

THE GLEANER



Celebrations

Birthdays

Andrew 1/9

Rob P 1/15.

Linda G 1/24

Laura Lee 1/25

Paulli B 1/26

Jen 1/31

Anniversary

Mike & Sandi

1/20



COMMUNION

Jan 1, 2024

By Intinction

SESSION MEETS

Jan 9, 2024

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Jan 28, 2024

Wise Men Still Seek Him by Pastor Tony

As we stare 2024 in its infant face, we have to think about the year that's past.

I'm certain that for most reading this, it was filled with both good things, and not so good things. That said, who do you turn to in thick and thin? Who is the one, stable someone in your life that you can count on, day in and day out?

I hope and pray that the answer to that question is Jesus.

Jesus is the one constant in our lives, the One who cares so much for us and gave himself that we might live. When we realize the full extent of what Jesus' life, death, and resurrection mean for our lives, it changes our perspective, and helps us to be able to deal with each day as it comes to us.

It's been said that you can't worry about the past, because it is gone.

You can't worry about the future, because it may never happen.

You can only be certain of the present; it's all any of us have, at any given moment.

Jesus told his disciples, and he tells us, *"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."*

We can't worry about the past, and we need not worry about the future. It is secure in Christ Jesus. That gives us the freedom to live fully in the present, to take it fully in stride and to embrace it.

Not long after Jesus had been born into this world, wise men from the East found the place where he and his parents were living and paid homage to him. These magi believed him to be the King of the Jews that had been predicted by the prophets, and had sought him out for months, following a supernatural star that led them to where he was. It has been said, "wise men still seek him". Wise people still seek this King of kings and Lord of lords.

It's wise to be concerned, to seek to make wise decisions and to plan, as best we can, for what's ahead. That said, there are many things we may not be able to count on: Family, friends, security, finances, health, peace, or even life itself. But as we look at the New Year ahead, we can be certain of our Savior's love for us, for an eternal future that is secure in him, and we can trust him utterly with our lives, because he gave his life that we might live. Jesus said,

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will come back to you again. If you really loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, who is greater than I am I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe."

Believe the Good News: Jesus lives, Jesus rules, and Jesus intercedes for us before the throne of our Father in heaven. He will return to claim what is his, including those of us who believe in him. **Amen.**

Pastor Tony

Mission Report

As we close out 2023, I am struck by how much our little church has done in our community. We are a small group with a big heart. God has blessed us richly. We are not without trials. We have had to say goodbye to family which have gone to be with the Lord. Others are struggling with illness, no one said aging would be easy. We are here for each other. Thanks be to God for being with us through out our journey.

Rowdy Rooster/ Winlock Foodbank



The Foodbank continues to support more than 100 families in the Winlock /Vader area. As a replacement for the Annual Walk and Knock, the Winlock-Vader Food Bank's Drive and Drop was scheduled for December 2,2023. Community Members brought donations to the Food Bank. The Boy Scouts and other helpers unloaded the cars and sort the donations. This event helped stock the Foodbank before Christmas.

On December 13 there was a food distribution for Christmas supplies. The Foodbank was blessed with turkeys and spiral cut hams that they received from the Lewis County Foodbank Coalition. Community Members were able to get everything needed to prepared a Christmas feast. Santa came to the Rowdy Rooster.

During December an innovative fundraiser was launched to support the Winlock Foodbank. Cookie Trays were sold at the Rowdy Rooster. The Bistro is fast becoming famous for their baked treats. The Rowdy Rooster was closed between Christmas and New Years, giving a much needed rest to the Volunteers. They will be back open January 2, 2024.

Toledo Neighbors Program

On December 19,2023 at 6 pm Toledo Neighbor's held a public meeting at Neighbors' Hall. Starting December 30, 2023 Food Distribution was changed Saturdays from 11 am to 1pm. Food sorting and stocking starts at 10 am. A schedule for volunteers is being developed. Starting in December Neighbors is having a cleaning day the second Tuesday of the month from 3 pm until done. Thanks to LauraLee the Christmas Tree had lights. The meeting room in the Hall was beautifully decorated.

The Christmas Distribution happened on December 17, 1 to 3 pm. Santa and Mrs. Claus were on hand. Pictures were taken. Volunteers and Community Members had a lovely time.

More changes are in the works at Neighbor's Hall. The Board has been drawing up plans for a large garden in the field beside the hall. They expect to have community partners in this exciting project. An artist's drawing of the New Garden is posted on our Large Bulletin Board.

Next cleaning day is January 10 at 3 pm.

Nominating Committee

It has been rewarding serving on this committee with Gary and Kathy. Tony has been sitting in on our meetings and offering his opinion and prayers during our discussions. Our prayers have been answered.

I believe we will have 3 new members for Session. More information will be available at the Annual meeting on January 28th after worship.

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV

Your Sister in Christ, Paulli



"And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."
Hebrews 13:16

Treasurer's Report for December 2023

It's yet another month when your treasurer does not have complete financial information to report so we will look at the church treasury in general. After Session accepts the financial reports on the 9th of January, a report will be pinned up on the bulletin board in the elevator lobby. You'll also have an opportunity to see all the financial reports at the annual congregational meeting on the 28th of January.



