

Immanuel—God with Us

By Jean LaRosa

Do you ever get the blues after Christmas is over? I usually do. I love the season of Advent and everything that leads up to Christmas—the music, the decorations, the lights. It's a bright spot in an otherwise dreary time of the year. But once it's over, the decorations all go back in the box, the tree gets taken out to the curb, and we still have another two months of long, cold nights to deal with before we begin to see signs of spring. I tell people that the Christmas lights on my house are actually winter lights. I leave them up until Daylight Savings Time returns. Call me eccentric, but I need all the light I can get.

One of the things I miss after Christmas is over, is that the focus on Jesus that we have during Advent seems to dissipate. Advent is all about Jesus—his supernatural birth, his incarnation in the form of a baby boy, his promise to come again. *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). Immanuel. God with us. He seems closer to me somehow during Advent. But in January, it's kind of like everyone changes the channel and we go back to our regularly scheduled programming.

I've often wondered what it would be like to go to a cozy coffeeshop and sit down for a cup of coffee with Jesus, like I would with a good friend. I might get a skim milk latte. Maybe He would order decaf, or herbal tea. We'd go over to a pair of comfortable armchairs in the corner, and I'd get to tell him about everything that's going on in my life and ask for his insight. I'd ask him to pray with me. I would feel loved and understood by him.

I think the Samaritan woman that Jesus spoke to in John 4 must have felt loved and understood by him. He saw her, really saw her.



He knew all about her situation, the five husbands and the man who wasn't her husband, how she lived on the margin of society in that town. And He offered her the one thing she really needed. Living water, eternal life. She was so excited that she went back to town and told everyone about the man she had just met, who claimed to be the Messiah. The other Samaritans came to check Him out and were drawn to Him, too. He stayed in that town for two days to minister to them, and many of them believed in Him. *"We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world"* (John 4:42b). Jesus made time to be with them.

Some of us have had a tough year. Maybe we lost a job, or a house, or someone we cared

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about, or got some really bad news. We can't have coffee with Jesus, but we can still remember that He is with us. He is present in our difficulties. He sees our situation; He knows our deepest need. Sarah's servant Hagar called God, *"the One who sees me."* *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* (John 1:4-5) Like my winter lights that shine until the days get longer again, Jesus is our light in the long nights. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1). God is not absent or too busy to listen to us. He is with us. God with us. Immanuel.

Perisseia

Our women's growth group will begin an eight-week Winter Series on Thursday, January 27, at 7:00 pm via Zoom. We will spend our time discussing the concept of free will. All women are welcome. If you have not participated in Perisseia/Zoom, please email Cindy at cynthialbills@gmail.com to be included on the Zoom invitation.



Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

Nathaniel Ventura	January 1
Elena Yamamoto	January 8
Merkle Cherry	January 11
Kristin Westbrook	January 25
Timothy MacQueen	January 26
Tobias Boote	January 27

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



2022 Congregational Meetings

Budget Information Meeting

Please attend in person, or virtually, the Budget Information Meeting on Sunday, January 16, at 11:00 am, to hear about the Chapel's finances and the proposed budget for 2022. This will be the time to ask questions in preparation for the vote on the budget at the Annual Meeting. There will be a private live stream set up for this meeting with a chat feature that will enable people at home to submit questions to the moderator.

Annual Meeting

Join us on January 30, at 11:00 am, to hear and celebrate in retrospect the events and activities of 2021, and to vote on the 2022 budget and leaders. Since a quorum of 50% of members is required, please plan to attend or submit a proxy ballot by mail or drop it off in the special ballot box on the front porch of the chapel house. There will also be a private live stream of this meeting, and the method for virtual voting and links for the live stream will be emailed.

Financial Update

(Through November 30, 2021)

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$210,643	\$201,663
Other income (PPP loan)	\$29,458	
Total Income	\$240,101	
Expense	\$217,671	\$201,677

Windsor Chapel has sent \$26,524 to our missionary partners this year. That is 13% of your giving!

Elders' Corner

By Ken Bills

One of my favorite parts of preparing for Christmas is hanging our ornaments on the Christmas tree. Many are like old friends, and each year it is good to see them again. I have to admit, though, that they seem to vary a great deal in their religious significance.

Some are easy to understand. There are many stars of various shapes, sizes and materials—including a lighted star at the top of the tree in remembrance of the miraculous star that announced the birth of the King and that called the wise men to come and worship. And of course, there are angel ornaments, as angels appear so prominently in the history of Christ's birth, from the angel Gabriel who announced to Mary the extraordinary role that God was asking her to play in the redemption of the world, to the angel choir that announced the Savior's birth by singing "Glory to God in the highest" to poor Palestinian shepherds.

Of course, the ornaments include tiny manger scenes. My favorite is a small wooden ornament of the manger with a big palm tree in front, that almost seems like a silent protest against the white Christmas theme represented by many white and crystal snowflake and icicle ornaments that surround it on the tree.

