

# Through Zion's Window

DECEMBER 2019

## “A Man in a Red Suit or a Baby in a Manger?”

Every year at this time Christians find themselves pulled in two different directions. There is the worldly understanding of Christmas as little more than a winter break with the opportunity to give and receive gifts from one another under the guise of the gifts being given by an old man in a red suit. And then there is the Christian understanding; a celebration of the giving of the greatest gift in history, Jesus born a babe in Bethlehem and a forward look towards Christ's return. Two different symbols of the season—a man in a red suit and a baby in a manger.

Not too long-ago Starr and I were at a Christian bookstore and we came upon a figurine that had Santa Claus kneeling at the manger. It turns out that this image has been around for some time now, but we hadn't seen it before and so we started talking about it. Did we like it? What did we think about the blending of the two images? Is it a “theologically” appropriate image? According to the store manager it had caused controversy for him as well; he had the figurine in the store window until someone complained loudly about it and he took it out.



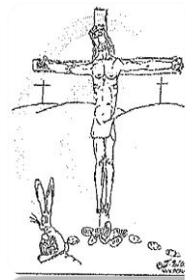
When Starr first pointed it out to me, I cringed. I didn't like the image at all (nor did she). We simply saw it as another way that culture tries to water down the true meaning of Christmas. After all, if you can make Santa and Jesus interchangeable then Christians will eventually see Santa and Jesus as the same thing with the same meaning.

But, as our conversation continued, we thought that that maybe it wasn't such a bad image. After all, Santa is kneeling to baby Jesus. That image of the secular and materialistic approach to Christmas is kneeling in worship to the Son of God. That, at least to us, seemed to place the proper perspective on the issue. However—does that mean that Santa has been around forever? Or at least that he lived before the Christ child was born? Hmmmm, of course there has always been God's way and our way. If Santa represents more than just Christmas but also our rebellion against God's way, then it's true that Santa has existed as long as people have.

That, however, places Santa in a very negative light. I've always enjoyed the story of St. Nicholas from whom the Santa Claus tradition grew. St. Nicholas was a bishop in the early church (around 300 AD) who inherited a lot of money from his parents when they died. He was known for secretly giving gifts of money to the poor. Saint Nicholas' name changed over the centuries and the Dutch eventually knew him as Sinterklass, which became, in English, Santa Claus. For St. Nick, and for modern Christians, gift giving is an outward sign of our loving response to God's great gift to us.

So; is Santa, at least originally, a symbol of humanity's rebellion against God and God's hope for us? Or is he a symbol of our loving response to God? Regardless of the answer to where Santa comes from; is he in competition to our celebrating Christmas as Christians? Is it better that we place him at Jesus' feet or in opposition to him? All of us respond to images differently. Maybe Starr and I over-analyze them just a bit☺. But as each of you enter this season, I would invite you to consider the images you use to symbolize Christmas. Do those images reflect your faith? Do they uplift God and the great gift God has given us? Do they water down the message of Christ? Would a stranger walking into your home immediately know that you worship the One, True God? Or would they think you worship the material world?

In the end Starr and I both decided we didn't like the figurine. We just can't put Santa and Jesus into the same image. Starr put it best for both of us when she said it would be just like having the Easter bunny hopping around a cross and hiding eggs in the empty tomb.



Yours in Christ,

*Pastor Doug*



November 10, 2019 Council Minutes – The meeting was brought to order by President Jerry Liesener at 10:07 am. Devotions were led by Wendy Egholm. Devotions for December will be led by Gina Altreuter. A motion was made by Christine Siedschlag, seconded by Wendy, to approve the secretary's report for October as printed. All in favor, motion carried.

Carrie Wendorf emailed the financial reports to the Council members for review. Motion by Wendy, seconded by Franklin Wolter to accept the treasurer's report and file for audit. All in favor, motion carried.

Pastor's Report – Christmas Eve services will be 4 pm at Zion, 6 pm at Cross and a possible late-night candlelight service with location and time to be determined. Thanksgiving and Christmas Day service will be at Zion at 9 am, both will be joint services with Cross and Holy Name. The first Sunday of each month will be a joint worship with Holy Name at 8:30 am. Discussed Pastor's continuing education options for 2020.

#### Committee Reports:

Parish Ed – Cross has extended an invitation to have our Sunday School kids join their Christmas program on Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. Decision was made to not have service at Zion that morning and we join their 10 am service. No 8:30 am Worship service at Zion this day.

Evangelism – We will be gathering donations for the Ashippun Bread Basket on Thanksgiving. Decorating the church for Christmas will be on Saturday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am.

Missions – The giving tree will be set up with gifts going to the residents at Shorehaven. All gifts should be returned to the church by December 8<sup>th</sup>. Council members will serve a Christmas meal for the Ashippun Apartment residents on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

Stewardship – November 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> will be Stewardship Sundays. Skits and temple talks will be part of the service.

