a church directory on February 8-9, 2008. Volunteers are needed for sign-up, telephoning, host/hostess. Anyone interested in helping may speak to Ray Matthies (528-3457) or Laura Johnson (528-7260).

Vacation Bible School Planning

It is once again that time of year when we begin planning for our Vacation Bible School Program (June 2nd – 6th). VBS is a phenomenal ministry and opportunity to teach many children about their Savior and His great love for us.

Each year our numbers have grown increasing larger and with the expansion of our daycare we anticipate an even greater number this year. Unless we are able to find enough teachers and other support staff, we will have to limit the number of children that we allow to be in our program. Please prayerfully consider the ways in which you may be able to help us out. For more information, please speak with Pastor Moeller or Jessi Moeller.

Sunday School Christmas Program

The Christian Education Committee decided on a different format for the Christmas Program. The program will be at NOON on December 16th after an 11:00 a.m. meal sponsored by the Sunday school. This time change may allow more out of town guests to be able to attend.

TLC Christmas Program

Trinity Learning Center proudly presents its Christmas program... “Jesus, Born for Us! Alleluia!” on Friday, December 21st at 7:00 p.m. Please join the children of Trinity Learning Center as they present their Christmas program to you. After the program, there will be time of fellowship and holiday “goodies.” We look forward to seeing you there!

My, How I’ve Grown!!!

For the past 6 ½ months we have been watching the development of a baby beginning with conception. During the 7th month a baby uses all four senses. The eyelids open and close and the eyes look around! The baby can taste, touch, cough, yawn and hiccup. Check out what else a baby can do during this time of growth at the display table in the hallway and place your pennies in the milk jug! These pennies will be donated to the Alpha Center’s ultrasound mission. Thank you for your support!

“...You Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Set You Free”

Iraq is a very long way from South Dakota not only in terms of miles, but also in terms of weather and, more significantly, culture. As I write this missive the temperatures are near 100 degrees. It’s late October! Needless to say, I don’t get to enjoy the fall colors here, as the primary color is tan. Everything, it seems, is the color of sand. This is my second deployment, so I’ve been here for every month of the year and not much changes; not the seasons, not the colors, and especially not the culture.

Change is something this culture does not embrace very well. I’ve been on over 200 mounted and dismounted patrols and each time I am amazed at how it’s as if I’ve stepped back in time. If it weren’t for the automobiles, I could easily be in the year 1307 instead of 2007. Furthermore, this changelessness is no more evident than in the way women are treated. It’s almost as if they have “anti-rights” in the place of basic human rights. I am awestruck at how the wives are treated in this society, they truly are treated as second-class citizens as their primary role is that of farmhand, or perhaps I should use the even stronger term “slave.” As children, the women were allowed to talk and interact with men, but once they obtain the age of marriage (which coincides with menstruation), their heads are covered and all contact with any male outside their family is forbidden. It’s also not uncommon to hear of a wife being severely beaten.

All of this fits neatly within their religious culture. Islam is a very brutal religion. I wish I could say that after spending many months here I could report that we, the American public, have misunderstood Islam.



The sad fact is we have not. This is not to say that every Muslim is a terrorist for they are not. The majority of the people in this desolate land are grateful for our efforts on their behalf and like us, and they are certainly better off today than when they lived in the shackles of Saddam Husain, but their religion will always stand in the way of true human rights, and more importantly, in the way of the one true religion.

I thank our Lord Jesus that He has set me and all believers free from man's rules of religious enslavement. I survive being chained to wall and beaten with whips or being treated as a slave as long as I was free in Christ. With the cross before my eyes I would always have hope. This is something the Muslims lack. How sad. My battalion (First Battalion, Seventh Marines) has several more months to spend here. I doubt that there will be a Christian Revival and that throngs of Iraqis will rush to the altar of Christ, but that doesn't mean I'm going to give up. I am going to keep on trying to witness to every Iraqi that I meet and I'm going to keep on teaching the Devil Dogs in my care to do the same. In that way, by the power of the Holy Spirit, maybe, just maybe, one more soul may be led to confess Christ and trust solely in His redeeming action upon Mt. Calvary.



I guess there is hope for these people after all!

