



GraceNet

Knoxville, TN

December 2014

Erasing Christmas?

I heard a news report that this certain school district was erasing the words Christmas and Easter from the school calendar. It was a 7 to 1 vote to do away with the word "Christmas" in response to a Muslim group that wanted their special days inserted into the school calendar.

This started me thinking, what if Christmas was erased from the world's calendar? In fact, for many parts of the world, Christmas is not a significant day or concept. What would the world look like without Christmas and its true meaning? Could it be that we have failed to realize how greatly that first Christmas changed our world? Consider these thoughts:

1. A Christmas-less world would have a false idea of who and what God is like. For most of the world pre-Christmas, the idea of a God was one whom you had to appease. The gods of the ancients toyed with people, were capricious, may have demanded human sacrifice, were wrathful and yet limited.
2. These false images in turn made the world a dark, cruel place. The Bible tells us that this world was really in the grip of Satan who used these false gods to control us. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. From the moment of His birth, Satan was enraged and strived to kill Jesus. At every turn the evil one tried to block, tempt and even destroy Jesus. But Christmas was the beginning of the end of Satan. Where there is no true Christmas, Satan still has a hold. We should not be surprised that darkness and cruelty continue to dominate these areas.
3. "Love came down at Christmas," is a phrase from a Christmas musical. The greatest force in the world is love. God unleashed love in all its fullness at that first Christmas. The first Christians were known by their love. This confused the Romans who for instance were not use to caring for the desperately ill or the handicapped. Hospitals, orphanages, relief efforts, and charities of all kinds spring from that first Christmas. Jesus loved in a way that the world had never seen. It has left an indelible mark upon this world.
4. A world that marks Christmas is a world that, perhaps grudgingly, acknowledges that there is a God and that He intervenes in this world. It is also a recognition that there is going to be a day of accounting or judgment. Christmas is a sign to the world that God is not going to let us be and that there is meaning to this world and our lives. It means that God has a plan with an end in mind. Christmas declares that Jesus came into the world and that He intends to come back. It is a world either put on joyous or fearful notice.



**KEEP
CHRISTMAS**

Continued on page 2.

Erasing Christmas?

Continued from page 1.

Unfortunately we have the freedom to erase Christmas and its true meaning from our own life calendar. The result of this is to choose other gods, to open a door for Satan to get a foot hold, to reject love as the primary mode for our living and to put off the idea that life has any eternal meaning.

On the other hand, we can “keep” Christmas in our lives. We can let its full meaning pervade us. We can know God for who He really is. We can be resisting Satan just as Jesus did. We can let love rule our hearts and know the joy this can bring. And finally we can have a hope that our life is meaningful, significant and heading to a blessed destination.

Don't erase Christmas – highlight it!

~ *Pastor Rich*



Our Grace Family

Meet Maria Brelsford

Since it is now December, are you getting excited about the possibility of some of that white stuff? I mean--- thinking of Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas"? Some of us are just thrilled about the possibility, but of course, snow also brings potential hazards! But corner Maria, who probably can give you some pointers about safe driving, etc. since she is from New Haven, Connecticut. Maria is widowed but is surrounded by wonderful family. So ask her to talk about son, Stephen and about Lisa, Grace, David and Cameron. She will be more than happy to fill you in on the details. The family is further enhanced with her Papillion Happy and Kelly, THE cat! Want to put a smile on her face? Then have her tell you about the kind of pizza that comes from Connecticut. Maria's most interesting work experience involved her work in an Alzheimer's unit at PWH, and her volunteer spirit continues as she serves working at a local library. She loves playing cards and dabbling in crafts. You see a wisp of longing come over her as she thinks about a dream of being a grape grower living in Italy. But if she had to content herself with any dream, it would be one in which she could heartily donate lots of money to the Humane Society of East Tennessee. We are warmed by her smile and her friendly demeanor even though Maria claims she has to work at being outgoing. Happy with all of her many blessings, Maria chooses to share herself with us, and a better Christmas gift could not be had!



GraceNet is published monthly by
Grace Lutheran Church – LCMS

9076 Middlebrook Pike, Knoxville, TN 37923
Phone: (865) 691-2823 Fax: (865) 691-4895
E-mail: glc@visitgrace.org
Reverend Richard M. Elseroad, Senior Pastor
Reverend Justin A. Bell, Associate Pastor
Reverend Mark Bushuiakovish, Associate Pastor

Website: <http://www.visitgrace.org>

Articles for GraceNet are due by the **1st of each month** for the following month's edition.

GraceNet Staff

Debbie Booher, Editor
Linda Jaekel
Nancy May
Joan Scraggs

Email to Editor:
dbooher@knology.net



If you have a special event you would like to have publicized in GraceNet, please submit the information to

Debbie Booher by the 1st of each month for publication in the following month's newsletter.

Christmas Worship Schedule



Advent Services - 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 3

Wednesday, December 10

Wednesday, December 17

December 7 - Christmas Brunch

9:00 - 10:30 a.m. - Brunch

December 14 - 5:30 p.m.

