

# The Reporter

## December 2022

The Reporter

Volume 20, Issue 07

### “Gift Exchange?”

by Pastor Proeber

Christmas is a time of exchanging gifts, greetings, and good wishes. The greetings and good wishes seems to last, and always continue to brighten our days long after Christmas. The exchanging of gifts sometimes doesn't work as well. I think everyone has received one of those “gifts.” The ones you really don't want or need, yet you receive them with thanks and appreciation. Sometimes, you may even say, “Oh, you shouldn't have.” While you may conjure up some semblance of appreciation, you still feel, what am I going to do with this? You could “regift” it, but what if somehow it ends up with the original giver? You could put it into the back of the closet, but the space is already full of similar gifts. You could possibly throw it away, but again, what if the giver asks, “What ever happened to that gift I gave you?” There is one final option. It could be exchanged for something else.

It used to be the return and exchange departments were the busiest places in the store after Christmas. This has changed with greater online purchasing. Still returns are pretty common. The wrong size. The wrong color. Maybe the gift was just wrong. So, an exchange is planned and made. It might be for credit, or it might be for a different gift more to one's liking.

Exchanges can be simple. They can also become complicated. We always hope for the best, and with rare exception, they usually work out.

At Christmas there is one gift we already know we are receiving. It is the gift of God the Father, namely his Son, our new-born Savior. There is no other gift which can compare with what God the Father gives. It is perfect, complete in every way. Still, some who receive this gift exchange it for something else. It may be intentional, or it may be unintentional. It happens though. Sadly the exchange typically happens prior to the celebration of Jesus' birth, and it reaches its zenith on the day of. People who hold the gift of Jesus in their hands make the decision to exchange this gift for what the world offers.

Now there is nothing wrong with celebrating Christmas, as long as we don't exchange what is important for what is superficial. Gifts, decorations, trees, parties, dinners, and a myriad of other things are on our minds. We grapple to find enough time, and we fret because we might not be ready for Christmas. But is this what Christmas should become? Is this what the birth of Christ should be? If it is, we have just exchanged God's great, indescribable gift of grace for a few trinkets, some bright lights, and fleeting joy.

*Continued on page 2*

#### In this Issue:

2018 Thanksgiving Celebration	3
Decorating & Chili	4
In Our Prayers	4
Outreach Opportunities	5
Notes & News	6
Ladies Christmas Get-together	6
Reporters & Meetings	7
December Birthdays	7
Christmas Schedule	8
December Calendar	

*Exchange, from page 1*

It's no wonder, depression and disappointment rates tend to soar around Christmas. It is also interesting to listen to people air their comments, "I thought this year would be better, or at least different." We have to be honest. Without Jesus Christ Christmas is nothing more than the world's pressure to spend money, to over plan our schedules, and to be constantly tired. Again, if this is what Christmas has become, we have exchanged God's gift for something considerably less valuable.

So what should we do? Get rid of everything? Stop giving presents? Make Christmas like any other day? I am not advocating eliminating traditions and practices. At the same time, these things should never become the controlling force at this time of year. I remember several times when we didn't put up a tree, or only a small tree with Jesus ornaments on it. We never found the time to send out cards. Also, the only presents were those specifically needed. I'm sure some people would be horrified, and conclude, "This isn't Christmas at all!" However, it was one of the better Christmas celebrations I remember, because we simply focused on the gift God gave us—his Son. Another memorable Christmas was my very first in the ministry. Everything was prepared and set to go until the snow started falling early in the week. By the time Christmas came around no one was able to go anywhere. Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the Sunday after Christmas were all canceled. I spent those days quietly celebrating by myself. I had no tree, no presents, and no real plans for company. Still, nothing was lacking, because it made me look past everything I didn't have, and relish the things I did—the simple message of the angels: "Today, a Savior is born for you. He is Christ the Lord!" I wouldn't have exchanged either of those Christmas celebrations for any other.

I guess this quiet approach has always stayed with me. It is the simplicity of the celebration which produces the greatest joy. It is the beauty of God's gifts which brings the greatest meaning. It is the message of Jesus' birth which offers the greatest peace.