There are Cross ornaments that foreshadow the Holy Infant's mission. We also have Christmas tree ornaments that remind us, I suppose, of Christmas. And many ball-shaped ornaments that, lacking a beginning or an end, symbolize eternal life, but which mostly, I suspect, are there to look pretty and glisten.

There are many bird ornaments: Doves, of course, symbolizing the Holy Spirit who played a central role in the Incarnation. "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of Most High will overshadow you,*" Gabriel told Mary. (Luke 1:35) But there is also a red canary, and a growing flock of glass and polished steel hummingbirds (because who doesn't love hummingbirds?) and multicolor glass butterflies (for the same reason). Big Bird

also makes an appearance, though Cookie Monster has moved on to our daughter's home.

Even with the departure of Cookie Monster, animals are well represented at our Christmas tree, starting with the small spider or two that hitched a ride when we brought the tree in, and our cats that, thankfully, have been content to crouch beneath its branches and chew bows off the presents rather than climb, or leap, to the treetop. Our ornaments include a glass cat or two, some very cute bunnies and various little mice, some with red and white scarves to keep out the cold. A beautiful crystal unicorn stands regally inside a clear glass ball.

Our family is not left out of the celebration. Although the special ornaments highlighting our children ("Baby's First Christmas," etc.) have been parceled out to the featured kids, there is a brass raggedy Ann and Andy engraved with the names Ken and Cindy, as well as ornaments holding pictures of two beloved, though long gone, standard poodles. And we have one ornament with a picture of our kids in a gingerbread house, with Pluto sitting outside in a red hat.

In short, our ornaments are an eclectic mix of the seemingly religious and seemingly secular. But I think that is oddly appropriate. To begin with, it's no surprise that our Christmas traditions are populated with animals that never show up in the scriptural account of the birth of Jesus ("The cattle are lowing...?"). The Creator of all creatures has come to earth. All of creation, as Paul says in Romans, longs for redemption that can be found only in Him. That some of these creatures now adorn our tree is only right.

Moreover, in the context of the Incarnation, the distinction between the spiritual and the secular largely disappears. God taking on human flesh explodes any attempt to separate the spiritual from the physical, because God Himself has taken a physical body. Our very bodies are not our own, but belong to the One who has come to save us. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) And there is no area of our lives that does not belong to Him. If the tree ornaments we hang in celebration of His birth

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reflect our lives, our family, and our loves, that, in turn, reflects an important truth. The King born in Bethlehem wants and deserves nothing less than all we have and all we are. No part of our lives is outside His Lordship; there is no corner of this world that He does not claim. Particularly as we approach a new year, this is worth remembering. In all we do, in all we say, in our jobs, in our families, in all our plans and dreams and hopes, we are His and made to give Him glory and praise. “O come let us adore Him!”

Further Up and Further In
*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*

By Cindy Bills

A Lesson from a Shade Tree

“Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”

Warren Buffett

This quote by one of the most successful businessmen on the planet is a surprisingly good place from which to launch the New Year. We are inundated with ways to fulfill our New Year’s resolutions in the quickest and most comfortable manner, from click bait offering magical supplements to lose weight, increase energy, and/or to regain our youthful appearance to computer programs to increase our productivity to products that enable us to live our best lives. But a focus on these types of resolutions is not only likely to produce failure; it is also a short-sighted approach if we desire a deeply meaningful and eternally significant life. I would like to take a brief look at a few Bible passages that can help us to gain a more kingdom-oriented perspective.

Genesis 1:26-28—*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of*

the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

In the beginning, our Creator made us with two purposes in mind: to be fruitful, and to steward His creation. These purposes reflect our Creator Himself as the dynamic energy that drives relationship and thoughtful care. And then beyond that, bearing fruit and exercising stewardship over creation reminds us that our Creator is also the Lord of time, patiently exercising His sovereignty over the course of millennia until His purposes are fulfilled.

Genesis 3:15-16—*And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

Not long after the creation account, we read in Genesis of Adam and Eve looking to take a short cut in fulfilling God’s plans, to do life their way rather than His. In pronouncing judgement upon them after the fall, the LORD also includes what is now widely regarded as the first hint of a coming Messiah: Eve’s seed—the fruit of her body and of her relationship with her husband—will bruise (or crush) Satan’s head. While we are in the blessed position of knowing that the Messiah has indeed come for the descendants of Adam and Eve, it has taken century upon century to get here.

