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The Steeple



Dec 13, 2023



The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church



The Candle of Peace

In Fredrich Buechner's book "Wishful Thinking" the word *Peace* is defined by its relationship to Jesus. Next to Buechner's entry of Peace are no other reference words as his definition of hope had. Instead, we read:

Peace has come to mean the time when there aren't any wars. Beggars can't be choosers; we'd, most of us, settle for that. But in Hebrew, peace *shalom* means fullness, means having everything you need to be wholly and happily yourself.

One of the titles by which Jesus is known is the Prince of Peace, and he used the word himself in what seems at first glance to be two radically contradictory utterances. On one occasion he said to the disciples, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword." (Matthew 10:34) And later on, the last time they ate together, he said to them, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." (John 14:27)

The contradiction is resolved when you realize that for Jesus, peace seems to have meant not the absence of struggle but the presence of love.

Taken another way, Martin Luther King Jr. once wrote that, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." And that, "power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."

Love and Peace are intimately linked together it seems, both in the eyes of Jesus and I think King if we read him right. Perhaps it is the virtues of hope and joy that bind love and peace together around the light of Christ. Whatever the case may be, the names that we associate with candles that mark the weeks before us are not just significant but poignant given the fact that Christ is born amidst conflict and conflict we hope, will be once and for all reconciled in Him before the Father.

Advent for all its preparatory pomp, speaks of the wondrous reconciliation that is in Christ Jesus. John the Baptist points the way towards this in his message to repent! And as Buechner reminds us, “To repent is to come to your senses. It is not so much something you do as something that happens. True repentance spends less time looking at the past and saying, “I’m sorry,” than to the future saying, “Wow!”

So, here is to our Christmas “Wow!”

Nick+



Theologian’s Corner: St. John of the Cross Mystic and Monastic Reformer, 1591

Juan de Ypres y Alvarez was born in 1542. His father died soon after, and Juan was brought up in an orphanage. (His father was probably Jewish. It is remarkable how many of the most memorable Spanish Christians have been of Jewish background.) At seventeen, he enrolled as a student in a Jesuit college, and at twenty-one, he joined the Carmelite Friars. He was ordained in 1567, and almost immediately met Teresa of Avila, a Carmelite Nun who was undertaking to return the Order to its original strict rule, which had been gradually relaxed to the detriment, as she believed, of the spiritual lives of the members of the Order. Those who followed the strict rule as promulgated by Teresa went barefoot or wore sandals instead of shoes, and so became known as Discalced (unshod) Carmelites, or Carmelites of the Strict Observance. John undertook to adopt the stricter rule and encourage

others to do so.

Not all members of the order welcomed the change. In 1577 a group of Calced Carmelites, or Carmelites of the Ancient Observance, kidnapped John and demanded that he renounce the reform. When he refused, he was imprisoned in complete darkness and solitude in a Calced

monastery in Toledo for about nine months. He then escaped and fled to a Calced monastery. While imprisoned at Toledo, he had begun to compose some poems, and now he wrote them down, with commentaries on their spiritual significance.

He was given various positions of leadership among the reformed friars, but then dissension broke out among the reformers between "moderates" and "extremists." John supported the moderate party, and when the extremists gained control, they denounced him as a traitor to the reform. He was sent to a remote friary, and fell ill, and finally died at Ubeda during the night preceding 14 December 1591.

His poems include:

The Dark Night of The Soul (about the experience of spiritual desolation, of feeling abandoned and rejected by God, and why this is for some Christians a means by which God increases our faith in Him; about the Christian walk, the life of prayer and contemplation, and growing in love and grace)

The Ascent of Mount Carmel (same poem as the preceding, but with a different commentary attached)

The Spiritual Cantic (about the love between the Christian and Christ as symbolized by the love between bride and groom; draws heavily upon the imagery of the Song of Solomon)

The Living Flame of Love (about the soul transformed by grace)

His works have been translated into English by David Lewis (1906), and by E. Allison Peers (1953). His poems have been translated by Roy Campbell and are available in Penguin paperback. The following extracts are quoted from the poetic translation by Peers.

from The Living Flame of Love:

O Living flame of love
That, burning, dost assail
My inmost soul with tenderness untold,
Since thou dost freely move,
Deign to consume the veil
Which sunders this sweet converse that we hold ...