So, while we are making all our plans and preparations for December 24th and December 25th, we can't afford to lose sight of what makes those days so special. Remember what God the Father has done! Remember the gift he is giving you in Jesus! Remember the great, undeserved love you have received through faith! There is nothing which can compare, and nothing which will ever compare with knowing we have a Savior born for our rescue.



O Jesus Christ, your manger is my paradise where my soul is reclining  
For there, O Lord, we find the Word made flesh for us — your grace is brightly shining.

The world may hold her wealth and gold; but you, my heart keep Christ as your true treasure.  
To him hold fast until at last a crown is yours and honor in full measure.

*Christian Worship 40 st. 1 & 5*

## 2022 Thanksgiving Celebration

On Sunday night, November 20th, sixteen members and one guest gathered for a night of good food and fellowship. The pre-Thanksgiving pot-luck is always an enjoyable evening, and this year was no different. There was turkey, ham, and a delicious pork tenderloin with fried apples. The usual side dishes were also part of the evening's faire. Green bean casserole, mashed potatoes, two kinds of stuffing, gravy and more! So much more, there was hardly room for dessert.

And the desserts did not disappoint, nor were they ignored. There was ice cream, pumpkin pie, and a bourbon-chocolate-pecan-pie.

After several hours of enjoyable conversation, people returned to their homes to again savor the great gifts the Lord had given. A special note of thanks needs to be given to Linda Williams and Karolyn Hanna for decorating the fellowship hall to give it a more "homey" feel.

Our opportunity to give thanks continued Thursday morning, November 24th, with our regular Thanksgiving Service. The order of worship led people into the Book of Psalms which are filled with songs of praise to the Lord for his underserved goodness and mercy. The Handbell Choir added to the service by playing two arrangements—"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," and "Simple Gifts." The message for the day recounted David's song of praise, and encouraged each of us to ask the same questions David did: "Who am I that the Lord should show me mercy and kindness;" and, "Who am I that the Lord should use his Word and Will to carry me."

As usual, the center piece on the altar was exceptional. Many commented on the arrangement, and how it was such a fitting and beautiful reminder of all the Lord has done for us richly and daily. Certainly we have every reason to join with the Psalmist.

<sup>1</sup> Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD.  
Let us give a loud shout to the Rock  
who saves us.

<sup>2</sup> Let us approach his presence  
with thanksgiving.  
With music we will shout to him.

<sup>3</sup> For the LORD is the great God  
and the great King above all gods.

<sup>6</sup> Come, let us bow down.  
Let us revere him.  
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker,  
<sup>7</sup> for he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture  
and the flock in his hand.

*Psalm 95:1-3, 6-7*



## Decorating, Chili, and Fellowship

On **Sunday, December 18th** we will gather for what has become an annual tradition. At 3:30 pm we will decorate the sanctuary for our Christmas worship services. There are many tasks—putting up the tree, garlands, and wreaths, hanging ornaments, and arranging poinsettias. In every endeavor, many hands make light the work! Young and old can come and help!

Following the decoration of the church we will enjoy a chili dinner. There is always plenty to eat, and if the weather is cool, it definitely warms a person up. The evening will conclude with desserts and fellowship.

In the past, we have made stops at Wood Glen Hall and Mariposa. Sadly COVID restrictions will keep us from caroling for the people in these two places. God-willing, we pray everything will return to normal so we can continue to share the good news of our Savior's Birth in song to these precious souls.

