



## *From the Pastor's Desk*

### **A Chaotic and Disappointing Christmas is transformed into A Christmas of Joy and Peace by the Birth of the Christ-Child**

I'm sure that Mary and Joseph were looking forward to spending their first Christmas together at home by the fire in the comfort of their own house with family and friends. (Yes, I know there was no "Christmas" before Christ was born, but for the sake of this article bear with me!) But a new mandate came down from the government demanding that everyone had to go to their city of origin for the new census (which probably was for the purpose of new taxes!). They could not just mail it in, or go on line to register. They had to physically journey to their ancestral home. It would certainly not be convenient to say the least! Life under the Romans was difficult! It must have been hard to not feel helpless in the face of systemic abuse of power, unrealistic governmental decrees, and violent oppression.

The Roman government could care less about the convenience or comfort of the Jewish people who were under their rule. What an interruption of life! Was this really the best time to travel? Mary was nine months pregnant as well. But, there were no exceptions. Almost 100 miles on a donkey over rough terrain was not going to be a pleasant trip "over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house" for the holidays! It would be like traveling from Pittsburgh to Erie. Joseph walking and leading the donkey with Mary on its back, but without the benefit of highway 79!



When they finally arrive, they find that "there was no room for them in the inn." Nor was there any delicious dinner warming in the oven for them. They had to make do with the stable among the animals. One can feel the despair and hopelessness they must have faced. One would easily be prone to utter frustration and fatigue in their situation.

But, it was there, in the humble stable that God entered into our world as the Christ-child was born and laid in the manger. The Savior of the world had arrived! In the midst of a chaotic, broken, fearful, hate-filled, and hopeless world; the Prince of Peace, the Healer of souls, the Love of God, and the Hope of the world was born that Christmas Day. Even though it looked like evil was still in control and that the world was out of control; it was the dawning of a new day! Yes, as the song declares,

*"O holy night, the stars are brightly shining, it is the day of our dear Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'til He appeared and the soul felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks, a new and glorious morn.  
Fall on your knees, O hear the angels' voices, O night divine, O night when Christ was born.  
O night divine, O night, O night divine."*

*Continued on page 3 ...*

## Ruthfred Lutheran Church

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In His birth, Jesus turned the darkness of the world's nightmare, into a "night divine" which broke forth into "a new and glorious morn" for all who would believe in Him, for all eternity!

The angels announce to the shepherds, *"Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you Good News of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth PEACE among men with whom He is pleased."* (Luke 2:10,14)

Regardless of how this Christmas finds you, whether on a difficult journey, unexpectedly alone, financially stressed, physically exhausted, deeply disappointed, anxious and fearful, or feeling helpless and hopeless; please take comfort in this truth, that Jesus the Savior has come for you! He left the comforts of His heavenly home in order to give you the JOY and PEACE of Salvation in Him. Welcome Jesus into the home of your heart this Christmas Season, and know that He is making a place in His heavenly home to welcome you for the Christmas of all eternity!

***Wishing you the true JOY and PEACE of a Very Merry Christmas!!***

***Pastor Carlson***



Merry Christmas Congregational Family!

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, will not perish but have everlasting life."

(John 3:16)

As we come together to celebrate the "first gift of Christmas" which was the giving of the Christ-child to save the world, we want to thank you for all of your love for us this past year, and for the joys of ministering together with you as we share the Good News of Jesus through our church.

We love you and pray God's blessings upon each of you!

We wish you a Blessed Christmas filled with the love, joy, peace and hope of Christ!

Pastor & Jen, Ben, Sadie, and Sam



What a wonderful six months it has been here with you at Ruthfred!  
A blessed and merry Christmas to all of you, dear Ruthfred family.

Celebrating His birth with you,  
The McMinns



## Member Profile: Annie & Jason Buzon

by Mettelise Ziegler

While the COVID pandemic has caused hardship, it has also brought blessings. COVID was responsible for bringing the Buzon family to our church. Annie's father, an Evangelical Lutheran Church pastor, was originally called to the Pittsburgh area to serve Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Beechview. He retired from St. John Evangelical Lutheran in Carnegie. Annie spent much of her childhood at church and went on to graduate from Thiel College with a degree in Art Education.

Jason was raised Roman Catholic, and attended parochial school from grades 4 through 9. Yet, he does not think he truly had much faith until much later in his adult years. Although Jason works for Main Street Renovations, his passion is music. Annie calls him a "musical genius" for his abilities in composition, guitar and banjo. He has played in local performing bands, notably *Nameless In August*, and hopes the Pittsburgh music scene will be able to pick up again soon.