And O, ye lamps of fire,
In whose resplendent light
The deepest caverns where the senses meet,
Erst steeped in darkness dire,
Blaze with new glories bright
And to the loved one give both light and heat!

by James Kiefer

Together we pray: Judge eternal, throned in splendor, who gave John of the Cross strength of purpose and faith that sustained him even through the dark night of the soul: Shed your light on all who love you, in unity with Jesus Christ our Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Please pray for: Liz Green, Michelle Sheffield, Catherine Sheffield, David King, Pris Snow, Ben Baker, Sanawbar, Diana Farris, Joel Hahn, Steve McCraw, Josh Harris, David Swindell, Norma Perrier, Connie Finch, Dorothy Buchanan, Peggy Kauffman, Ryan Kiesel, Tony Clapper, Bruce Neiswander, Jack & Karla Stoecker, Joseph, Tim, Shania Smith, Terry Grogan, Tyler Roberson, Jerry Nezam, Jim Brooks, Tom Martin, Don Doty, Luke Karel, Miriam Petrovich, Lynette Beebe, Nancy & Joe Norton, Jack Smith, Tina Holland, and Margaret Holden.

Please add the following to your prayers this second week of Advent:
St John's, Woodward
Grace, Yukon

December Needs



Concern's current needs are: peanut butter and for homeless - hats, gloves and hand warmers.

LET US SEE IF WE CAN FILL THE TOTE BY METCALF WITH GLOVES, SOCK HATS, AND HAND WARMERS. Dollar Tree has these items for \$1.25 each!

Luke's Place Dec 14th -Dec 20th, 2023

- Dec 14th Men's Breakfast, 7am, Metcalf
- Rector's Bible Study, 9:15am, Metcalf
- Green Country Eucharist, Rite I, 1pm, GCV
- Dec 17th Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8am, Chapel
- Faith Forum, 9:15am, Metcalf
- Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10:30am, Nave
- Godly Play, after Children's Sermon, upstairs
- Dec 19th Spiritual Discovery, 10am, Library
- Dec 20th Choir, 5pm, Choir Room
- Advent Program and light supper, 6pm, Metcalf

Birthdays and Anniversaries, Dec 17th –Dec 23rd, 2023



Birthdays

Jim Carroll (12/21)
Logan Warring (12/21)
William Larkin (12/21)



Anniversaries

Fr Lee & Lynda Stephens (12/17)
Connie & Doug Freebern (12/23)

If your or a loved one's name doesn't appear on the list, please email or call the office, and we will add your birthday or anniversary!



Many, many thanks from the Washington County School Supply Drive. St Luke's folks donated **195** boxes of crayons in the month of November. Because of your generosity, 195 students will have crayons in their backpacks for school next fall! BRAVO!!!



Advent Program and Light Supper Dec 20th, 6pm Metcalf Hall

Join us in food and fellowship
Sing some Christmas Carols
And celebrate each other!

Menu: Chili and ALL the fixin's

Advent Faith Forum Series

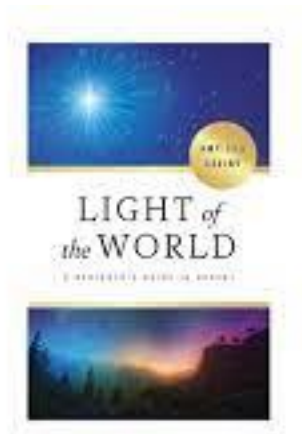
Light of the World. A Beginner's Guide to Advent

