

## Miracle of Birth

(Pat's Pondering from the Pew)



This picture reminds me that HE holds us in the palm of His hand, even as God held His Son in the palm of His hand.

So it is that every December, Christians await, with anticipation, the re-telling of the greatest story ever told, the birth of our Savior, Jesus. Young children count the days until the 25<sup>th</sup>, yet many do not clearly understand the deeper meaning of Christmas. They have made out their wish and want lists far in advance in the hope of receiving that longed for cherished gift. Merchants also tell potential shoppers what they want you to do in advertising ploys, then ply their wares in the hope of making huge profits for their businesses but rarely display Jesus' story or play our favorite carols.

Christian churches across most of the world prepare their youth to re-tell Jesus' story with artistic flare and new songs they have learned for this occasion. Church choirs, bell choirs, and praise teams have practiced and then graced us with new hope in their re-telling the old story with blended voices and instruments.



There is another story of births that seems to be somewhat connected to our birth story and that is

found in the message that Jesus gave to Nicodemus.

Found only in the gospel of John in 3: 7-21, we read that one must be 'born again' or born of the spirit to belong to or see the 'kingdom of God.' Jesus was telling the people the story of salvation.

Nicodemus, while a very respected learned man of the leadership spoke to Jesus about this very teaching. He did not understand being born of the flesh and being born of the spirit that Jesus was teaching.

Perhaps he did not understand that it is not about knowing about God but is about knowing God and this is spiritually discerned, ( I Cor 2:14) . Perhaps being born again is simply getting the ego or I out of the equation and allow God in all aspects of a person's life. Both Charles Spurgeon ( a Baptist preacher b 1834 d 1892) as well as Watchman Nee ( a Chinese Evangelist and bible teacher, b 1903, d 1972) have great perspective on being born again.

Nicodemus was under the law and adhered to that law but could not discern the spirit of Grace so he asked the question many still today ask," how can man be born again as he cannot enter a second time into his mothers womb?"(paraphrased)

Being born again or what some call re-generation is simply having a change of heart or a spiritual transformation, in that we become a new person ( II Cor 5: 15) or more Christ like in all our thoughts, words and deeds.

Indeed we celebrate as each person, joins in a new birth when that person comes to the Lord and confesses Jesus as their Lord and Savior. (John 3:16)

This Christmas season as we look to the re-telling of the birth of Jesus, Celebrate Him who gives us life now as well as life in eternity with Him.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

## Pearl's of Wisdom from the Pastor's Pen



Dec, 2015

Dear friends in Christ,

We have heard so much in the news lately about attacks in Paris and Mali and threats to the U.S. It is hard as Christians to know what to do or even how to process what

is happening in the world. We are looking toward Christmas with the prayer of "peace on earth". Sometimes we wonder if that is even possible.

Pastor Nancy Feniuk Nelson wrote an article for the weekly Synod newsletter. I want to share it with you. It is being reprinted with permission.

May we all remember that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Let us hold each other in prayer and in love.

Peace,  
Pastor Martha

This is the week that Paris happened. And the week before that it was Beirut. Just prior to that, a Russian jet exploded in midair. And then there are all the other incidents I've forgotten for the moment. No wonder they call it terrorism. It is terrible. And it terrifies. At first, terror leaves us breathless; and speechless, except for the random expletive, perhaps. But then, after the breathing normalizes a bit, speech returns ... with a vengeance.

Facebook and Twitter, TV news shows, radio talk shows, the halls of Congress, and homes across the country and world vibrated, literally and figuratively, and the vibrations continue.

For some, it is quite personal. The acts of terror took the lives of people they knew and loved and the loss is enormous. For others, the response relates to how the world is working, or not working. Some see it as a predictable result of previous decisions or actions or attitudes. Others see it as an opportunity to rage against a political party or viewpoint or religion.