## In Our Prayers

Through the last two months we have had a number of opportunities to pray for those who are of the family of faith. It is a humbling and awe-inspiring thing we do as we come before our heavenly Father's throne of mercy and grace. It is our privilege as well because of the precious work of our Savior. So, we pray without ceasing, asking the Lord to be with these precious saints —

- Larry Scheffler as he continues to recover from by-pass surgery. We ask the Lord for continued strength and speed of healing. We also give thanks because the Lord has sustained him along with Jan during this process;
- Phineas Bater as he continues his program of treatment for a brain tumor. We pray the Lord will work through the doctors who are treating him, and if it is the Lord's will, to bring about a full recovery. We also ask for the Lord to strengthen his parents—Pastor Noah Bater and his wife Missy. Pastor Bater is Wilma Heidenrich's grandson, and he serves Prince of Peace in Thousand Oaks.
- Sally Krause who is in a memory care facility in Santa Maria. Although her health is stable, she has good days and days when she struggles. We implore the Lord to continue to bless her with good health and a strong faith. Also, if you would like to send her a card, she would certainly appreciate the contact and correspondence. Her address is:  
Sally Krause  
% Merrill Gardens  
1220 Suey Road  
Santa Maria, CA 93454
- Matt Bennett who is at the Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga. We ask the Lord to keep him safe and in his protecting care. He is currently being served through the WELS Commission on Prison Ministries with printed materials, and visits from Pastor Proeber once a month. Because of regulations, personal correspondence is prohibited. So, prayers for him are even more important. He does look forward to his subsequent release and becoming part of the ministry at Our Redeemer.



“  
I bring you  
good news of great joy  
which will be for all  
people.”

The Outreach Committee continues to sponsor events which provide opportunities for members to invite friends and relatives to Our Redeemer. Some events are conducted outside the formal worship service. There are also special worship services with food and fellowship afterwards. We hope these events will encourage you to invite people you know to learn more about our church and to hear the message of grace in Jesus Christ we proclaim. Please plan to participate, and to serve!

## Outreach Opportunities

### Advent Worship

This year's theme will focus on the familiar words of Isaiah, chapter 9. These are words we rejoice to hear, and by which we are prepared to receive our Savior who comes with Light and Life to shattered the darkness of our sin darkened lives, and to rescue us from the death we deserved under God's justice. Truly, we have to confess: "A Glorious Light has Dawned!"

November 27th —

A Light for those walking in the darkness of sin

December 4th —

A Light for those living in the darkness of death

December 11th —

A Light for those enduring the burden of sadness

December 18th —

A Light for those waiting for the Lord's Promise

As part of our Advent season of preparation the Lord's Supper will be offered on December 4th during the worship service. If you are unable to receive it during the service, please make arrangements with Pastor Proeber to schedule a time to receive it privately. How blessed we are to see how powerfully the Lord works in our lives through his Word and Sacrament.

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### Christmas Eve, December 24th

Christ, the Savior is Born! Certainly it is a familiar message, yet it never loses its wonder and awe. Once again we will focus on the incredible love of our gracious and faithful God. This is the God who sent his Son into the world to bring peace and righteousness to all people. The candlelight service is at 7:00 pm.

Following the service there will be snacks offered in the fellowship hall. Please bring "finger food," cookies, and other snacks to enjoy with one another.

### Christmas Day, December 25th

The celebration of our Savior's birth continues with a 9:30 am service. When we consider what God accomplished with the birth of his Son, what could ever compare with it, or become an acceptable substitution for this the greatest of all gifts? This is why we make it our sincerest desire to come and worship the new-born King, again on Christmas morning.

Snacks will also be offered in the Fellowship Hall.



## Notes & News

### ✝ Music Update

The handbell choir is making final preparations for our Advent and Christmas season of worship. There are a number of more traditional arrangements, as well as some new arrangements. Many of the songs have familiar melodies like Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel, and Silent Night. There are also some new arrangements which will add to the worship of the new born Savior, Jesus Christ.

For 2023, there is an open invitation for people to ring. It doesn't require any specific skill, just a willingness to serve the Lord and a commitment to make practices. The Handbell choir practices on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm.

If you are interested in playing the handbells, please speak with Debbie.

### ✝ Bible Class

The Sunday morning class continues to meet weekly. There is a regular pattern of "Digging Deeper" into one of the appointed lessons for the day. Each lesson is a unit by itself, so if you cannot make Bible Class every Sunday, you can still drop in without missing any previous lessons.

