

THE WINDOW

On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world.

December 2022

WAIT! Christmas is on a Sunday?!? by Jessica Schoepner, Dir. of Family Ministries

For many people, Christmas is filled with traditions: special meals, carefully orchestrated plans with family and friends, and favorite events that we look forward to all year long. That's how it is in our house, too.

In the first years of our parenting, Jason and I implemented traditions in hopes of helping our kids experience the truth that Christmas is when we joyfully celebrate Jesus coming to the world He created. We had figured out what worked for us: Bible truth + Santa fun = Christmas tradition. And then, six years into parenting, something happened that disrupted our pattern:

Christmas fell on a Sunday!

We had carefully balanced kids' needs, purposeful traditions, and family preferences and expectations. Then suddenly there was this unrequested/untimely interloper.

What to do?

It was helpful that year for us to hear from some just-ahead parents in our faith community who had used this teachable moment to help their children focus their faith in a new way. I am writing this in case it is similarly helpful for you, but what follows is an invitation, not a prescription. There are as many ways to nurture our children's faith as there are children and parents partnering with the Holy Spirit.

After weighing the possibilities, we decided to embrace this rare parenting opportunity and add in a once-in-a-while tradition. When Christmas falls on a Sunday (usually only 3-4 times during an entire parenting life cycle), we adjust our usual Christmas timing a little so we can get together with our faith family to worship the Newborn King.

The first year we had Christmas Sunday as parents, we had an infant, a three-year-old and a change-hesitant kindergartner. Going to church on Christmas morning took some preparation – physical and mental – and lots of communication.

If you're on the fence, I'd invite you to talk to that former infant, three-year-old or change-hesitant kindergartner about their experiences and memories of Christmas Day worship. They've been part of it three times now, so I was curious if and why they would make the choice to worship on Christmas. Here's what they told me:

"Worshipping on Christmas Day is special."

"It's a great way to keep the main thing - the main thing."

"It's a moment of peace."

"It's a time to recenter my priorities and focus on Jesus."

"Why wouldn't we?"

"It's a time to play games and open presents and spend time with our family and friends, so why wouldn't we spend the first part with the church family we love?"

"How cool is it when we get to worship Jesus together on his birthday?"

If you decide to join this special time of worship, here are some ideas of what you can expect, and a few ideas to help make it a success for your crew:

- • • • •
- **Christmas Day Unplugged** at 10:00 am will be a •
- simple, meaningful, church family time to worship •
- the Newborn King! Come as you are—casual and •
- comfortable. Kids in jammies are A-OK! •
- • • • •

GETTING READY

Communication is key:

- Your tone sets the tone. If you are excited about the opportunity, your kids will hear that. If it's an obligation, they'll notice that, too.
- Remember "people don't resist change, they resist loss" (Ronald Heifetz). Find out everyone's

very favorite part of Christmas morning. Adjusting timing is usually okay if it's done for a good reason and communicated well—but eliminating a favorite tradition will be a net loss.

- Decide which of the favorite things will happen before and after church.

- Communicate about what to expect early and often, answering new questions as they arise. Everyone likes to know what to expect. Be sure to have these conversations with extended family, if applicable.

Practically speaking:

- Figure out which things really need to happen before church to let your kids know that their wishes have been considered. For us, that meant opening stockings and one particular present that we knew would be exciting for them. Your route will be unique for your family.

- Let kids know what's coming after church. If you still have gifts to open or toys to be mastered, let them know that those are going to be waiting for them right after church and a hot chocolate bar (or whatever will help them process that there is more to anticipate throughout the day.)

- Let your kids bring a toy. For best results, help them choose something that will help them focus on God. A stuffie or a craft project will match your objectives better than a Nintendo Switch or a remote-controlled car.

- Grab a special Christmas morning worship bag on your way in.

- Sit where your kids can see and hear and encourage them to stand and sing. They'll know these songs!

- After the service, grab a cup of hot chocolate, wish your church family Merry Christmas, and then head home!



