

*Tidings of Peace*

# DECEMBER

*Newsletter of Peace Memorial EPC*

## *From the Pastor...*

Who is to Blame?

-Rev. Aaron Beaty

Has anyone else noticed a growing trend in finger pointing? There seems to be a growing need to blame something, or somebody for the woes of the world. Several books have recently been published on the evils of religion. Many of them teach that if it weren't for religion (in general), much of the world's suffering would end. Truly, religion can become a structure that heralds delusion, prejudice and fear. And as a wise man once said, "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate, leads to suffering." Therefore, be rid of religion and we rid ourselves of a system that perpetuates much that leads to human suffering...

In another arena we can hear the same sentiment aimed at the government. "If it weren't for them blasted Republicans (or in a Democrat-led government- "if it weren't for them blasted Democrats") then the world would be a better place." But then the Republicans lose to the Democrats, or the Democrats lose hold to the Republicans, and despite the shift in policy, the world seems to suffer still.

Perhaps we can blame the communists! I know that argument is a little dated, but still, it doesn't take much effort to dredge up that cause. If we only rid ourselves of communist societies, then the world would be a better place. It's tempting to think this way- after all, communist governments have caused immeasurable suffering in the past.

The desperate search for someone to blame has no lack of targets. We can blame the whites, the blacks the Jews, the immigrants. Shoot! Why not blame Canada?

It begins to sound silly when put this way doesn't it? The blame game gives us a sense of security- security that the woes of the world are not really OUR fault, and so correcting the problem really is not our responsibility. After all, it is much easier to gripe and blame, than it is to shoulder responsibility- especially responsibility for messes that you are not directly responsible for making.

I find it significant that during Jesus' earthly ministry, in the midst of corruption on every level, he said very little, if anything at all about overturning corrupt systems, be it religious, governmental, or social. Instead he was more concerned with overturning our inward corruption.

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## *From the Pastor... Continued*

Instead of taking up the fight against an oppressive and corrupt government, Jesus instead stood up against the oppressive and corrupt spirit within us. Why? Was Jesus not really concerned about social order or religious health? Of course he was. But Jesus seemed to “get” the human condition.

The cause of human suffering is not a series of broken governments, or religions, or movements. The cause of suffering is a broken human nature. The reason governments go corrupt, or religions engender division and violence, is because humanity is broken. All of us, on a fundamental level, have a propensity toward corruption in some way.

The Bible refers to this as being a result of the fall- when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and pursued knowledge of good and evil.

Christmas brings a word of hope to a broken humanity. The message of Christmas shows God’s solution to the human problem. In Jesus Christ, there is a great “mend.” Yet the mend we celebrate so frequently during Advent and Christmastide gets packed away with the rest of the Christmas decorations come January.

I have a vision for the church- that we will become known by our neighbors as a people who take responsibility. Or perhaps more pointedly- a people who, instead of pointing fingers of blame, shoulder one another’s burdens and faithfully pursue reconciliation, healing, and edification.

Are we, the followers of Jesus Christ here at Peace Memorial, a people who speak more words that build up, or tear down? Do we have a reputation as a people of encouragement and optimism, or do our neighbors recognize us as the league of nay-sayers?

The living Word of God, Jesus Christ, came to earth, suffered and died for us that we would become a light to this dark world. There are plenty of topics to make us angry. There are plenty of blunderers and plunderers, hacks and quacks to fill us with indignation- we need not look further than ourselves! But Christ calls us to transcend the mire of the human condition and to instead see and strive for an ideal that allows us to display;

kindness in the mire of selfishness,  
forgiveness in the pit of guilt,  
joy in a sea of sorrow,  
peace in the face of violence,  
and truth in a tide of falsehood.

This contrast is what it means to be a light to a dark world.

Will we have the courage and the faith to keep the Christ Candle- the light of Christ-lit into a new year? Happy New Year, and may the Love, Joy and Peace of Christ rule in your hearts and minds in 2021.

Pastor Aaron

## FROM JACOB TO THE WILDERNESS

### A study of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers

Sunday Bible Classes 9:00-10:00 AM Fireside Room

We have resumed our Sunday Bible classes before the worship services on Sunday.  
See you then!



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

7<sup>TH</sup> NOREEN BREEN



### BUCKET BRIGADE TAKING A BREAK

**The monthly Bucket Brigade will be taking the months of December and January off.** We decided we have more

important things to do in December, such as preparing for and celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior. And we figured January would be a wet, messy time, and what good does it do to clean one area if we've made a muddy mess of another? Since we started this activity, a varying group of people (and yes, that has included men) have tackled the sanctuary, pastor's office, fellowship hall, downstairs restrooms, and the fireside room. We haven't decided where our buckets will take us next when we resume in February, but it will be where no Swiffer Duster has gone before (or at least for a very long time). Thank you all who have given a few hours of your time and your sweat equity to make God's House more homey.