Genesis 12:1-3—*Now the LORD said to Abram,
“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;
And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will
be blessed.”*

The fulfillment of the LORD’s promise of redemption begins in earnest when the LORD calls
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Abram out of the land of Ur of the Chaldeans, to go to the land He would show him, the Promised Land, and to become the father of God’s people and a blessing to all nations. Abram enters into a covenant relationship of faith with the LORD and becomes Abraham. And yet again, after decades of waiting, the LORD enables Abraham’s aged wife to bear a child, and the fruit of her womb becomes known as Isaac. Through Isaac the covenant with the LORD continues: Isaac marries Rachel and she bears Jacob, who, with wives Rachel and Leah, becomes the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Malachi 3:5—*Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.*

The nation of Israel—God’s covenant people—finds itself enslaved in Egypt for over 400 years, and even after deliverance, God’s people wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Once the Israelites do enter and mostly conquer the Promised Land, waiting for the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plans continues. The age of the prophets dawns, and Daniel, Isaiah, and Micah, to name a few, reprove their fellow Israelites for their short-sighted oppression of the weak and proclaim the promise of the Messiah to come...sometime.

The advent of the Messiah does indeed come, some 750 years after Isaiah’s time. And as God Incarnate walked the earth, we saw His character on full display as He ministered to the poor, the weak, and the underprivileged before providing Himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God, covering the sins of the world. Christ’s public ministry was a three-year project before He turned over His work to the church. Our recent celebration of Christmas reminds us of this most pivotal time in human history even as we are also reminded that Christ will come a second time, at the end of the age, to herald a time of judgment and the full establishment of His reign.

This brief summary of eons of human history highlights an important God-truth: God’s

redemptive work is not a quick fix; it is by no stretch of the imagination instant gratification. Rather, it is a faith investment: we put our hearts and minds in the Lord’s hands, confident in what we cannot yet see: determined to become who He has created us to be and to fulfill His glorious and eternal purposes in us and through us.

We are called to be about the business of bearing fruit for God’s kingdom. *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.* ⁵ *“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.* (John 15:4-5). And our Lord is very clear that our fruit-bearing can only happen as we remain in an abiding relationship with Him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness, self-control....* (Galatians 5:22-23a)

I would like to suggest that if we are to pursue the abundant life of Christ in 2022, we must avoid the distractions of quick-fix, self-focused growth and instead embrace the Lord’s fruit-bearing work of faith in us. May we use our days to promote and prosper His work in us, patiently bearing fruit and experiencing great joy as we do so for His eternal glory.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or cynthialbills@gmail.com to continue the dialogue...

Let’s Keep in Touch!

If you have changed your email address or are not receiving the weekly Windsor Chapel emails containing the links for the live streaming of our worship service, please send your new email address to Dorothy at chapel@windsorchapel.org, and we’ll update our database. This will also enable you to participate in the live streaming of the Annual Meeting and receive regular email updates from Windsor Chapel regarding winter weather closings and other important chapel news. Please also let us know if you have changed your home address or phone numbers.

New Beginnings

By Janet Berrill

January is a time to think about new beginnings. It's natural at this time of year as one year comes to an end and another starts anew. But I'd like to turn the tables and look at a past new beginning, instead of a future one.

Let me begin by telling you of an encounter I had recently. I met a man named Mike who collects used furniture and resells it. He had a bumper sticker on his truck that read, "Real men love Jesus." I asked Mike if he was a Christian, and he enthusiastically said he was. As we got into a conversation, he started telling me about his past. He was addicted to drugs and alcohol, and his life was spinning out of control. When he was thirty-five his sister told him he should go to Teen Challenge for help. Teen Challenge is an organization that works to transform the lives of adults and teens with addictions through Christ-centered solutions. Initially hesitant because he was not a "teen," Mike checked himself in. While in the program, he accepted Christ as his Savior and his life was transformed. He was freed from his addictions, and he completely turned his life around.

As Mike was telling me about his past, there was a note of shame and sadness in his voice. He felt bad for the way he lived his life before accepting Christ. He had made bad choices, and he regretted them. But I did not see things that way. His story was one of victory and triumph! It was an amazing testimony of the power of God to set someone free and give them a new beginning in life. As I said these things to Mike, I emphasized that his past life was not something he should feel shame about, but rather it should bring joy because of how God had transformed him. Let me be clear, I am not saying that Mike should be happy about his addictions or the people he hurt in his past. Those things were wrong. But

he is now forgiven and no longer needs to feel guilty or shameful. Guilt and shame come from the enemy who wants to rob us of the joy we have in Christ.

We sing a song in church called *Graves Into Gardens*. One line in that song says, "You turn shame into glory." That's exactly what I was talking about with Mike. Our past, rather than making us feel shame, is an opportunity to glorify God!

How are you different now than before you accepted Christ? How have you grown and changed since accepting Jesus as your Savior? I can look back at my life and shake my head at some of the decisions I made and how I used to act. But in my heart, looking back at my past makes me thankful and causes me to praise God for how He has changed me. He has given me a new beginning! My past is in the past and rather than feel shameful about it, it is an opportunity to bring glory to God for the new life He has given me.

As we begin a new year, I want to encourage you to look back at your life. What were you like before God gave you a new beginning? Let the memory of your past and where you were bring you joy and hope as you celebrate what God has done in your life and how He has changed you.

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

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