Christmas Sunday trivia: It's on a 28-year cycle, falling at 11, 6, 5, 6, and then again at 11 years... The next Christmas Sunday will be in 2033, when our kids will be 11 years older. So - I'd like to invite you to join in the wonder of a simple, kid-friendly

family celebration on this Christmas morning in 2022.

A final note to the adults in the pews:

- How good it is to be together as a church family!

- Enjoy the wonder of Christmas with kids around!

- Ask them what their favorite thing has been so far.

- Ask them what they are looking forward to next.

- Since not all families follow a Santa tradition, you might want to let kids bring up Santa (or not).

- In these conversations, **YOU** are specially positioned to help kids see that there is no divide between sacred Christmas and secular Christmas. When parents tell their kids that Christmas is about celebrating Jesus' birth, and you share a snippet of your celebrations, kids will learn that the people in their church family are also enjoying presents, food, songs, stories and time together to celebrate that Jesus is born.



Spiritual Correspondence

by Jana Prescott

"I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)

A book that Frederick Buechner wrote, "Telling the Truth," has some interesting thoughts about being truthful. So what is telling the truth? I'm thinking it's more than just not lying. There are times when those who want to be known as honest people find this is difficult. They may start thinking that in this world, even in their own life, being truthful and being honest seem to be on opposite ends of the spectrum. But to be followers of Christ, in honesty and in love, we all need to put being honest as our cause of being truthful in all we say and do.



"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him Who is the head, that is, Christ." (John 4:15)

December At A Glance

At West Hills our mission statement . . . On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world, provides us with the framework for how we live our lives. Here are notable activities this month in the life of our church, seeking to connect us to God, others, and the world.

Sundays:

- Crosswalk Kids and Youth will meet beginning at 8:50 a.m. in the lower level welcome area on December 4, 11, and 18.
- "Through the Eyes of Mary" Advent study on December 11 at 9 a.m. in the chapel.
- Christmas HymnSing! on December 18 from 9:35 - 9:55 a.m. in the sanctuary.
- Worship @ 10 a.m. is livestreamed and in-person. Following worship, join us for fellowship in Geneva Lounge. For those not attending in-person, we welcome you to watch the service by livestream at: whcomaha.org/live.

Monday Evenings - Open Play Pickleball! A weekly rotational play from 6-8 p.m. Come when you want, leave when you want. Invite some friends!

Tuesday Mornings - Men's Bible Study meets at 7:00 a.m. in the large conference room #182 in-person. The group studies the scripture passage for the upcoming Sunday sermon.

Wednesday Mornings - Women's Bible study at 9:30 a.m. in the chapel. This group is studying the book of Romans.

Wednesday Evenings - Men's Bible Study at 7 p.m. in large conference room #182.

Thursday Mornings - Women's Bible Study at 9:30 a.m. in the chapel. This group is studying "Women of the Bible; The Good, The Bad, and The Wicked".

December 9 - Cookies & Cocoa from 6:30-8 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. An all-ages Christmas event.

December 13 - Session meets at 6 p.m.

December 15 - Sloppy Joe Ministry Drop Off at the church. Come between 10-4 to the north circle drive and drop your cooked sloppy joe seasoned meat and hamburger buns in the bins. Make as much as you'd like. The food will be taken to the Stephen Center to be enjoyed by many!

December 18 - Getting To Know You Christmas Style at 9 a.m. in Fellowship Hall and
- Youth Chili & Caroling at 11:45 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Lunch, carol, deliver gifts, games & prizes!

December 24 - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 p.m.

December 25 - Christmas Day Unplugged at 10 a.m. A simple, meaningful, church family time to worship the Newborn King! Come as you are - casual and comfortable. Kids in jammies are A-OK!

December 30 - IGNITE! Youth serving our city during the day and neon fun at night! 9 a.m. - 11:59 p.m.

“With God”

by Rick Mason, Elder for Spiritual Formation

Some of you may know that I have become fond of a newer Christian author by the name of Skye Jethani. Skye is an award winning author and speaker and co-host of Holy Post Podcast, a weekly show that blends astute cultural and theological insights with comical conversation. He earned a Masters of Divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois and serves as a pastor in Wheaton, Illinois. Skye has studied numerous other religious sects and helps to build bridges of cooperation between Christian and other faiths.

