

Rejoicing Spirits at Calvary – December 18th 2011

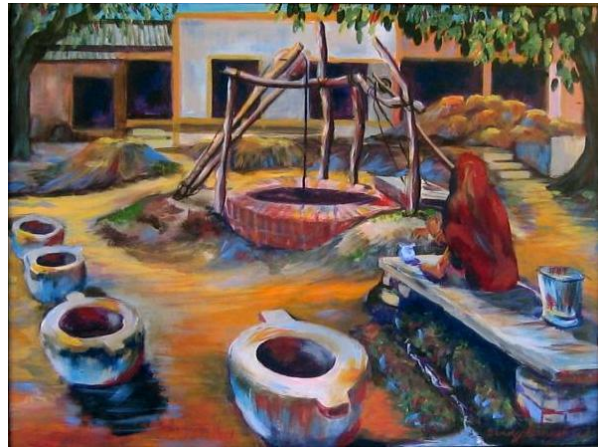
The theme was “Shining Bright”

As we looked forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus, we met to give glory to God and to share Christ’s love. The church was “Christmas festive” as worshippers entered and greeted each other. In addition, a table was placed in the welcoming area with beautiful origami butterflies for all attendees and envelopes for those who were photographed throughout the year. TJ Swalm, who does a beautiful job, once again crafted the butterflies, and each envelope contained photos that featured the person whose name was on the front. We thank Ed Edleman for donating 2012 bookmark calendars to place with the envelopes.

Our pre-worship song was: *He is the King of Kings! He is the King of kings, He is the Lord of lords. His name is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Oh, He is the King!*

Welcome and Announcements

Calvary’s Rejoicing Spirits offerings usually go to purchase animals (and training for those who receive them) through the Lutheran World Relief Global Barnyard. However, when other great needs face the world, such as the earthquake in Haiti, exceptions are made. Since there is currently a huge lack of water in East Africa, and true challenges in getting clean water to those without, we voted during our announcement time to spend two-hundred fifty dollars (\$250) to purchase part of a village well, fifty dollars (\$50) to buy seven-thousand (7,000) water purification tablets, and ninety-six dollars (\$96) to get forty eight (48) large water jugs for individuals to transport water to where they need it. After the service, one worshipper donated another sixty dollars (\$60), with the stipulation that fifty of it be earmarked for seven thousand additional purification tablets.



Joan Cloutman was honored for her years of service as our music director. She has just accepted the position as chairman of the church’s worship team, which she feels precludes her from staying with us as director. Joan expressed her thanks. She said that her heart would still be with Rejoicing Spirits, and also that she would be dropping in at times to worship with us. Joan will be missed.

We also welcomed “Mr. And Mrs. Claus,” who, in reality, were Pastor Bill McGowan and his new wife Joan, who both arrived in Santa hats! We wished the McGowans many years of happiness.

Our Service Begins

We began worship with our first song (which today was *Lord, I Lift Your Name on High*), our confession, and an opening prayer offered by Pastor Bill. Then, as in the tradition of early Christians, we passed the peace. During this time, all who are able get out of their seats to greet each other with a handshake and the phrase “*May the peace of the Lord be with you*” or, more simply, “*Peace be with you.*” The passing of the peace is a meaningful part of our Rejoicing Spirits services at Calvary. It gives everyone one more opportunity to feel truly welcomed

Our Second Song and Readings from God's Holy Word

We sang two verses of *Away in a Manger* before our seasonal Bible readings.

Ben read the first reading from Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 6: *For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Skyler read the gospel reading from Luke, chapter 2, verses 8-12: *In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."*

Flute Interlude

TJ Swalm played a lovely arrangement of *Little Drummer Boy*, while Jim Werkiser, our guitarist, added a drum beat to parts of it. This music was a wonderful addition to our Christmas service.

Unfortunately, Samantha had another commitment and was unable to be with us today. She traditionally shares her recital piece with us in December, which this year was *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*. She and her musical contribution were both missed.

Highlights of the Message

As they were entering worship today, Pastor Bill chose eight people to receive a piece of construction paper with one letter on it. These worshippers were called forward to show their letter as the message began. Our first challenge was to figure out what word the letters spelled and to get everyone in the correct order for the word to be read properly. The word was NATIVITY. As soon as the word was announced, Margaret asked, "What does that mean?" Pastor Bill pointed to the steps in front of the altar and said, "This is a nativity scene. Nativity means *birth*, and this scene shows the birth of Christ – with the shepherds, wise men, Mary and Joseph, and the manger with the Baby Jesus."



A star shone brightly to lead the three wise men to Christ, and we can be stars, too, to lead others to Christ. Let's see how we can live as a "bright, shining star" by figuring out what we can do that starts with each letter of NATIVITY. What can we do that starts with the letter "N"? The first attribute that was called out was **nice**, and many others followed for "N" and for each letter, including **accepting**, **tolerant**, **involved**, **volunteer**, **inviting**, and saying **yes** to helping.

The really fun part about coming up with a correct adjective was that Pastor Bill had many star erasers that he threw out to those who shared their ideas and thoughts, and others that went to those who were just listening intently! We had to be alert!

Song of Response

After the message we sang *Go Tell It on the Mountain: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere; Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!*

Prayers

Those who wished to offer a prayer came to the front of the chapel. We thanked God for the gift of Jesus, and asked Him to support Peg, who recently lost her husband. We also prayed that God would be with all those in military service, especially a son who is serving in Afghanistan, with Uncle Jay, who is homeless right now in California, with a wife who is having medical tests, and also with others. We thanked God for the blessings we have this Christmas.

Fred led us in the Lord's Prayer.

Happy Birthday and Happy Anniversary Celebrations

James, whose birthday is in November, was not able to be with us last month, so he came forward with those who were celebrating December birthdays: Holly, Jean (represented by her sister TJ), and Carol (who was reminded by her son Brian to step up!). All were sung to. *Happy Birthday to you. May Jesus bless you and guide you and keep you the whole year through.* (second verse)

Ed Edelman and his wife are celebrating their 43rd anniversary. Congratulations and many blessings to come!

Closing Songs

We sang two verses of *Joy to the World*, and then, because of a special request from Fred, two verses of *Silent Night*. We were a large group today, so our voices truly filled the chapel with beautiful and meaningful Christmas sounds.

Benediction and Dismissal

Pastor Bill gave the benediction. Then Fred gave the dismissal: *Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*"

Fellowship

As always, we met in the parlor adjoining the chapel for refreshments. There we were able to enjoy delicious cookies, a festive looking table, and each other's company, and to wish each other a very Merry Christmas. It was a blessing to be able to experience such a warm fellowship time with others who are also celebrating the birth of Jesus.

Next Month

We worship next month on Sunday afternoon, January 15, at 4:00 p.m. in the chapel at Calvary Lutheran Church, 730 South New Street, West Chester. All are welcome. We look forward to seeing you!