

# Rejoice... It's Christmas

## What is Advent

By Rev. Bob Dowrey, pastor, United Methodist Church

By the time you have read this word, Advent will be almost done. What is Advent, and why do we celebrate it as a season in the church year?

The word Advent comes from the two Latin words, meaning to come close. God comes close to us in the person of Jesus. It is through Jesus that we see God, know what He is like, and follow Him by following Jesus. In the birth of Jesus in the manger at Bethlehem, we see that God cares enough for us to send His Son, our Savior, into the world...into a world full of trouble and turmoil. He didn't want a world like that--neither do we. What a better world it would be if we followed in His way and walked in his path!

Why not just have Christmas Day, the day Jesus was born, as our special day, and not bother with any Advent season at all? After all, many of us grew up never even hearing of Advent. Actually though, we did hear of Advent, but called it by another name--the Christmas Season. We can call it by whatever name we wish. The meaning of God's coming close to us is still there.

We need a Christmas Season! We need an Advent! After all, if it takes so much preparation for the birth of an earthly baby, how much more preparation it takes for a heavenly one. We couldn't do everything in one day. Imagine trying to sing all the carols at once, and not singing them after that.

This year the first Sunday in Advent was November 29. Christmas is a special day by itself. May God bless all of you as we join together this season in worship, fellowship and happiness in our church and in our community and family activities. With the strength we receive at Christmas, let us look forward to the new year.

## Christmas

By Rev. Larry D. Benjamin, Church of the Nazarene

Christmas! Just the word brings excitement and joy to the faces of little ones. What does the word "Christmas" mean to you?

There are two terms that I like very much, they are: "Jesus is the Reason for the Season" and "Wise Men Still Seek Him." Without the birth of a very special baby, we wouldn't celebrate Christmas. We may have the commercialism of the season, but it wouldn't mean anything more than any other day off from school or work.

The wise men came to find this special baby. They traveled a long way just to see Him and give Him the gifts they brought. By following the star, they eventually found Him. The Lord still has ways of bringing people to Himself. One way is through the Holy Bible. It is a map of how we can find the Christ, and have Him become our personal Savior. Another way is through our churches. Our community is blessed with several churches and the people in them would be very willing to help someone find their way to the Savior.

As we celebrate Christmas with our family and friends, let's not forget that "Jesus is the Reason for the Season," and the fact the "Wise Men Still Seek Him."

## He is the Light of the World

By Lynda L. Crane, Pastor, Heppner Christian Missionary Fellowship

Historians tell us that Dec. 25 is not the true birthdate of Jesus Christ. But whatever the date, we have something to celebrate!

He is the light of the world. And as we walk in Him, we too will walk in the light. In Him is life and his life is our light. (Jn. 8:12 Jn. 1:4)

The world is getting darker every day but, in the midst of that darkness Rejoice! The glory of the Lord is going to arise upon a people! (Is. 60)

Be wise be ready. He will come suddenly to His temple, but who may abide the day of His coming? (Mal 3:1-2). Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first and the son of perdition be revealed. His coming will be after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

In this hour we must receive a love of the truth, for strong delusion shall come upon all those that don't. But God from the beginning has chosen you to salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth.

He has called us by the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (II Thes. 2)

We have much to celebrate in this hour. Let God arise! His enemies will be scattered! (Ps. 68). Continue to press toward that mark for the prize of the high calling of Christ Jesus.

Have a wonderful holiday season. In His Love and Service,

## "Here am I"

The Rev. Lea Mathieu, Ione United Church of Christ

The Christmas story is radical in many aspects; the first is that a poor young girl was told: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you."

The second radical aspect of Christmas is that this brave child simply answered, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord."

This radical announcement and acceptance hold a direct lesson for all of us, for you never know when the Spirit may come upon you, do you? It is thus best to be always open, and to cultivate a constant awareness of the possibility of the Spirit's unexpected visitation.

Such growth in the awareness of the holy is difficult for us; human beings (sadly) seem to prefer God in a tidy, closed box. So as a Christmas season exercise in opening up to the anytime-anywhere sense of God, I offer these beginning steps:

Live as though the angel Gabriel may alight on you at any moment in any guise.

Watch everything around you for signs of the Spirit.

