

Another Christmas Story

When Karl and Beatrice married they both agreed that theirs would be a childless union. They were both extremely career oriented. Karl worked on Wall Street and he thrived on the pressure and long hours. He achieved his dream job as a part of the Goldman Sachs Empire.

Beatrice had her own successful profession as a real estate lawyer. She was in that rarefied air of the New York City real estate market.

Both had been raised in Christian and church-going families. They took similar paths in rejecting the faith and practices of their parents while they were freshmen at Cornell. When Karl and Beatrice met for the first time, what they both thought would be a short conversation extended for hours. They realized they had almost identical goals and aspirations. From that moment on they were inseparable, marrying exactly two years later.

Karl and Beatrice were very careful people. They were careful about their finances, about their vocational decisions and careful not to have children.

It was immediately following their 5th anniversary that Beatrice became sick. It was a constant nausea. She was too busy to think about it and put off seeing a doctor. Finally after a month of throwing up and losing weight she made an appointment. The doctor chuckled as he delivered the news. "Beatrice didn't you realize you were pregnant?"

Karl was shocked and Beatrice peevish at his reaction and disgusted with his pronouncement that she should have an abortion. If there was a lingering religious sentiment, it was that abortion was wrong. They would have this baby and that was it!

Karl accepted grudgingly that he would be a father. The pregnancy went well and on December 25 – Christmas Day – little Harry was born.

Both families were overjoyed and outdid each other in buying gifts. They were also baffled by how indifferent acting both Karl and Beatrice were to their newborn. They went through the motions of taking care of Harry but with little emotion or enthusiasm. How could they know that this boy would change their lives and eternal destinies?

Was it because he was born on Christmas? It was a great mystery but almost as soon as he could verbalize anything, Harry demonstrated a wholly different spirit than his parents.

He was baptized more out of the grandparents' insistence than any desire of his parents. His grandparents also wrangled out permission to take him to church on a somewhat regular basis. They too were astonished at his amazing spiritual growth and understanding. In Sunday School, Harry was called the "Little Preacher," and whereas other children might find this offensive, he relished the title.

By age 5 he was besieging his parents with questions. Why did they not go to church? Who did they think Jesus was? Didn't they think there were a heaven and a hell?

Karl and Beatrice were increasingly flummoxed by their precocious child. They argued against the faith and used the age old reasoning that, "you will understand when you are older." But this did little to deter Harry. Their responses only made him desire to learn more and ask ever more penetrating questions.



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By age 10 they had come to an impasse. Karl and Beatrice did acknowledge that they had a special son with an amazing intellect. They admitted to each other out of Harry's earshot that he was having an effect on them. Each of them had softened their antagonism toward Christianity and the church. But out of pride they wouldn't let Harry or their extended family know.

It was the year approaching Harry's 12th birthday that everything changed. Karl and Beatrice had steadfastly refused to attend any church service and especially at Christmas and Easter. When they asked Harry what he would like for a Birthday/Christmas present this year they were taken aback by his request. "I only want one thing. I want you to both come with me to the Christmas Eve Service. I won't accept anything else!"

Their first response was: "Well, I guess you won't be receiving a present this year." Now they had grown very fond of their exceptional son. He was obedient and respectful. Compared to other families, Harry was a dream child. So after talking it over for weeks on end they decided they would accede to his wishes. They would attend the Christmas Eve Service.

Neither Karl nor Beatrice would have ever imagined that one church service would change the direction of their

lives. What they didn't account for was the everyday prayers of Harry and his continual witness over the years.

The church was full but Karl and Beatrice and Harry still managed to get the treasured back pew. The Christmas carols moved them and made them nostalgic. The sermon was simple, yet clear and profound. When they lit their candles it was as if a light went on in their hearts. To this very day they can't explain it. Suddenly they believed. Suddenly and unexpectedly they believed that Jesus' birth meant the coming of the Savior of the world – their Savior.

Harry liked to call it "a Christmas miracle." Now he was the one to be surprised as his parents were up early on the Sunday after Christmas ready to go to church!

Karl, Beatrice and Harry are known by other church members as the "intellectual Christians" ready to defend the faith. But they laugh and would rather be called "those Christmas people." On the birthday of their Savior, and their son's birthday – they now, year by year – celebrate their own spiritual birthdays.

For unto us a Savior is born!

~ Pastor Rich

Congregational Meeting



Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 6

12:30 p.m.

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

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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.

Our Grace Family

Meet Paul Guthrie II

Can you believe we are heading into holiday time? Have you seen your first snow flake of the season?

