

# Christmas messages from your local churches

## St. Patrick's and St. William's Catholic Churches

### 'From Anxiety To Spiritual Peace'

There is a simplicity about Christmas. We celebrate the birth of a baby. We cannot improve on the inspired account of this event. Yet we have to meditate on the event. We have to consider the meaning of this event. As we look around and see homes lighted brightly and decorative. We see representations of the Nativity Scene. We see people shopping joyously. We hear music commemorating this event. We hear people greet each other happily. And we have to ask ourselves just what is the meaning of this event.

Perhaps we listen to the words of the Christmas Carols. One tells us that this event was such that we sing: "O Holy Night". Another has us saying that this is "Joy To The World". Then the words of the Angels, spoken to the shepherds, go right to the heart of the matter: "For to-day in the City of David a Savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord." (Luke 2:11) So, that is what all this excitement is all about. The Prophet had foretold it, telling that a virgin would conceive and bear a son and his name would be called Emmanuel. Perhaps the shepherds knew about that prophesy. The words of the angels gave them the motivation to go to the City of David, Bethlehem, and see for themselves. There must have been joy in their hearts. Maybe they wondered why this revelation had not been made to kings or princes. What they knew was that it had been made to them, and they rejoiced.

You and I have not only heard the prophesy, but we know the fulfillment of the prophesy. We can learn from the example of the shepherds. They left their sheep to go and offer their homage to the Infant Savior. We, too, need to leave the concerns of our lives and worship the Infant Savior.

We are living in a time of anxiety. Our economy is weak, we have experienced drought, and our country seems to be on the verge of war. We need the Prince of Peace in our lives. We need not just the tinsel and bright lights, but the reality of the Savior in our lives. When we have that gift we will have true joy in our lives, a joy that no one can take from us. May this Christmas be one filled with faith in the Savior. May we come to know with St. John that "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

-Father Gerry Condon

## Heppner Nazarene Church

### 'Our Christmas gift, today, yesterday and tomorrow'

One name or title that goes along with Jesus is the Christmas name Emmanuel, which means "God with us." So what does this really mean, "God With Us?" First read Matthew 1:18-25 (key verse 23). "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-which means, "God with us." 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus."

Let's study this word in verse 23: Emmanuel <English word of Greek origin. Emmanouel (em-man-ooale') <Greek word of Hebrew origin. Immanu'el (im-mawnoo-ale') <Hebrew word. Emmanuel is defined as: "God with us" or "with us is God"; the symbolic and prophetic name of the Messiah (the Christ), as read in, Matthew 1:23 and Isaiah 7:14, because Jesus was God united with man, and showed that God was dwelling with man.

Hebrew word ('el)- means: "God, the Mighty One; the one true God, Jehovah (Yahweh)." The names of God as given in Scripture are representative of His greatness and of His workings toward us. Jehovah-jireh-"the Lord will provide;" Jehovah-nissi-"the Lord my banner;" Jehovah-shalom-"the Lord my peace;" Jehovah-shammah-"the Lord is there;" Jehovah-tsidkenu-"the Lord our righteousness."

Reverently we also say the name "el Shaddai" defined as "nourisher and comforter". We bow before the name "Elohim," which means "power," but we have come to love one particular name of God, because it unlocks to us all the others. And that is the name Mary (and Joseph) gave to her firstborn Son, the name of Jesus. Jesus, Apostle John declared, was God's Word. John 1:1-4: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men."

The Name of "Jesus" is the same Word that had spoken into existence everything that ever was. Jesus declared Himself to be Bread to eat, and Light in which to walk. Jesus told us that He is the Door to all good things, and that He is the Good Shepherd to lead us and to seek us when we go astray.

### Understanding Our Christmas gift:

1) God is SPIRIT <John 4:24>: "God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." To the one woman at the well of Sychar, Jesus spoke this profound truth. In it He affirms the personality of God, and the common ground on which God and humankind meet. We, too, are spirit made in God's likeness.

2) God as Spirit is LIFE <John 5:26>: "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself." And John 14:6 Jesus Said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." So people are spiritually "dead" until they respond to God, through His grace. Jesus came to make that response possible.

3) God as Spirit is LIGHT <John 1:5>: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." And John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Moral depravity is the absence of light; because Satan blinds people's eyes they prefer not to come into the light. However, if we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all sin.

4) God as Spirit is LOVE <John 4:8-11 >: "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." God is love.