Annie and Jason met through the internet on E-Harmony. They were surprised to be living two minutes away from one another. Married since December – 2016, they now have two young children. Van is two years old, while Haley just turned one. The children attend Weekday Ministries Childcare Center at Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church where their mother works as the lead older toddler teacher (and this writer is the director). The family resides in Scott Township.



Sometime ago, Jason had the thought that since the Bible is the world's "most popular book" he should try reading it. That led to the desire to study God's Word through a church with solid Biblical teaching. Annie wanted that too, and she craved a thriving congregational life that included children. The couple considered options. Ruthfred's services broadcast over the internet made it possible for Annie and Jason to "visit" often. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, when the doors opened for in-person worship, they were in attendance at the 8:30 am service. Five months later, on November 22, they became members.

God certainly works in ways we would never plan! Although the COVID pandemic rages on causing serious illness, death, job loss, missed celebrations and more, we marvel that Our Good Shepherd creates opportunities to bring people into the fold.

## Song of the Month

By Tom Glasser

### *Joy to the World, the Lord Is Come*

Lyrics by Isaac Watts

Music by George F. Handel; Lowell Mason



Suppose I were to ask you to name only two songs or hymns that most fully say "Christmas observance" to you. Which two would you pick? I know, it's hard – there are so many wonderful, hymns, carols, and songs to consider! The two that come to mind for me are "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night". Curiously, when I looked these two hymns up in our SBH hymnal, "Joy to the World" is listed as the last hymn in the Advent section and "Silent Night" is the first hymn in the Christmas section. For this month's article I'd like to focus on the former.

The lyrics for "Joy" were composed by Isaac Watts. As noted in another article of this series, Isaac was a prolific hymn poet. Interestingly, this hymn was never intended for just the Christmas season. It is based more on Psalm 98 and Genesis 3 than on anything in the New Testament nativity narratives. To be more exact, it is based on a paraphrase of Psalm 98 from Watts' own "The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament".

The author of Psalm 98 celebrates how God has done marvelous things, worked salvation with his right hand and his holy arm, revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations, and remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness. For these things he calls upon all the earth to make a joyful noise to the Lord with singing and all sorts of instrumentation. He even calls for the sea, rivers, and hills to join in.

***Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns; Let men their songs employ,  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Repeat the sounding joy.***

The Psalmist also confidently looks forward to the day when the Lord will come to judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity. He was inspired to write this without the benefit of knowing any details about the redemptive life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We Christians living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have the advantage of looking back at Jesus' first coming and can sing "Joy to the world, the Lord is come." How much more confidently can we look forward to Jesus' second coming when "thorns will no longer infest the ground".

Shifting attention to the musical aspect of this hymn, I noticed that our SBH hymnal gives credit to Lowell Mason while my old LCMS hymnal lists George F. Handel as the composer. So which is it, I wondered. Turns out it's a bit complicated (as most things in real life are, right?). Lowell Mason was an American music educator who did indeed arrange the popular melody we know so well, but he did so by borrowing musical phrases from Handel's "Messiah". Hence the attributions to both. Ironically, while Watts and Handel resided in London, Mason's tune "remains virtually unknown in Great Britain."

([www.umcdiscipleship.org](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org))

*Continued on next page ...*

Lutherans are noted for singing hymns in harmony. My research for "Joy to the World" has helped me to understand why this hymn is particularly fun, especially for tenors and basses. "When sung to Antioch [name given to Mason's melody], the text is repeated in the second section, reflecting a particular early American treatment of the melody called a 'fuging tune'. A fuging tune was a compositional device initiated by American-born composer William Billings (1746-1800) where voice parts enter one after the other in rapid succession, usually repeating the same words." ([www.umcdiscipleship.org](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org))

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come; Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room, And heaven and nature sing...  
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat, repeat the sounding joy!*

***Come, Join us this Holy Season as we Celebrate:***

***"Christmas Lights The SON!"***

Ruthfred Lutheran Church



**Sunday Advent & Christmas Season Messages:**

<b>November 29<sup>th</sup></b>	<b><i>"The Coming Son of Man"</i></b>	<b>(8:30 am, 11:00 am)</b>
<b>December 6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b><i>"The Beloved Son of God"</i></b>	<b>(8:30 am, 11:00 am, &amp; 6:00 pm)</b>
<b>December 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b><i>"The Eternal Son of God"</i></b>	<b>(8:30 am &amp; 11:00 am)</b>
<b>December 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b><i>Contemporary Liturgical Service</i></b>	<b>(5:00 pm)</b>
<b>December 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b><i>"The Son of Mary; The Son of God"</i></b>	<b>(8:30 &amp; 11:00 am)</b>

