

**Family & Friends..... December 14, 2022**

"Joy to the World" was written by Isaac Watts in 1719. Isaac was an English minister and hymn writer, and the lyrics are an interpretation of Psalm 98. The carol is usually sung to an 1848 arrangement by the American composer, Lowell Mason. Since the 20th century, "Joy to the World" has been the most-published and popular Christmas hymn in North America. Isaac wrote the words to this hymn by accident. He published a book of poems in which each poem was based on a psalm. But rather than just translate the original Old Testament texts, he adjusted them to refer more explicitly to the work of Jesus as it has been revealed in the New Testament. It is such a beautiful hymn and I am sure you will hear it a lot during this festive season. Instead of celebrating the birth of Jesus as many hymns do, the carol is all about Christ's triumphant return. Watts believed that all people should be able to celebrate Christ's return with a joyful noise. "And heaven and nature sing." To God Be the Glory!

*Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises. (Psalm 98:4)*

It is with joy we announce our visitors: Sandy Koneman (Garfield), Jo Davis & Karen Kett (Gravette), Steve & Denise Baer, Taylor Moore and Rhett, and Morgan Simpson; all from Bella Vista.

Those on our prayer list this week: Our heartfelt sympathies go to Bob Musson in the loss of Pat, Susan Duffy and Brenda Tucker in the loss of their fathers. Gene Geren suffered a stroke. Shirley Hale's daughter, Jackie Morris has stage four breast cancer that has spread to her lungs and lymph nodes. Tim Short has cancer and will be having surgery soon. Judith Carmical is now at home recovering after her hospital stay. Also continue to remember and pray for the LaPorte & Winslow families, Susan Duffy, Cameron Thorn, and Lee Horton.

Children's Home list: brown beans, salad dressing, Spam, popcorn, and green beans. Food Pantry list: Yams, stuffing mix, chicken broth, green beans, mushroom soup, French fried onions, turkey gravy, chocolate chips, cookie mixes, instant mashed potatoes, frosting/sprinkles.

Praise is the overflow of a joyful heart. Love you, stay safe.

*Karen*

**Bella Vista  
Church of Christ**

Highway 71 and County Road 40  
989 NW McNelly Road  
Bentonville, AR 72712

**Return Service Requested**

<b>LORD'S DAY</b>	
Early Worship	8:15 AM
Bible Class (Livestreamed)	9:30 AM
Worship (Livestreamed)	10:30 AM
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	
Ladies' Class	9:45 AM
Bible Classes (Livestreamed)	7:00 PM

**Phone: 479/273-2434**

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

**ELDERS**

Tracy Bowman.....479-899-3089  
Don Butcher.....636-548-0458  
Dallas Dobbs.....479-640-49439  
Perry Johnson.....913-707-8379  
Ray Reiss.....903-908-0203

**DEACONS**

Mark Bagwell John Bowman Chris Johnson Bryan Busbee Joe Hott Mike Spencer  
Randall Hunt Terry Roberts Aaron Sloan Tyler White Mike Martin

**MINISTERS**

Jeff Grisham.....479-531-9135  
Parker Willis.....615-587-3208  
Cory Spruiell.....501-941-4525  
Javier & Helmer Rosero.....Bogota, Colombia

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**Bella Vista**

**MEMBER**

**Looking Closely**

It really is a great time of year. We all have various activities and traditions around Christmas. There are parades, programs, and all kinds of decorations that are scattered all around our various areas. When the kids were smaller, one of our favorite things to do was to drive around and look at all the Christmas lights. Among the Santas and sleighs, the lights and trees, we would see nativity scenes displayed. We would often drive past and comment about how nice it looked, or admire the way it was set up, without paying much attention to what is actually communicated in that scene. What if we stopped and looked?

We see a couple with a newborn baby. We see a group of shepherds. We see what appear to be wealthy kings. We see three very different and disparate groups of people with little if anything in common. Yet, these are three groups of people that we find in the accounts of the birth of Jesus recorded in Matthew and in Luke.

Mary and Joseph, the young couple from Nazareth, were ordinary people on a their way to a life that was probably quite predictable. The shepherds were people who were just going about their lives in one of the least honored vocations of their day. Then there were the kings from the East, wealthy and educated who studied and watched for the fulfillment of prophecy. Three groups of people that we see in various scenes all around us at this time of year, all brought together by a singular event.

That singular event was one that had been in the works for centuries, ever since the fall in Genesis 3. That singular event consisted of an angelic messenger, an imperial edict, a miraculous conception and birth, communication to various people via dreams, the appearance of a star, and a chorus of angels making the grand announcement. All of this, plus many more acts of God of which we read throughout the Old Testament, brings together people from all walks of life with God in their midst. There are several things we need to notice as we look at that



first nativity scene.

We see the importance of stepping out in faith, trusting in what God can do. When Gabriel shows up to make the announcement to Mary, she really doesn't know what to make of all this. Who would? She was just told that she would conceive and give birth to God's son, that he would sit on the throne of his father David, and that his Kingdom would never end (Luke 1:26-33). After asking how this could be possible and hearing the explanation of Gabriel, Mary replied, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) She had no idea where this would lead. She simply said, "I'll do whatever you want me to do."