Our Christmas Gift, Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow is found in John 3:16-17. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

Now That Is Our Christmas Gift For All Time! This, then, is what Jesus came to reveal: Emmanuel revealed God as Spirit, the Spirit of: Life, Light and Love. For it is the best part of the name Emmanuel, this dawning of the reality that in Jesus, God has actually come to where we are. Emmanuel means "God with us". I don't know any better Christmas message. It is, what Christmas is all about.

-Rev. Duane Jones

## Willow Creek Baptist Church

### 'The Looking Glass of Christmas'

Have you ever noticed that the image of an object can be altered by viewing it through a glass lens? Some lenses alter appearances for the better, some for the worse, and some even turn the image upside down. The only way to see something as it truly exists is to view it through the proper "looking glass." Such is the case with this wonderful celebration we call Christmas. Today, there are many who have a distorted view of Christmas. The only way to view Christmas accurately is to view it through the only real looking glass...The Bible! Looking at Christmas through the Bible helps us to see it in truth. It helps us see clearly who Jesus is and why He came. A Biblical view of Jesus reveals the Biblical meaning of Christmas. Let me share with you two common misconceptions concerning Christmas.

First, we have a distorted view of Christmas when we see Jesus only as a baby. He was born physically and literally of a virgin. That is amazing. However, it is also important to see that this meant Jesus left the glory of Heaven and made Himself of no reputation to come in the likeness of man. He humbled Himself in obedience to God the Father and was born in human form to be a "bondservant" (Phil 2:5-7). That is amazing. But that is not the most amazing part. The most amazing part of His birth was His death. He alone bore the sins of the entire world. He alone is qualified to offer a substitutionary payment for our sin. He was born as a baby so that He might grow to a man. He grew to a man so that He might be put to death. It was His death that met the requirement of sacrifice, reconciling man to God through faith and by grace. Without a birth there could be no death! We celebrate the birth because we recognize the physically manifested love and eternal plan of God to restore relationship with man.

Secondly, we have a distorted view of Christmas when we see Jesus only as a giver. Christmas is the season of giving because Jesus gave Himself. We take this time to reflect on all that He has given to us, and we rejoice in the blessings of God. That is wonderful, and as it should be. But! That is only half the story. If we are not careful we fail to see that Jesus also came as an example for us to live a life characterized by sacrifice and faithful service. It is true that Jesus gives. But, He also requires! He gives salvation; but He requires repentance. He gives joy; but He requires surrender. He gives peace; but He requires submission. He gives life; but He requires death of self. One day Jesus will return, and when He comes He will be requiring! We do our children and families a great injustice when we focus the eyes of our heart exclusively on receiving from Jesus. I am afraid that we have so confused our children today that when the Lord returns, descending from Heaven, they will be the ones who will miss the glory of God. They will miss it because they will be consumed with disappointment that He didn't arrive riding on a sleigh, with a big belly, wearing a red suit! The Bible shows Jesus as the One who is looking for those who are faithful and obedient. That is who Jesus is.

Do you want your family to be blessed this Christmas? The greatest blessing of Christmas is to see it through the clear and holy looking glass of the Bible. How do you see it?

-Pastor Bud Wenzel

## All Saints Episcopal/Hope and Valby Lutheran Churches 'HUMBLE BEGINNINGS'

When the angel Gabriel proclaimed to Mary that she would become pregnant and the son she would deliver would be the savior of the world, Mary pondered the angel's message in her heart. Now, I ask you to ponder in your heart the true message of Christmas and compare that message to how Christ's birth is experienced today. Today the season is over-ran with commercialism and spending uncontrollably, and I would ask that you to ponder the question "Why?" in your heart.

When God chose to send God's son to earth as a human being God wasn't extravagant, but rather humble. Of all the beings of the universe that had the right and the ability to be outlandishly extravagant God would be the only one. However, that isn't how God chose to work. No, rather God chose to work through a young unwed mother, who was engaged to a carpenter named Joseph. And instead of making arrangements at the finest facilities of the time to deliver the child, God's son was born in a stable and laid in a manger. Finally, instead of sending out lavish birth announcements God proclaimed Jesus' birth to a group of shepherds, who were watching their flocks by night. Every step of the way God went out of the way to be humble, in order that God could be in solidarity with humanity. Jesus' humble beginnings was the precedence for Jesus' future ministry, one that reached out to sinners and tax collectors, the least, lost, last and forsaken of Jesus' time. Jesus was given a humble beginning; he led a humble life and died a humiliating death.

