



Atonement Quarterly

Winter 2018

10245 Loma Rancho Drive, Spring Valley

619.670.7174

Putting St. Nicholas back in Christmas

By Dr. Gene Edward Veith

Santa Claus has become the patron saint of a secularized Christmas. Many Christians are trying to balance the mystique of Santa with the true meaning of Christmas centered in Christ. Some families are doing without Santa altogether, but even that can prove complicated. (As one of our own children told the grandparents, "My parents don't believe in Santa Claus, but I do!")

And yet, no matter how hard people try, Christmas resists secularization. The very name contains Christ, and when stores try to avoid that name by using holiday, that word, too, contains a confession that the day is holy. And Santa Claus, which is just a contraction of St. Nicholas, really is a patron saint.

Indeed, among Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox, St. Nicholas is one of the most popular of the saints they venerate. He is the patron saint of children, students, sailors, merchants, (strangely) thieves and the entire nation of Greece. Stories about the saints are called "legends." That they are

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not necessarily historically accurate has given rise to a broader meaning for things that are “legendary.” Still, legends often contain a grain of truth, if

not in the history, then in their meaning.

We do know that St. Nicholas lived from A.D. 270 to A.D. 343 and was the bishop of Myra, in present-day Turkey. The legends tell how he would give gifts to children and how he paid for the dowries of young women so that they could marry, dropping gold down the chimney or tossing the money through the window so that it landed in their stockings hung up to dry before the hearth.

Another story, though, connects St. Nicholas to an important historical event. He was said to have attended the Council of Nicaea, the conference of bishops that met to consider the claims of Arius, who taught that Christ was not God but only a man. The bishops affirmed the biblical truth that Christ is both God and man, using language that is still used today when we confess the Nicene Creed.

Supposedly, Bishop Nicholas of Myra was so incensed when he heard Arius tearing down the divinity of Christ that he went up to the heretic and slapped him in the face. Some accounts have jolly old St. Nicholas slugging Arius with his fist!

The Emperor Constantine (who sympathized with the Arians) was present and demanded that Nicholas be thrown into prison. His fellow bishops, shocked at the impropriety, voted to strip him of his office and removed his bishop’s stole.

That night, according to the legend, as Nicholas was languishing in his cell, he had a vision of Jesus and Mary. The Lord asked him, “Why are you here?” Nicholas replied, “Because I love you.” Jesus gave him a golden book of the Gospels, and Mary gave him a new bishop’s stole. The next day, the other bishops woke up with a conviction that they should restore Nicholas, which they did.

So, did any of this actually happen? Probably not. The contemporary

accounts of the council do not mention any such incident. And yet Nicholas may have been at the Council of Nicaea. All of the bishops of the Church were invited, and Nicaea and Myra were in the same country. Some early accounts say that Nicholas of Myra was present. A list of attendees, though, does not include him. (That is to say, of the eleven surviving copies, only three do, but those might be later additions.) We cannot verify that St. Nicholas actually struck Arius, but it is just as well attested as his putting gold in young girls' stockings. And it is much better attested than his living at the North Pole with elves and flying reindeer. The meaning of the legend, though, is surely true: St. Nicholas Santa Claus confessed Christ.

The problem with the cult of the saints, as practiced historically, is that the saints become detached from Christ. Sailors would pray to St. Nicholas to save them from a storm, rather than to the One who calmed the Sea of Galilee. Similarly, children ask Santa to bring them gifts, instead of the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Actual saints, however, point not to themselves but to Christ. It wasn't their supernatural virtues that made them saints. Rather, it was their faith in Christ.

St. Nicholas knew who Christ is "very God of very God" who was "made man" and he also knew that Christ was "for him." St. Nicholas may or may not have been in a literal prison. But he surely knew the prison that is sin. Nevertheless, Christ came to him in forgiveness, bringing His Word and His calling.

Can we put the saint back into Santa Claus? In a column I wrote for World



Magazine that has attained eternal life on the Internet, I tried to be funny by proposing new song lyrics (Santa Claus Is Coming to Slap, Deck the Apollinarian with Bats of Holly, Frosty the Gnostic, Rudolph the Red Knows Jesus) and holiday customs (greeting people who take the Christ out of Christmas with a gentle slap).

But probably our best hope comes from building on what Santa is most associated with: the giving of gifts. We can explain to our children that they receive gifts at Christmas because, in the words of the Small Catechism, God “has given me my body and soul . . . clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home . . . and all I have.” Above all, He has given us salvation, not based on whether we've been naughty or nice, but as a free gift. That is, He has given us Jesus.