Joseph is another example of this kind of faith. Imagine being told by your fiancé that she is pregnant and that her child was the result of a miracle. It's no wonder that Matthew tells us that he wanted to "put her away." But when God communicated with him, confirming what Mary had said, "he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus." (Matthew 1:24-25)

We see the importance of being watchful. "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:1) We know little of these men. How far did they travel? Who exactly were they? We can tell that they were people who were expecting God to do something. They had been watching and waiting for the promise of God to come. As a result of this, they were able to witness a marvelous event.

We see that this event was good news for everyone; no one was to be excluded. The first to receive the announcement of the birth of Jesus was a group of shepherds (Luke 2:8-12). The shepherds, the least of society, are not only told of the event, but were invited to go and see. It wasn't just for the rich, the respectable, the religious, or even just the Jews. God sending his son is good news for all.

We see that God does all of this in order to be with us. The divide between us and God due to sin was something we could not resolve. God wants to be with us badly enough to show up as a vulnerable infant, born in a stable. I pray that this is what we see as we stop and look at a nativity scene. I pray that this is something that we remember every single day of the year.

-JEFF GRISHAM

## Accepting His Joy

God is love. It is a part of His nature. "This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us..." Gift giving originated within the heart of God... "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." Love and giving are inseparable.

**The Motive: God Loves Us.** We have so misused the word love until it has lost its true meaning. We love pumpkin pie because it tastes good. We love a member of the opposite sex because they are attractive to us. We love our country because of the freedoms it affords. We love mother for what she has done for us. But God loves for another reason: He loves us because we need His love and we can't live without it! Remove God's love from our world and we would have neither life nor salvation. If we could sustain ourselves, forgive and save ourselves, we would not need God's love, nor His gifts.

**The Gift: His Only Begotten Son.** The gift is proportional to the love of the giver. When it came time for God to give, He gave - not His cattle on a thousand hills, not silver and gold, not stocks and bonds, not lands and houses - but "His only begotten Son." No other sacrifice would do! "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption... How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences" (Hebrews 9.12-14).

God in heaven becomes flesh in a womb. He who is larger than the universe becomes an embryo. The Omnipotent Creator is born of a teenage girl. God is wrapped in swaddling cloth. Spirit becomes flesh, making Himself vulnerable to human weakness, sorrow, sin, pain and death. What a gift!! "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."

**The Condition Of The Gift: Faith.** This gift given by God is not for those who deserve it, not for those who earn it, not for only a chosen few, but for all who will respond to it by faith. The Hebrew writer plainly states that the blood of Christ flowed back from the cross toward Adam, and forward toward us, giving salvation to all who would step into its life-giving flow: "But now He (Christ) has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9.26).

Rejecting Christ nullifies the gift. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4.12).

Listen, the only gifts we will enjoy this Christmas are the ones we unwrap. Likewise, we must access the gift of Christ by responding to Him. Faith is what "unwraps" Jesus in our life: "unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." The Hebrews writer says, "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith," "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Let's not try to rewrite scripture or explain it away, but just accept God's gift on His terms through an obedient faith. Amen?

**Result of The Gift: Eternal Life.** I believe the Bible to teach that eternal life is more than just simple longevity. It also speaks to us about a quality of living: Eternal life versus eternal death. Lost versus being saved. Fear versus comfort. Death versus life. Perishing versus salvation. Joy versus sorrow. Happiness versus pain. Light versus darkness. Losing versus winning. Heaven over Hell. Fellowship with God versus separation from Him and His gifts. I hope you're experiencing Eternal Life during this Holiday Season, and are preparing to enjoy the Eternity of Heaven.

Please! Let me beg you to add genuine Joy to your life by acknowledging your faith in Jesus, accepting Him as both your Lord and King.

-RANDALL CASELMAN

From *Lifelines* December 18, 2019

### SUNDAY SERVANTS: 12/18/22

#### First Service

Welcome, Prayer & Scripture ..... Randall Hunt      Song Leader ..... Tyler White  
Greeters ..... Gary McCool, David Saunders      Communion Scripture & Prayer ..... Dallas Dobbs  
Closing Prayer ..... Bill Alumbaugh  
Nursery Workers ..... Jerri Dobbs, Tori Hunt

#### Second Service

Welcome, Prayer & Scripture ..... John Caylor      Song Leader ..... Mike Martin  
Greeters ..... John Bowman, Mike Johnson      Communion Scripture & Prayer ..... Jim May  
Closing Prayer ..... Tracy Bowman  
Nursery Workers ..... Wanda James, Debbie Martin      Van Driver ..... Bryan Busbee

#### December Worship Coordinators

Worship Coordinator ..... Mark Tucker      Streaming Coordinator ..... Kyle Dillard  
Audio Coordinator ..... Homer Makinson      Video Coordinator ..... Chris Johnson