

Community Church of Christ

Sloan, IA



Christmas will be different this year, this will be the saddest Christmas ever, will there even be a Christmas this year? I have heard these questions posed by many during the past several weeks. As I worked in the building this week preparing it with Christmas boards, décor, and the special nativity figures, I couldn't help but reflect on those questions and in some cases decisions. Yes, it will be different—no children's program, no kids' club parties, no parade like the ones before. The saddest and no Christmas? ONLY, if you choose to make it that way!! THIS year, you will have time to really enjoy Christmas and it's meaning...the birth of our Lord, the joy it brings to our hearts, the hope that sustains us, the peace within each of us, and the love it warms our very being with. How can that possibly be sad? I think of Ruby and how she would say she loved the quiet time, to light her candles, listen to the carols, and enjoy the lights...a time to thank God for His Son. My thoughts also include so many memories of Christmas past—family gatherings with Grandma's boxes of chocolate covered cherries, my Grandpa B and the walks to the Christmas Eve service listening for the crunching snow under our feet, the Christmas program and singing Joy to the World as we entered with all the children, the lights Daddy set up in the yard and the nativity set with one of our baby dolls being Jesus, caroling on Don's hay racks and the cold biting our cheeks as we huddled close together in warm blankets—Yes, it will be different but yet perhaps even more precious because we will have TIME to listen to the Christmas story—no not the up on the house top one—but the One contained in the book of Luke! Share it with your family, your close friend, your children, and grandchildren!

A few years back, I remember the snow storm that hit our communities. Jill, Linda, the kids and

I left a day early to get to Tenn. on the advise of our husbands of the approaching storm and telling us they would join us after the Christmas Eve service. We arrived in Tenn. safely but quickly learned they might not make it! We received phone calls of the news of the storm, and then how the Christmas Eve service was being canceled and the guys were told get to Omaha and catch your plane! Emery still talks of the ride with Kody! They arrived just in time for the last plane to fly out of Omaha! We began receiving pictures of the rising snow totals, the interstate being shut down, and business's closing. Margi Davis later told us it was the best Christmas ever because they were all together and no one could go anywhere!

Yes, we WILL have Christmas! It WILL be different, it WILL be joy filled, and perhaps one of the most meaningful! Memories of loved ones who have gone on before us, childhood memories of excitement, memories of family gatherings, memories shared, and the Christmas story—our greatest gift, Jesus, God's Son!

Merry Christmas everyone! Our love, Emery and Sharon, Kody and Jill!



We would like to thank each one for the cards and calls we received at the passing of our Dad, uncle, and brother, Bud Ping. The family of Bud Ping



A big thank you to all of our church family for the prayer shawl and all of the prayers shown to Jim and I thru this terrible ordeal. The Kirkendall Family

December brain teaser: Can you decipher the phrase reflected in this lettering layout? yyuryyubicuryy4me
**November's answer: Thursday



If you think your life is an utter disaster, that God could never use a life as messed up as yours, think again. Let me point you to some familiar Bible stories. Joseph's brothers hate him so much that they sell him as a slave and make their father believe he has been devoured by animals, but "but God meant it for good" to save thousands from starvation.¹ Sampson lusts after a Philistine girl -- not the nice Jewish girl his parents wanted for him. But the Bible says, "his father and mother did not know that this was from the Lord."² King Solomon's son makes a disastrous decision that loses him half the kingdom. What a mess! But God says, "This thing is from me."³ Jacob is a liar and a cheat and has to flee for his life. He sleeps out in the open with only a rock for a pillow. But when he wakes with a vision of angels, he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."⁴ Your life may appear well-ordered on the surface, but underneath there may be disarray. Brokenness, pain, shame. Things you seem utterly incapable of fixing. The good news, my friend, is that God is bigger than your messy life. He is not impotent. He is not confined by your boundaries. He is God! And he is unafraid of working in messy situations. In fact, he gets a kick out of surprising us with his amazing grace. What are your points of pain? What is the mess that *you* are struggling with? Maybe, just maybe, God is able to take *your* mess, and out of it bring blessing. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

How bad can it get? A girl

A girl gets pregnant. Her parents are utterly shamed. Her fiancé -- not the father -- is ready to dump her. And then he is told, "Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."⁵ How bad can it get? The girl is in labor, far from home with only a cave-barn where she can lie down and have her baby. The only place to put her newborn is a manger. A cattle trough. We imagine it with fresh, fragrant straw plucked from a bale of hay. But I doubt that the cave was stocked with neat bales stacked against the wall. The straw that night was neither fresh nor fragrant. Life was a mess -- but God was in it. God sees Mary with her tiny infant and sends a host of angels to announce the birth. "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."⁶ The messy manger is itself a sign from God. Is your life a mess? Then let this be a sign to *you*. *Your* very good news is that the God of the messy manger, the resurrected Christ of the cruel cross, and the Holy Spirit, in whom you live and move and have your being, are able to break through in *your* life, begin to clean up *your* mess, bless you too. And that -- like the messy manger -- will be a wonder all its own.

1. Genesis 50:20
2. Judges 14:4
3. I Kings 12:24
4. Genesis 28:16
5. Matthew 1:20
6. Luke 2:10-12



A thousand times in history a baby has become a king, but only once in history did a King become a baby!

Unto Us
a Child is Born



December 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6 	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 	21	22	23	24 	25 	26
27	28	29	30	31		

December birthdays:

Dec. 2 Markie Burton, Dec. 3 Bertha Nelson, Dec. 5 Olivia Benjamin, Logan Stoullil,
Dec. 6 Hazel Lee, Karalee Sprinkle, Dec. 10 Jill Killian, Delyn Dallen, Dec. 12 Phil Jenkins, Andrew
Parker, Dec. 13 Sandy Silbernagel, Dec. 21 Faith Lux, Betty Andrews

notes

ADVENT:

