

# Christmas messages from area pastors

**It's not just a holiday or memorial, it's a birthday celebration**

"Keep Christ in Christmas" is a message that our modern world needs to hear. Over and over again we are hearing the bland greeting "Happy Holidays." Some national stores are having "holiday sales," "holiday bargains" and are refusing to use the word "Christmas" even in their advertising. However, this is not just a holiday, it is not just a memorial, it is a birthday celebration, the birthday of Jesus Christ. For those of us who are Christian, Jesus is the Son of God. Consequently, His birthday has a profound significance.

It is up to us to proclaim this message to our culture. Jesus Christ must be the center of our teaching, of our worship, of our service, of our lives. He is the center of the Gospels. Those Gospels refer to His identity as God's Son who became man, and to His teaching, and His saving work. There He teaches us what it means to be an adopted son or daughter of the Heavenly Father.

Personal holiness does not come from simply wishing each other "Happy Christmas." It comes from allowing the Savior into our lives. As we celebrate the birthday of the Savior, it is good for us to remember that His birth was an historical event. It was an event that changed the history of mankind forever. For some two thousand years people have been inspired by the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. There have been those who have sacrificed their very lives for the truths that He taught. There have been those who achieved great holiness by living by his principles. There have been those who have found comfort from His words in their times of tribulation and distress.

His great teaching can be summed up in a few words: love God, love neighbor. It is up to each one of us to make a compelling response by the witness of our lives. As we live his vision of justice and peace, we will be offering hope to our world, and keeping Christ in Christmas. Perhaps we can go further than that, and share Him with someone else. And that could be the greatest gift they will ever receive.

Fr. Gerry Condon

St. Patrick's Catholic Church

**May we reach out to our neighbors this season and all of the year**

As we once again participate in the Christmas season I hope that we may remember Him who came as a babe to bless the world with Hope, Love and Peace. May each of us reach out to our neighbors, friends and even those who may not be counted such, is my hope for this season and all of the year.

The Savior himself showed us the way. He taught through His example and ultimately by the great sacrifice of His perfect life that Love conquers all. He invited all to "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly at heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

We live in a wonderful community where neighbors truly look out for one another and people have not forgotten others in the rush of day to day living. I am so grateful for the wonderful feeling of unity and concern expressed by those with whom I have the blessing of working and living.

There is no better time than now to mend a fence, salve a wound, comfort the cheerless or lift those with broken hearts by our acts of kindness and love. I know with that love of the Lord, Jesus Christ in our hearts we can come to know Him. By following in His footsteps we can raise ourselves and those around us to a better more peaceful existence.

He lives! He loves us! We can share His love and feel His love each day as we follow Him in word and deed. Let us come unto Christ this season and always I pray.

Dieter E. Waite

President, Willow Creek Branch

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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## Love came down at Christmas

"Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine;

love was born at Christmas: star and angels gave the sign.

Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine,

love to God and neighbor, love for plea and gift and sign."

Christina Rosetti

The message of Christmas is that of an ever-present and gentle love made flesh in Jesus Christ. This love is not in the form of a mushy Hallmark card or a warm fuzzy. This Love is a person, who walked among us... Emmanuel, which means "God present with us."

If you have attended a wedding recently, you have seen two people who are not ashamed to say they love each other. Their "token" of love is a ring that symbolizes commitment, faithfulness, and the promise to grow more deeply in love as the years progress.

Our "token" from this amazing birth of God into our world is Love. It is the sign that God is still with us. And because Jesus remains within us, Love allows us to extend His gift to those that may be the most difficult... neighbors, coworkers, even challenging family members. At this time of year we often need an extra amount of Love, and that may be our "plea"... that God would help us to love as Jesus did. Finding out that God does supply that need in Christ Jesus is the "gift" that can never be wrapped up neatly and placed under a tree, for it is alive.

The "sign" of God's gift to us that first Christmas morning was the baby Jesus in the manger. Perhaps the sign to us of God's gift this Christmas is not just the empty tomb and the risen Lord, but the profound sense of gratitude we experience when we ask and then allow God to transform our relationships by teaching us how to love more deeply.

When you wonder as you wander this Christmas out under the skies of Morrow County, may you be filled with the Love of Jesus, the "token" that is to be shared. May you find the gift of extending Love to those who need it most. May gratitude and joy be the sign of that experience. May your life in Love be as apparent as the couple getting married. May you glow with the plea, the gift and the sign of Jesus Christ, ever present to you and to me. Wishing God's Love (Jesus) to each of you.

Rev. Janis Johnson

All Saints' Episcopal and Hope Lutheran Churches

## A special invitation to a birthday celebration

You are cordially invited to a birthday celebration.

Guest of Honor: Jesus Christ

Date: Every day. Traditionally, December 25 but He's always around, so the date is flexible....

