

December 2020, January 2021

Beacon

Online

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Merry Christmas



Happy New Year

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Joyce K. Allen, Pastor

THE GIVER

Many Christian families struggle with what role — if any — Santa Claus should play in their Christmas celebrations. No matter what you decide, it's fascinating to know the history of the real-life St. Nicholas.

Born about 270 A.D., Nicholas was a bishop in Myra, or modern-day Turkey. In the year 325, he was part of the Council of Nicaea, which produced the Nicene Creed.

Nicholas, known for his generosity, often gave away his money anonymously. According to tradition, he secretly provided dowries for the three daughters of a bankrupt merchant. Nicholas threw two bags of gold through open windows and placed the third in a stocking hanging by the fireplace to dry. Thus began the Christmas tradition of placing gifts in stockings.

St. Nicholas is quoted as saying, "The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic God's giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves."



Pastor's Page

"When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom." Luke 1:28-33

It wasn't the Christmas Mary expected, or anyone else for that matter. Everyone thought the Messiah would come riding on a cloud, maybe a lightning bolt in his hand. Everyone thought he would be a warrior king, and that he would send the Roman Empire packing. Everyone thought the coming of the Messiah would be a glorious day that all people would see.

Nobody expected a baby laying in a feed trough. Nobody expected a cold, dark night and a bunch of animals, who were wondering about their feeding location. Nobody expected Shepherds, they were nobody special, looked down upon for living outdoors with the animals. It was all so unexpected, at least that it would be in this way, but here was Emmanuel, God with Us.

So here we are in 2020, wondering about our Christmas. Will we be with people? Can we? Can we come to church on Christmas Eve and light our candles? Can we sing? Will it be the worst Christmas or perhaps, the best ever? By the way, yes to church and singing and candles, just in new ways. You'll find the information in this newsletter. Back then and now and out into the future, don't forget that we do know the most important thing about Christmas. Emmanuel. God is with us! Merry Christmas! And since, this is for January too, Happy New Year!

*Peace,
Pastor Joyce*

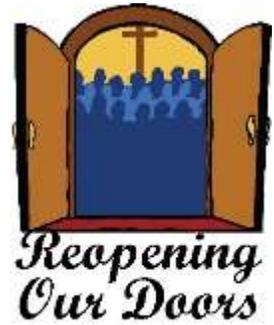


Did not arrive on a cloud.



Born in a manger.

We are using good old science and statistics to know which Sundays we can open. If the Covid rate is less than 2% in Broome County for three days in a row, we meet that week in person as well as our live streaming. You don't need to check those statistics. We will post on Facebook and have folks call people without that resource. As I write this article we have not been able to worship in person but we are hoping to very soon.



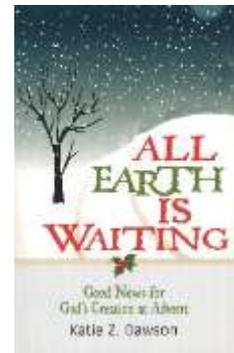
VIRTUAL COFFEE HOUR AND ZOOM PRACTICE



If we are going to learn zoom, we may as well practice. If we are going to practice, we may as well have coffee hour. So, on December 6th at 1pm we' will meet on zoom. Send Pastor Joyce your email address and she will send you an email invite. You'll need to click on that invite to join. You can also get a phone number to call in if you don't want to use a computer, or don't have one. I'll get a couple of tech experts to help us and we'll see if we can't get a group of people together to at least see one another and have a little conversation. Since you are going to be at your own house, you are responsible for your own snack. I understand that not everyone can participate. This is just an attempt to learn one way to get together.

ADVENT STUDY

We're going to try a zoom study. You can download zoom to your computer or put the app on your tablet or phone and just let it sit there. If you sign up for this class Pastor Joyce will send you a zoom invitation and you can just click on it and enter the room. If it asks you to join with video say yes. Same with audio. If you want to call by phone, you can do that too. Our book is "All Earth is Waiting" by Katie Z. Dawson. It is the Large Print Version and it is so cheap we're not even asking you to pay for it.