Children's Christmas Program

December 21 - Regular Worship Services

8:00 a.m. - Traditional Worship

9:30 a.m. - Bible Classes

9:30 a.m. - Blended Worship

11:00 a.m. - Contemporary Worship

December 24 - Christmas Eve Services

5:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

11:00 p.m. with Midnight Communion

December 25 - Christmas Day

Happy Birthday to our Savior!



Worship
THE
King

Christmastime Reads

During this month, the library will display both fiction and non-fiction that revolve around Christmas. Among the non-fiction titles that are new are:

Not a Silent Night: Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem by Adam Hamilton (292.9 Ham): Hamilton traces the birth, life and ministry of Jesus through the eyes of Mary as she looks back on her son's life following His death. This title is a companion to his earlier book, **The Journey** (292.9 Ham).

The Women of Christmas by Liz Curtis Higgs (225.92 Hig): Higgs introduces her readers to the women who surrounded Christ's birth. Elizabeth is the barren one who trusted God and became the mother of the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist. Mary is the young virgin willing to believe the impossible and became the mother of the Messiah. And last, Anna, the prophetess who, when she sees Jesus, proclaims Him to be the long-awaited Messiah.

Fiction Titles

The Christmas Cat by Melody Carlson (Fic Car) Garrison travels to Canada to sort out his deceased grandmother's belongings including locating the "purrfect" owners for each of her six cats. However, he must conceal the fact that each whiskered charge comes with a monetary gift as well.

The Mistletoe Promise by Richard Paul Evans (Fic Eva): Elise Dutton dreads the Christmas season ever since a bitter divorce left her alone, broken, and distrustful. When a man from her building suggests that for eight weeks until December 24, they pretend to be a couple, she surprisingly agrees. And then an unexpected relationship emerges.

Snowfall by Shelley Shepard Gray (Book 3 in **Days of Redemption** series) (Fic Gra): Lovina Keim brings joy to the Rhodes Amish family as snow blankets their Sugarcreek community.

All Is Bright: A Cape Light Novel by Thomas Kinkadee (Fic Kin): In book #15, Spencer welcomes you back to Cape Light for another Christmas adventure. A box of old photos takes Rev. Ben Lewis back to 1978 when a scandal tore his church apart. As Ben looks back, his daughter Rachel faces the future following her husband's death.

Mr. Miracle by Debbie Macomber (Fic Mac): This is another whimsical, heartwarming romance from Macomber. Guardian angel Harry Mills is on a mission to help Addie get her life back on track. She returns to her hometown for the holidays where she connects with Erich with whom she grew up. They are opposites in every way, and when forced to spend Christmas together, they brace for trouble.

The Christmas Light by Donna Van Lier (Fic Van): In the small town of Grandon, five very different individuals are brought together for a rather unconventional church

Nativity that will teach them the true meaning of Christmas and that hope abounds.

Evergreen by Susan May Warren (Fic War): The Christiansen family saga continues as Ingrid and John face a tumultuous Christmas. Now as empty nesters, John plans a surprise romantic trip to Paris at the same time that Ingrid chooses to spearhead a major church project. Then their faithful dog requires an expensive, emergency surgery. To make matters worse, an unwanted "guest" arrives dredging up old hurts. As winter settles in, a chill also settle over their marriage too.

Find these and many more Christmas themed books on display throughout the month of December.

Also throughout the month two titles pertinent to the national news will also be on display. These two books deal with the subject of what happens when a devout Muslim meets the baby born in a manger.

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity by Nabeel Qureshi (foreword by Lee Strobel) (248.2 Qur): With degrees in medicine, Religion, and apologetics, this Muslim-turned-Christian provides a succinct overview of Islam and relates his journey from Islam to faith in Christ and all it cost him in family and friends. Qureshi had three purpose in mind when writing this book: 1) To give non-Muslims an insider's view into a Muslim's heart and mind; 2) To equip his readers with facts and knowledge showing the strength of the case for the Gospel versus the case for Islam; 3) To portray the intense inner struggle of Muslims grappling with the Gospel and the costs, sacrifices, and doubts.

Face to Face With Jesus by Samas Habib (248.2 Hab): Another powerful story of the clash between Islam and Christianity in one person's life and the peace found in Jesus.

Find these and other titles related to Islam on display throughout the month as well.

Merry Christmas and Blessings to you in 2015!