Time: Whenever you're ready. (Please don't be late, though, or you'll miss out on all the fun.)

Place: In your heart. He'll meet you there. (You'll hear Him knock.)

Attire: Come as you are, grubbies are okay. He'll be washing our clothes anyway. He said something about new white robes and crowns for everyone who stays till the last.

Tickets: Admission is free. He's already paid for everyone. (He says you wouldn't have been able to afford it anyway, it cost Him everything He had. But you do need to accept the ticket.

Refreshments: New wine, bread, and a far-out drink He calls "Living Water," followed by a supper that promises to be out of this world.

Gift Suggestions: Your life. He's one of those people who already has everything else. (He's very generous in return though. Just wait until you see what He has for you.)

Entertainment: Joy, Peace, Truth, Light, Life, Love, Real Happiness, Communion with God, Forgiveness, Miracles, Healing, Power, Eternity in Paradise, Contentment, and much more. (All "G" rated, so bring your family and friends.)

R.S.V.P. Very Important! He must know ahead so He can reserve a spot for you at the table. Also, He's keeping a list of His friends for future reference. He calls it the "Lamb's Book of Life."

Party being given by His kids (that's us). Hope to see you there! For those of you whom I will see at the party, share this with someone today.

-Lexington Baptist Church

## We're still singing because we're singing for a King

Christmas is a story told in song. There's no other holiday quite like it for bringing music into our lives. Carolers, concerts, TV specials, radio stations dedicated entirely to seasonal music, the shopping malls of course, but even at the grocery store our ears have been filled with a month of music inspired by the story and traditions of Christmas. Perhaps this is as it should be, for an event of earth-shattering importance first announced through praising angels: "To you is born this day in the City of David a Savior. . .Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:11, 14). Angels and shepherds began the Christmas singing and we're singing still, because we're singing for a king. Perhaps this king is a little hard to recognize in a baby born into humble circumstances in a relatively insignificant Middle Eastern village. But this particular infant king has turned the world upside down, doing just the opposite of what we might expect—lifting up the lowly, scattering the proud, filling the hungry with good things, and, of all things, dying on a cross to repair our broken relationship with God. It's that death and resurrection from death that ultimately put the song into Christmas, because without that death and resurrection, this obscure Bethlehem birth would mean nothing. And precisely because of that resurrection, there will be no end to our song.

In a little known Christmas hymn written by a pair of contemporary Lutherans (Jaroslav Vajda, theologian, and Paul Manz, organist), the message is beautifully retold: Peace came to earth at last that chosen night when angels clove the sky with song and light and God embodied love and sheathed his might - Who could but gasp: Immanuel! Who could but sing: Immanuel!

And who could be the same for having held the infant in their arms, and later felt the wounded hands and side, all doubts dispelled - Who could but sigh: Immanuel! Who could but shout: Immanuel!

You show the Father none has ever seen, in flesh and blood you bore our griefs and pains, in bread and wine you visit us again - Who could but see Immanuel! Who could but thrill: Immanuel!

How else could I have known you, O my God! How else could I have loved you, O my God! How else could I embrace you, O my God! Who could but pray: Immanuel! Who could but praise Immanuel! (Text c 1984 Jaroslav J. Vajda)

Sing on!

Katy Anderson

Intern Pastor, Valby Lutheran Church

## Area Christmas Services

### St. Patrick's and St. William's Schedule

Monday, December 24: Christmas vigil at 8:30 p.m. and Christmas Carols at 9 p.m. A candlelight procession for the blessing of the Nativity Scene vigil mass will be held.

Tuesday, December 25: Christmas mass will be held at 11 a.m. (Heppner).

Tuesday, December 25: Blessing of the Nativity Scene at 8:45 a.m. along with Christmas carols and Christmas mass (Ione).

Monday, December 31: Vigil mass will be held at 5 p.m. in Heppner.

Tuesday, January 1: Mass in Ione at 8:45 a.m.

Tuesday, January 1: Mass in Heppner at 11 a.m.

### Valby to hold candlelight service

Valby Lutheran Church will celebrate Christmas with a candlelight service on Monday, December 24, at 6 p.m. Sunday worship continues weekly at 9 a.m. All are welcome.

### Lexington Baptist Church to hold

### Christmas Eve Services

Lexington Baptist Church would like to invite the community to a Christmas Eve Service at 6 p.m. on Monday, December 24. A time of Fellowship including hot chocolate, coffee, and cookies will be held immediately following the service.

**HEPPNER ELKS 358**  
676-9181 "Where Friends Meet" 142 North Main

**- Saturday, Dec. 29th -**

**Tom & Jerry Party  
starting at 6 p.m.**

**- MONDAY, DECEMBER 31st -**

**New Year's Eve  
Crab Feed  
& Ham Dinner  
starting at 6 p.m.**