## Thoughts from an Elder: by Joe Riker

A Prelude – Read Luke 2:22-40

The glory of God's extraordinary salvation through Christ Jesus is juxtaposed with the ordinary, ritual presentation of a young Jewish boy at temple. Even as his family participates in this common custom, the uncommon breaks in. Simeon proclaims Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah, the salvation for which Simeon has waited. Anna praises God for this young child, in whom she sees "the redemption of Jerusalem." Christmas is a reminder that our extraordinary God breaks into our ordinary world, our ordinary lives, and our ordinary traditions.

Luke 2:22-40

When Jesus was only 40 days old, Mary and Joseph, like all observant Jewish families in those days, presented themselves at the temple for purification. Strictly speaking, the purification ritual was for Mary only. The purification of a new mother occurred 40 days after the birth of a male child, and 80 days after the birth of a female child. The firstborn male didn't need to be purified. He was dedicated to the Lord. The Christ Child didn't need to be "purified," but he's "purified" anyway, a sign that he stands with the people. Mary and Joseph offered a sacrifice of two turtledoves. *[I don't know about you, I've often wondered if that's the two turtle doves in the song "Twelve Days of Christmas"?)* But the original audience in the temple would have wondered something else. *"Turtle doves? Why didn't they sacrifice a lamb?"*

Here are the directions in Leviticus 12:6-8

"When the days of her purification are completed...she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. He shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement on her behalf...If she cannot afford a sheep she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering..."

So without saying, "Mary and Joseph were very poor," Luke *LET'S* us know that Mary and Joseph were very poor.

Today many people, including some Christians will tell you that if you have faith, you'll be financially prosperous. They find verses in the Bible that support this "prosperity gospel"; but mostly it seems to work for certain types of preachers.

Our culture wants this prosperity gospel to be true, because the American dream is not built on finding the blessings in poverty. But if Joseph and Mary had faith enough to listen to the angel, to bring God's own son into the world, and to be obedient enough to take him to the temple to obey the Laws of Moses then they should have been prosperous beyond measure. Yet this couple couldn't even afford to buy a lamb for sacrifice. If God's own family was struggling to get by, then we need to reconsider the connection between being blessed and being prosperous.

Then, sitting in the temple was the righteous and devote Simeon. Simeon led by the Spirit waiting to see salvation, the Christ. Simeon leads us in the celebration of Christmas, rejoicing that he has finally seen the world's salvation, the presence of God in our very midst.

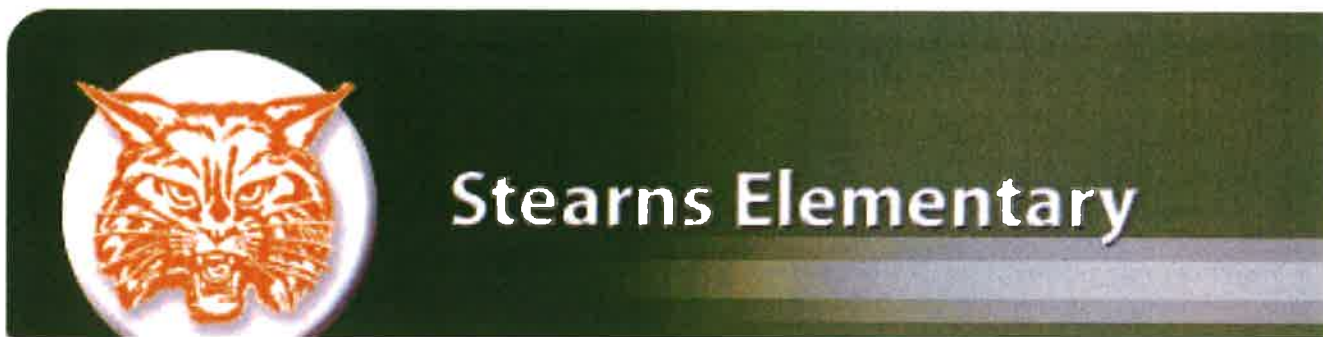
Only one other person sees the drama of God at work. An old prophetess named Anna gives thanks to God and offers her witness, speaking "about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem". Just as this time of Christmas demands that we pause, it also gives us a prelude to what will come.

Simeon is the personification of the Advent promise fulfilled; years and decades for God's Messiah to appear: he waited; he trusted, he hoped, he prayed, he believed. And when the promise was revealed in the child Jesus, Simeon rejoiced.

### Thoughts from an Elder: Continued

Over these past weeks, we too have been invited to wait with trust, hope, love, and faith. Today, we celebrate with joy for God's promised salvation has come. Christ is born. Christ is alive. Christ lives in the hearts and love of every person who celebrates this glorious season of light and life. Pause to reflect. Embrace Mary and Joseph as models of faithfulness. Offer praise; the Christmas story is not over. This is the prelude. Rejoice greatly, for the child is growing in stature and wisdom in all who walk with Christ. Give witness to the Lord! Share Jesus' name, will, and way with all. This is the one we've been looking for!

### Mission & Outreach Committee



The Mission & Outreach committee would like to thank the congregation for all the donations made throughout the year for Stearns School.

We are doing a coat drive again this year for Stearns School. New or gently used coats are needed and greatly appreciated.

To be able to deliver the coats before Christmas break we need to have them by Sunday December 13th.

*We have a box at the back of the sanctuary for Stearns School donations.*



## **Peace Memorial Women's Missionary Guild (PMWVG)**

### **FALL BAZAAR FOLLOW-UP**

The Peace Memorial Women's Missionary Group would like to extend a huge "thank you" to all who participated in making our annual Fall Bazaar a success! We raised more money this year than last, even without having our soup luncheon. It was very heartening to see the community turn out to support us, as well, and hear their encouraging comments. As part of our bazaar, we have a "White Elephant" room, and every year we stress this room is geared toward "the kid without much money, looking for a gift for Grandma." Well, Jocelyn shared just such a story with us- a boy about 7-years old who was using money he made collecting cans to find a gift for his grandmother. He found the "perfect" thing, as well as a gift bag to put it in. He was happy and proud of his purchase- we were dabbing our eyes.

The PMWVG Board had voted earlier how we would use the proceeds from this year's bazaar. We always first give a gratuity to the church for the use of the building, then decide where the balance should go. This year, we're sticking close to home and will give to the Organ Repair Fund.



### **PMWVG CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12**

The PMWVG Board will be hosting the annual Ladies Christmas Luncheon on Saturday, Dec 12th, beginning at noon. The women of our church do an amazing load of work throughout the year, and this is our way of thanking them for their efforts. All women are invited, including friends and family. Even women who are not part of our church help out in many ways, be it involvement with the Stitches group, contributing items for our bazaar or coming by to help in whatever way they can. We'll be serving our traditional lunch- chicken roll-ups, glazed carrots, cranberry salad, rolls, and pumpkin cake and beverages. We'll have Laura Brasser address the gathering about the organ repair needs. And we'll have an old-fashioned carol sing.

*Please plan to join us so we can show how very much you are appreciated.*

## Stewardship & Finance Committee

### Financial Report

#### October 2020

##### At a glance

Operating Inc.:	\$9,115.20
Operating Exp.:	\$12,591.30
<b>Monthly Net:</b>	<b>(\$3,476.20)</b>
<b>Ckg Acct Bal 10/31</b>	<b>\$28,763.66</b>
<b>MMkt Bal 10/31</b>	<b>\$45,924.02</b>

October 2020

Here is our monthly update on finance:

October Operating Income: \$9,115.10

Expenses: \$12,591.30      Net: **(\$3,476.20)**

**YTD Net: (\$2,331.94)**

Greetings!

We had a lot going on in October, which is normal as we enter into winter and the end of the year.

Some expenses in October beyond regular

operations were quarterly payroll taxes, yearly QuickBooks payroll program installment, building insurance, world missions quarterly donation, some landscaping bark, and a new headset for the sound system. There were no purchases or monies spent with the money market, restricted funds.

The stewardship drive ended in November, and session will go over the estimated income in December to determine if we need to cut anything from the proposed budget. We thank you for your participation in caring for and supporting our Church home.

We hope you had a blessed Thanksgiving, and are looking forward to the Christmas season and the celebration of our Lord. May the season bring you blessings of good health and happiness.

Peace be with you all,

Kathy Todd





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We're on the web!

[www.peaceEPC.com](http://www.peaceEPC.com)

"like" us on Facebook

*"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight"*  
-Prov. 3:6

Romans

12/6 - Romans XI

"God's Righteousness Received by Faith"

Romans 10

12/13 - Romans XII

"God's Righteousness Revealed in Jew and Gentile"

Romans 11

12/20 - Romans XIII

"God's Righteousness Expressed in the Body"

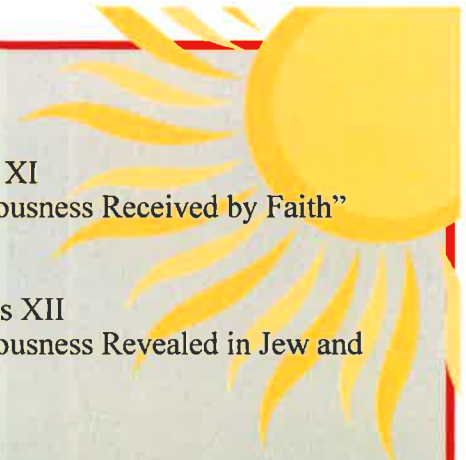
Romans 12:1-21

12/24 -

12/27 - Romans XIV

"God's Righteousness Grasped in Political and Social Life"

Romans 13



**Your SESSION**

Elders

- Pastor Aaron Beaty- Session Moderator
- Noreen Rhoades- Clerk of Session
- Kathy Todd- Finance & Stewardship
- Don Perryman- Christian Education
- Linda Dart- Mission and Outreach
- Jim Zeller- Building and Grounds
- Sally Heaton- Worship

**Your DEACONS**

Geri Coker- Chair

Bev Moulton

Susan Orton

Jocelyn Shellito

Vicki Zeller

*The Deacons meet the third Sunday of each month following worship.*

**Your**

**TRUSTEES**

Harold Heaton

Stephen Goode

Sharron Goode

Sharon Haddock

*Session meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 6-8PM.*

