



## Platte Christian Reformed Church

December 2018

### When the Bell Rings: God's Not Dead, Nor Does He Sleep

One of the lesser-known Christmas carols is *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*, based on Henry W. Longfellow's poem 'Christmas Bells.' Longfellow wrote his poem in the midst of the American Civil War, which isn't noticeable in the carol, but is clear in the poem. His poem contrasts the 'peace on earth, good will to men,' proclaimed by the church bells he hears on Christmas Day, to the sound of cannon-fire: "*Then from each black, accursed mouth; The cannon thundered in the South; And with the sound, the carols drowned; Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*" With one ear, Longfellow hears these sweet church bells proclaiming the message of peace. In the other, he hears the thunder of countrymen trying to kill each other. How can this be? It's the annual announcement of God's coming, but in a world that seems so God-less.

This is the tension you might feel in yourself during this Christmas time. True peace is often in short supply. An absence of peace can be because of a struggle you face, loss you've endured, or from...well, you aren't sure what. As you look out the window or into your television, peace is lacking. Despite our medical technology, for the third year in a row, average life span is in decline in America, with one of the main culprits being the fact that more Americans died in 2016 from overdoses than were killed during the entire Vietnam conflict. Suicides climbed to a 30-year high of 45,000 people that same year. And so we today, especially in an election year, could bow our heads, like Longfellow, and in despair, say, "*There is no peace on earth, for hate is strong, and mocks the song, Of peace on earth, good will toward men.*"

But in the carol's next and final verse, the bells win out. "*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: 'God is not dead, nor does He sleep; The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men.'*" Christmas is a reminder to the world that God is neither dead nor asleep. He had *seemed* asleep to Israel, and yet, here He is, in baby form in the arms of Mary, come to face our fears, conquer our enemies and deal with our sin.

*Cont'd on back*

Here He is, to show peace and love to a world of conflict and hate. He has come, and He isn't finished – He will come again.

Though Longfellow is hearing chimes playing carols, I have always enjoyed that our church has a bell. In a world of clocks, phones and cars, the bell has little 'practical' use (I have yet to meet someone who was sitting in their living room, heard the bell, and said, "Hey, church!" and joined us in the next ten minutes). And yet, there is still something about that bell ringing out to the town, announcing the gathering of God's people to worship. Each Sunday, and particularly this year on Christmas Day, our own bell peals loud and deep. Not with a carol, but nonetheless an announcement: God's not dead. God doesn't sleep. And His people come from all directions to worship the ascended Prince of Peace. To hear about a Savior who is very much alive, whose death and resurrection makes certain that, when He returns, yes, the wrong shall fail and the right prevail.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Drew

Facts from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website in articles on March 29, 2018 and June 7, 2018.

## FAMILY PRAYER NOTES

### GENERAL PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUESTS:

- ◆ Pray for all the various family that will be traveling during the holiday season – for safety and for warm, meaningful time together.
- ◆ Ask God to make you more like Christ in one particular way during the coming new year.
- ◆ Remember those who struggle with anxiety or depression, which can be particularly difficult during the holidays.
- ◆ Lift up the new elders and deacons who will be selected to serve a new term beginning in 2019.
- ◆ As we remember the first coming of Jesus, pray for His second coming!
- ◆ Remember our community youth groups and pray for God to raise up leaders able to give time and effort.

### Nursing Home Residents, Shut-ins and their Caretakers:

- ◆ Tony & Rozella Baan Hofman, Ted & Carol Bultsma, Kevin Burma, Gertie DeJong, Clair & Pearl Dyk, Marie Kok, Clarence Hunsucker, JoAnn Kuipers, Juna Meyerink, Ruth Pranger, Cheryl Reed, Evelyn Severson, Harriet Sprik, Leona Van Dusseldorp, Muriel Van Vuren, and Betty Van Zee

### Those Mourning the Loss of:

- ◆ Don Severson, Alfred VanZee, Jennie Bultsma, Darrell Kuipers, Harriett Brand, Kevin Antonsen, Helen Phiefer, and Kenny Kuipers.

### Missionaries:

- ⇒ Ben & Amy Meyer (CRWM– Mexico)
- ⇒ Victor & Lori Selemani (YWAM– Africa)
- ⇒ LaVeryl & Max Voss (Wycliffe– Papua New Guinea)
- ⇒ Calvin & Jessica Wunderink (TeachBeyond-Czech Republic )

### Monthly Birthdays and Anniversaries

*(to see church activities, please refer to our weekly bulletin, or to the online calendar at [plattecrc.org](http://plattecrc.org) for the most up-to-date information)*

#### December Birthdays:

- 1: Clair Dyk
- 3: Gretchen Kuipers
- 5: Trinita Kuipers
- 6: Roland Bultsma
- 7: Ian Kuipers
- 8: Joey Kuipers
- 11: Hannah Hansum
- 12: Jim Buitenbos
- 14: Clarence Hunsucker
- 14: Verna Sprik
- 17: Sarah Kraayenbrink
- 19: Joyce Meyerink
- 21: Shelly DeGroot
- 22: Elaine Boltjes
- 23: Brady Kok
- 24: Pegge Pranger
- 25: Victoria Selemani (Missionary)
- 28: Alan Weg
- 28: Marie Kok

28: Marie Kuipers

29: LaVeryl Voss (Missionary)

30: Candy Van Dusseldorp

#### December Anniversaries:

- 16: Calvin & Jessica Wunderink (Missionary)
- 22: Ken & Dee Kredit
- 31: Jim & Vicky Buitenbos

*Please let the church office know if there are any birthdays or anniversaries that we've missed! Call 337-3572, or email: [plattecrc@gmail.com](mailto:plattecrc@gmail.com)*