



Hope Lutheran Church

Enumclaw, Washington

The Messenger of Hope

"Member of the Plateau Ministerial Association"

Pastor Dan's Corner

I am looking blissfully out the window at a foot of snow glistening in the bright sunlight, and visions of Thanksgiving turkey leftovers are still almost a week away. Last year, our first winter in Enumclaw was pretty mild, and no snow. Looks like the snow shovel might get a workout this year.

What a beautiful beginning to Advent, snow swirling and gently falling, a crystal clear night with the stars shining brightly. I can't help but hear Nat King Cole singing, "O Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining" as my mind takes me to that night long ago when our world, and our lives, changed forever. Yet, so many things remain unchanged.

A courageous young woman tells the angel Gabriel, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." (Luke 1:38). She found herself pregnant by the Holy Spirit, and facing what could have been a death sentence at the time for being betrothed, but not yet married, and with child.

Potentially a single mom in a harsh world, her life would have been pretty bleak. We need not look far from our doors to see young women facing the same difficulties in life, single moms,

unmarried young women with a child, facing a world full of hardship. And God loves them just as much as God loved Mary.

For many people, me included, this story strikes pretty close to home. And through the grace and love of Jesus Christ, we are called in faith to love the modern Mary's of this world. To reach out to them with the Good News that God loves them, and so do we.

The Christmas story in Luke's gospel (Luke 2:1-20) was a radical story when it was first written, and it still is today. A homeless man and woman, with no place to stay, no place to welcome them, seek shelter in a barn on a cold night. A baby is born into poverty, a feeding trough for a crib. The prospects of life were pretty bleak. Do you think that scenario is still played out today? Do you think that God calls us to love and care for them, just as God does?

The first hearers of the Good News were lowly shepherds, people that were despised and considered so untrustworthy that they couldn't even testify in court. They were treated with contempt by society.

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Is It a Disadvantage to be Principled?

My daughter Betsy, who lives in South Africa, made an insightful statement on the phone recently. She had observed that there is a tendency when one is principled to be self-righteous. I agreed with her. Since we Christians live by a code of ethics based upon the Scriptures, there is an inclination in many of us to look down upon others who do not live by that same code. Why is this, and what can be done about it? I've noticed the same tendency in myself and in other Christians that when we do something right, we tend to think we're better than others. I've got some thoughts on how we can avoid the sin of pride, and yet still live righteous lives based upon living according to God's principles.

The ancient King Nebuchadnezzar had this problem and it took God turning him into an animal to teach him the lesson: Nebuchadnezzar claims, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty? **The words were still on his lips** when a voice from heaven..." (Daniel 4:30-31) Nebuchadnezzar was proud of what he had done—he had acted wisely, and now he was gloating over his accomplishments when God told him he would be eating grass and living like an animal for the next seven years.

My experience with this phenomenon comes from watching myself doing something loving and thoughtful, and then becoming prideful about being loving and thoughtful! The first step to avoiding this is to become aware

of this tendency of our human nature. I think this is what Paul intended when he told the Corinthians in his second letter to them: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ**" (II Corinthians 10:5). That is how we battle the sin of pride. We watch what we are thinking and take it captive before it blossoms into sin.

In observing my own thoughts and also the actions of others, I have seen this same kind of behavior. I do something right, realize it, and then I gloat over what I have done. The metaphor I think of when I observe this very behavior is to climb a mountain and then become vain with the accomplishment. As soon as we reach the top, we begin to head down the other side into the sin of pride. Besides watching every thought, another solution is to recite in our heads, at those times of success, the wisdom of King David, "**Every man at his best state is all together vanity**" (Psalms 39:5 KJV). Our lives are so very short and brief and in one sense so very insignificant, and we don't really have any reason to get vain about doing something correctly. That's what I remind myself when I see those kind of thoughts rising in me.

In conclusion, it's good to lead principled lives and to strive to do the right and righteous things. And, when we actually accomplish our goal, it is at that precise moment that we need to watch our thoughts and make them captive to humility. May we pray for that kind of self-awareness and self-control!

