

This month's Pastoral Perspective is my abridged Christmas Eve sermon



A few weeks ago, a friend asked me “haven’t you run out of things to say about Christmas after 30 plus years of ministry?” Great question - perhaps it’s enough this year to watch, listen and in our case, smell the story of Jesus birth. I was tempted to do just that as Georgi and I aren’t really in the Christmas mood this year, no tree, no lights, no anything - When our 19-year-old grandson Lucas died on Thanksgiving afternoon we didn’t feel like celebrating much of anything.

But then one of our young theologians asked a question that moved me from my Christmas apathy. Audra’s question: *Why do people talk all about Jesus’ birth now, but in the bible, everyone focused on his teachings?* Audra here is my answer for you: Baby Jesus is cute and cuddly – Jesus the man certainly isn’t!

Audra – if you haven’t been informed yet there are number of things that you don’t talk about around the dinner table or others places for that matter: Politics, Money, Religion or Sex! Guess what – that’s what Jesus spent a lot of his time dealing with – really!

Jesus focused his time pointing to Gods Kingdom on earth, in the here and now - not just in the future – The Kingdom of God – God’s way of doing things, God’s way of living, God’s priorities. He dealt with the God’s Kingdom not in the abstract but in the realities of life.

Politics - He talked openly about the abuse of those in power, both Romans and the religious leaders of the day. He confronted their greed, their disdain and utter contempt for the poor, their meanness towards people who were different than themselves, and their use of fear to control the people.

Money –The reason for Jesus being born in Bethlehem was because Joseph and Mary were ordered there to be registered so that they could be taxed. It was an oppressive system that was titled in favor of the very rich. Jesus lived in a time that money was concentrated in the hands of the few and the system was designed to keep it that way.

Sex - Jesus broke almost every law when it comes to interacting with women. He treated people of all genders the same, he talked to the outcast, he even talked to people outside his religion.

Religion– Jesus confronted how the religious leaders were focusing on “doing things right” (rituals of hand washing, worshiping correctly, etc.) rather than doing “the right thing.” (uplifting and following the Kingdom of God way) He challenged people to look at how they were living, how they were treating others, how they were using their resources.

He cared for the poor, the outcast, and those on the fringes of society while holding the religious leaders and structure accountable for creating an unjust system that benefited the powerful and wealthy at the expense of the people.

He went against the norms of society – by living out the greatest commandment – Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself.

You see Audra, Jesus the man isn't easy to follow. A little baby is safe, Jesus the Christ is not. Unfortunately some things have not changed since Jesus' day as we live in a world where there is a lack of common decency, where outright meanness is becoming the norm, there is no longer a sense of the common good, narcissism leads rather than humility, justice and mercy has been replaced by inequity, greed and self-righteousness.

I know that this isn't the typical Away in the Manager Christmas sermon and if I have made you uncertain, uncomfortable, even offended well I guess I was focusing upon Jesus the Man rather than Jesus the Baby.

Hello Everyone!

There are never enough words sometimes for a simple thank you. But nothing can describe how thankful and appreciative I am for all the support I have received from the church community for my trip to India. This adventure began on November 9th, starts off in Chennai and then to Madurai. In Chennai I will be visiting the city I was born from. In Madurai I will be spending the time volunteering at the Grace Kennett Foundation orphanage. The love and kindness you've all shown me is something I hope to bring to the children of the orphanage. I sincerely thank all of you for your donations and prayers. I am hoping to keep everyone updated on my travels through Facebook. I am blessed to be a part of Our Saviors and I look forward to spreading God's love.

Nandri (Thank you in Tamil language)





Wednesdays

Hang out with your friends, enjoy a meal and spend time in intentional conversation. Come when you can and bring a friend or three! We rotate between Our Saviors (OSLC) and Westby Coon Prairie (WCP)

This Month

5:30 – Eat 6:00 – 7:30 gathering

Wednesday February 7 OSLC

Wednesday February 14 WCP

Wednesday February 21 OSLC

Wednesday February 28 WCP

**“All are from the dust,
and to dust all return.”**

Ecclesiastes 3:20, ESV

Ash Wednesday
February 14

Our Saviors

10:00 am – 7:00 pm

Ash Thursday
February 15

Skogdalen

6:30 pm



It is LUTEFISK time again!!



Saturday, Feb. 3rd

Our **29th** annual lutfisk dinner will be on Saturday, Feb. 3rd. We will be serving this year from 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. With nearly 600 served last year, we need all of the men (and women) to help with this project to make it a success. We also need help from OSLC Youth.

We are asking all of the men to bring 4 dozen Norwegian pastries; we also ask that you help in the same area as last year. If you would like to help but have not done so in the past, just show up on Saturday and we will put you to work.

