

A photograph of a winter forest. In the foreground, there are several evergreen trees heavily covered in snow. To the left, there are bare, thin branches of deciduous trees. The background shows more snow-covered trees and a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

The **Messenger**

December 2015

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 TREASURED FAITH CHOIR @ WESTWARD TRAILS 10:30AM	2  	3	4	5
6 SUNDAY IN THE PARK   	7 HOMEBOUND MEALS	8	9   	10	11	12
13 VISION CLASS 12PM   	14	15	16   	17 	18	19
20   	21	22	23 NO WEDNESDAY NIGHT ACTIVITIES	24 OFFICE CLOSED	25 OFFICE CLOSED CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE @ 5PM	26 CHRISTMAS DAY
27   	28	29	30 NO WEDNESDAY NIGHT ACTIVITIES	31 OFFICE CLOSED AT NOON	OFFICE CLOSED	

Items of Notice

College Ministry

Women's Ministry

Legacy Ministry

Family Ministry

Student Ministry

THE LEAST LIKELY

BY PAT KELLY, LEAD PASTOR

I am always rooting for the underdog. It is the unexpected 'opponent', the least likely person, that gives me hope. And when they come out and win from behind...wow!

Is this not the story of Jesus' birth?

The prophecy of Jesus' birth declared in Micah 5:2, says: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."

The prophet Micah would call the least among the clans of Judah. But least, by no means, translates as insignificant.

- It is here that Jacob would gain a son and bury his beloved bride Rachel.
- Ruth would find refuge and hope in the barley fields.
- The prophet Samuel would find a king among shepherds.

And some 900 plus years later in this same place, shepherds would be looking for a King, in a manger. What a turn in history, what a humble way God would send His only son

A Lineage that would consist of prostitutes, murders, and kings.

A lineage of grace.

The least likely is often what stories are made of. It is the underdog no one expected.

It is the story of Christ Jesus "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:4-11).

Why Bethlehem? Only God could plan the least likely of places that no one was giving any attention to.

It is from the simple town of Bethlehem, where a Savior would be born. This simple town would announce our King!

This King makes all things beautiful!

Merry Christmas,

Pastor Pat


Pat Kelly
Lead Pastor



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JESUS ISN'T SANTA CLAUS

BY BECKY WEEMS, CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Walking into the holidays you begin to see all of the Christmas decorations go up, lights, trees, Santa Claus statues. I have always had a little bit of a hard time with the idea of Santa Claus. As a child, I always wondered if my naughty list was longer than my good list and if I was in balance. I felt like I needed to wake up in the morning and try to raise that good list because I had really messed up the day before? There was this mindset that my works determined my worth and I tried to please all those around me with the things that I did. Not only Santa, but I began to see God this way. I wondered if my sin was going to outweigh the good decisions I had made. The battle was within myself and honestly it led to the need to make sure it looked like I had it all together all the time. My faith in God was weak and I was not sure if I could truly trust a God that was pleased with me one day and upset the next. It was exhausting.

But then...God allowed many trials in my life and I began to see that whether I was faithful or not HE was faithful. This led me to dig into his word, and I began to learn how he had been also faithful to the Israelites, to Abraham, to Jonah, to David, and this list goes on and on. In my eyes at the time some of their naughty lists were much longer than mine...this had to be a good thing? Ha. Through the trials, I began to trust him more and more and as I was digging into scripture it was backing up how I saw God moving. I could stand behind him as he did the fighting with the lions, tigers, and bears right in front of me. I saw his faithfulness. I know that Goliaths will come, and He will ask me to trust even more as he fights for me. He isn't wavering. I can trust! Jesus no longer seems like Santa Claus to me but I call him LORD JESUS! I didn't need more faith but I needed the right perspective of Jesus.

I think we sometime have this Santa Claus Jesus in our minds that we don't fully trust and it keeps us from walking in the plan He has for us. In 1 Samuel, David says "The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of the Phillistine" God takes full responsibility for a life surrendered fully to Him. Christianity is not trying harder it is surrendering more. I can be myself, trust Him, and call him Lord Jesus!

Psalms 28:7 "The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.