The Wednesday evening class will continue up to Christmas. Currently we are using the DVD study series, "This Changed Everything." It examines what happened following Luther's Reformation, and traces other reformations in Europe and England. There will be a short break the week after Christmas, but classes will resume January 11th at 7:00 pm.

### ✝ Sunday School

Christian Education for our children will continue through the month of December. There are some scheduling issues being considered for the New Year. Parents, please watch for more information which will come out in the next couple of weeks. Sunday School continues to be scheduled for the second and fourth Sundays of the month. Classes meet during the hymn of the day and the sermon. Please speak to Sonja Todd or Pastor Proeber for more information.

We thank the Lord for the dedication of Sonja Todd who taught Sunday School from October through December.



## Ladies Christmas Cookie Exchange and Get-together

The name says it all. On **Tuesday, December 13th**, the ladies of Our Redeemer and their guests will gather for an evening of snacks and friendship focusing on the birth of Jesus Christ. It is always enjoyable, and this year will be no different.

Pam Schueler will host the evening at her home. Everything starts at 7:00 pm

The ladies are asked to please bring along a gift for the exchange, as well as 3 dozen cookies to share. You may speak to Pam, Debbie Aitkins or Sonja Todd for more information.

## Serve the Lord with Gladness

### Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?  
Event report? Potluck-gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages  
Reviewed for scriptural consistency  
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy or email to Pastor Proeber—pastor.orlcsb@gmail.com

### *A simple and rewarding way to serve!*

Thanks to Sue Proeber for her picture of the Thanksgiving display. There is a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have really made every issue more interesting. We pray that every member will consider providing an article for the new year—2023. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber for advice. Thanks!

### Meetings for December 2022

Church Council  
Committees

Tuesday, December 6th at 7:00 pm  
Tuesday, December 6th at 8:00 pm

*If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board. He will be happy to help.*

Meetings for the Committees will be announced as needed in order to complete 2023 Ministry Plan and Budget.

### December Birthdays



1<sup>st</sup> - Alan T.  
23<sup>rd</sup> - Barbara G.  
25<sup>th</sup> - Our Savior, Jesus Christ.

*O God, our help in ages past;  
Our hope for years to come,  
Still be our guard while troubles last  
And our eternal home!*



# CHRIST the SAVIOR is BORN!

Christmas Eve Worship

Monday, December 24th

at 7:00 pm

Refreshments & Fellowship

following the service

Christmas Day Worship

Tuesday, December 25th

at 9:30 am

“Glory to God in the highest  
and on earth peace to men  
on whom his favor rests.”

Luke 2:14





# December 2022

Church Office: 967-1128

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Parsonage Phone: 967-3570

*Grow in Grace! Encourage one another! Proclaim what we have seen and heard!*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2 Office Hours 10:30—2:30 pm	3 Clean Florez
4 <b>LORD'S SUPPER</b>  Advent Worship & Streaming 9:30 am Christian Education 11:00 am	5  Handbells 7:00 pm	6  Church Council 7:00 pm Committees 8:00 pm	7  Bible Class 7:00 pm "This Changed Everything"		9  Office Hours 10:30—2:30 pm	10 Clean G. Grunewald  Lawn Beginning December 11th Favuzzi
11 Advent Worship & Streaming 9:30 am Christian Education 11:00 am	12  Handbells 7:00 pm	13 Pastor's Circuit Study 10:00 am  Ladies Christmas Fellowship 7:00 pm	14  Bible Class 7:00 pm "This Changed Everything"		16  Office Hours 10:30—2:30 pm	17 Clean Hanna
18 Advent Worship & Streaming 9:30 am Christian Education 11:00 am Decorating 3:30 pm	19  Handbells 7:00 pm	20	21  Bible Class 7:00 pm "This Changed Everything"		22  Office Hours 10:30—2:30 pm	23 Clean Pettus  Lawn Beginning December 25th J. Schueler
25 Christmas Day Worship & Streaming 9:30 am	26	27	28	29	30  Office Hours 10:30—2:30 pm	31 Clean Proeber
Pastor Proeber will be in Arizona						