

Another Word December 7, 2021

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

As we journey together through Advent, here are 3 symbols to carry with you about this glorious season. The cutting down of the Christmas Tree represents the death of Christ. Putting it back up and decorating it with lights represents His Resurrection. The wreaths that adorn our houses are never ending circles that represent everlasting life. And then, there are the candy canes. They are made in the shape of a shepherd's hook to remind us who were the first to hear of our Savior's birth. Their colors are significant also. White is to represent the purity of Jesus, and the red stripe is the blood He shed for us. Many candy canes have 3 red stripes, which are a symbol of The Trinity. And you thought they were just decorations and a sweet treat!

Be sure to join us for our Christmas Eve service, December 24th, at 7pm. If you need a ride to the church, please call the office for arrangements.

Our Scriptures for this Sunday are: Isaiah 40:1-5 and Malachi 3:1-4, read by Elder Linda Gardner. The New Testament reading is Luke 1:39-63 read by Jan Robinson. Our lesson's title, "Two Mothers Meet."

This Sunday is the Third Week of Advent. The Candle of "Joy" will be lit by Monta Donelson.

As we enter into this time of prayer, please remember Karen, John, and others who are facing surgeries or fighting physical ailments. Also, please remember the countless thousands whose lives were forever changed by the attack on Pearl Harbor, 80 years ago today. Let us pray for Peace in our world.

Loving God, creator of life, Holy is Your name and wonderful are Your deeds. We await with great anticipation the celebration of the birth of Your Son as well as His second coming! But, until then may You find us faithful and willing to reach out to our neighbors in love and kindness. We lift up to You our friends and family in need of healing. May Your strength and comfort give them peace. Thank You for Your gift of life and blessings, and may we always be bold in our commitment to You. As we live by faith, and walk in hope, may the world be renewed with Your love. In Jesus' name, the perfect name we pray, Amen.

The second candle on our Advent wreath is the candle of "Peace." Peace, like Hope, is a word we use a lot, and in many different ways. In the 60's, "Hippies" held up 2 fingers and said "Peace, Man!" That peace was a declaration to drop out of society and to "do your own thing." Today we say, "just leave me in peace," meaning don't bother me. That's a far cry from "Grant us Peace."

To have peace means to find calm, harmony, quiet, and stillness. And to have freedom from strife; freedom from war. A life and a heart without peace leads to anger, loneliness, despair, and hopelessness.

Proverbs 14:30 states, "A heart at peace, gives life to the body." The Christmas Carol I have chosen, and the story behind why it was written, exemplifies this simple but profound Proverb.

The author of our Carol was a Harvard professor and one of America's great writers in the mid 1800's. Life was good, but war clouds began to gather over his life and nation. In 1861, just as the Civil War broke out, his wife tragically died when her dress accidentally caught fire in their Massachusetts home. Two years later, his son, 17-year-old Charley ran away from home and joined the army. Charley was a good soldier, but in the following year contracted typhoid fever and malaria, and was

sent home to recover. That August, Charley was sent back to fight, and on November 27, 1863, he was wounded and almost paralyzed. In early December, Charley again was brought back home to his father who constantly sat by his side, nursing him back to health.

On Christmas Day, 1863, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow vented all the trials and emotions that had built up in him over the past 3 years.

As he sat at his son's bedside, the church bells began to ring, ushering in another Christmas Morning. And that is when true peace overwhelmed him. That is when he found, calm, stillness, freedom from strife; freedom from war. His heart became "filled with peace, and gave life back to his body." That morning, he wrote one of his most famous poems, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day."

The following are Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's words. They were rearranged to fit music written by Mark Hall and Dale Oliver. (This is the arrangement Brian and I sang last Sunday.)

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"

(Based on the recording from the Casting Crowns album "Peace on Earth")

I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old familiar carols play. And mild and sweet, their songs repeat, of peace on earth good-will to men. And the bells are ringing, like a choir they're singing, in my heart I hear them; Peace on earth good-will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head, there is no peace on earth I said. For hate is strong and mocks the song, of peace on earth good-will to men. But the bells are ringing, like a choir they're singing, does anybody hear them? Peace on earth good-will to men.

Then rang the bells more loud and deep; God is not dead nor doth He sleep! Peace on earth, peace on earth.

The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men.

Then ringing, singing on their way, the world revolves from night to day. A voice, a chime, a chance sublime of peace on earth good-will to men.

And the bells they're ringing, like a choir they're singing, and with our hearts we'll hear them, Peace on earth.

Do you hear the bells they're ringing? Like the angels singing, open up your hearts and hear them, peace on earth, good-will to men.

All of us at times, feel helpless; in deep despair. I pray that you, like Henry can always find "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding. The peace that will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ." (Philippians 4:7)

In His Peace,

Rich