

Life together

Olsburg-Walsburg Lutheran Parish

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Reflections by Pastor Keith

When I was a child, the longest month of the year was December. I couldn't imagine how long each day could be. The countdown would begin. Twenty-four days till Christmas. Twenty-three days till Christmas. Twenty-two days till Christmas. Those were very long days of waiting.

Years later, here I am, no longer a child, but still waiting. No longer waiting to untie the bows and tear off the wrapping paper. No longer waiting to see what treasures I will discover under the Christmas tree. But I am waiting. And waiting. And waiting.

Are you waiting? What are you waiting for?

Are you waiting for COVID-19 to be over? Are you waiting to be able to safely visit family again? Are you waiting for a cure for cancer or some other disease? Are you waiting to find a job? Are you waiting to graduate from school? Are you waiting for a child to be born?

Are you waiting for conflict around the world to cease? Are you waiting for the economy to improve? Are you waiting for the hungry to be fed? Are you waiting for the poor to get a break? Are you waiting for liberty and justice to be shared and cherished by all people?

Waiting! It is so hard to wait. Sometimes we get tired of waiting. We quit waiting. We give up. We assume nothing is going to change. We assume we are stuck in a crazy, chaotic, condemnable world. We think, "what's the use?"

Advent teaches us that waiting is worth while. It is certainly worth while when what we are waiting for is God! The people in the Old Testament had to wait a long time before the Promised Savior came! *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children."* (Galatians 4:4-5)

Christmas celebrates the coming of God to be with us, to save us, to help us! That is certainly worth waiting for!

Will this world always be like this? Fractured? Broken? Chaotic? People have asked this question for thousands of years. Central to Biblical teaching is that God has not given up on this world, but is actively working to restore it to how it originally was. That's what Jesus came to do!

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The New Testament book of Colossians says, *“For in Jesus all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”* (Colossians 1:19-20) Jesus comes to reconcile, to make peace. Jesus comes to mend what is torn and to fix what is broken. Jesus comes to heal and restore and renew all things, the entire universe, every bird and tree and mountain and star and every single human being - including you! In Jesus, God is putting it all back together! That is certainly worth waiting for!

We wait, but our waiting is not just sitting idly by. Not at all. Waiting for God is actively engaging in the work of God.

The book of Titus puts it this way: *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.”* (Titus 2:11-14)

What are you waiting for? I am waiting for God to make all things new! God will do it. God's new world is coming. It is worth the wait!

Keep the faith. Love God. Love others. Be the people of God!

Merry Christmas!
Pastor Keith

Words of Wisdom

While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger.

Life together - Luke 2:6-7

The angel said to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

- Luke 2:10-11

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

- Matthew 1:20-21

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

- John 1:14

Christmas is a time to celebrate that God loves you!

- Rick Warren

Silent Night

The organ at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf had broken just before Christmas in December 1818. Without an organ, what would the church do for music on Christmas Eve? The assistant pastor of the church, Joseph Mohr, and the organist, Franz Gruber, rose to the occasion. Mohr wrote eighteen short, simple, poetic lines, and Gruber set them to music for two voices, choir and guitar. The song was “Silent Night.”

The song is still sung everywhere people gather to remember the birth of Jesus. The images of the song infuse memories of Christmas Eve - the holy night when all is calm and birth; the holy infant, tender and mild, sleeping in heavenly peace; the angels singing, “Christ the Savior is born.”

“Silent Night is such a simple song, yet an unforgettable one - because it makes known the dawn of redeeming grace, the profound birth of Jesus Christ.

December birthdays, anniversaries, joys and sorrows

If you know of a member whose birthday is not listed, please contact the church office.

December Birthdays

- 3 Willa Erickson (O)
Blake Fronce (O)
- 10 Carla Hageman (W)
- 11 Beverly Sundgren (W)
Rita Nelson (W)
Alyssa Kulp (W)
- 15 Loree Allen (W)
- 17 Vern Bulk (W)
LaRae Kraemer (W)
- 18 Kylie Grater (W)
- 20 Brian Monser (O)
Garrett Olson (W)
- 22 Tom Nelson (O)
Brandon Rogge (W)
- 23 Anita Hinkle (W)
- 26 Heather Nelson (O)
Jeremy Hinkle (W)
- 28 Rick Johnson (O)
Kent Nelson (O)
- 29 Jerome Flohr (W)

December Anniversaries:

- 3 James and Janice Nelson (W)
- 22 Michael and Ann Ingham (W)
- 23 Valerie & Andy Hoehner (W)
- 25 Rich and Darnell Vargo (O)
- 30 Steve and Julie Strauss (W)

January 1-8 Birthdays

- 3 Darnell Vargo (O)
- 5 Gavin Hargrave (W)
- 6 Gary Holt (O)
- 7 Kenneth Neilson (W)
- 8 Julie Strauss (W)

Joys and Sorrows

- † We sorrow with the family and friends of Walsburg member, Milly Nelson, who joined the saints in the Kingdom of Heaven on October 30, 2020.
- † We sorrow with Walsburg members, Jennifer and Doug Byarlay, on the death of Jennifer's father, Max Porter, who joined the saints in the Kingdom of Heaven on November 3, 2020.