Cokesbury Book Store says, "Quite simply, we have a responsibility to care for this earth in preparation for Christ's return. This is the message of All Earth is Waiting. Explore the familiar Advent themes of hope, preparation, joy, and peace with the heavens and earth in mind and consider how all creation longs for the coming of Christ, taking seriously the notion that the good news of Christ is good news for all the world. Designed for individual or small-group use, each chapter of this Bible study offers questions for reflection and a brief prayer as well as Advent candle lighting liturgies, a call to worship, a prayer of confession, and hymn suggestions. The book's chapters include: The Source of Hope, Clear the Way, Discovering Joy, The Peace of the World, The Reconciliation of Heaven and Earth.

You must email Pastor Joyce that you want to join the study. If you are in the Binghamton area you can pick up a book at church office. Since this is online though, you can join from anywhere and get your own book. Our class will meet online on Wednesday December 2 and the 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th, from 6:30 to 7:30pm.



Drive-Through Pet Blessing



You can add this to the list of church activities we CAN do! We didn't have a blessing for our pets back in September like we generally do, so let's have one now. You and your pet can stay inside your warm car or truck, while Pastor Joyce stands outside in the wind and snow. Doesn't that sound like fun? Come on around the church driveway and line up. Pastor will be between the Church and the Parish House, waiting to give a blessing and a treat. Humans should wear their masks and stay in the car. If you have a pet that is not canine or feline, please bring a treat for pastor to hand out. We will meet on Saturday December 12 at 10am, until every pet and person is blessed. Tell your neighbors and friends please!

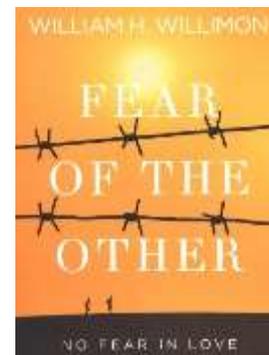


MISSION NEWS

We started our annual hat, scarf, glove, and mitten drive on November 22 for elementary children in the local schools (Chenango Valley and Chenango Forks). Place your donations in a box by the trees at the altar (if we have worship service inside). You may also place them in the tote under the alcove on the front steps or drop them by the church office. We would like to request donations in small sizes for children in grades K-6. The local schools greatly appreciate this mission because so many children need warm clothes when they go outside. This drive will conclude on January 3, 2021.

JANUARY STUDY

Don't come out in the cold and dark! Stay home and meet us online! In January and into February we will study the book, "Fear of the Other" by Bishop Will Willimon. Again, unless the Covid situation changes, we will meet via zoom. That means Pastor needs to send an email invitation and you need to get your book from the church office or buy it yourself. This class ask for a 10 dollar donation if we buy your book for you. Please email her if you want to take this class.



The Cokesbury Bookstore says "There is a distinctively Christian way to engage the so-called "outsider" and "stranger." Tolerate one another. Wait. Isn't that supposed to be love one another? It's one thing to genuinely love people who are more or less the same as we are, but what about those who are not only strangers, but people who live completely different lives? Reliable spiritual guide Will Willimon invites you to look more closely at the Gospel's command to love—because to genuinely love those considered to be "Other" may be the hardest thing for people of faith to do.

THE CHURCH MOUSE

Did you get to eat some turkey? I sure hope so, and I hope you got to see some friends and family, even if was over the computer. I am waiting for the day when people come and put up the Christmas trees and wreaths. I heard they want to arrange them to look good on the camera, instead of for a church full of people. That makes me so very sad. I want a church full of people, but it's dangerous for the people. Well, you know, Pastor Joyce's brain never stops and she has come up with ideas for us to get together and hold our candles and sing Silent Night. And isn't praising Jesus what Christmas is really all about?

BABY NEWS



We had another outdoor baptism in November. We thought it might be too cold, but it was a sunny 70 degrees. Little Lauren Joanne Shepard, daughter of Julie Harrison Shepard and Robert Shepard, was baptized. Her older brother Reid was very helpful and enjoyed being out in the church yard. Next we should baptize Lauren's new cousin Nolan, her Aunt Jenny and Uncle Josh's little boy. And, if that's not exciting enough, baby Boy Milunich should be here any day. His dad has predicted a baby before you receive this newsletter, so we will see. This mouse loves the little children so I am happy to welcome more into our church family.