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Services:**

***"The Son of David, Jesus the Christ, the Savior of the World"***

**5 00pm, 7:00pm, 9:00pm**

**Christmas Day Service: *"The Son Appears in Glory"***

**10:00am Holy Communion**





For those who like to receive hard-copies of the Herald, there is a top secret meeting that takes place each month to make that happen. A rare photo of one of these meetings was recently obtained. The members of the assembly team tried to disguise their identities, but exclusive investigative research has revealed that the participants in the photo are as follows:

From left to right: Standing -- Barb Thomas, Joyce Bock

Seated around table -- Bill Rotz, Joanne Salvetti, Pat Schramm, Rich Lindner, Becky Lindner

It is also reported that there are other members of this clandestine group who were not present that day. They include Judy Bender, Don McDowell, Janet & Bernard Paterra

If you see any of these perpetrators around church or at large, be sure to thank them for their dedication and service!

\* \* \* \* \*

P.S. The mailing and emailing lists have been undergoing some merging and updating.

If you are not receiving the Herald the way that you prefer, please send me an email at [tomglasser@comcast.net](mailto:tomglasser@comcast.net), or drop a note in the collection basket.



## Official Acts -- Fall of 2020

### Baptisms: (\*indicates member)

\*Minerva Paige Kowalski—9/27/20

\*Anastasia Juliet Rothermel—11/1/20

\*Emerson James Latore—11/15/20

### Funerals: (\*indicates member)

Pearl M. Weifenbach—8/29/20

\*Robert Baxendell—9/16/20

Helen M Carnett—10/5/20

\*Johanne “Timmie” Langkamp—10/14/20

\*Judith M. Boyd—10/17/20

\*M. Robert Thomas—10/21/20—graveside service only

\*Louise R. Hughes—11/12/20

### New Members:

Jason and Annie Buzon,

children Van and Haley

Catherine Recaldini

Ron and Kathy Vrana

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## **90+ Birthday Club**

Joyce Alderson Dec. 9th 95

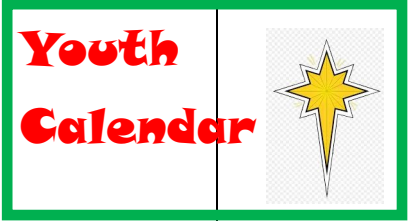

Cornell Ghise Dec. 31st 90

## **Happy Birthday !!**

# DECEMBER 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b> <i>Sr. Confirmation Class 4:00 pm</i>  <i>Worship Team 7:00 pm</i>	<b>2</b> <b>Herald Mailing Date</b> <i>JTTW 9:45</i> <i>Children's Choir 5:45</i> <i>Bell Choir 6:30</i> <i>JTTW/Kids Club 6:45</i> <i>Jr &amp; Sr Conf. 6:45</i> <i>Senior Choir 7:30</i>	3	4	5
<b>6</b> <b>2nd Sunday of Advent</b>  <i>Communion 8:30 am</i> <i>Sunday Sch. 9:45 am</i> <i>Communion 11:00 am</i> <i>Communion 6:00 pm</i>	<b>7</b> <i>Craft &amp; Sew 9:30 am</i> <i>Elders' Mtg 7:00 pm</i>	<b>8</b> <i>Sr. Confirmation Class 4:00 pm</i>  <i>Worship Team 7:00 pm</i>	<b>9</b> <i>Esther Bible Study 12:00</i> <i>Children's Choir 5:45</i> <i>Bell Choir 6:30</i> <i>JTTW/Kids Club 6:45</i> <i>Jr &amp; Sr Conf. 6:45</i> <i>Senior Choir 7:30</i>	10	11	<b>12</b> <i>Mary Bible Study 9:30 am</i>
<b>13</b> <b>3rd Sunday of Advent</b>  <i>Worship Service 8:30 am</i> <i>Sunday School 9:45 am</i> <i>Worship Service 11:00 am</i>	<b>14</b> <i>Elders' Prayer Time 7:00 pm</i> <i>Council 7:30 pm</i>	<b>15</b> <i>Sr. Confirmation Class 4:00 pm</i>  <i>Worship Team 7:00 pm</i>	<b>16</b> <i>Children's Choir 5:45</i> <i>Bell Choir 6:30</i> <i>Jr &amp; Sr Conf. 6:45</i> <i>Senior Choir 7:30</i>	<b>17</b> <i>Ruth Bible Study 2:00 pm</i>  <i>Men's Night 7:00 pm</i>	18	<b>19</b> <i>Contemporary Liturgical Svc 5:00 pm</i>
<b>20</b> <b>4th Sunday of Advent</b>  <i>Worship Service 8:30 am</i> <i>Sunday School 9:45 am</i> <i>Worship Service 11:00 am</i>	21	22	<b>23</b> <i>Senior Choir 7:30</i>	<b>24</b> <b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b>  <i>Worship Services: 5:00 7:00 9:00</i>	<b>25</b> <b>CHRISTMAS DAY</b>  <i>Communion Service 10:00 am</i>	26
<b>27</b>  <i>Worship Service 8:30 am</i> <i>Sunday School 9:45 am</i> <i>Worship Service 11:00 am</i>	28	29	30	<b>31</b> <b>NEW YEAR'S EVE</b>	<b>JANUARY 1, 2021</b>	