~Mary Schultz

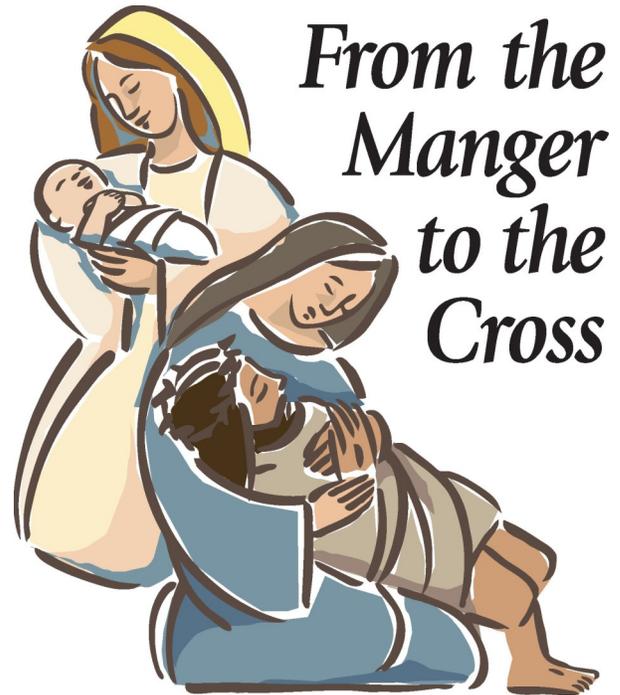


A Special Baby

Mark Lowry, who wrote the lyrics to the Christmas song “Mary, Did You Know?” says he’s always been amazed by Mary’s silence at the cross, as her son was being crucified. Maybe she was remembering back to that first Christmas, he wonders, when she counted Jesus’ fingers and toes.

“I wonder if she realized then that those were the same fingers that had scooped out the oceans and formed the seas. I wonder if she realized those were the same feet that had walked on streets of gold and been worshiped by angels. Those little lips were the same lips that had spoken the world into existence. When Mary kissed her little baby, she wasn’t just kissing another baby; she was kissing the face of God.”

Mary silently watched her son die 33 years later, Lowry notes — not just for the world but also for his own mother. “The baby boy she had delivered on that first Christmas was now on a cross delivering her.”



From the
Manger
to the
Cross

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will save our sons and daughters?*

*Did you know that your baby boy
Has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered
Will soon deliver you*

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will calm a storm with His hand?*

*Did you know that your baby boy
Has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby
You've kissed the face of God*

*The blind will see, the deaf will hear
And the dead will live again
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak
The praises of the Lamb*

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will one day rule the nations?*

*Did you know that your baby boy
Is heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding
Is the 'Great I Am'*

~ Mark Lowry, 1984



MERRY CHRISTMAS

The Revered One

We all know the Christmas story from Luke 2: “In those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus...” The name “Augustus” is a significant detail that heightens the meaning of the story for us in a surprising way. But, in all of our years we have likely paid no real attention to it.

The actual name of the Caesar in Luke 2 was not “Augustus,” but Gaius Octavius. In the Roman world titles were passed out to bestow honors and curry favor. “Augustus” was a title given to him by the Roman Senate in 27 BC. It means “the revered one.” Associated with it was the idea that he would usher in a new era of world peace. There was also a contemporary expectation of a coming world savior. The poet, Virgil used one of his writings to focus those expectations on Augustus as the fulfiller of such hopes.

Augustus was the grand nephew of Julius Caesar, and a longer form of Augustus' name included “Julius.” But, Caesar had no descendants. He had adopted Augustus as his heir. A year or so after Caesar's assassination in 44 BC the Roman Senate had also conferred the title, “the divine Julius” on Augustus. It was Augustus who expanded that title and called himself “son of the divine.” This was slightly different from “son of god.” That title was reserved for Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. But, it did express the idea that Augustus was a divinity.

Now read the opening of the Christmas story in Luke 2 again. The Caesar believes he is divine. People expect he is the world savior and will bring in a new era of world peace. He is to be revered by all.

And, look at his power. With a word he can set the whole known world into motion to register for taxation purposes at their ancestral homes. He has at his command all of the pomp and power of the of the Empire.

But, then look seven verses later. There the real Son of God and Savior of the world is born to a poor, unmarried couple who share their quarters with cattle and place the baby in a feeding trough that serves temporarily as a crib.

This is the contrast between what the world expects in a savior and the way God does things. The world values power and wealth. But, God shows His power in humble circumstances and events not noticed by the world, even despised by the world. I guarantee that thinking about this will give you a new appreciation for a significant aspect of Christmas.



~ Pastor Phil Bohlken

Healthline is a 30-minute Medical Education television show hosted by Grace's very own Sheila Wittke.

AIR TIME: Sunday afternoons at 6:30 p.m.

STATIONS:

CTV COMCAST Cable Channel 12 (Knoxville)

CTV CHARTER + WOW Channel 6 (Farragut)

AT&T U-Verse Channel 99

DECEMBER 2014 SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND GUESTS

07 - Understanding Deep Vein Thrombosis - Dr. Marcus A. Barber

14 - Defining Autism - Dr. John B. Robertson, Jr.

21 - Carpal Tunnel Syndrome - Dr. Michael Howard

28 - Knowing Your Cholesterol Numbers - Dr. Casey Page



*For the grace of God has appeared,
bringing salvation for all people.*



Titus 2:11, ESV

*Grace Lutheran Church-LCMS
9076 Middlebrook Pike
Knoxville, TN 37923-1557
(865) 691-2823
Fax: (865) 691-4895
E-mail address: glc@visitgrace.org
Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. (Traditional) and
9:30 a.m. (Blended)/11:00 a.m. (Contemporary)
Wednesday Worship: 6:30 p.m. (Blended)
Sunday School & Bible Classes @ 9:30 a.m./11:00 a.m.*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

TO:

