

O Christmas Tree

By Pastor Andy Straubel

Have you ever wondered how the Christmas tree found its way into Christmas? Some say it started with a man named Winfrith (Latin for Saint Boniface), an English missionary to Germany in the 8th century. It is said he came upon a large and sacred tree where a child was being sacrificed to the pagan god Thor. Winfrith stopped the sacrifice by taking an ax to the tree. But before he could finish the job a horrendous wind blew the tree down and separated it into four pieces. The Saxon crowd became convinced that Winfrith's gospel was true and converted to Christ. Afterward, Winfrith went to a nearby woods, cut down a fir, and brought it into his house to commemorate the event. I don't know if it is true or not, but it makes for good story telling. Unfortunately, my experience with Christmas trees is more mundane.

Truth be told, I have a love-hate relationship with Christmas trees. I cannot tell you how or when it started, but I have come to embrace it. It may have begun early in our marriage when I had to relocate the boxes marked "Christmas" from the basement. It may have begun when I dragged the tree from its resting place to set it up in our living room. Somehow, I think the annual wrestling match with the lights had something to do with it. Currently two sets are on the tree. In any event, our tree has taken its distinguished place for another year.

The other night as I sat in our living room with only the lights illuminating the room, I began to notice the tree, particularly the ornaments nestled among the branches. In our family the boxes come out the day after Thanksgiving; and, now with little ones again, they painstakingly take each ornament out of the box and place it on the tree. This year, three-

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Christmas 2018



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year-old Maddie would pick up an ornament and say, “Dis One! Up High! Or Higher!” (She couldn’t reach). Each memory seems to elicit a quiet laugh. Then it hit me, every tree has a story to tell.

There are ornaments given to Janice from students saying, “Best Teacher.” There are characters of the Christmas story—Mary, Joseph, and of course the baby Jesus. There are stars and angels and cloth candy canes and gingerbread men and even a little L.L. Bean canoe (thanks Scott!). Each ornament seems to carry a special story as to how it got on the Straubel Tree. But the ones that seem to carry the most significance are the handmade ornaments made when the kids were little: the “sheep” made of cotton balls with wooden matches as legs, the “manger” scene made of popsicle sticks that one of the kids made in Sunday School, and the pie plate picture frame with a portrait of Adam in first grade. Somehow, we couldn’t throw them away, and I am glad we didn’t. Little fingers now help make new decorations for the family tree and new memories are being made.

But there is another tree of Christmas, and it too has a story to tell. It is the tree upon which Jesus died for the sins of mankind. 1 Peter 2:24 says, He [Jesus] bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. *“By His stripes you are healed.”* Hey! Maybe God see us as ornaments hanging from His tree...with a story to tell. I think so!

Financial Update

(Through November 2018)

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...”

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$226,465.27	\$283,250
Expense	\$272,470.56	\$342,331

Windsor Chapel has sent \$45,949 to our missionary partners this year. That’s 20% of your giving!



New Windsor Chapel members, Sandy and Don Ober, were welcomed by Pastor Andy and the congregation in December.

*Lasun and Esther Dada
have been blessed with a
grandson!*



Oluwadamilola,

Was born on December 13, at 11:01 pm.

He weighed 9 pounds and 2 ounces

And was 21 ½ inches long.

*They are overjoyed and very grateful to
God for this precious new addition to their
family.*

Elder's Corner

By Ron Bystrom

Thankfulness, Faith, and Dependence— Moving Forward in 2019

As we look towards 2019 our heart as Elders is to have a heart of thanksgiving, while demonstrating faith and dependence upon our Lord.

We have many things for which we can give thanks:

For each of you who were new to the Chapel in 2018, we are thankful God led you to be with us.

For all who have blessed us through serving the Chapel in various ways including: worship team, video and sound, fellowship team, 11th hour teachers, outreach efforts, building maintenance, greeters, in the nursery or with children's programs, the Chapel Challenge, floral arrangements, communion preparations, and in MANY other ways.

We are also grateful for the many tangible expressions of love and care demonstrated as a number of parents transitioned from this life into the everlasting life with our Heavenly Father, or towards those who were recovering from various ailments or accidents.

As we continue to demonstrate this love towards one another and look towards 2019, a verse that has been on my heart has been 2 Chronicles 16:9, *"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."* (NAS)

In seeking to have "a heart that is completely His," a practical step we will be taking as

Elders is to participate in the DayAndNight.org "fast" from January 7-16.

The focus of DayAndNight this year is: "The Church. Participants who sign up (it's free!) will receive a unique devotional each morning of the ten-day fast, featuring a passage of Scripture which speaks to God's desire for His Church. The devotionals will challenge Christians to consider ways in which we can both personally and corporately fulfil God's plan and vision for the Body of Christ."

If you visit the DayAndNight.org website, you will see that they have a passion for fasting. If you have questions about fasting, please feel free to ask Pastor Andy or any of the other Elders. For us, however, the point is not really about fasting or not fasting. Fasting is not a measure of our spirituality, and we will not be looking to prove our worthiness, earn God's favor, demonstrate our spirituality, or compare ourselves with one another. Rather, we will be using this time to seek God together.

Each individual who is led to fast, can choose the manner in which he or she might "fast" as a step of humbling themselves before God. It could be anything from choosing to abstain from desserts for 10 days, to not eating one meal a day, or any other expression one might feel led by the Lord to take. No one should feel "obligated" to participate in the fast. But our hope is that many of us will use the ten day period to find a meaningful way to express a desire to have our hearts be completely His, a desire to please Him by our faith and dependence on Him in the year ahead.

Would you consider joining us from January 7-16 in seeking to set our hearts so that they are completely His? I can only imagine what God might do as He strongly supports us.

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

A Lesson From History

Two years ago this month marks the two-year anniversary of our granddaughter Eleanor's emergency surgery when she was just nine days old. Although Eleanor appeared healthy at birth, she was born with a congenital condition known as malrotation. Her intestines did not form properly, leaving them predisposed to twisting. Such twisting makes it impossible to digest food and cuts the blood supply to the intestines.

No one in our family had ever heard of malrotation that morning two years ago. Ken and I were on a plane en route to northern Iowa to meet Eleanor. When our plane landed, we learned that Eleanor had been vomiting "highlighter yellow" fluid and had been sent to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, by their local doctor.

By the time we arrived at Mayo, testing was completed. We had a brief opportunity to meet our new granddaughter before the pediatric surgeon rushed her into surgery. Not more than an hour later he returned, joking about the bad coffee and reassuring us that Eleanor was just fine. He also commented that the surgery had been just in time to save her intestines. Eleanor recovered quickly and without complications. It is fair to say that her parents and grandparents took longer to recover from the event.



Several months later, Eleanor experienced another bout of vomiting. Again, "highlighter yellow" fluid. Her parents quickly returned with her to Mayo, where testing reassured them that Eleanor was "just" vomiting. During their follow-up visit with the doctor a couple of weeks later, he reassured them that once he "fixed" the malrotation problem, it remained fixed.

There are a few aspects to this part of our family's history that make the history quite relevant to the spiritual considerations that often accompany a new year. Although I am not a fan of New Year's resolutions, a new year is a good time to deal anew with our sin problem in the context of our faith.

Often, our sins are hidden from us, much the same as newborn Eleanor's medical condition. We seem like nice people. We don't lie, cheat, or steal. Nevertheless, we are fallen people in a fallen world. We are sinners. We need to come before the Lord and ask Him to reveal what we cannot see, the subtle and not so subtle ways we have failed to love. This is not something we can do ourselves. We need professional help, so to speak, to save us from our sin before it kills us. King David certainly appreciated the Lord's revelatory work in his life: "You have searched me and known me."

And just as Eleanor's condition needed immediate treatment, corrective measures must be taken once our sin has been revealed. Confession and repentance: a change in heart, thought life, lifestyle. Sometimes the corrective measures are dramatic, and spiritual surgery is necessary to remove the root of sin: "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your

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“A Lesson From History,” continued...

whole body to be thrown into hell.” Sin is serious and life-threatening and must be treated as such.



Finally, we must depend on the Lord’s forgiveness and His sanctifying work in us. Lingering guilt is one of the most potent weapons of our enemy, the accuser. But just as Eleanor’s surgeon fixed Eleanor’s problem, our

Redeemer has provided an ongoing and permanent fix to our sin problem: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We need not and must not rehearse our forgiven sins: when we do so, we presumptuously play God and focus on ourselves rather than on Him. Although we will undoubtedly continue to sin, we can continue to confess and repent and depend on the Lord’s forgiveness and redemptive work.

Living in a sinful world is tough, and our own sin makes it even tougher. But praise the Lord! He has not left us to die in our sins. Jesus died to cover our sins so that we can enjoy a restored relationship with Him. He has given us His Word and His indwelling Spirit to reveal our sins and lead us to confession and repentance. So while we do need to seek His professional spiritual help to correct what threatens our spiritual well-being, we no longer need to live in guilt and fear. Instead, we have the incredible privilege of living in faith before our Lord who became God Incarnate to die for our sins, who guides and guards us and is preparing us for our place in His kingdom.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or cbills@verizon.net) to continue the dialogue....

Perisseia:
***Godliness in the World—
Down and Dirty!***

All women are invited to join our women's growth group as we begin an eight-week series on *Godliness in the World*. We will be looking at what genuine Godliness looks like as we live out our faith in an increasingly godless world.

We will meet Thursday evenings, 7:00-8:30, in the Chapel House, beginning January 24. No commitment or preparation is required. For more information, please contact Cindy Bills (cbills@verizon.net; 609-275-8557).

2019 Congregational Meetings**Budget Information Meeting**

Sunday, January 13, 11th Hour

Please attend the Budget Information Meeting on Sunday, January 13, during the 11th Hour to hear about the Chapel’s finances and the proposed budget for 2019. This will be the time to ask questions in preparation for the vote on the budget at the Annual Meeting.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 27, 11th Hour

This will be a time to hear and celebrate in retrospect the events and activities of 2018, and to vote on the 2019 budget and leaders. Since a quorum of 50% of members is required, please plan to attend.

Believers Baptism

Baptism is an important step in the journey of a believer. It is an opportunity for believers to make a public profession of their faith in Jesus. Through baptism we identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If anyone is interested in a Believer's Baptism, please contact Pastor Andy or speak with one of the elders.

Higher Ways Part 2

By Janet Berrill

This past fall I planned a multi-day hiking trip with a friend of mine. We picked a strenuous hike in the mountains. Lots of rocks on the trail would provide many opportunities to twist an ankle or fall and get injured. As we approached the trailhead, I prayed that God would bless the time we spent on the hike, that He would keep us safe and injury free, and that He would deepen our friendship through this shared experience. As I was praying, the realization came over me that when I planned the trip I never asked God if it was something He wanted me to do. I just went ahead and planned it. And now I was asking Him to bless my time. It felt all wrong. I was asking Him to walk with me and bless my plans that I made without even consulting Him. It was like the clay trying to tell the Potter what to do.

God does not want to walk with us, He wants us to walk with Him. God is the One who should determine where we go and what we do. We cannot expect God's blessings when we choose to walk our own way, i.e., deciding what to do without even consulting God or asking Him if it is what He wants us to do.

Many people recommend when deciding what to do that we should follow our heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*" We cannot follow our hearts and expect them to lead us where God wants us to go. As I wrote about last month, God's ways and thoughts are so much higher than ours; as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts and ways higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8). When we go our own way, we are not going to go where God wants us to go and hence we cannot expect God to bless us.

In Matthew 11:29-30 Jesus says, "*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*" A yoke is a wooden beam used between two animals to enable them to pull together. Often when a young animal is learning how to pull a load, it will be yoked together with a more experienced animal who will teach the younger animal as it works alongside him. The more experienced animal, being older and stronger, will not let the younger animal go astray but will keep it on the right track so that the younger animal learns the correct way to do the work for which it is being trained.

Jesus invites us to be yoked to Him. We are invited to work alongside Him and learn from Him. He has to take the lead; He has to set the course. If we choose to do that, we cannot keep choosing to do things our own way. We have to submit to God's will for our lives and follow Him no matter where He leads us knowing that He is gentle and humble in heart and in following Him we will find rest for our souls.

What plans do you have for the new year? Are they plans you made that you are asking God to bless? Or are you waiting on God to reveal His plans for you for the new year? God's blessings will come when we walk beside Him and follow where He leads, not when we make our own plans and go our own way. I conclude by sincerely wishing each of you a blessed 2019, one in which you are yoked together with Jesus and follow Him wherever He leads.

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

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