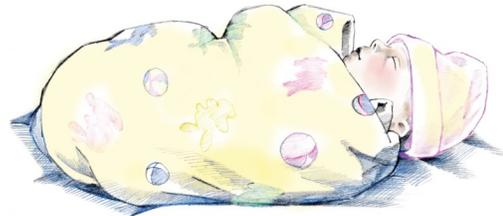
Our special person has seen a good number of snow flakes here in Tennessee from the time of his arrival and childhood in Morristown. Paul is married to Julie and has one son, Paul (III) and three grandsons ---with his son and one grandson all having the same name and having the same birthday as their Mentor! Talk about the odds of that happening!

Paul was involved in the exacting work of determining the cause of metal failures. One such was why a tower crane collapsed while being erected with men on it. Talk about pressure!

Pets? Not at this time but a cock-a-poo named Ducky died several years ago, and is remembered for those memorable walks around Glen Cove nightly. Paul absolutely enjoys filet mignon and chocolate mousse. And while not indulging in these favorites, he can be found gardening, doing stone work, or various carpentry jobs around his home.

If asked what he might want to do to change life in general, it would be to put together a plan that would save our debt crisis so that his grandchildren will not face a future financial crisis. The arrival of his male progeny, and secondly, his PhD ceremony at the University of Cincinnati rank as his fondest memories.

For right now, Paul spends his time and would like to spend more time and effort feeding the poor and underfed in surrounding counties. He is ever so busy doing this at Grace right at this time! His most valued possessions--his faith in Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior, followed by the love of his family--are so valued by him. We are not surprised that he was an eagle scout, a naval officer, taught college for eight years, a metallurgical engineer, and also survived cancer twice. He is a true pioneer while feeling grateful for the 82 years God has given along with the many blessings He has bestowed. Amen to that!



Newborns

Jack Dolan Newport

Born: November 5, 2015

Proud Parents: Michael and Amanda Newport



Aubrey Rose Beierle

Born: November 16, 2015

Proud Parents: Micha-John and Shannon Beierle

"A Charlie Brown Christmas"

presented by

The Children of Grace Lutheran Church

Sunday, December 13, 2015

5:00 p.m.



Christmas Worship Schedule



Advent Services - 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 2

Wednesday, December 9

Wednesday, December 16

December 6 - Christmas Brunch

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

December 13 - 5:00 p.m.

Children's Christmas Program

December 20 - 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

4:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

11:00 p.m. with Midnight Communion

December 25 - Christmas Day

Happy Birthday to our Savior!



New Titles for the Holidays

New Non-Fiction

Where I Am: Heaven, Eternity, and Our Life Beyond by Billy Graham (236 Gra): Beginning with Genesis and continuing through the Bible to Revelation, Billy Graham shares what the Bible has to say about eternity from all sixty-six books. "Each short chapter examines the reality that each of us chooses where to spend life after death....From the Old Testament writer who composed 'Show me Your ways, O Lord' (Psalm 25:4) to the New Testament writer who penned the words of Jesus, 'Whoever believes in Me should not perish,' (John 3: 16), there is hope for anyone who puts his or her faith and trust in the One who gives us the promise, 'Where I am, there you may be also!' (John 14:3)" {book jacket}

Glory Days: Living Your Promised Land Life Now by Max Lucado (248.4 Luc): Lucado uses the story of Joshua to explain how we can put the past behind us and walk in the glory God intended for His people. Readers are reminded that there is an amazing Savior waiting for us to come to Him and an amazing God who is fighting for us. In classic Lucado style, he emphasizes how this knowledge will change every aspect of the believer's life.

Seven Women and the Secret of Their Greatness by Eric Metaxas (920 Met): Biographer Metaxas has brought insight into the lives of these women and the role their faith played in their lives. The women he chose are: Joan of Arc, Susanna Wesley, Hannah More, Saint Maria of Paris, Corrie ten Boom, Rosa Parks, and Mother Teresa.

New Fiction

Love Inspired novels are heartwarming inspirational stories presented in pocket-sized paperback format and printed in a larger, easier-to-read print. These stories are written by several well-known Christian storytellers. These are easy, light-reading with an uplifting, inspirational message. Among the newest titles added to the library's collection are:

A Doctor for the Nanny by Leigh Bale (Fic Bal)

Her Christmas Hero by Lorraine Beatty (Fic Bea)

An Alaskan Wedding by Sandra Belle Calhoun (Fic Cal)

The Christmas Family by Linda Goodnight (Fic Goo)

Rancher For the Holidays by Myra Johnson (Fic Joh)

Yuletide Cowboys by Deb Kastner (Fic Kas)

A Husband for Christmas by Gail Saymer Martin (Fic Mar)

Falling For the Mom-to-Be by Jenna Mindel (Fic Min)

The Rancher's Second Chance and **A Reunion For the Rancher** by Brenda Min-ton (Fic Min)

A Texas Christmas Wish by Jolene Navarro (Fic Nav)

Rekindling the Widower's Heart by Glynnia Sirpless (Fic Sir)

Lakeside Hero by Lenora Worth (Fic Wor)

In **The Lancaster Courtships Amish** series:

The Amish Bride by Emma Miller (Fic Mil) Book 1;

The Amish Mother by Rebecca Kertz (Fic Ker) Book 2;

The Amish Midwife by Patricia Davids (Fic Dav) Book 3.