Becky Weems
Children's Minister





CANTIQUE DE NOEL

BY BLAKE RUSSELL, WORSHIP PASTOR

I've always had a special connection with the hymn "O Holy Night." For me, its arguably one of the best Christmas carols out there, if not one of the greatest hymns ever written. However, its beginnings and history has been unique compared to many other songs written in the 18th & 19th century.

In the mid 1840s, in a small french town, Placide Cappeau de Roquemaure was the local poet. Shortly before Christmas, the parish priest requested that Cappeau write a poem for the church's Christmas mass. Cappeau himself didn't consider himself a faithful church goer, so surprised and honored, he agreed to write for the church.

On a trip to Paris, Cappeau penned the verses to "O Holy Night" by imagining what it would be like to witness the birth of Jesus Christ. As he completed the poem, he realized that it was not just a poem, but a song. Not being a musician, Cappeau enlisted the help of one of his friends, an accomplished musician named Adolphe Charles Adams. Adolphe Adams by no means was an active member of the church. In fact his family ancestry was Jewish, so the music he was to compose was to lyrics that he didn't even believe. Motivated by a good challenge, Adolphe Adams agree to write the score to "O Holy Night", and upon completion, "Cantique de Noel" was played and sung for the first time at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve 1847. The song spread quickly across France over next few years and was adopted by many in the Catholic Church. Soon however, evidence surfaced that Cappeau had walked away from the church, and Adams was a Jew. The leadership in the Church decided it was no longer appropriate to sing songs written by outsiders of the Church.

Nearly ten years later, while in France, an American writer named John Dwight ran across "O Holy Night." He recognized the deep theology in the song, but Dwight was also a staunch abolitionist during the turbulent time of the 1850s & 1860s when slavery was such a large part of American culture. He gravitated particularly to the third verse of the song where it reads "chains shall He break." Dwight brought the song back to the United States, translated it into english, and the song spread like wildfire, particularly in the North.

But the story didn't stop there. On Christmas Eve in 1906, Reginald Fessenden, a former chemist for Thomas Edison, used a special type of generator that allowed him to broadcast a voice over radio airwaves. These were the first words spoken on the radio:

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed..."

Radio operators all over the nation, surprised to hear a voice, not coded impulses, ran to their radio's and tuned in. After Fessenden finished reading the story of the birth of Christ, he picked up his violin and played "O Holy Night," the first song ever played across radio waves.



Blake Russell
Worship Pastor



JOY IN SUFFERING

BY KENDALL McDONALD, COLLEGE PASTOR

Greetings Fredonia Hill Family,

I pray your Thanksgiving was full of rejoicing and, well, thanksgiving. We are so incredibly blessed to have air in our lungs in order to pour out our praise to the King of Kings. No matter what we are going through or what our circumstances may be, we can pour out thanksgiving because He is ALWAYS worthy of praise and He NEVER changes.

Recently I was listening to an interview with Joni Eareckson Tada. She is a woman who had an accident in which her life was miraculously saved. However, the accident resulted in her being a quadriplegic. Her story is incredible and is well worth your time to investigate. She went through tremendous sadness and depression as she dealt with the reality of paralysis in her life. Through the ministry of friends and family she was able to come to truly worship God in her difficult situation. She has impacted so many lives with her story and is a tremendous agent of the gospel.

I wanted to share with you something she said in that interview which deeply struck me. In speaking about the profound mystery of life and how to deal with God in our most difficult days she said,

I would enjoin them [the listening audience] to walk with me, in my case wheel, into that mystery, just dive right into it. Don't expect answers but receive every inward and outward trouble and every disappointment, every darkness, every desolation, with both your hands because it is a blessed occasion of learning how to die to yourself and enter into a fuller fellowship with this God who is big enough to give you joy in the midst of the most gut wrenching heart-ache.

One of the things I have been pondering recently is how we so often separate the "spiritual" parts of our lives from the normal, everyday things. We are being spiritual when we read our Bible or pray but the rest of the day is pretty normal. When we feel it is necessary in a crisis or a time to share Christ with someone we switch back into spiritual mode. What if that's not the case at all? What if everything in our lives should be considered sacred? It's not sacred because of the place or because of the circumstance, it's sacred because of who is there. Psalm 24:1 tells us "the earth is the Lord's and ALL it contains..." There was never meant to be a separation between the spiritual things in our lives and everything else. Rather, God has given us His Spirit to know Him and experience Him in all situations we might face and in all places we might go.

