



CHRISTMAS RECITAL

**IN MEMORY OF SHIRLEY LYONS WILL
BE HELD:**

**DECEMBER 7, 2014 AT 5PM
COLLBRAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

THE MUSTARD SEED, THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
COLLBRAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
P.O. BOX 160
COLLBRAN, CO 81624

DECEMBER 2014

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C L E R I C A L
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Christmas
"plus"
Advent

My understanding of Christmas was shaped basically by growing up in the late-40's and 50's in the Midwest. I have fond memories of my family's holiday traditions, but it wasn't until I went to seminary and then began to serve churches in the 70's that I discovered just how parochial, maybe even myopic, my family's understanding of Christmas really was....

For example, it wasn't until I was in college that I had any understanding that there was a *Season of Advent* — a four-week period of time before Christmas that helped us prepare for something other than the consumer-driven holiday that is Christmas even today for the majority of people in our culture. When Wal-Mart employees begin moving artificial trees and decorations into their stores in early October, any meaningful, *spiritual* preparation for a celebration of Christ's birth is almost literally pre-empted by such economic realities! These

days it's as though you have to live simultaneously in two time zones as you attend church and attend to daily life. Unfortunately, the green and purple Advent Wreath doesn't hold a candle to an eight-foot, magical, tinkling lighted, baubled Christmas tree!

Once I began to do "*intentional interim ministry*" in the mid-80's, I experienced an even greater variety of customs and practices as I moved from one congregation to another nearly every year or two. At First Pilgrim Congregational Church in Kansas City, KS, I remember having coffee and conversation with Lloyd Wilson — a very Scottish gentleman — who said he would not permit his family to cut and decorate a Christmas tree until Christmas Eve; and they always took it down on Epiphany at the conclusion of the "*Twelve Days of Christmas*," all according to the custom in the "*Old Country*."

I suspect that those old traditions trace their origins to a time when Christmas trees had real candles — something that was and still would be very dangerous. So you wouldn't want to have candles on a desiccated evergreen tree any longer than necessary.... Moreover, well into the 19th Century it was believed, in Catholic circles at least, that if you removed your evergreens and Christmas decorations before February 2nd — the feast of Candlemas — someone in your household would die before next Christmas! So decorating too early can be hazardous to your health and *undecorating* too early can be dangerous as well! (*Some more liberal interpreters held that you could remove your decorations on or after the Twelfth Day, or Epiphany, without fear of a curse or bad luck.*) Sometimes it is difficult to separate the superstitious *chaff* from the spiritual truth in the *wheat*....

Whatever your family's traditions and practices are I hope they help you celebrate Christ's birth with a spiritual focus and meaning. The Season of Advent which begins this year on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, November 30th, is designed to help you and your family — nuclear or extended — do just that. The Advent themes of "*hope, anticipation, preparation, expectation, journeying, and patience*," helps us to be more aware and grateful for the "*joy, peace and love*" that are so central to Christmas. I hope to have some **ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS** available by the end of the month to help you along your Advent journey to Christmas.

This has been a kind of seasonal potpourri of ideas about the Season of Advent. I look forward to sharing all but the first Sunday of Advent with in worship!

Godspeed,



Advent Devotional for 2014

Tear Open the Heavens: Advent Devotional 2014 from the Stillspeaking Writers' Group is 40 pages of unique devotionals that encourage you to cry out for deliverance and celebrate the answer to that cry. God did tear open the heavens and come down, but not in the way anyone predicted: in vulnerable flesh to love, heal, and suffer with us as one of us.

Devotional books have been ordered and can be picked ^{up} at services at the Congregational Church.

Soup Supper and Tree/Sanctuary Decorating - November 30, 2014 at 5:30 pm

Please plan on attending the soup supper at 5:30 pm on Sunday, November 30, 2014. Decorating the tree and sanctuary will follow. Please bring the kids. We will be done in time for a school night bedtime. Soup will be provided. Please bring a small amount of crackers, cheese, or dessert.

Sunday School plans for December

The children in Sunday School will be learning the Christmas carol, The Birthday of a King, to sing for the congregation during the Christmas season. We will be celebrating Advent with candle lighting and scripture. The birth of our Lord is the culmination for the month long study in song and stories. Crafts will relate to the season.

CHRISTMAS RECITAL DECEMBER 7, 2014 5PM AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The recital program is taking shape. We are missing some of our long time participants. Please encourage anyone you know, that would like to participate, to contact me at 487-3474 or on the Plateau Valley Communities facebook page. I would be happy to accompany students that might like to play an instrument they are learning at home or playing at school. We will have to arrange practice time so please call as soon as possible.

A reception will follow the recital with cookies, coffee, tea, and hot cider. Please plan on attending. MERRY CHRISTMAS!!