† We sorrow with Walsburg members, Anita, Jeremy, Jacob and Joshua, on the death of Anita's mother, Rita Gilbreath, who joined the saints in the Kingdom of Heaven on November 21, 2020.

† We sorrow with Walsburg members, Gary and Diana Hargrave, and Trenton, Lynn and Tyler Hargrave, on the death of Gary's mother, Norma Hargrave, who joined the saints in the Kingdom of Heaven on November 28, 2020.

† We rejoice with Lee and Roberta Hartford on the adoption of their new grandsons, Chance and Collin Galloway. These brothers were recently adopted by Andrew and Caroline Galloway.

Members in service

Olsburg

Thank you to these members for their service to the parish during December.

Walsburg

***Ushers and Greeters:** Jerome Flohr; Mary Kay Henry; Roger and Kathy Sundgren

Communion Ushers: Gary Hargrave; Jeremy Dick

***Acolytes:**

***Lay Assistants:** 12/6 Jennifer Byarlay; 12/13 Amber Befort; 12/20 Becky Nelson; 12/25 Rita Nelson; 12/27 Janet Neilson

Altar Committee: Roseanne Johnson

*If you are unable to be present for your assignment, please find a replacement and contact the church office so the correct name will appear in the bulletin.

Ushers: Jim Nelson; Nick Cooper; Gregg Gibson; Bill Monser

Communion Assistants: 12/6 Kristi Fronce; 12/ John Lowry; 12/24 Kirby Burkland; 12/27 Coleen Esping

***Acolytes:**

***Lay Assistants:** 12/6 Bill Monser; 12/13 Coleen Esping; 12/20 Ashley Rice; 12/24 Jan Cooper; 12/27 Kraig Kasselman

December Altar Committee: Coleen Esping

Worship In Our Homes

We are now worshiping in our homes. Because of the increase of COVID-19 cases in our area, the councils of our two churches have made the decision to suspend in-person worship at our churches. No one knows how long this may last, but we certainly hope that we will be able to return to worship in our churches very soon. Meanwhile, we worship at home.

We are making our Sunday morning service of worship available on each church's Facebook page. Some of you have been worshiping in this way for awhile. For others of you, this may be a new way to worship. We encourage you to join in congregational worship in this way.

Since we are not gathering together at church, we ask that you mail your offering to your respective congregation. You may mail it to the church directly or to the financial secretary at your church. The financial secretary at Olsburg is Alice Gibson (113 S. 1st St., Olsburg, KS 66520) and the financial secretary at Walsburg is Lynne Berry (14180 Crooked Creek Rd., Leonardville, KS 66449). Our work as the church goes on in many ways. Your financial support is needed and valued.

Stay Connected

If you use email, we would greatly like to add you to our church's email list. In this way you would receive the weekly bulletin, "Pastor Keith's Reflections," the monthly newsletter, and other congregational announcements.

If you are not currently on this list and would like to be added, give you email address to our parish coordinator, Shelly Burklund. Her email address is sburklun@ksu.edu.

Life together

Walsburg Sunday School Christmas Program

Despite the COVID-related challenges, the show must go on! The Walsburg Lutheran Church Sunday School will present a special Christmas Program, "Christmas-Then and Now" which will be emailed to all church members on Dec. 13. The program will feature a slide show with a live nativity skit, as well as pictures and videos of our Sunday School children sharing their Christmas joy and excitement. It will certainly be different this year, but we look forward to spreading Christmas cheer just the same!

2020 Walsburg Children's Christmas Program "Then and Now"

Back Row (l-r): Innkeeper, Macy Berry; Angels, Trinity Meader, Harper Befort; Wisemen, Kade Campbell, Brody Willimon, Ryker Befort; Shepherds, Hudson Henry, Joshua Hinkle, Jacob Hinkle

Front Row (l-r): Angels, Abigail Hagenmaier, Rhett Nelson, Teske Nelson, Koy Nelson; Mary, Izabel Nelson; Joseph, Mason Scofield; Shepherds, Trenton Meader, Jackson Hoehner

Not pictured: Rowdy Berry

