

Wishing you all the joys and blessings of this Christmas Season

The Grace of Receiving

Christmas is that season when giving extends to many charities, forgotten people and causes that we seldom think about during other times of the year. Such a spirit of Christmas goes beyond thinking about what will I get as a present from someone I know or with whom I do business. There is the economic part of the season that has a down side for some - the reason for the season is lost or at least diminished.

While giving is the usual focus, what about the way that we receive the gifts? Have you watched others open the gifts from you? Therein can be the gift that may be more of a blessing to you than the one who receives the gift. How do we receive a gift from someone else? The way we receive that gift says something about our relationship?

The source of the good will and the giving spirit at Christmas connects us with God who started this Christmas thing; receiving from God is the issue that I place before you now. "God is love" - just one of the insights about God. Receiving from God brings us into the adventure of life and love that will bless our families, communities and beyond, because it is contagious. So this Christmas as you receive, let's follow a style of receiving that honors the giver and the gift. Because of who God is, there can be a Christmas spirit that leads us into the new year with renewed hope and promise.

The first Christmas expressed the value of a humble town, the involvement of humble folks as God left fingerprints and footprints on the course of human history. How we receive the gifts from above and from any who give to us will extend the meaning of Christmas 2005 into the year 2006.

How about Christmas becoming a habit that we live out every day? It will enrich your relationships with God and everyone else.

-Reverend Don Swanson
All Saints, Hope and Valby Lutheran churches

Peace, what peace? Luke 2:8-14 NIV

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace to men on whom his favor rests".

Some years ago a major art gallery sponsored a competition for painters. They were offering prizes for the best painting on the subject of "peace." As attendees browsed through the entries in the art gallery, most had decided that one particular painting would most assuredly win the prize. It portrayed this lush green pasture under a vivid blue sky, with cows grazing lazily and a little boy walking through the grass with his fishing pole over his shoulder.

It really made you feel peaceful however; it came in second place. The painting that won was a real surprise. It portrayed a scene of the ocean during a violent storm. The sky was ominous, the lightning was cutting across the sky, and waves were crashing into the rock walls of a cliff by the shore.

At first glance you could not find peace in that picture, but if you looked closely, you would understand what was going on. There, about halfway up the cliff, was a bird's nest. It was tucked into a tiny hollow in the rock. A mother bird was sitting on that nest and tucked underneath her were her little babies sleeping soundly. That truly depicted "peace."

We humans have attempted to manufacture this peace on earth. Usually our efforts are focused on materialism in an attempt to find peace and joy. Sadly it just doesn't satisfy.

Many people have a theology that removes the Divine presence of God from their lives. They want to enthrone the human soul with peaceful ideologies. Ultimately, they find no peace, no joy, and no lasting happiness, only disappointment, emptiness and even fear.

Mankind has never known peace. Peace is not the absence of war, like darkness is the absence of light. Many nations have long sought peace with one another. Yet, peace eludes them. No peace treaty that man has ever devised has been kept. We try but still we fail to find peace. Why can't we find peace?

This is because man has never been at peace with God. And, if there is no peace with God, then there can never be peace in the soul and heart of mankind. We need to understand what is really being said in Luke 2:12. "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Immediately following these words, the herald angels appeared; and begin to sing praises to God. Therefore; our first clue is that God's Glory and man's peace rests in that manger. The angels are saying that peace can only be found through the birth of Christ.

There are several important things we need to realize about His peace. His peace is different than the world's peace. John 14:25-27 Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you; my Peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

His peace comes with the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is our source of real peace. This peace comes in the security of our relationship with Him. The world can't give this kind of peace. In John 16:33 Jesus says: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world."

Peace is the fruit of obedience to God. We are called to live by faith, and doing so brings us peace of mind, heart and soul.