TEAR OPEN THE HEAVENS | ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2014 (THE STILLSPEAKING WRITERS' GROUP)



5-Pack - \$15.00

Tear Open the Heavens: Advent Devotional 2014 from the Stillspeaking Writers' Group is 40 pages of unique devotionals that encourage you to cry out for deliverance and celebrate the answer to that cry. God did tear open the heavens and come down, but not in the way anyone predicted: in vulnerable flesh to love, heal, and suffer with us as one of us.

Devotional titles include:

- OMG, Isaiah!
- Apocalypse Not Now
- Jesus Goes to Hell
- I Must Stop Christmas from Coming. . .But How?
- A Brood of Snakes
and more

FREE preview here.

Tear Open the Heavens begins Nov. 30 and can be used each day of Advent in individual or group settings.

5-pack - \$15.00 (plus shipping) The best value if you'd like multiple copies!

Single copy - \$6.00 (with FREE shipping)

Click here to purchase the 2014 Advent Bundle, which includes one 5-pack of *Tear Open the Heavens: Advent Devotional 2014* and one copy of *Essential Advent: Holy Moments and Sacred Experiences for Your Whole Congregation*.

9 THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD DO WHEN READING THE BIBLE

A few simple habits to build into your Bible reading.

By bronwyn lea

Very few of us have the inclination or interest in diving into three years of seminary education in order to get a better handle on the Scriptures. However, every believer should long to get a better grip on the Bible. The good news is that it does not require a graduate education to do so.

At seminary, I learned Greek, Hebrew and all manner of intimidating subjects ending in -etics, but some of the things that have stayed with me most clearly were not things from textbooks, but off-the-cuff comments from teachers who had walked with God far longer than I had. They were post-it sized truths, easily understandable and readily applicable. Years after graduating, these are the things I still remember.

1. Read 'King' When You See 'Christ.'

Christ, or Messiah, means "*anointed one*," and priests and kings were anointed. Substituting "*King Jesus*" for "*Christ Jesus*" when reading draws attention to the fact that Christ was not Jesus' last name, but in fact His title: one of great honor and esteem. Making that one switch alone breathes new life into reading the New Testament.

2. Read 'You' Differently.

Almost all the "*you*" words in the New Testament are plural you's rather than singular you's. The Southern "*y'all*" expresses it beautifully: the epistles are written to believers corporately, not believers alone. This does not diminish personal responsibility at all, though. If anything, it heightens it: we pray together, believe together, suffer together, raise the armor of God together. All y'all.

3. IF YOU SEE A 'THEREFORE,' FIND OUT WHAT IT'S THERE FOR.

Therefore, take note in bibles where paragraphs are divided up with headings inserted by editors. If the paragraph begins with "*therefore*," you might have to pick up a bit earlier to understand the context.

4. REALIZE THAT NOT ALL 'IF' STATEMENTS ARE THE SAME.

This was a watershed one for me: not all "*ifs*" are the same. Conditional "*ifs*" are not the same as causal "*ifs*." Some IF statements are always tied to the THEN one (if you stand in the rain, then you will get wet). Others have more risk involved: the IF statement is necessary, but not sufficient, to bring about the THEN one (if you study for an exam, then you will pass).

This makes the world of difference in studying Romans 8: "*If you are led by the spirit of God, you are children of God.*" I had always read that and been afraid I wasn't spirit-led enough to be considered God's child. It was a glory-hallelujah moment to realize this was the first type of if: "*If you are led by the Spirit of God (and you ARE!), then you are also always and forever His child.*" What a difference!

5. RECOGNIZE THAT LAMENTING IS OK.

Yes, there is joy and peace and hope in Christ. But true believers still mourn and lament. There is space in the life of faith for complaining, tears, grit and depression. Just look at the Psalms.

6. REALIZE THAT PROPHECY IS MORE OFTEN FORTH-TELLING THAN FORE-TELLING.

So often, our focus in approaching prophecy is to ask “*what did they say about the future?*” However, often the prophets weren’t talking about the future (foretelling), they were explaining and interpreting Israel’s history and current predicaments in light of their covenantal behavior (forth-telling), and had little to do with the future. Israel may have painfully aware that they had just suffered military defeat at the hands of the Babylonians, but it took the prophet’s words to explain from God’s perspective why this had happened and what lessons they were to learn from their experience. Poor old Jeremiah.

7. BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE IDIOMS OF YOUR KING.

Jesus’ words were so often hard to understand: cryptic, in parables, couched in Hebrew idiom. He spoke of eyes being lamps and people being salt: language often so far removed from my understanding it was tempting to skip over the gospels to the much more familiar epistles.

However, if we have called Jesus “*King*” and “*Lord*,” we dare not skip over His words just because they are hard. Commentaries and a little Internet research on the gospels go a long way towards filling in some of the cultural and linguistic blanks. As his followers and servants, it is our responsibility to keep on seeking understanding.