December 17th

The Journey to Joy

December 24th

The Gifts of the Gentiles



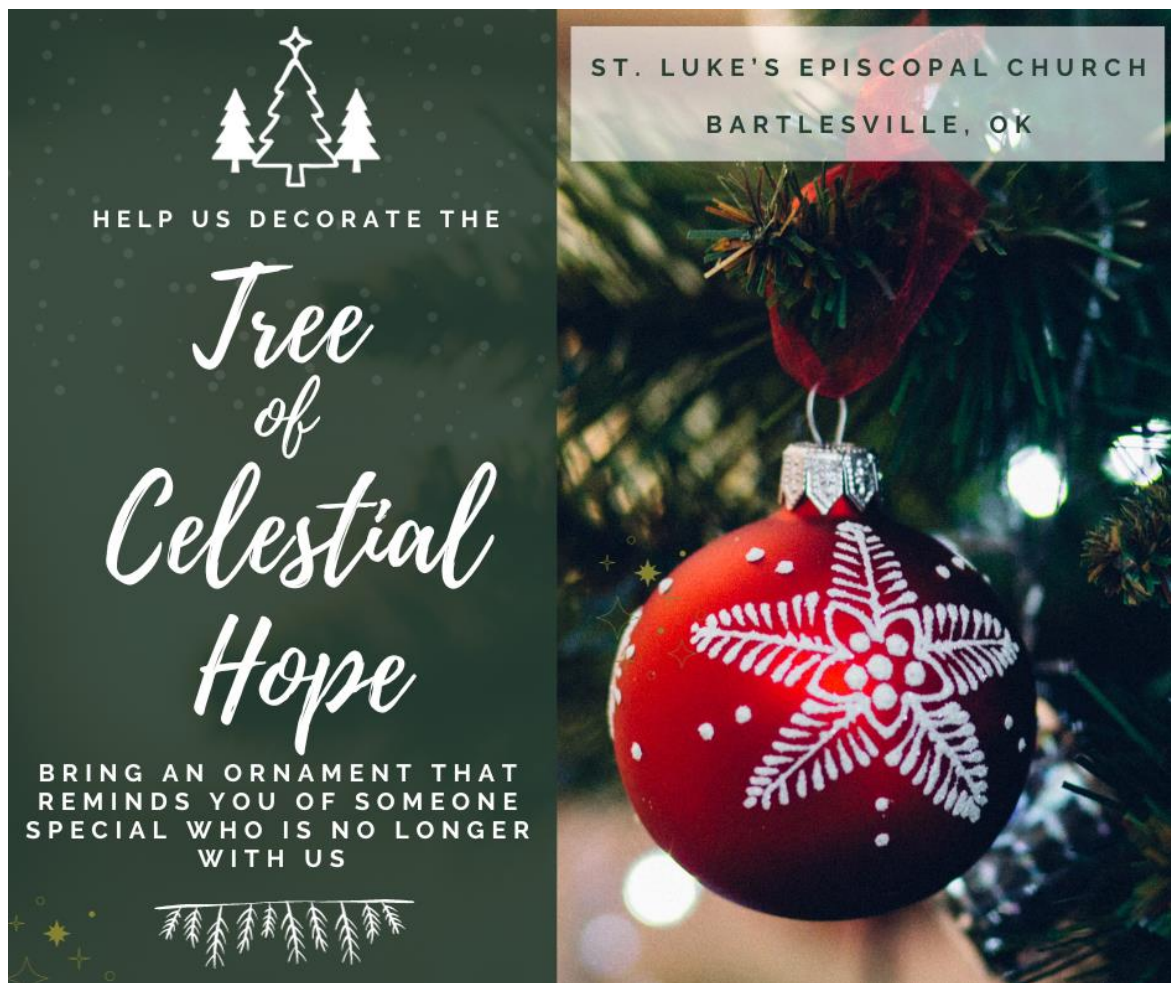
In *Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent*, author, professor, and biblical scholar Amy-Jill Levine explores the biblical texts surrounding the story of the birth of Jesus. Join her as she traces the Christmas narrative through the stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary, the journey to Bethlehem, and the visit from the Magi. These stories open conversations around connections of the Gospel stories to the Old Testament, the role of women in first-century Jewish culture, the importance of Mary's visitation and the revolutionary implications of Mary's Magnificat, the census and the stable, and the star of Bethlehem and the flight to Egypt.

Faith Forum begins at 9:15 a.m. on Sunday mornings in Metcalf Hall.

Join Us!



Til Christmas!



This month's Pack the Backpacks items are 3x5 inch lined Index Cards, 100 ct packages and 5 tab notebook dividers.



Thank you to everyone who has contributed in the past. It helps more than you know.



Tree of Celestial Hope





There is still time to donate to the Flower Fund for all of the Christmas Poinsettias, wreaths and pine roping that decorate our church. Please get names (of your memorials or those whom you choose to honor) into the office or in the offering plate by Sunday, December 17th so that we can include these

special names in our Christmas Eve bulletins.

Many thanks from Jo Baughman, Flower Fund Chairman.



March of the Toy Monster Trucks

Star Tree Thank You- A BIG thank you to all who participated in providing 35 monster trucks to young boys in foster care this Christmas season. For many decades St Luke's has shown God's love and brought joy to thousands of children in need in the Bartlesville area. So again, thank you, God bless you and Merry Christmas!

---Steve and Cheryl VanAken

Note: I had the privilege of helping Kylie from DHS load the three HUGE boxes of trucks into her vehicle. The expression on her face as she gazed at all the trucks and cars overflowing from the boxes said it all. Some little boys were going to have an amazing Christmas. She

could not thank us enough. Things at DHS have changed from the days when we picked stars and could go 'shopping' for different gifts from wish lists for kids in the Foster Care system. DHS simply doesn't have the manpower to compile the individual requests for us as in the past. The Star Tree recipients are different than the low income children lists on Salvation Army Angel Trees you see around town. We always worked with the Foster Care system when it came to the Star Tree. Maybe one day we will again be able to provide individual gifts but for now we will give what DHS requests of us and work within their system to provide the best Christmas we can and that is exactly what we did this year! YOU ARE THE BEST!!!
----Penny

Collect for the Third Week of Advent:

Traditional: Stir up thy power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let thy bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end.

Amen.



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