Some people prayed for Paris. Then it was noted that we hadn't prayed for Beirut. Some thought we should pray for the world while others thought we shouldn't be praying at all, because it wasn't God who did this. And what about the refugees? What about the people who have left home and homeland seeking an opportunity for a decent life for themselves ... for their children. Ah, but then, who ARE those refugees, REALLY? Are they one of THEM?

I am confused, and frightened. And overwhelmed by the enormity of what I see, which I know is but a fraction of what is. I think, actually, I speak for most of us. It just comes out in a lot of different ways when confusion and fear try to express themselves."

As this week's author of the lead article, as someone in a leadership role in the church, as a baptized child of God, I wonder what can be said that might help. And in that wondering, what my heart hears are the soon to come words of the soon to come season of the soon to come savior: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy.

And for now, that's where I have to stay and wait. I'm a few weeks early, but that's okay. In some ways, it's always Advent. And on some days, the only help there is comes from "Fear not".

Reverend Nancy Feniuk Nelson  
Bishop's Associate

## Warming Tree



The warming tree waits for your donation of warm socks, gloves and hats/caps for all genders and sizes. Now is the time to take advantage of holiday sales. Let's make this tree shine in wonder with its boughs bending with all the gifts from the people of Grace. This benefits Plowshares guests.

Speaking of trees, don't forget our annual sanctuary tree trimming and carol singing. Lots of hands make short work as we decorate our place of worship. We will meet on Saturday, Dec 19 at 2PM. Bring Cookies to share too!

## Poinsettia's at Grace



Photo courtesy of Cheryl Johnson

Can you donate one of these beautiful displays for our Christmas Season? Make your offering in honor of or in memory of a loved one. Anne Barnes spearheads this effort. Deadline is to be 13th and cost is \$10.

## Christmas Eve Services December 24 (Thursday)

Two services, both with lots of familiar carols and holy communion.

Young Family Friendly Service at 7PM  
Traditional Service at 11PM

**October's food cart brought in over 100 pounds of non perishable food for our local food bank. Thank you to all who contributed, let's see if we can match or beat that this month.**



The **Faith Girlz** will be looking to the nativity this month and crafting items on their month theme.

They meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Fri evening every month at 5:30pm. If you know a young lady who is between kindergarten age and a senior in high school, please feel free to invite them. Call Shelia for additional information. They even get a light dinner too!

## Annual Congregational meeting for 2016 January 24, at noon in fellowship hall

For the forgetful and procrastinators among us, your annual report is DUE this month in the office. Please be respectful of our hardworking Admin Ass't

### *for parents*

"A parent must respect the spiritual person of his /her child and approach it with reverence, for that too looks the Father in the face and has an audience with Him into which no earthly parent can enter, even if he/she dared to desire it."

(Geo McDonald)

## Your council at work in Nov.



Treasurer- giving returned to more normal  
Pastors rep't – confirmation now has 4 students, meets Sun afternoon, 4-5pm

Outreach ministry- a widow/widowers group will use our facility beginning in Jan

--our choir invited to participate in community wide Christmas concert on 12/20 at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres.

Worship & Music---Shelia resigning as pianist at 2<sup>nd</sup> service in Jan.

Nominating Team—met and have couple of possibilities, waiting for firm answers.

Call Team-- met with Bishop's Assoc, Pr Nancy & she is gathering candidates for us.

Budget team – working on next years budget

## On Stewardship---

We are stewards of God's Grace at Grace! How does this fit into our lives when the world seems to be falling apart around us in turmoil, chaos and interpersonal discord amongst families, friends and neighbors?

We do what we do best here at Grace and offer a kind and encouraging word to new comers, visitors, pastor, long time members, to the least of these, as well as, to those to whom we disagree.

We step up to the plate and take the time, to employ our ears to listen to others' stories of pain and struggles joys and sorrows, even in the midst of our own.

We extend hospitality with a plate of cookies, a hot dish or groceries for the home bound or those struggling with financial issues. We send out notes of encouraging love, not only to those who are ill but to all.