We can also take the opportunity to teach the doctrine of vocation. God gives His gifts through what other people your parents, pastor and so on give you. So, God is the One who is giving you your toys and gifts on Christmas morning by means of all of these people who love you.

We can tell our children that God gave the gift of Jesus to Santa Claus long ago. He became a pastor who helped children and, when he baptized them, gave them the gift of Jesus too. That's why Christmas has Santa and presents. Its really all about Jesus.



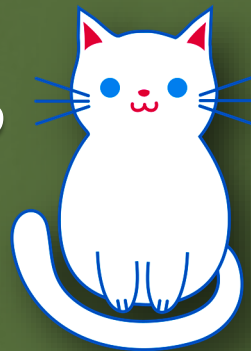
There is still space
to sign up for
flowers in 2019.
The suggested
donation is \$30
and the flower
chart is hung in
the narthex.



Flowers & Fellowship



Please remember
that donations to
the 'kitty' help
fund our Sunday
morning
fellowship
snacks &
coffee.



Stewardship News



Throughout his epistles and his preaching recorded in the Book of Acts, St. Paul refers, in one way or another, to thanksgiving and thankfulness nearly 50 times. Whether vertically toward God, or horizontally toward the neighbor, thanksgiving is a major theme within St. Paul's body of work.

What does this mean? It means thankfulness is intrinsic to the life of those baptized into Christ. In other words, giving thanks is what Christians do as they live out their lives in this world.

The problem is that we often forget this. Consider your average, run-of-the-mill, normal day. When you get home, and your parents, your spouse or your children ask about your day, what first comes to your mind? After 99 percent of things went right, went exactly as planned, were enjoyable and blessings, we tend to focus on and remember the 1 percent of things that went poorly, that didn't go as planned, and that were nuisances.

We remember the bad things. We focus on discontent. And we fail to give thanks in all circumstances for everything (Eph. 5:20) and to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4).

Thankfulness and contentment go together. We are content with things for which we are thankful. St. Paul could be content with having plenty or when in need because He gave thanks to the Lord for all things. He thanked the Lord for those who had prayed for him and listened to his proclamation of the Gospel. He gave thanks for their good works in and for the Church of Christ. He gave thanks for the grace of God in Christ Jesus and found that God's grace was sufficient for him.

So, give thanks for all things and in all circumstances dear brothers and sisters in Christ. For you have been saved from sin, death, and hell by the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. You have been added to the very family of God in an adoption of grace through Holy Baptism. God is your Father. Our Lord, Jesus Christ is your brother.

Stewardship News

But He not only provides for your spiritual well-being, He cares also for this body and life. Your Father in heaven provides food and clothes, house and home, husband, wife, and children. He gives you reason and all your senses. He has given you the raw talents that you have developed into careers. Everything you are and everything that you have is a gift from His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in you.

Give thanks for these things. Make a list – every morning if you must. Say them out loud. Sing about them within the congregation of the saints. And remember this: God has given you these things so that you may be of service to those around you – your family, your neighbors, your brothers and sisters in Christ. For to whom much is given; much shall be required (Luke 12:48).



From the Pews

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH

-by Remi Tufts

Christians are the light of the world. Christians are the salt of the earth. Notice in both sentences that the world and earth are involved.

Christianity has always been an outreach program concerning humanity. A program motivated by love of thy neighbor. Jesus said, "Greater love, hath no man than he who is willing to give up his life for a friend." O course, Jesus the Master Teacher , defined love by giving up His life for us. - his friends on the cross.

As believers and followers of Christ, nothing should be more important to us than sharing this love t the world by giving up our lives in this task, but we can give something just important to them, namely, our talents and abilities and support.

We intend to accomplish this task initially in two ways. First, we will set up a neighborhood Canvassing Training Session and Second, is Cross Cultural Culinary Arts.

With the start of these two programs, we will be salting our neighbors with light of Christ and an example of Christian love for 2019. In addition, we will be providing an opportunity for them to receive "The Good News of Jesus Christ" which is our true objective.

All are invited and encouraged to attend either workshop or both workshops. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board or give your name to the office.



From the Pews

"ANOINTED ONE"—"THE MESSIAH"

-by Remi Tufts

Oils were used to cleanse the skin and protect it from the dry, arid climate of the Middle East. Some of these oils were perfumed with plants, flowers, or barks from India and other faraway lands. Because these oils were rare and expensive they were kept in "alabastrons" small alabaster or clay containers with narrow necks that restricted the flow.

Oil was also used for ceremonial purposes. Kings were to be anointed with holy oil at their coronation to show that they were consecrated to God. You can read about the anointing of King Saul or King David by the prophet Samuel.