This is the truth Joni Eareckson Tada realized as she pondered God in the midst of great suffering and it's the truth we must connect with if we are going to be people who's joy and thanksgiving is not robbed in the midst of trouble. If the presence of God is what makes something sacred, then, for Christians, every second of every day is a sacred opportunity to experience and praise God. Even in our greatest troubles.

May you be blessed as you discover this truth and as the mundane things in your life become supernatural!

Shalom,

Kendall McDonald



Kendall McDonald
College Pastor



GAME ON FAMILY EXPERIMENT

BY MATT MURRAY, YOUTH PASTOR

Over the last few weeks in the student ministry, we have been studying the life of Daniel. In any kind of competition or event, winning is almost always connected to how prepared you are. Though practice and the skill building may not seem necessary in the moment, when it's game on, those skills are what will make all the difference. Daniel was a young Jewish boy who encountered his game on moments over and over—moments he was able to thrive in because of how he had honed his faith skills. Daniel's life offers us a glimpse into just what is possible in our own lives when we become intentional about growing and developing a living and active faith in God.

Your student experiences so many influences each day. They receive messages from you—their parents, teachers, other students, media, ministry leaders, coaches and a variety of other sources. Do you ever wonder what is getting in? Whose voice do they hear the loudest and who has the most impact on their actions?

Despite all of the noise in their lives, studies show that students largely develop their ideas about God at home. Believe it or not, they are still listening to you, and not just when you're talking about spiritual things. They are listening intently when you talk to them AND when they hear you talk to other adults about money, relationships, faith, culture, and life choices. As a public high school teacher, I often engaged students in conversations that sound like this:

Student: The RIGHT way of doing (money, politics, marriage, etc.) is _____. Me: Why? Student: Because it's RIGHT. Me: Why?

And eventually we would end up at the same place. Because that's how their parents do it or say it should be done. Nearly 100% of the time students expressed "their" opinions in what was clearly their parents' language. Students take their cues on how to live from their parents more often than anywhere else. This is particularly true when it comes to our faith. The spoken or unspoken posture that we take toward Scripture, prayer, service, and worship will ultimately be the model our students use as how things "should be done". So how can you leverage your influence as a parent without resorting to lecturing or re-preaching each Sunday's sermon?

1. Partner with the student ministry. Just because you have a student in the ministry doesn't mean that you are unwelcome. In fact, both the church and the home are more effective when they choose to work on the same thing at the same time. Connect with your student's small group leader, be proactive in determining what they are learning and how you can engage your student in conversation about that topic at home.

2. Be transparent about your own faith. Talking with your teenager about faith doesn't mean that you have to have a perfect message prepared at all times. It also doesn't mean you need to have all of the answers. It's okay to be transparent with them about how and when you pray as well as what happens when you don't receive an answer right away. If you spend time reading Scripture, do so in a place where they might see you or ask him/her what he/she thinks a certain passage means.

3. Ask your teenager what he or she is learning. Silence doesn't always mean inactivity. Students process spiritual information in different ways. Just because your teenage daughter doesn't volunteer to tell you what she's learning at church doesn't mean she simply goes to see her friends. Often students simply do not know how to begin the conversation with their parents about spiritual matters. Simply opening the door can allow you to speak valuable words into their life. And remember, anytime you frame a question for your teenager, be willing to answer the question yourself. Your transparency opens the door to more transparency from them.

Here are some open-ended conversation starters to encourage dialogue between you and your student about faith. These can be asked at dinner, in the car, or anywhere that conversation flows easily. Remember to model the way by answering the question first and then asking your student.

- o What do you appreciate about God?
- o Where have you noticed God's activity around you?
- o How can we make God a bigger priority in our family?
- o How can God use our family?

Matt Murray
Matt Murray
Student Pastor





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Secretary's Reports

HONORARIUM

Dennis and Wilma Jones

Sr Adult Ministry

SYMPATHY

Gail Martinez loss of her dad, Bernard Brown

Bill LeBlanc loss of his wife, Joy

Wilma Jones loss of her brother

Teresa Figueroa loss of her step-dad

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Financials are available in the church office upon membership request.



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