In 2011, Skye published a book simply titled “With”. He suggested that there are four primary ways people relate to God. Those ways are either “Life from God”, “Life over God”, “Life for God” or “Life under God”.

He states “Life under God” suggests we seek to exert control over God through strict adherence to rituals and absolute obedience to moral codes. Perhaps we can put the Pharisees in that category.

In “Life over God”, Skye suggest that people believe the problems plaguing our world could be solved if we simply put divisive ideas behind us, religion being chief among them, and then work towards a more harmonious future. It's humanity living without God and free from the fearful superstition of religion.

On the other hand, “Life from God” we seek to control God in order to achieve our objectives. In other words, we praise God as if he were a magic genie, that if we are good in our faithful walk, we would expect God to be good in return – our primary purpose is to seek something from God.

Finally, “Life for God” we seek to please God through gracious acts of service. Always believing he needs more from us. In other words, we feel the need to serve our way into His good graces.

Skye indicates that God never expected us to fill any of the above relationships. Rather, we should be in “Life with God”. God made it clear from the beginning that he created man for that very purpose – to be in relationship with Him. God sent us Jesus – Emmanuel (God with us). Simple as that, God wants to be in relationship with us. His grace is good enough. We do not need to control him or have him control us – God is with us.

Skye tells us that the reason most people gravitate to one of the four postures is because they've never received a clear vision of who God is, and so they settle for something less. The one thing that prevents us from living with Him is sin. But God took care of that, that all we need to do is believe that Jesus came to bear our sin and justified us so we can be with God.



One sentence in this book really struck me. Skye says “Periods of silence become more common in our prayers as we entrust ourselves to God and seek only his presence rather than striving for a specific outcome”. **God WITH Us.**

I encourage you to read this book. Read it with your small group, read it with your family, read it on your own. I think your view of your relationship may change once you realize what God is really seeking from us.

November Session Notes

During the November Session meeting the elders:

- Approved the Designated Gifts Policy as submitted by the Finance Committee.
- Approved holding the December Session Meeting a week early on December 13, 2022.
- Discussed the membership review process.
- Discussed the proposed budget for 2023.
- Discussed practices around the Stewardship and Budget Processes.
- Noted the job description for the Worship and Music Director has been finalized. A job posting for the position will be out soon.

Reimagining Caregiving

by **Connie Huck,**
Deacon of Homebound Ministry

I moved to Omaha after college for my first job. I had a beat-up car and a studio apartment at first since I hadn't worked long enough to have much money. Fortunately, I lived fairly close to my grandparents who liked to feed me. After 6 months or so I found a roommate and moved into a bigger apartment. My second post college roommate was my cousin. She is creative and fun and we had a blast living together. One of the things she liked to do on Saturday mornings while I was working was rearrange the furniture in our apartment. I was amazed at her vision for reimagining our living space to make it more functional. Over the last few years at West Hills, the deacons have been rearranging our caregiving furniture as well. Historically, the deacons have been heavily involved in caregiving and while many parts to caregiving remain the same, we've moved people and ideas around to help us function more efficiently. We've also discovered that we truly need community to be most productive and we've discovered there are various technological tools to help with providing meals, homebound communion and other areas needing volunteers or donated items.



We also recognize that part of our community is currently homebound. What that means is that due to health, circumstance or living arrangements, many cannot leave their homes without assistance, and some cannot leave at all. It's difficult to be separated from our church community. The deacons at West Hills are working to find the best arrangement for helping Homebound Ministry. We are seeking people to partner with others who are Homebound by actively being in relationship with them thus bringing the church home. **If you are interested in becoming a Homebound partner, please contact the church office at 402-391-8788.**

Invite Friends and Family to:



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7pm

A traditional candlelight service at 7 p.m. with hymns and the telling of the Christmas story.



Christmas Day Unplugged
WORSHIP SERVICE AT 10 AM

A simple, meaningful, time to worship the Newborn King!