What about a look at how our finance committee functions? First of all, Session appoints a treasurer. The treasurer then oversees the stewardship of the congregation's financial resources by insuring, first of all, that no *one* person is involved in every aspect of the process of "money in, money out". There are seven people who make up the financial committee, two of whom pair up every Sunday after worship to count the collection, make sure each offering is credited to the giver, and prepare the bank deposit. Then the offering is deposited in the Timberland Bank night deposit box.

The following day the treasurer picks up the deposit receipt from the bank and gets the collection information from a secret place in the church. The day after that Rebecca inputs the deposit information into QuickBooks and Donation and pays any bills for which we have received statements. (The treasurer/clerk picks up the church mail three times a week.)

Once a month the treasurer takes the bank statements and a thumb drive to bookkeeper Jess Blinebry who reconciles the statements and cleans up any problems she encounters. She also takes care of any "heavy lifting" the treasurer might come across. Usually just bookkeeping stuff. After a few days the treasurer picks up the reconciled statements and updated flash drive and the new information is restored to QuickBooks.

Once a year Dean Meilke from the Synod Mission Development Certificate Program drives down from the Seattle area to review financial records from the previous year. He then makes recommendations for the finance committee to implement in the future. So far, in this treasurer's experience, there have been no major issues, just a few suggestions regarding process. Dean's review gives us some assurance that we would be ok in the event of an IRS audit. Phew!

Please prayerfully consider joining the team in one capacity or another. We like to have members and especially elders involved, since a degree of discretion is certainly involved. Have a Happy New Year in Christ! Tom

Paulli B shared some photos of the Christmas Eve service. Also on our YouTube Channel.



THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Luke 2:19 Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Read Luke 2: 1-7

After all the joy of Christmas Day, the following day felt like a letdown. We'd stayed overnight with friends but hadn't slept well. Then our car broke down as we were driving home. Then it started to snow. We had to abandoned the car and taxied home in the snow and sleet feeling *blah*.

We're not the only ones who've felt low after Christmas Day. Whether it's from excessive eating, the way carols suddenly disappear from the radio, or the fact that the gifts we bought last week are now on sale at half price, the magic of Christmas Day can quickly dissipate!

The Bible never tells us about the day after Jesus' birth. But we can imagine that after walking to Bethlehem, scrambling for accommodation, Mary's pain in giving birth, and having shepherds drop by unannounced (Luke 2:4-18), Mary and Joseph were exhausted. Yet as Mary cradled her newborn, I can imagine her reflecting on her angelic visitation (Luke 1:30-33), Elizabeth's blessing (verses 42-45), and her own realization of her baby's destiny (verses 46-55). Mary "pondered" such things in her heart (2:19), which must've lightened the tiredness and physical pain of that day.

We'll all have "blah" days, perhaps even the day after Christmas. Like Mary, let's face them pondering the One who came into our world, forever brightening it with his presence. (Author: SHERIDAN VOYSEY)

Insight into Luke 2:15-20

Luke tells us that "all who heard" what had been told to the shepherds about Jesus' birth "were amazed" (Luke 2:18). In the gospel of Luke, amazement or astonishment is a recurring description of how people respond to God's actions (SEE 1:63; 2:33; 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:14). Amazement is the appropriate and natural response to His wonders. But such amazement isn't identical with belief. For example, in Luke 24:41, after Christ's appearance to His disciples after His death, we're told "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement." It's possible that Luke emphasizes that "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (2:19) to capture the value of not only reacting with amazement but also continually and daily wrestling with the realities of what God is doing. Luke's comment on Mary's pondering could also indicate Luke relied on her testimony (SEE 1:2-3) for his account of the shepherds.

(Author: MONICA La ROSE)

When are you prone to feeling a "low" after a "high"?

How can you ponder today all that Jesus has brought into the world?

Dear Jesus, I praise You for entering our dark world,

Forever brightening my days with Your presence.

Reprinted from: OUR DAILY BREAD DEVOTIONAL Submitted by Becky Vango

Bible Verses on Hope and Renewal

Lamentations 3:22-23: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Isaiah 43:19: Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Romans 12:12: Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Christian Quotes on Hope and Renewal

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." – C.S. Lewis

"God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile." – Max Lucado

"Hope is the anchor of the soul." – Saint Augustine.

"Hope is a great gift that God gives us. It is the light that guides us through darkness, the strength that keeps us going, and the joy that fills our hearts." – Pope Francis .

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." – Nelson Mandela.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Another thank you to Kathy for filling in for me the day of Christmas Eve and I am very sorry to have missed Christmas Eve after seeing the video. And speaking of Christmas, thank you to all who shared our postings on Facebook. It makes a big difference in our outreach.

2023 was very busy as I have mentioned in the past months of the Gleaner. Our Instagram followers have increased from numbers in the 60's to the 80's. I think we are doing alright in all our media endeavors and we are working very hard. Please let me know if you have any suggestions. Complaints go into the Complaint Box (Whaaat? There is a Complaint Box??)

As always, thanks to our team of Kathy, Tana, and Tony too. And thank you to you who contribute. It wouldn't be any good without you. Peace be with you & Happy New Year, Chris.