As I ponder all these facts in my heart, I ask you, where does all the chaos of the season come from? How is it that Christmas, which started out so humble, has turned into something so brass? We all have to come up with our answers to that question. However, the good news for all of us is this, no matter how we distort the meaning of Christmas; God's purpose for the season has never changed. There is no amount of commercialism that can persuade God to change God's mind concerning God's gift to us in the form of salvation that arrived in the form of a baby, wrapped in bands of cloth and laid in a manger because there was no room at the inn.

-Pastor Laura Snyder

## Heppner Christian Missionary Fellowship 'RESTORE'

"Man's goings are of the Lord," (Prov. 20:24)  
How can a man, his own way, understand?  
The timing, the molding, the purpose,  
Is up to the Potter's hand. (Jer. 18:6)  
"Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it,"  
"Why hast Thou made me thus?" (Acts 9:20)  
Our times are in the Potter's hand. (Ps. 31:15)  
And He'll perform that good work in us. (Philip. 1:6)  
Weeping may endure for a night, (Ps. 30:5)  
But God will wipe away every tear, (Rev. 7:17 & 21:4)  
When it gets the very darkest,  
That's when the morning is near.  
His people have been robbed and spoiled,  
And none have said, "Restore," (Is. 42:22 & 23)  
May the Man of War rise up within us! (Ex. 15:3)  
"Let him that stole steal no more!" (Eph. 4:28)  
In our lives, churches, and families,  
We needn't look far to see a sign,  
In our finances, communities and world,  
The enemy has crossed the line! (Ps. 91:10)  
It's time to cast up the highway, (Is. 62:10)  
It's time to occupy! (Luke 19:13)  
And for the abominations in the land  
It's time to sigh and cry. (Ezek. 9:4)  
Having done all we'll stand, (Eph. 6:13)  
As the armour of the Lord we wear, (Eph. 6:13-17)  
No longer giving the enemy too much credit,  
Instead, the power and promises of God we declare! (Eph. 3:10)  
We've read of the wondrous works He has done, (Ps. 40:5 & 78:4)  
And He's still the same today! (Heb. 13:8 & Mal. 3:6)  
"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"  
(Ps. 116:12)  
Now let His people say!  
Though the waters may seem deep, (Is. 43:2)  
And we'd like to avoid the fire, (Dan. 3:17 & 18 & 1 Pet. 1:7)  
His thoughts are not our thoughts,  
And His ways are so much higher. (Is. 55:8 & 9)  
We'll not be alone in the waters, or drowned in the rivers,  
Nor burned in the fire we know! (Ps. 66:12)  
Not because of what we see or hear,  
But because our Father said so! (Rom. 3:4)  
So we will rejoice in the Lord, (Hab. 3:18)  
He will make our feet like hind's feet, (Hab. 3:15)  
The Lord God is the strength in which,  
Every challenge we will meet!

"But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses; they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?" (Isaiah 42:22-23 KJV)

by Catherine Sims

In this holiday season may each one of us rejoice in Him who is the reason for the season.

-Pastor Lynda L. Crane

## First Christian Church

### 'A Gift From A King'

In Matthew 2 we read of the coming of Magi (the wise men) from the east following a star. They arrived in Jerusalem to ask for directions to the one who has been born king of the Jews, for they wished to go and worship him. Of course Herod, King of the Jews hears of this request and promptly asks the Magi to locate this child for him that he to may go and worship the king. And so Herod tells the Magi to go and look in Bethlehem for the child born king of the Jews. We know the story!!! They go and find Jesus and bow and worship him and present to him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. After they did this the passage of Scripture says that they being warned in a dream did not go back and tell Herod about the child but went home by a different route. It also says that Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt in order to escape from Herod, King of the Jews.

The King Herod at that time gave a gift to the people of Bethlehem. Realizing he had been outwitted by the Magi he had every child two and under in Bethlehem killed as to protect his precious power. Jesus on the other hand being the true king, died for the sins of his people, who had rejected him and for the sins of the whole world. A gift from one king was death and sorrow and pain. The gift from the other was freedom from all of that.

This Christmas season let us remember Jesus the King and the gift he gave, the forgiveness of sins to all who believe. It was and is so much more than anything we can give.

-Rev. Andrew Johnson

**MILLER MANUFACTURING**  
Wishes Everyone A  
Merry Christmas And  
A Happy New Year  
This office will be closed on Dec. 25, 26 & 27, and  
Jan. 1, 2003