8. REMEMBER WHAT YOU LEARNED IN ENGLISH CLASS.

The Bible is not an instruction manual. It’s not a “*how-to*” book for life. It is a collection of 66 books of literature, and to interpret it correctly, you need to remember what you learned in English class about interpreting different genres of literature.

Biblical truth is found in poetry, but we must read it as poetry. It is found in narrative, but we must read those as stories. It is found in proverbs, and we must treat those as such. Just a quick moment to think “*what book am I reading from? And what type of literature is this?*” can make a world of difference. Truth be told, the Bible is not an easy read, but it is absolutely worth the effort.

9. READ TO STUDY. BUT ALSO, READ TO REFRESH YOUR HEART.

Amid the hours of serious Bible study, I treasured this advice. Sometimes, we read to study and understand and wrestle with the truth. But sometimes, we read to make our hearts happy. “*Delight yourself in the Lord,*” for “*your words are sweeter to me than honey.*”

Birthdays for December
 Glenn Stoll
 Ben Hayes
 Kane Gunther
 Rick Gunther
 Jeannie Reeves
 Jennie Reiners
 Wyatt Rollins
 Peggy Shiflet
 Evonne Stites

Anniversaries for December
 George and Nancy Currier
 Jim and Deane Cole
 Rick and Toni Gunther
 Dick and Mavis Hess
 Gene and Deloris Scott
 Kurt and Shonie Thompson

BIBLE QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Elisabeth (Luke 1:5)
2. Rachel (Genesis 30:14)
3. Martha (John 11:24-26)
4. Mary (Luke 10:39-42)
5. Mary and Martha (John 11:32-39)
6. Peter's (Mark 1:30-31)

Women's Fellowship had a very successful Turkey dinner and even though it was so chilly, we had a nice crowd. Many thanks to the ladies that spent so much time in cooking and serving the dinner. We also thank the many people who contributed the pies and deserts. The town's people have never let us down. Our next meeting is 9th of December at 10:00 a.m. in the church basement. We wish everyone a wonderful Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year.

The Noisy Offering for December is the Christmas Fund which goes to the retirement accounts for our pastors. I know this is the most busy season of the year but we hope you will come to our events like the Recital and the soup supper and decorating the tree and enjoying the comradeship of our fellow neighbors.

BIBLE QUIZ

NOTABLE WOMEN, AND SOME LESS NOTABLE (III)

1. What New Testament woman was married to a priest named Zacharias?
2. Who begged her sister for some mandrakes, hoping they would help her bear children?
3. To what woman did Jesus declare, "I am the resurrection and the life"?
4. Who sat at Jesus' feet while her sister kept house?
5. What two women witnessed Jesus' tears over their dead brother?
6. What disciple's mother-in-law was healed of a fever by Jesus?



SERVING OUR COUNTRY



Andrew Bellotti
 Adam Brown
 Corey Martla
 Kimberley Schneider
 Kandiya VanMeter

Jason Lachinet
 Chris Box
 Jason Hallott
 Chad Schneider
 Sarah Tressel

Elijah Brito
 Tony Clements
 Jake Harris
 Justin Cady
 John Lloyd

Mark Lachinet
 Du Schaman
 Alan Salamanca
 Eric Duffall

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily into the back of the fence lessened and finally, one day passed when he did not hammer a single nail.

His father was very pleased and said to him, now come with me. He took him to the back of the fence and asked the boy to remove all the nails. Several days went by and finally the boy said to his father - all the nails are gone now.

The father was pleased and said to him, lets go and look and they both saw the number of holes in the fence. The father told him the holes represent all the nasty times you lost your temper and now how does the fence look to you? The boy realized he had nearly destroyed the fence and said he was so sorry he had pounded so many holes and that it didn't look very good at all.

The father went on to say, the fence will never recover from what you have done and will look bad until someone replaces the entire fence. It's like a person who has been insulted by your bad humor. The scar will always be a reminder to them that you were so mean to them. No matter how many times you say you are sorry, there is still a scar in their hearts and the wound will still be there. Remember that friends are very rare jewels. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. Do not hurt your friends and be mean. Please remember to treat everyone you know as nice as you can and then you will have a great number of friends. This also applies to your family members. They need to know that you love them too. Now, you are my friend and I love you and I am honored to be your friend.

Please forgive me if I have ever left a hole in your fence. !

Forgiveness and understanding, that's a beautiful combination. Garrison Keillor

Never get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life. Dolly Parton.

Tact is the ability to tell someone to go to hell in such a way that they look forward to the trip.
Winston Churchill

Life itself cannot give you joy unless you really will it!
Life just gives you time and space, it's up to you to fill it! From the Sunday Sentinel

May you always defiantly resist the aging of your spirit.
No hour of life is lost that is spent in the saddle!
Winston Churchill

My aim that when my hands will work no longer, that the work of my hands will still continue to keep on working.

**With God All
Things Are
Possible**