Anything beautiful, anything loving, anything solid and real, is to remind you of God.

Watch the stars.

If you ever loved poetry, start reading and writing again. If you ever loved music, really listen, play and sing. If you ever loved...etc.

If you have lost touch with the Spirit of God's revelation in your own life, you are to begin praying.

The best way to start is to say "Here am I"--all the time.

## A Wonderful Name

By Roger W. Scharen, Pastor, First Christian Church

Everyone's name is special. It is a possession given to us at birth, and used to identify us forever after. A name may be chosen because it reminds the parents of a friend or relative...or it may be selected because it has a combination of sounds which are pleasing to the ear. Only one name was spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah as being

"wonderful." It was the name to be given to the Savior. Isaiah 9:6 says, "And His name will be called wonderful..." but it was nearly 800 years before God told what that name was to be, and why.

Joseph, to whom the virgin Mary was promised, was told by an angel; "You are to call his name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

That is why Jesus' name is so special, so wonderful! He is our Savior. Christ was born in Bethlehem, died on Calvary, and is now in the presence of God. He is Wonderful!

## The World Was At Peace

Rev. Thomas R. Scanlan, pastor, St. Patrick's Church

And the whole world was at peace. How long has it been since those words could be spoken? But then, the Prince of Peace would not be born into a world at war. So the world was at peace when the angel said to the shepherds, "Be not afraid...for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

In the inspired word of God in Psalm 85 we read the words, "Justice and peace shall kiss." Pople Paul VI might have had that passage in mind when he said that there can be no peace in the world unless there is justice. Justice, the fundamental moral virtue that demands that we give what is due to each person. Where injustice rules, peace is missing.

Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, came into this world and became a human being like us to show us how to live a life of justice and peace. He went about doing good. He had compassion on the multitude. He fed the hungry. He forgave repentant sinners and did not condemn them. He endured hardships, the human weakness of his apostles, denial by one of them, betrayal by another and, dying in terrible agony on the cross said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

In the Christmas season we celebrate more than a little infant on a bed of straw. We thank God for sending his Son to conquer sin by his death on the cross and then triumph over death by his resurrection from the dead. The true meaning of Christmas is told in the inspired word of God, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3, 16.

## "Yes Lord, I believe"

The Rev. Robert Crum, All Saints Episcopal Church

Once upon a time there was a theologian who, over a period of some months, spent each Saturday morning in a bath tub asking himself questions as he prepared for an important examination. The questions he would ask ranged from the profound and unanswerable type (like: "What is the meaning of life?") and "How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?") to the more practical (like: "Why is there an expiration date on sour cream packages and once you pass that date does it turn good?") Another question that haunted this thinker as he lay "prune-bottomed" in his luxurious tub was: "When precisely was the moment of salvation?" "When was it, exactly, that God saved us?" I suppose that sounds like a wondrously silly thing to contemplate, but church officials and clergy are like that at times...wondrously silly.

Be that as it may, this explorer of the profound continued to ruminate; to chew the cud of this question for some time developing a number of interesting and, at least to his mind, legitimate responses. For example, some could argue that salvation came as soon as God

## Christmas Eve services planned

### Hope and Valby Lutheran Church

The congregations of Hope and Valby Lutheran churches will celebrate the Christ Child's birth with candles, carols and Holy communion on December 24. Pastor Hoobing's Christmas message will be "Come and See the Baby". The scripture readings for the service will be Isaiah 9:2-7, Titus 2:11-14 and Luke 2:1-20.

Service at Valby Lutheran Church located on the Ione-Gooseberry road will begin at 6 p.m. Service at Hope Lutheran Church will begin at 9 p.m.

### United Methodist Church

The Christmas Eve candlelight service at the United Methodist Church will be held December 24 at 7 p.m. "Everyone is invited to enjoy this family oriented evening of singing carols, lighting the Christ candle and lighting their own individual candles," said a church spokesperson. The choir will sing the anthem "O Come To My Heart, Lord Jesus".

Worship service on Sunday, Dec. 27 will begin at 10:30 a.m. with Sunday school beginning at 9:30 a.m.