Grace filled stewardship is also about taking care of and empowering others' to positions of leadership and service then stepping aside to allow them to shine. Yet it embraces, nurtures and improves the gifts within one's self, as well as in others.

Stewardship is about giving back to God what he first gave us whether it be our time, talents, tithes, offerings, caring for the creation both locally and globally and acknowledging that His Grace is in abundance.

Yes, stewardship is alive and well at Grace and continues to grow in and through us as the Holy Spirit inspires and leads us in this gift of grace.

May your gift of Stewardship take root and grow to maturity in God's Grace.

### More Churchie Words

**Alb or Sticharion** is the ankle length white robe the pastor or priest wears

**Cincture** is anything worn around the waist that holds up or gathers clothing such as a rope

**Epitachian** is the stole that a pastor wears

**Paraments** are decorative altar cloths

**Eucharist**—another name for Holy Communion

**Homily or postil** another name for a sermon, usually shorter in length

**Crozier** is a shepherd's crook or staff that a bishop carries

## This and That

Diane Pauli sends us this food for thought---

"To be the image of God, humans must be aware of being beloved. Accordingly, to be the image of God is not to share with God some divine attribute, such as intelligence or freedom of will; instead to be the image of God means the capacity God has created in his human creatures for us to respond to His Love for us"

*(David Novak)*

Shelia Prax reports a great turnout for the Pumpkin Fest and that all seemed to enjoy themselves. Mother Goose was a big hit with the younger set. Food prepared and served by Bear Connormon was tasty and hit the spot. Many thanks to all the Grace helpers for this community outreach that drew about 100 people. Note: Shelia deserves a lot of praise as she also walked the neighborhood with some hand designed invitations.



*(Thanks to Holly Connormon for above photo's)*



*Mother Goose aka Diane Pauli  
(photo thanks to Pr Martha Stum)*



## A Christmas Prayer

( by Diane Pauli)



This season we ask that you make our hearts the cradle that holds Jesus. Forgive us for being too busy to look in your face, too busy earning a living, wrapping presents, or raising children, too busy harboring grudges, coveting trinkets, and worrying about the future, Forgive us Jesus and thank you for loving us enough to become one with us.

Just as you came in the stillness of the night, please enter our lives this season. Come to us in the bleak hills of Afghanistan, at the cold tense border of divided Korea, in bloody Iraq and Syria, as well as in the tenseness of Israel and in the crowded noisy cities of our hurting world, Come to each one of us, that we may know your Heavenly peace. Send us your heavenly angels to sing in our hearts and disclose your loving face that illuminates the darkness of our souls and offers healing.

Yes Lord, make our hearts your cradle. Holy Jesus, empty us of sin and trivia and every distraction that surrounds us, that we may, like the shepherds and wise men come with open hearts to adore and bless you And when it comes time to get back into our ordinary lives, may we know deep within that our lives can never be ordinary but is being transformed and forever blessed by your presence. Come quickly Lord Jesus! Come Quickly! A Men



A BLESSED SEASON THIS CHRISTMAS TO ALL

## Thrivent's Ham It Up Dinner Up date

Jeanne Yttreness reports that over \$1200 was collected to benefit Project Sanctuary , Autioneer Dwight Cawthorn managed to get the bidding for the delicious desserts high enough to assist in this fund raiser.



Thanks to Steve Johns and Bear Connomon for cooking and carving duties as Jeannie fills the trays with ham.



Dwight is 'encouraging' bidders for the tasty after dinner treats.

**Thanks to Holly C for the photo's She reported that all had a fantastic time.**

Thrivent will sponsor the stocking and gifts for home bound seniors who participate in the 'Meals on Wheels' program. A packing party will be announced later in the month. This is also the last event sponsored by Thrivent.



The local Thrivent board extends a heart felt thanks to all in the congregation who have made all their events successful over the years.