**Come as you are—casual and comfortable.
Kids in jammies are A-OK!**

Students...Get Ready for IGNITE!



IGNITE
**A DAY TO SERVE OUR CITY
AND A NIGHT OF NEON FUN**

SCAN TO REGISTER **WHO, WHEN, WHERE**

OPEN TO ALL MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MISSOURI RIVER VALLEY PRESBYTERY
DECEMBER 30, 2022
9 AM - 11:59 PM
WEST HILLS CHURCH 3015 S 82ND AVE OMAHA

Read at the Thanksgiving Eve service by Joanne Topolski

'Tis the night before Thanksgiving and we're in God's house
And just for the occasion I wore a nice blouse

Pies in the basement are being sliced with care,
And Kathy Padilla has asked me to share

My thanks let me list, I'll be done in a snap
Lord, Thanks for Your Word

The children and parents have all just been fed
Thanks for Community Nights, and Go Big Red

Thanks ever so much for my husband, so handy
And Heather, Jessica, Ricardo and Andy

Thanks for John Good . . . even when he's talking trash
If we ever need help, he's there in a flash

Now I'll confess that I really miss Kevin,
No doubt he's smiling and singing from heaven

God hears us, He sees us, our troubles he knows
He blesses our works, even the sloppy joes

Thanks for our health and friends and family dear
Thank You dear Lord that we have nothing to fear

Thanks for the Swing Dance and Labor Day picnic
InterVarsity friends are really a kick

Blessings so many I cannot really name
But from them and through them we give You the fame

Thanks for mission partners, close and far away
Abide, Cameroon, Young Life, Haiti, Westgate

Middle East, Ecuador, and soon under this roof
more little children when the rooms are fireproof

Thanks for our city, our state and our nation
Thanks for the hearts that serve You with elation

You teach us to rise above the divisions
And in Your strong name we have all provisions

Service to You, opportunities abound
Vacuum, answer phones, even help with the sound
Paint a door, bake a cake, make flowers take root
Thanks for our gardeners I give them Salute!

It doesn't count unless it's service with joy
And this is true for man, woman, girl and boy

And blessings of talents, there is no lack
For instance there's Peggy, with dec'rating knack

There's always treats, hospitality abounds
Thank You Lord too for the Geneva lounge

Thanks for our Elders, our Deacons, the Session
Thanks for forgiveness, and thanks for confession

Thanks for the old hymns and the new songs as well
And all the stories of Christ Jesus to tell

Thanks for smart phones, internet and the telly
Thanks for peanut butter and jars of jelly

Thanks for our chickens and all the eggs they lay
Thank you for fresh mercies with every new day

Mission team members Chris, Steve, Peg, Linda, Mike
VBS folks and Calvin Crest trails to hike

Stockings for shut-ins, lunches at the street school
Lord, everything You do is cool!

Once more let me say, I'm thankful for Terry
The love of my life, our days are quite merry

We thank you for all who gather in this place
May Your love and glory shine out of each face

There's too much to say, I will never be done
To tell the blessings of Father, Spirit, and Son

so...Happy Thanksgiving to all - to all good night
Go build relationships while we eat that pie!!

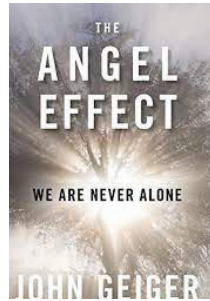


Ukulele Band Performance

Book Suggestions

by Debbie Chadwick

The book, "The Angel Effect: We are Never Alone" by John Geiger examines the question of the presence of angels in our lives.

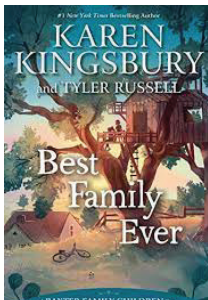


"The Angel Effect" is a compilation of true stories about people who the author believes have experienced the Angel Effect.