Thoughtfully, and humbly,
Richard Elfers
Sunday Forum Coordinator



Upcoming Events

- Dec 4 - Fourth Wisemen
- Dec 5 - WELCA Bake Sale
- Dec 6 - Agenda Items Due
- Dec 7 - Theology on Tap
- Dec 8 - Holden Evening Prayer
- Dec 9 - Brewed Awakenings
- Dec 9 - Christmas Decorating
- Dec 13 - Council Meeting
- Dec 15 - Holden Evening Prayer
- Dec 16 - Brewed Awakenings
- Dec 18 - Fourth Wisemen
- Dec 19 - Children's Christmas Pageant
- Dec 19 - Messenger articles due
- Dec 21 - Theology on Tap
- Dec 22 - Holden Evening Prayer
- Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Services
- Dec 25 - Have a Very Merry Christmas
- Dec 28 - XYZ Potluck



December Birthdays

- 12/13 Claudette Lorimor
- 12/16 Jayde Kettner
- 12/17 Rich Elfers
- 12/18 Kim Borgen
- 12/21 Robin Hanson
- 12/24 Erwin Plagens
- 12/28 Dorothy Christensen

December Anniversaries

- 12/18 Ron & Edith Evans
- 12/27 Dan & Sherry Idso

Our December schedule for Package Side Dish & Shampoo/Toothpaste



Place all donated items in the basket in the Narthex. Thank you!

Articles are due for next month's Messenger by December 19!

Pastor Dan's Corner cont.

Yet, in an amazing role reversal, God chooses them to spread the Good News. How often are the modern shepherds of our towns, the homeless and poor, treated by society with contempt rather than with love? Yet God loves them as much as he loved that homeless couple in a manger in Bethlehem.

We can't hear the Christmas story without hearing the angels singing, "Glooooooooria, in excelsis Deo," *Angels We Have Heard on High*, a beautiful Christmas carol that we will join in singing with the angels Christmas Eve.

Hark, the Herald Angels singing the Good News, "Glory to the newborn king!" Good news that a dark world really needed to here 2,000 years ago, and really needs to hear today. Who will be the "Herald Angels" today, telling the world of God's amazing love and grace?

The angels proclaim something pretty radical, a message of "And on earth, peace

among those whom he favors (NRSV)." The King James Version tells of "On earth, peace, goodwill toward men." That was pretty radical proclamation in a world and place where power and oppression left little room for peace.

In our lives we often pray for peace for our world, our nation, and our families. So often peace is understood as an outward peace, between people or countries. What about an inward peace, peace between you and God? Peace that passes all understanding and can never be found in the world, but only in God.

This Christmas I pray that each of you might find that peace, and that peace might fill your hearts with the warm glow of the Christmas story, 2,000 years ago, and this month, right here in our towns, neighborhoods, and homes.

God bless you, and Merry Christmas!

Pastor Dan

Adult Forum in December

On Sunday, December 5 and Sunday December 12 our Adult Forum program will be "Christmas: God's Risk of Incarnation." Pastor Dan and Rich Elfers will lead the program, from 9:45-10:45, exploring the risk of incarnation that accompanies the birth of Christ. How "Christmas" has evolved from its original story into a much different celebration, and how the church can respond to the risk of incarnation today.

Council Meeting



A detailed copy of the Council Minutes can be seen on the roundabout

The Congregation Council met on November 8. The following was approved: The minutes were approved as written. The Treasurer report was presented. The monthly report was reviewed and discussed. Concerns were discussed about the necessity of supporting the mortgage payment with funds from the savings account. Will discuss further at next meeting. There was concern that Pastor Dan's work schedule has been greater than a standard work week. Council is sensitive to his schedule and will consider ways to mitigate the demands on his time.

Old Business:

Synod – Synod met with congregational leaders to discuss ways to strengthen relationships.

Bishop Hofstad – All members were given a copy of the Bishop's letter in their mailboxes

Ministry Team - Preliminary MT budgets were discussed and will be acted upon at Dec Council Meeting.

New Business:

Halloween Carnival – was a big success, a BIG thank you goes out to Sandy Carey for organizing the event and all the many volunteers.

Church decorating – December 9 will be our church decorating night all are welcome.

Social Ministry – The Social Ministry team will be soliciting contributions to provide holiday dinners for 5 families.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm with Prayer.

Agenda item deadline: Monday, December 6 by noon, Next regular Council Meeting: Monday, December 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Worship Schedule

This year, Christmas Eve services will be held at 7:00, a contemporary family and children's celebration of carols and candlelight, and 11:00, a traditional service of carols and candlelight.

There will be ONE worship service on Sunday, December 26, at 10:00, and ONE worship service on Sunday, January 2 at 10:00.

Advent Holden Evening Prayer

Holden Evening Prayer will be celebrated on Wednesday, December 8, 15, and 22 at 6:30-7:00. Dessert will be served after the service. If you would like to lead in singing Holden Evening Prayer, please contact Pastor Dan.

Children's Christmas Pageant

Our annual Christmas pageant will be held on Sunday, December 19. We will have ONE service that day, at 10:00 AM.

Bleatings From The Sheep Pen

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

James 2: 14 - 17

Faith in Action Sunday, what an experience! Many of us gathered at several church sites in Enumclaw this past Sunday for a brief worship service and then went out into our community and provided multiple services to help uplift the less fortunate around us.