- Reverend Duane Jones
Church of the Nazarene

The Light of the World

There is no doubt about it - God is a mystery. When God created the angels, even they were baffled by that mystery. God continues to be a mystery to this present day. Yet to fathom this mystery to some extent for us humans, God sent His Son into the world. However, our minds are still not able to comprehend a Divine Person having a human nature. Yet that is what we celebrate at Christmas. We still do not understand the mystery, but faith enters the picture, and we believe.

Fortunately, this is not a blind faith. It tells us that the Savior was born in Bethlehem and that He grew up in the Holy Land. It was there that He preached, and told parables to illustrate his teachings. More that He worked miracles, made prophecies to convince people that He was one with the Father. He told His apostles: "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe because of the works I do." (John 14, 21) At the Last Supper, He prayed: "...that they may be one as we are one..." (John 17, 22) So Jesus Christ has been the hope of the world for the past 2000 years. As the author of "One Solitary Life" wrote: "I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built ...have not affected the life of man upon earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life".

Christmas is, of course, a challenging time. Towns and homes are lit up in joy. They help us to remember that He said that He was the light of the world. Yet there is darkness in our world, which His light has not reached. There is war in our world, unhappiness in many homes, and evil addictions in the hearts of many. So Christmas is a challenge to all of us to bring the principles of Jesus to our world. It is a challenge for each one of us to bring the light of Christ to our world. We may not be a brilliant light, but every light, pierces the darkness. This is the hope of Christmas, and when we do let that light shine, there will be true joy and happiness in our own lives, and the lives of those around us. Let us dispel some of the mystery of God by bringing the light of Christ to those around us, and our Christmas will be a very blessed one.

-Father Gerry Condon
St. Patrick's and St. William's Catholic churches

Principal's Corner

By Daye Stone
Heppner Jr/Sr High School

It is snowing outside, Christmas break has started, and the end of the first semester at Heppner Jr/Sr High School is coming to a close in a few weeks. Looking back on the past four months here at HHS, it has gone well and fast for the kids and our staff. I for one have enjoyed the fall and am looking to the winter and beyond trying to put things in place that encourage more student participation and accountability. With this being said, it has been the vision of all staff at HHS to work with each student and see that they meet the gains that are prescribed by Oregon grade level standards, to create and diversify opportunities for them as well, and to communicate to our patrons the successes that we are enjoying as a school community. These three highlighted areas are the school board adopted goals, and I would like to give our community a highlight of what HHS is doing to meet all of them and this point in the school year.

Currently, our student council (Laurie Murray, Krystal Nairns, Heather Rill, Mahaley Huddleston, Regi Seitz, Lyndi Patton, and Chelsey Bettsering) has been working on painting quotes on teacher doors that were chosen by each teacher. They look great, and our student body's commitment to make this happen illustrates really what kind of student leaders we have in our school. I am very proud of their vision/effort and creating a place that we can call our own, through innovative, creative ways of personalizing our building. We have also commissioned two pieces of art work with James Montgomery at Natures Steel Sculptures in Gresham that will enhance our building as well. James specializes in stainless steel art and is working on a piece for our downstairs staircase that is nearly eight foot long and four and a half feet tall. This artwork will encompass several mustangs running through rolling hills and trees along with a water fall and mountains in the background. The artist uses different forms of patina to create the color and desired look. He has been featured in numerous publications and schools across the region. The

second piece will be for our gymnasium. Mr. Montgomery will make an eight-foot long 3-D version of our mascot for the wall that will use a blue and gold patina finish to hang in the center of our league mascots. As one can imagine, these projects are not easy or cheap. The student council is working hard in making this possible through fundraising and it is our hope they can attain all of the monies that it takes to finalize both pieces by the end of January. If anyone is interested in donating to this cause, please contact our school for more information.