We have two work shifts. The first shift will be from 8:00 AM until 1:00 PM, and the second shift will be from 1:00 PM until everything has been cleaned up and put back (6:00 PM or so). Funds will be given to the high school, confirmation students and parents who work at least one shift. These funds will go into your account to be used for church trips and activities!

Ticket prices are:

Adults - \$15 Kids Age 6-12 - \$ 8 Under 6 - Free



**PROUD TO BE
NORWEGIAN**

LEFSE MAKING

We will be making lefse
on Saturday, January 13th and Saturday January 20th
At 9:00 a.m.

We will be making lefse for the Lutfisk
Dinner in February.
If you have always wanted to learn how



ANNUAL MEETING



OSLC will hold their annual congregational meeting on Sunday January 21 at 11:30am followed by a potluck.

Skogdalen will hold their annual congregational meeting on Sunday January 28 10am followed by a potluck.

Annual reports for all groups/organization need to be in the church office by Monday, January 15

Our Saviors Singers

OSS meets on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at 9:15 and sings twice a month . We sing a variety of music ranging from familiar hymns to newer songs that are very sing able. Join us when you can as we are a diverse group of people who like to sing, some of us have been singing for years, others are singing in a choir for the first time in



Our stepping stones ministry brings parents and children together to grow in their relationship with Jesus and support them in nurturing faith life in the home! Pastor John leads the sessions that provide practical tools for our families to grow in faith.

**Stepping Stones for 3rd and 4th graders
and parents!
Sunday January 21st 9:15**

This month our 3rd/4th and parents will explore how we can connect the Bible to our everyday life. It will be a fun and informative morning and of course there will be coffee, juice,



We three Kings of Orient Are... is a carol that tells the story of foreigners bringing gifts to the Christ Child. Have you ever wondered what they were expecting the child would do with the gifts? They gave gifts in hope of what Jesus would do.

We give gifts to Jesus not in hope but in gratitude what the Christ Child became – Our Savior! Unlike the Wiseman we do know what Jesus uses our gifts for, they provide the financial ability to be a community of faith that touches the lives of people with the Love of Christ in our worship, education, care, community outreach and so much more.

It is out of gratitude for the Christ child that we support Jesus' Ministry at Our Saviors and Skogdalen. As we enter into this new year prayerfully reflect up the gifts that you gave to Jesus this past year and what gifts you anticipate to present to the Christ Child next year.

Gratitude

Like your household there are basic expenses such as insurance, electric, gas, phone, water, garbage, etc. Our Saviors average monthly cost for those basics is \$3,900, our monthly insurance bill alone is \$1,160!

This only keeps the doors open and heat on! The remainder of the budget goes to making ministries happen! Keep this reality in mind as you plan your giving to Jesus' Ministry in 2018. Consider using on-line giving, it's safe, convenient and extremely helpful. More information at the church office.

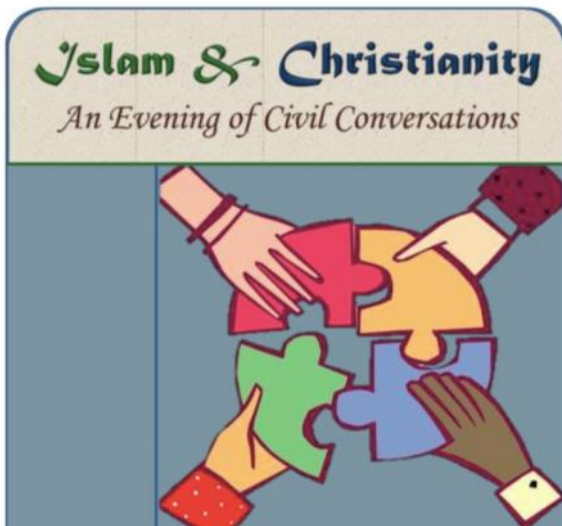
Thank you for the end of the year Extra (Special) offering for operating expenses.

- ◆ WELCA for principal payment on our line of credit and contribution to the General Fund.
- ◆ Lasagna Dinner donation to the General Fund



Don't forget to fill out the Estimate Of Giving Form for 2018





Wednesday February 7th

6:00

Simple Meal

6:30– 8:00

A time for conversation

Join us on Wednesday February 7th for an evening of conversation centering around the Islamic and Jewish traditions. Members of Shoulder to Shoulder of La Crosse will lead the conversation concerning these two religions that are often in the news but for many of us we have no personal connection with a Muslim or Jew.

The format is an overview of both faiths followed by a time of questions and conversation. We begin with a simple meal at 6pm followed by listening, learning and responding to the presentors. Please RSVP by Sunday January 28, if you will be joining us for dinner. Your able to RSVP with the sign up in the back of the church, call or e-mail the church office.

Our Saviors Lutheran Westby

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