At Hope, Pastor led us in a ‘pep rally’ service with several songs tailored to getting up, and getting going, even joyfully marching to our chosen service jobs for the balance of the morning. He told us we were the Sermon for the Sunday, as were proclaiming the Good News of Jesus as we went cheerfully to our tasks. And what a joy it was.

We had some who gathered at Plateau Outreach Ministry and helped by sorting bulk foods, sorting other food items, and provided general cleaning. We had some who went to the Senior Center to help by cleaning windows and repairing walls. We had some who walked the local neighborhood as the snow was flying and knocked on doors and gathered can goods and boxed food items for our local food bank. Some joined dedicated prayer groups for prayers for the community. Some went caroling to uplift shut-in seniors. Some wrote letters and cards for nursing home residents. Some wrote letters and cards for our armed services members. Some cleaned at local parks.

After a couple hours of joyful service, we gathered back at Hope and shared some of our experiences. What great stories of people’s generosity we experienced as we gathered food from our neighbors, as we worked together with other Christians from other churches, as we shared our time, our writings, our songs, our prayers, our love, the Good News to those we met, to those who will be greatly impacted by our actions.

It was a very powerful experience for all of us. But, lest I forget my Lutheran roots, I would be remiss in not adding a little asterisk to the above Book of James Bible passage that Martin Luther was not too impressed in. It is another Bible passage that started the Reformation and is found in Ephesians 2: 8

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

So thanks to all who were able and willing to help others with their volunteer efforts. Thanks to God for giving us the abilities and time and willingness to share our blessings with our neighbors. And thanks that we could celebrate together our experiences without boasting. Instead, we humbly and quietly, or not so quietly, showed our faith in a loving Savior by our actions and abilities, which He gave to us to share.

Greetings, bleatings, from the sheep pen.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. (Psalm 23: 1)

Jim Niehoff

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Our Purpose:

"Making Christ known in our community by reaching out through worship, service and fellowship"

Hope Lutheran Church is a member of the Southwestern Washington Synod of the ELCA

Their mission: "...Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ by empowering congregations and church leaders to grow in worship, education, outreach, stewardship and other missions"

*Their website:
www.lutheranssw.org*

Soli Deo Gloria

Confirmation

We are holding our Confirmation program jointly with Trinity Lutheran. Pastor Dennis, Dan Idso, and Pastor Dan are working together, alternating the program between Trinity and Hope. We are meeting twice per month, one Sunday from 4:00-6:00, and one Tuesday from 6:00-7:30. If you have a grandchild, neighbor, or friend who might like to join the confirmation group, please contact Pastor Dan.

WELCA

WELCA will be having a bake sale after both services on Sunday, December 5th. We will receive matching funds from Thrivent Financial and the funds raised will be donated to POM. We will also have the drawing for the quilt that Lori Highfill made and donated to the quilters. We have tickets available for \$5.00.

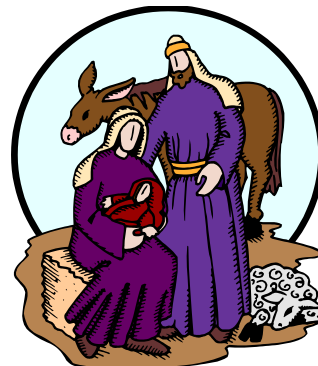
A Christmas Poem

Far away in Bethlehem, a Baby Boy was born;
Born with neither riches nor with fame,
Yet Wise Men came from all around to bring to Him their gifts,
And peace was felt by all who heard His name.

Angels watched Him as He slept, and gently rocked His bed;
Their voices singing softly in His ear;
His Mother and His Father both gave thanks to God above
For the greatest gift of all, their Son, so dear

They knew His life upon this earth would not be filled with wealth,
They also knew He would encounter strife;
But most of all, they knew that He would be a loving Child,
And teach the love of God throughout His life.

At Christmas, as we celebrate this Birth of Jesus Christ,
Let's keep in mind the truth of Christmas Day;
For it's not the Christmas wrappings, nor the gifts that lie within,
But our gift of love to others in every way...



A Blessed Christmas to You from your synod office staff



The Cycle of Life

By Bishop Robert D. Hofstad

The Church Year. Every Christian knows it. Even if he or she *thinks* they don't ... they know it! Why? Because our *culture* knows it. Christmas is December 25th! Easter...that's in March or April, isn't it? ... something about Jesus! Even Halloween has *something* to do with the church, doesn't it? All of us know there is an annual cycle of the church year ... even if we *think* we don't know.