Soli Deo Gloria

Chaplain Richard Townes

On related note to Pastor Townes' letter, Julie Pike from the SD District LCMS office writes:

I've often wondered if there was anything that I could do to bring a little bit of joy to our troops serving overseas, and especially those in Iraq. We always hear of the sacrifices that they must endure while defending our great nation. Then just this past week I received an e-mail from Chaplain Richard Townes, formerly of Mt. Calvary in Brookings, SD. He sent pictures of himself and some of the troops whom he serves. He also sent me a sample of a newsletter that he sporadically produces—shared with you in this newsletter. Along with this he had a request..." Julie, "If any churches would like to help us, I could use DVDs for the DVD library I am building for my boys here. They like comedies, dramas, action movies, war movies and recent TV series, especially *Gray's Anatomy*, *Smallville*, *King of the Hill*, *Friends*, etc."

I brought this request to President Sattgast and he agreed that the District Office could act as a gathering point for these small but meaningful donations. So, during this very appropriate time of year, won't you help bring a little bit of home to those who won't be able to be home for the holidays. If you have a/some DVD/s you would like to donate, please send them to the address below. It would be nice to collect these through the end of the year and ship them to Chaplain Townes the beginning of the new year. Thank you so much for your caring and generosity. If you would like to send a note to our troops along with the DVD's—we will be happy for forward those too!!

The South Dakota District LCMS
Attn: DVD's for our Troops
PO Box 89110
Sioux Falls, SD 57109

Thank You

We would like to thank our friends at Trinity who greeted us, gave cards and gifts on our special day. We will cherish the memories always. Harv & LaRaye Rehfeldt

December 2007

Cleaners, Greeters, Head Ushers, & Acolytes

Head Elder: Tim Totton

Sunday, December 2nd

Cleaners: George & Donna Vogt, Jean Gregersen,

Greeters: Amber Connolly

Head Usher: Chris Paulsel

Acolyte: Eric Krizan

Sunday, December 9th

Cleaners: Joe & Mary Krizan, Judy Larson

Greeters: Joe & Mary Krizan

Head Usher: Chris Paulsel

Acolyte: Dustin Kleba

Sunday, December 16th

Cleaners: Bob & Ruth Moore, Louis & Michelle

Thompson

Greeters: Arnold & Ruth Arends

Head Usher: Chris Paulsel

Acolyte: Megan Eggebraaten

Sunday, December 23rd

Cleaners: DeWane & Joyce Carls, Ben & Michelle

Matthies

Greeters: Ben & Michelle Matthies

Head Usher: Chris Paulsel

Acolyte: Colin Kelley

Sunday, December 30th

Cleaners: Richard & Donna Bowden, Loren &

Marsha Letsche

Greeters: Richard & Donna Bowden

Head Usher: Chris Paulsel

Acolyte: Thad Johnson

Sunday, January 6th

Cleaners: John & Carlene Barber, Marilyn

Matthies, Candace Nelson

Greeters: John & Carlene Barber

Head Usher:

Acolyte: Travis Eggebraaten

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 9:30 am Worship 10:45 am S.S. & Adult Bible Study 12:00 noon Elders meeting 7:30 pm Men's Club meeting	3 6:00 am Men's Bible study 9:30 am TLC Chapel service	4 9:00 am Chapel at Tieszen Home 7:00 pm Bible study	5 9:30 am Lifelight Bible study 5:30 pm Confir- mation class 6:00 pm Supper 7:30 pm Worship	6 2:00 pm Chapel @ Leisure Living 5:30 pm TLC Bible Study	7	8
9 9:30 am Worship w/communion 10:45 am S.S. & Adult Bible Study	10 6:00 am Men's Bible study 9:30 am TLC Chapel service	11 7:00 pm Bible study	12 9:30 am Lifelight Bible study 5:30 pm Confir- mation class 6:00 pm Supper 7:30 pm Worship w/communion	13 5:30 pm TLC Bible Study	14	15
16 9:30 am Worship 11:00 am Dinner 12:00 noon Chil- dren's Christmas program	17 6:00 am Men's Bible study 9:30 am TLC Chapel service	18 7:00 pm Bible study	19 9:30 am Lifelight Bible study 5:30 pm Confir- mation class 6:00 pm Supper 7:30 pm Worship	20 9:30 am Circuit Pastor's meeting at Trinity-Hartford 2:00 pm Chapel at Leisure Living 5:30 pm TLC Bible Study	21 7:00 pm TLC Christmas Program	22
23 9:30 am Worship w/communion 10:45 am S.S. & Adult Bible Study	24 7:30 pm Christmas Eve worship Christmas Eve	25 9:30 am Christmas Day worship w/communion Christmas Day	26	27 5:30 pm TLC Bible Study	28	29 2:00—8:00 pm Moeller's Open House at the parsonage
30 9:30 am Worship 10:45 am S.S. & Adult Bible Study	31 6:00 am Men's Bible study 9:30 am TLC Chapel service					