Other new fiction titles added include:

Come Rain or Come Shine by Jan Karon (Fic Kar): Fans of Jan Karon and her Mitford characters, Father Tim Kavanagh, his wife Cynthia, Cooley and Lace Harper, will be pleased to read the newest title in the series. Father Tim's adopted son Dooley has graduated from veterinary school and opened his own clinic. With money still tight, he and Lace want to keep their wedding simple—a potluck, a country band, a barn, a few animals and the mountains in June. And you are invited.

The Photograph by Beverly Lewis (Fic Lew) Lewis continues her Amish stories, this one set in Eden Valley, part of the Old Order. A handsome stranger walks into Eva's sweet shop with a mysterious photo. But the woman in the photograph is no stranger to Eva.

Love Everlasting by Tracie Peterson (Fic Pet), book 3 in **Brides of Seattle** series. In Seattle in the 1880's, independent women are looking for love and marriage. Abrianna is faced with a dilemma. Pursued by two men, she must choose between Wade, a man she has viewed like a brother, or Priam, a man of wealth but questionable character and integrity.

Find these on display throughout the month ready for checkout. Also look for books about Christmas and other Christmas stories.

MERRY CHRISTMAS from all the library workers.

~ Mary Schultz



What Did the Magi Know and When Did They Know It?

If you had been one of the Magi (Wise Men), would a bright light in the sky have been enough to make you set out on a long journey to search for a newborn king? How did they know to do that?

No one knows for certain what the Star of Bethlehem was. Werner Keller* makes a very interesting case for a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Jewish astronomers believed the Messiah would appear during a conjunction of these two planets in the Pisces constellation.

Those who studied the heavens gave a special significance to bodies and events in the sky. In Babylon Pisces was the sign of the west, the direction of the area near the Mediterranean Sea where Israel is located. In Jewish thought Pisces was the sign of Israel and the Messiah. Pisces was understood to close the old course of the sun and open a new one like the beginning of a new age.

Jupiter was considered a royal star (related to a king). In Jewish understanding, Saturn was the protector of Israel. The Roman historian, Tacitus, identified it with the God of the Jews. Babylonians regarded it as the special star of Syria and Palestine.

Nearly six centuries before the birth of Jesus many Jews had been carried off to captivity in Babylon. When Cyrus, the Persian, defeated Babylon, he encouraged these Jews to go back to their homeland; but, not all did. Some may have studied at a particular Babylonian school of astrology. Some people in Babylon would have become aware of Jewish prophecies about the birth of the Messiah. Add to that calculating backwards by astronomers has shown a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn occurred three times during 7 BC. (Jesus was born near to that time rather than 0 or 1 AD because of a mistake a monk made in the Middle Ages when converting pre-Christian dates based on the founding of Rome to the calendar in use at the time based on the birth of Jesus.) People in Babylon who studied the heavens would have taken notice of conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn and would have found the meaning associated with such a conjunction sufficient reason to go to Israel in search for the newborn King, and they would have known quite a bit about Him just from what they saw in the heavens.



~ Rev. Phil Bohlken

* Werner Keller is the author of a 1955 book titled *The Bible as History* (New York: Bantam Books). He was a Jewish man, but writes very convincingly about Christmas. His book has been revised and updated and is still available, although now out of print.

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

AIR TIME: Monday Mornings at 11:00 a.m.

STATIONS:

CTV COMCAST Cable Channel 12 (Knoxville)

CTV CHARTER 193 + WOW Channel 6 (Farragut)

AT&T U-Verse Channel 99

DECEMBER 2015 SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND GUESTS

- 07 - History of Cataract Surgery—Dr. Matthew D. Lowrance
- 14 - Immunotherapy and Cancer—Dr. Richard Grapski
- 21 - Traveling Abroad: Immunizations, Meds, Health Tips—
Dr. Martha Buchanan
- 28 - Sugars vs. Artificial Sweeteners—Dr. Rocio A. Huet





*Sing, O heavens, for
the Lord has done
this wondrous
thing.*

Isaiah 44:23, NLT

Our Savior has come!!

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Wednesday Worship: 6:30 p.m. (Blended)
Sunday School & Bible Classes @ 9:30 a.m./11:00 a.m.*

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