The Church Year — Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost — serves to take us back to the events of Jesus' life so we will not forget them. This is reason enough to celebrate. But there is more ... *much* more! If looking back is the *only* function of the Church Year, we have lost, perhaps, the most important gift. The Church Year mirrors the cycle of life. Not simply life in general, but specifically our life in Jesus Christ. The Church Year *does* take us back to events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, but more importantly the Church Year points to Jesus living *forward* into the present and the future. When we celebrate Christmas, the gift of God's Incarnation in Jesus Christ — God active in the "stuff" of life — God becomes a reality in *our* life. As we celebrate Easter, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes our own death and resurrection. We celebrate our baptism into Christ and our resurrection by the forgiveness of sins. Over and over again as we travel through the Church Year we experience a death and resurrection in our own life.

How does the Church Year evoke death and resurrection at other times? In Advent the waiting and anticipation of the season become reflections of our own life as we await release from the worries and burdens that hold us fast. In the darkness of Epiphany we come to understand the darkness in which we live — both as individuals and in our world — and we come to see the light of Christ breaking through that darkness. In Lent we come to know the "miniature" deaths we experience each and every day and our being "called forth" to new life from the waters of Holy Baptism. And in the Pentecost season, the Holy Spirit comes to us — just as to the disciples on Pentecost Day — bestowing the "fire" of faith and the "breath" of new hope in Jesus Christ.

Our journey through the Church Year is, in fact, a recurring experience of "pascha" — passing over from life to death, and from death to new life again. Each and every season and festival of the Church Year has its own coloring and shading, yet the Gospel proclamation remains firmly in place: Jesus Christ — by his own death and resurrection, by repentance and the forgiveness of our sins, and through the proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments — brings us to new life from out of the clutches of death.

The Church Year enfolds us into the cycle of life: Life — Death — Resurrection. Not by itself, of course. There is also the daily reading of scripture, regular worship and prayers, and even the exercise of our own ministry — our baptismal calling to love God and serve our neighbor. These also bring both death and resurrection to life. And the Church year does the same. It is a precious gift! A gift from God in Christ through the Holy Spirit throughout each and every day of life.

Thanks be to God!
Bishop Robert D. Hofstad



STEWARDSHIP DECEMBER 2010

As we start to prepare for the Christmas season we will have many opportunities to celebrate with family and friends at Hope Lutheran Church. We will have a time to pray together during Advent on Wednesday evenings, decorate the church on December 9th, two church services every week and special Christmas Eve services. Come, give thanks for Hope Lutheran Church and celebrate this joyous season.

A friend sent me the following story.

There is a field with two horses in it. From a distance, each horse looks like any other horse. But if you stop your car, or are walking by, you will notice something quite amazing... looking into the eyes of one horse will disclose that he is blind. His owner has chosen not to have him put down, but has made a good home for him. This alone is amazing.

If you stand nearby and listen, you will hear the sound of a bell. Looking around for the source of the sound, you will see that it comes from the smaller horse in the field. Attached to the horse's halter is a small bell. It lets the blind friend know where the other horse is, so he can follow.

As you stand and watch these two friends, you'll see that the horse with the bell is always checking on the blind horse, and that the blind horse will listen for the bell and then slowly walk to where the other horse is, trusting that he will not be led astray.

When the horse with the bell returns to the shelter of the barn each evening, it stops occasionally and looks back, making sure that the blind friend isn't too far behind to hear the bell.

Like the owners of these two horses, God does not throw us away just because we are not perfect or because we have problems or challenges. He watches over us and even brings others into our lives to help us when we are in need.

Sometimes we are the blind horse being guided by the little ringing bell of those God places in our lives. Other times we are the guide horse, helping others to find their way....

Good friends are like that.... you may not always see them, but you know they are always there.

Please listen for my bell and I'll listen for yours. And remember be kinder than necessary - everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.

Listen for the bell.

Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly

Leave the rest to God

Peace to you, the stewards of Hope
Kathie Thompson
 Stewardship Ministry Team

Worship Schedule

Dec 5 - 2nd Sunday of Advent.

First reading: Isa 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Second reading; Rom 15:4-13; Gospel Matt 3:1-12

Dec 12 - 3rd Sunday of Advent.

First reading Isa 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10; Second reading James 5:7-10; Gospel Matt 11:2-11

Dec 19 - 4th Sunday of Advent.

First reading Isa 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Second reading Rom 1:1-7; Gospel Matt 1:18-25

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve

First reading Isa 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Second Reading Titus 2:11-14; Gospel Luke 2:1-20

Dec 26 - 1st Sunday of Christmas

First reading Isa 63: 7-9; Psalm 148; Second Reading Heb 2:10-18; Gospel Matt 2:13-23