# DECEMBER 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 <i>TNT</i> 7-9 pm @ Church	2	3	4	5
6 <i>SWAP</i> 6-7:30 pm @ Church		8 <i>TNT</i> 7-9 pm @ Church	9	10	11	12
13 <i>SWAP</i> 6-7:30 pm @ Church		15 <i>TNT</i> 7-9 pm @ Church	16	17	18	19 <i>TNT Christmas Party</i> 5-9: pm @ Church
20 <i>SWAP Christmas Party</i> 6-9 pm @ Church		22 <i>NO TNT</i>	23	24 <i>CHRISTMAS EVE</i> Worship Services: 5:00 7:00 9:00	25 <i>CHRISTMAS DAY</i>	26
27 <i>NO SWAP</i>		29 <i>TNT</i> 7-9 pm @ Church	30	31 <i>NEW YEAR'S EVE</i>	JANUARY 1, 2021	

## Reading Through the Bible 2020



### Schedule for December

1st	I Corinthians 12-14	16th	Titus 1-3
2nd	I Corinthians 15-16	17th	Hebrews 1-6
3rd	II Corinthians 1-4	18th	Hebrews 7-10
4th	II Corinthians 5-9	19th	Hebrews 11-13
5th	II Corinthians 10-13	20th	James 1-3
6th	Galatians 1-3	21st	I Peter 1-5
7th	Galatians 4-6	22nd	II Peter 1-3
8th	Ephesians 1-3	23rd	I John 1-5
9th	Ephesians 4-6	24th	II John; III John; Jude
10th	Philippians 1-4	25th	Revelation 1-3
11th	Colossians 1-4	26th	Revelation 4-8
12th	I Thessalonians 1-5	27th	Revelation 9-11
13th	II Thessalonians 1-3	28th	Revelation 12-15
14th	I Timothy 1-6	29th	Revelation 16-19
15th	II Timothy 1-4	30th	Revelation 20-21
		31st	Revelation 22

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For everyone who participated in "Reading Through the Bible" this year, we pray it was a blessing for you. Thanks once again to Don Roose for spearheading this program for our congregation!

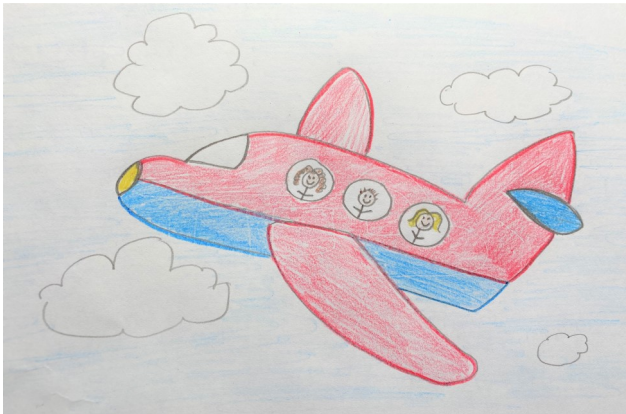
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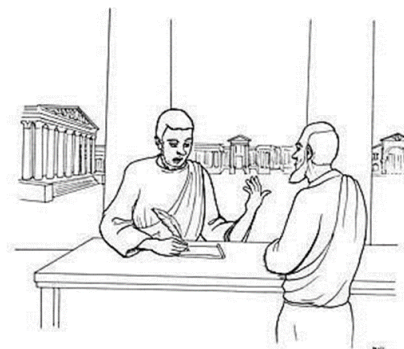
**A joyful heart is good medicine.**

**Proverbs 17:22a**

Mrs. Jones asked the students in her 2nd grade Sunday School class to draw a picture of some aspect of the Christmas story. She then had each student share his or her drawing with the class and talk about it. Susie drew a picture of a baby in a manger. Tommy drew three wise men on camels. Fran drew an angel with a shining star in the background. When it was Johnny's turn, he held up a picture of a jet plane with three passengers peering out of the plane's windows. "That's a very nice picture, Johnny," said Mrs. Jones, "but what does it have to do with Christmas?" "That's the flight to Egypt," he replied.



**I found  
this  
humerus**



"There I go—still writing 'B.C.' on my checks."