Pastor Joyce tries to get around to see all of the people who don't have gadgets they can watch church on. I hope this time isn't making you too lonely. There are lots of other church friends that would love to hear from you. How about calling a different one every day? It's an odd time and nothing like any of us have lived through before. Here's what humans need to remember. When you picture baby Jesus in the manger, don't you see all of us animals? We are not only watching the baby, we are watching out for the baby. We love humans. Most of them are very kind to us. So, as you picture all of us gathered around that babe in the manger, know that we are rooting for you. Remember that baby came here for you. That's what Christmas is all about. Merry Christmas!



Methodius Mouse



DECEMBER AND JANUARY SCRIPTURES AND SERMON TITLES

Dec 6: Psalm 69:1-18 and Luke 1:5-25	“Praying”
Dec 13: Psalm 30 and Luke 1:39-45	“Praising”
Dec 20: Psalm 145 and Mark 1:4-8	“Proclaiming”
Dec 27: Psalm 148 and Isaiah 61:10-2:3	“Practicing”
Jan 3: Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12	“Presenting Gifts”
Jan 10: Genesis 1:1-5 and Mark 1:4-11	“Presenting for Baptism
Jan 17: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18 and John 1: 43-51	“Presenting for Service
Jan 24: Jonah 3:1-5, 10 and Mark 1:14-20	“Presenting for Preaching”
Jan 31: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and Mark 1:21-28	“Practicing what we Preach”

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Since we can't all worship in the sanctuary at the same time, we are offering four ways to worship for Christmas. It will be different but if we let Jesus into our hearts, they will all be beautiful occasions for worship.

- 1) Drive Through Nativity: Saturday December 19th from 3pm until the cars all go through. Various family groups will portray the Christmas Eve story of Jesus, within a socially distant framework. We still need a couple of family or friend groups and lots of helpers. Speak to Pastor Joyce.
- 2) Live Streaming Service of Lessons and Carols. We will record early in the month, allowing time and space around all the musicians. You can watch it on our Facebook Page any time after noon on **Christmas Eve day**.
- 3) 4pm Outdoor Worship, **Christmas Eve**. Meet Pastor Joyce at the nativity scene. We will space out and sing carols, read the Christmas story and light our candles while we sing Silent Night.
- 4) Drive in **Christmas Eve at 7pm**. Let's use that beautiful new parking lot and our FM receiver! When you drive in we will tell you what station to turn your radio to, so that you can hear our Preacher. Bring your whole family or anyone you socially distance with. Can't see the family? Park next to them and celebrate together! Come in your own car and stay in your car. We will be singing carols, hearing the Christmas story and lighting our candles as we sing Silent Night. If you can help lead singing or park cars, speak to Pastor Joyce. This just may be the service you remember and talk about forever!



Drive Through Nativity Saturday December 19th from 3pm



Are you ready to try a Zoom meeting? If you send Pastor Joyce your email she will send you an invitation to an online meeting. We can stay home and safe as we continue to prepare for confirmation. Her email is revjoyceallen@gmail.com. We will meet on **January 17th at 6pm**, for about an hour.



This Christmas season is unlike any other in our memory. We have family and friends in nursing homes and others who are homebound and unable to receive visitors. Normal visitation is not possible for the Holidays. We can bring the joy of the season to them in other ways by simply writing a note in a Christmas card or even a letter with some memories of years past and hope for tomorrow. Here is a list of our nursing home residents and homebound church family members with their addresses:

(Happy Birthday 12/25, 101)
 Frances Sandwick
 80 Fairview Ave.
 Binghamton, NY 13904

Beverly Knopick
 66 Pamela Dr.
 Binghamton, NY 13901

Peg Shelley
 Elizabeth Church Manor,
 1863 Front St. Rm 210A
 Binghamton, NY 13905

Lillian Piano
 2317 Golden Ave.
 Scranton, PA 18508

Please also remember those in the military serving in faraway bases and lands.

Taffy Weir
 Hilltop Campus
 282 Deyo Hill Rd. Rm 3096
 Johnson City, NY 13790

Kathy Case
 725 Lee Circle Unit D 14
 Johnson City, NY 13790