These stories include, "A Tucson woman involved in a serious car accident who feels the reassuring presence of a mysterious nun, a Christian missionary during the 1994 Rwandan genocide senses the ethereal protection of angels; a young couple on a treacherous midnight drive through a snowy pass are guided by a middle-aged cleaning lady."

The reader is asked, at the end of the book, to decide if the angels are Heaven sent, or are they products of the human brain, or are they both? The author states that he believes he knows the answer.

Author John Geiger is the author of five books, including bestseller, "The Third Man Factor: Surviving the Impossible". He lives in Toronto.



The "tween" book, "Best Family Ever" by Karen Kingsbury and Tyler Russell is the first book in the Baxter Family Children series.

The Baxter family is made up of three girls, Brooke, who is thought of as the perfect older sister, Kari, who is a great soccer player, and Ashley, a talented artist. This close-

knit family is always there for each other. But the girls find out that their father, Dr. Baxter, is moving the family to Bloomington, Indiana.

The girls now are forced to leave the only home and friends they have ever known. Saying goodbye is hard but the girls soon decide that what is most important is their faith and love for each other.

Authors:

Karen Kingsbury is a #1 New York Times bestselling author. In addition, her books have been made into Hallmark movies.

Tyler Russell sold his first screenplay, "Karen Kingsbury's Maggie's Christmas Miracle", which premiered in December 2017 on Hallmark.

Bible Quiz compiled by Gloria Zinn

1. What song did the angels sing to the shepherds when Jesus was born? A) "All hail the risen King" B) "Praise God the living King" C) "Glory to God in the highest" D) "Praise the Lord the risen King"
2. After Mary was told by the angel about her pregnancy she left to visit her cousin Elizabeth. How long did she stay with Elizabeth? A) three weeks B) three days C) three hours D) three months
3. What was the name of Elizabeth's child? A) Immanuel B) John the Baptist C) Zechariah D) Micah
4. Which angel appeared to Mary as well as to Elizabeth's husband? A) Michael B) the angel is not named C) Raphael D) Gabriel
5. Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem? A) because Joseph was a descendant of King David B) because a census was decreed by the Roman emperor C) because his parents lived there D) because he was told in a dream that his baby should be born in Bethlehem
6. Where were Joseph and Mary living at the time they left for Bethlehem? A) Nazareth B) Jerusalem C) Bethshan D) Hebron
7. What was the first thing the angel said to the shepherds? A) "don't be afraid" B) "I bring you great news" C) "the messiah has been born" D) "I bring you peace and joy"
8. What did the shepherds do immediately after seeing Mary, Joseph and Jesus? A) returned to their sheep amazed at what they had seen B) told everyone what had happened C) kept the birth a secret because they feared that Jesus would be killed by Herod D) stayed until the next day with Jesus, Mary and Joseph
9. Who named Jesus? A) Mary B) Elizabeth C) Gabriel D) Michael
10. Who told Herod of Jesus' birth? A) the Roman emperor, Augustus B) wise men from the East C) the Jewish religious leaders D) it was told to him in a dream
11. Where did Mary, Joseph and Jesus move after he was born? A) they stayed in Bethlehem B) they relocated to Jerusalem C) they moved to Egypt D) they moved to Damascus
12. What did King Herod do after Mary, Joseph and Jesus moved? A) killed all the boys in and around Bethlehem ages birth to two years old B) sent out a decree to find Jesus and his parents C) turned the problem of a Messiah over to the Jewish leaders D) decided to do nothing since the wise men never returned

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



DECEMBER

1-Zoe Dozier
Candy Glasgow
5-Wayne Moore
9-Joanne Topolski
11-Branden O'Hare
Mary Turner
15-Eddie Nelson
16-Bill Jansen
17-Jason Scheopner

19-Julie Burgess
20-Judy Pagel
Terry Sedivy
22-Michael Backer
Randy Hess
28-Bev Eckhoff
29-John Nelson
Mark Zimmerman

JANUARY

1-Nancy Chesire
4-Laura Meyers
6-Rick Westcott
13-Steve Burgess
Les Peterson
14-Grant Thomas

*The complete list of January
birthdays will be in the January
newsletter.*