



# ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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## From the Pastor's Desk

*"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. ... From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." John 1:14, 16*



When Christmas has come and gone, we look back and remember with joy the new Christmas memories that were made. The look of surprise and joy of children tearing the gift wrapping paper and seeing a special gift they wanted. The smiles breaking across the faces of moms and dads and wives and husbands as they open a special gift. Gatherings around dining room tables, where most of the family was able to share a meal and laughter together. Memories of Christmas concerts and Sunday School Christmas programs. Families attending a candlelight service, with the candles creating a glow upon their faces as they sang, "Silent Night! Holy Night!" All these wonderful events happened and more. But then after all the Christmas celebrations are over, we are still in a joyful mood, looking forward to another family gathering or gathering with friends and so we look to New Year's Eve.

Each family, I am sure has their own traditions for New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Sometimes family and friends will get together on New Year's Eve and have a meal,



play games until they can do the count down of the old year and greeting the New Year, "three, two, one, HAPPY NEW YEAR!" There are cheers and greetings all around, husbands and wives exchange a celebration kiss and hug. Other families may just enjoy

the evening



and go to bed after the news and greet each other with a Happy New Year in the morning. On New Year's Day, there is the Rose Bowl Parade to watch with all the magnificent floats. Then there is an afternoon of college football. Yeah!



But soon January second comes and then the third and we find ourselves back into our normal routines. When we first get back to work, we share the memories of Christmas and the New Year celebrations. It feels good to have a New Year, a new start. There is a little frustration of remembering to write 2022 instead of 2021 for a while. After a week or so we get the hang of it.

Then the newness of the year seems to wear off. Things seem not so new, except the calendars. College Students have returned to classes with homework and projects. Elementary through High School students are back at school. Basketball games and wrestling meets continue once again. The weather is colder. There is stress back at work trying to meet the deadlines of getting projects done. Stress is back in relationships. As we listen to the news there will be more storms, more sad stories of accidents or some violence committed against someone. We begin to wonder, where is the newness? The fresh start of the New Year was short lived. The love of the Christmas season of reaching out to families to have a nice Christmas with Toys for Tots, new winter coats, mittens and boots, inviting people to have a nice Christmas

meal and a warm place to stay is slowly dissipating in the New Year it seems.

The Christmas love of the first Christmas however, does not dissipate. As John tells us his Christmas story, "The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as a father's only son, full of grace and truth." From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." The Word has still become flesh and lived among us. Jesus, the Son of God, also became son of Mary, a vulnerable little baby, with Joseph and Mary to take care of the Son of God. Jesus lived among us. Jesus had brothers and sisters to take care of, to play with, to laugh with and to love. Jesus had chores. Jesus went to school. Jesus helped Joseph in the workshop being a carpenter. Jesus had friends. Jesus lost friends. Jesus wept when loved ones died. Jesus lived among us.

As Jesus lived among us, Jesus also revealed his Father's love. Jesus opened the scriptures to the promises of mercy and grace. Jesus revealed the power of God's love as Jesus healed people, cast out demons, lifted up people as persons of worth when others had discarded them. Then Jesus showered upon us grace upon grace as he took on the powers of sin and death and Satan as he endured the cross, the grave and arose victoriously defeating sin, death and Satan.



Though Christmas has passed, and the New Year will come in and the newness eventually wears off, the Word of God still became flesh and lived among us. We are still receiving grace upon grace. Our Lord Jesus still walks with us. When we walk away from the light of his love and sin, Jesus seeks you out. Jesus draws you into his arms as you ask for forgiveness and Jesus declares, "I have already bore that sin, and I forgive you." When we are feeling the burdens of the brokenness of the world, broken relationships, Jesus invites you to let him carry the burdens and you rest in his love. When the world puts you down, Jesus lifts you up as a person of great worth, a person the angels of heaven know as a beloved child



of God. When your heart is heavy with burdens, Jesus is there to listen to the prayers of your heart. When life is good, Jesus is present to bless and multiply your joy. Jesus makes you and life new, every day. Every day, not just New Year's Day, Jesus gives you a fresh start, making you new. Every day, Jesus pours out upon you grace upon grace, as he claims you with his love and blesses you with his Father's love. So celebrate the joy of Christmas and bring in the New Year. Remember it is the one who came at Christmas who truly makes you and the whole world new. Happy New Year!

*Pastor Randy*



# WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



The “Christ”mas story is important to us. Special. Surprising. Meaningful. Why is this Bethlehem story so important? I would like to share a piece from my Advent devotional readings this year. “*Because of Bethlehem: Love is Born. Hope is Here*” Max Lucado

*People have always wondered about the image of God. Societies have speculated. Tribes have pondered. And we’ve reached a variety of conclusions. God has been depicted as a golden calf and a violent wind and an angry volcano. He wars wings, breathes fire, eats infants, and demands penance. We’ve fancied God as ferocious, magical, fickle, and maniacal. A god to be avoided, dreaded, and appeased. But never in mankind’s wildest imaginings did we consider that God would enter the world as an infant.*



**“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”** *The Word became not a whirlwind or a devouring fire but a single cell, a fertilized egg, an embryo – a baby. Placenta nourished him. An amniotic sac surrounded him. He grew to the size of a fist. His tiny heart divided into chambers. God became flesh.*

**Jesus entered our world not like a human but as a human.** *He endured puberty, pimples, hot weather, and cranky neighbors. God became human down to his very toes. He had suspended the stars and ladled out the seas, yet he suckled a breast and slept in hay...*

*Why did take all this so far? He wants you to know that he gets you. He understands how you feel and has faced what you face. Jesus is not “out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experienced it all – all but the sin. (And even that he carried to the cross.) So let’s walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.”*

*Since you know he understands, you can boldly go to him. Because of Bethlehem’s miracle, you can answer these fundamental questions: Does God care if I’m sad? Look at the rear-streaked face of Jesus as he stands ner Lazarus’s tomb. Does God notice when I’m afraid? Not the resolve in the eyes of Jesus as he marches through he storm to rescue his friends. Does God know if I am ignored or rejected? Find the answer in the companionate eyes of Christ as he stands to defend the adulterous woman.*

*Jesus radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God (Heb. 1:3) Jesus himself stated “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”*

*Anyone who has seen me weep has seen the Father weep. Anyone who has seen me laugh has seen the Father laugh. Anyone who has seen me determined has seen the Gather determined. Would you like to see God? Take a look at Jesus.*

**Everything changes when we see the face of God.**

*...He came with tears. He knows the burden of a broken heart. He knows the sorrow this life*



*can bring. He could have come as a shining light or a voice in the clouds, but he came as a person. Does God understand you. Find the answer in Bethlehem.*

*Gaze where May gazed. Look into God’s face and be assured. If the King was willing to enter the world of animals and shepherds and swaddling clothes, don’t you think he’s willing to enter yours?*

**He took on your face in the hope that you would see his.**

Wanderings and Wonderings,  
Pastor Bill Peters