Interestingly, the term "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew "mashi"ah" meaning the "anointed one." The name Jesus means "he will save" or "Savior" and was given to the son of Mary to show that He would save His people from their sins. The naming of the Messiah was so important that an angel was dispatched from heaven to make sure He would be given the correct name. The Old Testament equivalent was "Joshua" or "jeshua". In the Hebrew Language, Messiah, means "the Anointed One." At the time of the birth of Jesus, there was an intense hope among the Jews that an "Anointed One" would in order to be the ideal king--- one who would stand alongside an ideal high priest or perhaps a person who would embody both of these ideals into one person.

Later in His ministry when Christ asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter was ready with this simple phrase, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29) This phrase embodied all the hopes, yearnings, and promises of the centuries for the Jewish people.



From the Pews

THE WORTH OF A QUARTER

-Submitted by Nancy Riley

Several years ago, a preacher from out-of-state accepted a call to a church in Houston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived, he had an occasion to ride the bus from his home to the downtown area. When he sat down, he discovered that the driver had accidentally given him a quarter too much change. As he considered what to do, he thought to himself, 'You'd better give the quarter back. It would be wrong to keep it.' Then he thought, 'Oh, forget it, it's only a quarter. Who would worry about this little amount? Anyway, the bus company gets too much fare; they will never miss it. Accept it as a 'gift from God' and keep quiet.'

When his stop came, he paused momentarily at the door, and then he handed the quarter to the driver and said, 'Here, you gave me too much change ...' The driver, with a smile, replied, 'Aren't you the new preacher in town?'

"Yes' he replied.

'Well, I have been thinking a lot lately about going somewhere to worship. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change. I'll see you at church on Sunday.'

When the preacher stepped off of the bus, he literally grabbed the nearest light pole, held on, and said, 'Oh God, I almost sold your Son for a quarter.'

Our lives are the only Bible some people will ever read. This is a really scary example of how much people watch us as Christians, and will put us to the test! Always be on guard -- and remember -- You carry the name of Christ on your shoulders when you call yourself 'Christian.'

Watch your thoughts; they become words.
Watch your words; they become actions.
Watch your actions; they become habits.
Watch your habits; they become character.
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.



Lighting the advent candles: Burning brightly or burning us out?

by Elaine Heidtbrink, Director of Music



As I walked through Walmart last week looking for a last minute Halloween item, I charged out the door to the garden department hoping to avoid the long checkout lines by using the smaller ones out there, and I just about fainted. Taking the place of fertilizer and potting soil were 5 rows full of CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS accompanied by some very tinny-sounding canned carols blaring from a giant Snowglobe. “You must be joking,” I screamed in my head, “it’s not even Thanksgiving....no, Halloween!..... and you’re playing Christmas music?!” And I know this is only the beginning. Soon we will all be experiencing an endless loop of plastic Santas, lit lawn displays and “Frosty the snowman” over and over... and over.

According to some mental health experts, hearing Christmas music and the emotions which it evokes can be psychologically draining, especially for those working in retail who have to listen to holiday tunes blasting in their stores regularly. “People working in stores at Christmas have to learn how to tune it out – because if they don’t, it really does make you unable to focus on anything else,” reports Linda Blair, a clinical psychologist in the United Kingdom. “You’re simply spending all your energy trying not to hear what you’re hearing. Music has the tendency to bypass rationality and go straight for our emotions”, Blair said. “It might make us feel that we're trapped — it's a reminder that we have to buy presents, cater for people, organize celebrations. While previous research has shown that adding Christmas music or

scents to the shopping experience yields a positive experience for shoppers, it could also lead to impulse buys, due to the music's emotional influence", Blair added.



As a result, several labor unions in the UK have asked employers to consider the staff who have to listen to Christmas music all day, because playing the same songs repeatedly can become very irritating and distracting. Increased stress during the holidays is also a major problem in the U.S., according to the American Psychiatric Association - stressors which include financial demands of the season, dealing with the dynamics of family and avoiding weight gain, a 2015 Healthline study on consumer health found.

Well, that's pretty depressing, right? Not necessarily. As Christians we are afforded a very unique solution to this too much-too soon dilemma. Refocus and return to what we know is at the center of this holiday: the birth of our Savior, Jesus. Advent, the 4 weeks prior to Christmas, are designed for this purpose as we wait in anticipation just as the Hebrews did for thousands of years. Lead your families and friends back to simple pleasures and meaningful traditions. Abandon the extravagant gift exchange and replace it with handmade gifts or even small gestures of kindness instead of material goods. Experience the fellowship of our Wednesday Advent soup suppers and fill your cup at the Advent service that follows. And continue to play those holiday songs, but be sure to include a goodly portion of our rich and meaningful carols and hymns. Refocus and return, and with the lighting of each advent candle, look to the light in that manger so many centuries ago. Have a blessed and joy filled holiday season!