## Weather Report

by City of Heppner

Dec. 15 - 21, 1992

	High	Low	Prec	Snow
Tues.	38	24	.0	
Weds.	39	27	.0	
Thurs.	41	25	.15	2"
Fri.	34	21	.0	
Sat.	43	22	.01	rn
Sun.	44	37	.0	
Mon.	46	39	.0	

committed to the humiliation of becoming one of His own creatures; when He said He would submit for the love of His people. Others might say salvation came with the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan and His anointing with the Holy Spirit; when the Master responded overtly to the call He had felt for years to preach good news to the poor. Still others might claim we were saved as soon as Jesus prayed that heart-wrenching prayer in the garden: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will but yours be done" (Mt 26:39) And, of course, there is the classic answer: salvation came with the death of Jesus on the cross.

I wonder if we might be able to make an argument, not for one precise moment of salvation, but for all the moments of decision and commitment? Not just when Jesus committed to death but when He committed to life as well? When He said He would not only die for us but live for us, too. When He made the commitment to teach us how to be more fully what we were created by God to be: loving and caring and concerned more for others than ourselves.

Salvation is a free gift from God and cannot be earned, but it is also a partnership in which we participate developing a disposition in which to accept it; a synergism. What if it could be seen that Jesus saved us not altogether through one great act, though I do not deny it, but also through innumerable little acts of love and self-sacrifice? And wouldn't it be interesting if that same approach manifested itself in our lives and that we could recognize that we grow and become all that we are meant to be, not so much by the conspicuously given big sacrifice wrapped in bright paper that all will notice but by the little ones given as gifts to one another a hundred times a day.

Merry Christmas! Enjoy the giving and receiving.

## And the Word Became Flesh

By Rev. Stan Hoobing, Hope-Valby Lutheran Church

Christmas Season is a time when people are busy shopping for gifts, attending holiday functions, putting up decorations, sending Christmas cards and letters, delivering packages and entertaining family and friends.

Frederick Buechner shares the story of a pastor who is caught up in all the things we get caught up in at Christmas: stringing lights, hanging ornaments, hanging stockings and making sure things were "right".

Just after tucking in his children on Christmas Eve the pastor was about to drop exhausted into bed when he remembered he had agreed to feed his neighbors' sheep. So he trudged down the hill through knee deep snow and carried out two bales of hay from the barn to the shed. After turning on a 40-watt bulb hanging by a wire from the rafter, he cut the twine on the bales and scattered the squares of hay around for the sheep. As he watched these "dumb" sheep going for the hay he turned off the dim light and he suddenly realized where he was. The smell of the animals and hay, the dim light, the sound of the animals eating suddenly overwhelmed him. Here on Christmas eve, he was in the manger.

In the midst of our hectic pace this Christmas season with all our shopping sending and receiving Christmas cards and letters and gifts, decorating and entertaining, let us not forget the perfect gift that God in his infinite wisdom has given us -- the Christ child, who bestows freely upon us God's compassion and grace. St. John wrote in his gospel: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth (NRSV John 1:14)."

### All Saints Episcopal Church

The Christmas Eve service at All Saints Episcopal Church will be Thursday, December 24 at 7 p.m. The Rev. Bruce Spencer will celebrate Holy Communion. The community is invited to attend.

Sunday, Dec. 27, Rev. Bob Crum will celebrate Holy Communion beginning at 10:30 a.m. A coffee hour at the home of Bob and Suzanne Jepsen will follow the worship service.

### St. Patrick's and St. Williams Church

Christmas Eve Mass at St. Patrick's Catholic Church will begin at 9 p.m. with the children's candlelight procession and the blessing of the crib. Christmas carols will be sung before Mass.

Christmas day Mass will begin at 11 a.m. with Christmas carols

sung before Mass. St. William's Catholic Church in Ione will have their Christmas day Mass at 8:45 a.m. Christmas carols will be featured and there will be a procession with the statue of the Infant placed in the crib and the blessing of the crib.

## Soroptimist announce coloring contest winners



Winners of the Soroptimist Christmas coloring contest were announced recently. Pictured in the back row are third and fourth grade winners l-r first-Tara Ozment, second-Amber Flaiz, third-Matt Looney. Front row, first-second grade, first-Sally Calvert, second-Trevor Rhea, third-Aaron Harris; pre-school-Kindergarten, first-Don Shank, second-Lilly Calvert, third-Emily Bergstrom.