The fall sports are finished and it was fun to see the level of success for all kids involved and was even more exciting to watch our football team compete on a statewide level making it to the semi-finals. With the level of success that we experienced as a school in the fall, we are all looking forward to the winter and what it brings us on the hardwood and our new program- wrestling. Yep that's right, we have wrestling here at HHS and it has been unbelievable to see the amount of support and excitement of adding this option for our kids. Currently, we have 14 high school students and about the same from the jr. high practicing every night with the high school kids traveling and competing and the jr. high students starting competition after the new year. We will have the first annual Heppner High wrestle-off in the HHS gym in January, so look forward to that opportunity to see our kids in action. There will also be a four-week little kid-wrestling program that starts on Jan 3 and will end with a tourney on January 28. The HS/JH program is school sponsored/non-funded for this year, therefore we are traveling and fundraising to make sure we can continue with this option for years to come. For more information on our program or any of the activities that we are putting together, please contact Ken Bailey at 676-5110. It has taken a serious amount of volunteer time, effort and resources from parents and coaches to pull this off. You are having a direct affect in creating diverse opportunities that our community's kids gain much benefit from. Ken Bailey, Ty Hurl, Brian Harman, and John Bowles coached this year, along with the financial support of our own HHS Booster Club. Your commitment has been unwavering.

We are fortunate to have three new exchange students from Costa Rica. This exchange program is a little different from what a traditional exchange program looks like. The students will be here through the month of January (instead of the whole year) and are not actually required to take classes for credit; rather they will take classes for experience. This experience is rewarding for both parties, and Petra Payne was instrumental in bringing them here to our school along with the host families that had to go through the competitive process to bring them to Heppner.

We are still offering an after school study hall for all struggling students that are not making grades. It is my hope that our numbers will remain high with this and we are making strides in meeting each student's individual needs. Along with offering an after school study hall, we are adding the Zeros Aren't Permitted program to HHS for both jr. high and high school kids at semester time. ZAP is a non-punitive program which serves as an incentive to motivate students to turn in their work and earn passing grades, and we will provide the support to do that through extra time and tutoring. In essence, this is how it will work, each Thursday, teachers will submit their weekly F lists to the office. Students with one or more F's at that time will be "Zapped," They will be notified on the following Monday during activity period by their advisor that they are to report to our ZAP homework support program during lunch every day that week. Students who have brought up their grade (s) to passing by the end of the week will not be "Zapped" the following week. For students that continually are being Zapped week after week and have more than one F, a four hour Friday Zap will be an option for that student to get caught up. Parents will be getting a mailer on how we are going to administer and put this in place by semester time. My staff and I are excited about getting some extra time for our struggling students and we are targeting all of those kids that we desperately want to see succeed.

So there it is, it is wintertime and we at HHS are right in the thick of things with creating new opportunities for our students, communicating what it is that we are doing along with holding kids accountable to their achievement and success. We truly have a high functioning school, and I cannot express enough gratitude to our whole school community as to what it has meant to me personally to be the leader of something so enriching and rewarding. I hope all of you have a Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year.

St. Patrick's senior center

The Heppner Christian Church volunteers are hosts for the Dec. 28 noon meal. The menu is as follows: oven baked chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, mixed vegetables, sliced pears, fresh baked bread with butter, and pudding.

The revised mission statement passed by the board at the Oct. regular meeting states, "The purpose of the Senior Center Board of Directors is to provide support and assistance on behalf of seniors and handicapped citizens." At the Dec. 14 meeting members began implementing ideas put forth at the goal setting special session Oct. 7, and in relationship to the revised mission statement, the senior center board voted to consider membership in the local Chamber of Commerce. Members of the board will alternate in attendance. A consensus opinion was that an active Chamber membership would be an avenue of increasing awareness of the center's presence on Heppner's Main street, and its addition to the town's resources.

Plans are under way for the annual meeting and election of officers. Members of the board and residents of the senior center wish everyone a Merry Christmas.

Marriage Licenses

The Morrow County Clerk's office has issued the following marriage licenses:

December 12: Roberto G. Cuevas, 38, Boardman, and Maria Jesus Prado, 19, Boardman.

December 13: Derek James Dickens, 18, Hermiston, and Jacqueline Dee Hendricks, 17, Hermiston.