Recipes FROM THE Church Kitchen

Easy OREO Truffles

"These truffles are very easy and delicious. You can't go wrong with OREO, cream cheese and chocolate!"



Prep time: 10 min

Cook time: 20 min

Ready in: 1 hr 30 mins

Ingredients

- 1 (16 ounce) package OREO Chocolate Sandwich Cookies, divided
- 1 (8 ounce) package PHILADELPHIA Cream Cheese, softened
- 2 (8 ounce) packages BAKER'S Semi-Sweet Baking Chocolate, melted



Directions

1. Crush 9 of the cookies to fine crumbs in food processor; reserve for later use. (Cookies can also be finely crushed in a resealable plastic bag using a rolling pin.) Crush remaining 36 cookies to fine crumbs; place in medium bowl. Add cream cheese; mix until well blended. Roll cookie mixture into 42 balls, about 1-inch in diameter.
2. Dip balls in chocolate; place on wax paper-covered baking sheet. (Any leftover chocolate can be stored at room temperature for another use.) Sprinkle with reserved cookie crumbs.
3. Refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour. Store leftover truffles, covered, in refrigerator.

Recipe By: Phoebe

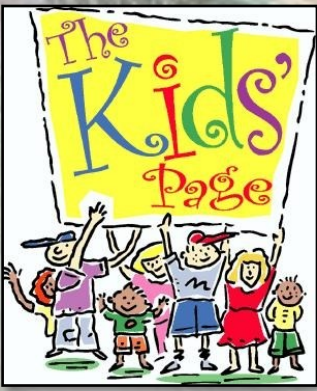
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Your
Recipes



If you would like to have your recipe featured in Atonements next news letter, please send a picture, name and instructions for your recipe to Atonement.sv@gmail.com



You Shall Call His Name "Jesus"

When Mary and Joseph found out that they were going to have a baby, they didn't go to the bookstore and get a book to help them choose a name for Mary's baby. In fact, they didn't choose the baby's name at all! God chose it for them! God sent an angel to tell Mary what to name her baby. The angel said to Mary, "You will have a son, and you will call his name Jesus" You see, the name Jesus means "the Lord saves." Was it important for Mary's baby to be named Jesus? Yes it was, because the Bible tells us that there is no other name that can save us from our sin. (Acts 4:12)

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for sending your Son. During this season when we celebrate his birth, help us to remember that there is salvation in the name of Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen.

Activity Page





Your Christmas Checklist

Christmas season will soon be in full swing! Stores are crammed full of people doing their last minute shopping and you're probably gearing up for all the good food that you're going to eat in the next few days. Because Christmas is such a busy time, its easy to forget some stuff, so we've got a checklist guaranteed to help you get rocking around that Christmas tree!

☒ **Decide to be happy** – Its easy to fall into the habit of unhappiness at Christmas time, and its usually the small things that steal the fun right out of Christmas. It usually starts with simple things, like being jealous about the presents a friend got, or feeling upset because you were forced to go to Aunt Lucy's house instead of hanging out with your friends. Choose to not let the simple things make you unhappy this Christmas. Decide no matter what to be happy and you'll be rocking around the Christmas tree in no time!

☒ **Be thankful** – No matter how stinky your Christmas seems, you can always find things to be thankful for. One thing to be thankful for at

Christmas is the fact that Jesus came into the world to pay the price for your sins. You're not getting what you deserve, which was hell. Instead Jesus paid the price for your sins so you can party it up this Christmas season!



Remember what

Christmas is Really About –

There's usually so much going on at Christmas that sometimes its easy to forget what Christmas is really about... JESUS! Spend some time thinking about what Jesus means to you, and be sure to thank Him for what He's done in your life.

Keep in mind this Christmas season how awesome Jesus is. Think about all He's done in your life, and take time to be thankful. If you do, you'll find that you'll be rocking around that Christmas tree in no time!

Check These Out!



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[@lcmsyouth](https://twitter.com/lcmsyouth)



LCMS Young Adult Ministry
Empowered to lead.



lcmsYAM.org

Heavenly Humor



(See John 2:1-11)

12-31-1998

HEY JESUS, I HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE
NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY ... I'M BRINGIN'
LOTS OF WATER

I **ADMIRE** THIS LIST,
I JUST DON'T THINK
IT'S **REALISTIC**.



WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

NOBODY CAN PRAY
CONSTANTLY.



OH.

ARE THERE TIMES
WHEN YOU **DON'T**
NEED JESUS?



1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

© WETZSTEIN² 14-12-10

IT'S **EASY** FOR
JOHN TO SAY,
"GIVE UP
YOUR COAT!"



WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

YOU
REALLY
THINK SO?

SURE!



NOBODY
WANTS HIS!



LUKE 3:7-18

© WETZSTEIN² 12-12-12

Atonement Monthly

2018



Birthdays

2 John Munnik
 3 Jan Stalman
 Art Puls
 23 Beth Puls
 29 Zenaida Villa
 30 Mary Weber
 Jennifer Stalman

Anniversaries

3 Kurt & Jan Stalman
 16 Dave & Dee Moody



December

Lay Ministers

Acolytes

Flowers




2	Tim Hahn	Phillip Brann
*5	Tim Hahn	Johnathan Moody
9	Jim Dysart	Sheree Moody
*12	Jim Dysart	Rebecca Moody
16	Larry Betancourt	Junior Betancourt
*19	Larry Betancourt	Sheree Moody
23	Mike Heidtbrink	Johnathan Moody
*24	Mike Heidtbrink	Gracie Scherbarth
30	Tim Hahn	Rebecca Moody

*Asterisks indicate midweek service



JANUARY 2019

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31				

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2 9:00 am Divine Service 10:30 am Church Meeting 2:30 pm Caroling	3 	4 10:00 am AI Anon 6:00 pm Men's Group 6:00 pm Bell Choir 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	5 10:00 am Bible Study 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Advent Service	6 	7 5:00 pm AYOP	8 1:00 pm Volvo Christmas Party
9 9:00 am Prayer/Predaching 10:00 am Nativity practice 10:30 am Bible Study 10:30 am Sunday School	10 6:00 pm Church Council	11 10:00 am AI Anon 6:00 pm Men's Group 6:00 pm Bell Choir 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	12 10:00 am Bible Study 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Advent Service	13 6:20 pm Joining Jesus 6:30 pm Scouts	14 5:00 pm AYOP	15 9:30 am Nativity Set-up 4:30 pm Nativity Dress Rehearsal 6:00 pm Nativity Event
16 9:00 am Divine Service 10:30 am Bible Study 10:30 am Sunday School	17 	18 10:00 am AI Anon 6:00 pm Men's Group 6:00 pm Bell Choir 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	19 10:00 am Bible Study 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Advent Service	20 	21 5:00 pm AYOP	22 10:00 am AI-Anon Business Meeting
23 9:00 am Contemporary 10:30 am Christmas Eve Rehearsal 10:30 am Sunday School	24  7:00 pm Service	25 	26 10:00 am Bible Study	27 6:20 pm Joining Jesus 6:30 pm Scouts	28 5:00 pm AYOP	29 Hiking Club
30 8:15 am Lay Meeting 9:00 am Divine Service 11:00 am Dining with Disney	31 					

2018—2019

Officers and Board/Committee Members

Executive Board

President	Tim Hahn
Secretary	Shenoah Riess
Financial Secretary	Ann Duggan
Treasurer	Nancy Riley

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Member	Jim Dysart

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Member	Dee Moody

Flowers

Ann Duggan

ATONEMENT LUTHERAN CHURCH

10245 Loma Rancho Drive
Spring Valley, CA 91978
(619) 670-7174

Rev. Chet Sherbarth
atonementspringvalley.org
atonement.sv@gmail.com

Weekly Service

Sunday at 9:00 am

Sunday School

Sunday at 10:30 am

First Communion Class

Sunday at 10:30 am

Bible Studies

Sunday at 10:30 am

Tuesday at 6:00 pm (Men's)

Wednesday at 10:00 am

Thursday at 6:20 pm - Joining Jesus
- *Every other Thursday of the month* -

Confirmation

Friday's at 3:00 pm

Membership Classes

Wednesdays at 8:00 am

Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday's at 7:00 pm

Atoner's Bell Ringers

Tuesday's at 6:00 pm

Hiking Club

Last Saturday of each month.
Location and times to be announced

Contact Us



Call us!

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:30-12:30pm

619-670-7174

Pastors Hours: Tuesday-Friday 9:00-3:00pm



Write/E-mail

Mail: 10245 Loma Rancho Drive
Spring Valley, CA 91978

E-mail: Atonement.sv@gmail.com



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