Building and Grounds – a new sign for the upper parking is being quoted. Zion's service time will be updated on the lower parking lot sign.

Old Business – a revised church directory will be handed out. Please let Danielle know if there are any changes.

New Business – Discussed having a food drive for the Ashippun Bread Basket on Thanksgiving and other options throughout the year. They are currently in need for food and cash donations. Council positions open next year are Stewardship, Parish Ed and Evangelism. Please give it some thought if you are asked to run for one of these positions. It was decided that the Forever Young club can continue to use the church basement for their monthly gathering for \$25.00 per month. A new water heater was installed.

The next Council meeting will be on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Motion was made by Christine, seconded by Doreen to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 am, motion carried. The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Tunak



The Giving Tree is now up in the Narthex. The gifts collected will be given to the residents of Shorehaven Health Center as Christmas presents. Please join us by picking a gift idea from the tree and purchasing a gift for a resident this Christmas season. Please have all unwrapped gifts to church by 12/1. A collection box is located below the tree. Thank you for your generosity.

Blessings to you,  
Christine Siedschlag - Zion Missions Committee



### Youth Events



Don't forget St. Nick comes on December 6<sup>th</sup>, but we heard that he may be paying a special visit to the kids at Zion on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

We will have our Children's Christmas Program at 10 am during a special Joint Worship Service at Cross, please join us!

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\*9 am – November 28 - Thanksgiving Day Worship – Joint Worship Service with Cross and Holy Name of Jesus at Zion - Please bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to the Ashippun food pantry.

\*10 am – December 15 – Joint Worship Service and Children's Christmas Program at Cross. NO 8:30 am worship service at Zion this day.

\*4 pm – December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship - Joint Worship Service with Holy Name of Jesus at Zion

\*6 pm – December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship at Cross

*\*Possibility of late-night Christmas Eve Service, location and time to be determined*

\*9 am – December 25 – Christmas Day Worship - Joint Worship Service with Cross and Holy Name of Jesus at Zion

### Zion's Church Basement Ladies...

will host a Christmas luncheon and party for members of the Forever Young Club on Tuesday, December 10. We are excited to have received a Thrivent Action Team grant to help cover the costs enabling us to offer the event at no charge to its members. However, we help to make this a truly special event.



need your

Would you be willing to provide homemade Christmas cookies? Or able to make a dozen muffins? I would be extremely your generous support. Give me a call if you have questions or to get on the "bakers" list.



would you be thankful for

You can bring your cookies/muffins to church before worship on Sunday, December 8, (we'll keep them separated from the coffee hour treats!) **or** to the church basement entrance between 9 and 10 am on Monday, December 9 **or** Tuesday, December 10. Thank you for sharing your culinary talents!

Sandy  
920.474.4386



### Piggly Wiggly Receipts

The cash register receipts you dropped in the box during the months of September and October totaled **\$8,200.08**.

*Reminder:* Only Oconomowoc Piggly Wiggly receipts are counted. Pig receipts that have the word "DUPLICATE" printed on the top are NOT counted.

### *Saints in Light*

Thank you for lighting the tree in remembrance and honoring the special people in your life.

Keep the love lights glowing throughout the season and into next year.



### The Great Pew Challenge

Coming January 2020

Details to follow later



**\*\*PLEASE BE AWARE** that criminals are taking advantage of church members' trust in their pastors to impersonate pastor's accounts and send text or email messages saying that the pastor is in desperate need of money or gift cards. Reasons provided vary from claiming a medical emergency, a horrific car accident, or helping others in great need. Please know that your pastor would NEVER contact you by text or email and ask you for money. He will only ask for prayer! If you are ever in question PLEASE contact your pastor directly, the church office or a church council member.

**\*\*With the weather already starting to turn** just wanted to pass on a reminder...if school is canceled any events at Zion that day/evening including office hours, programs and education classes are canceled for the day/evening. For Sunday worship cancellations, we will send an email, post on Facebook, and it will scroll on Today's TMJ4 tv/radio station.

## Things Happening Around Zion...

- \* November 21 ~ 6 pm – 7:30 pm - Adult Education at Cross
- \* November 22 ~ 10 am – 12 pm - Pastor Doug will have office hours at Whelan's Coffee Shop (163 E Wisconsin Avenue ~ Oconomowoc). He will NOT have office hours on November 29, due to Thanksgiving.
- \* November 27 ~ 9:30 am – 11 am - Adult Education at Zion
- \* November 28 ~ 9:00 am – Thanksgiving Day Joint Worship Service – with Cross and Holy Name of Jesus (at Zion). Please remember to bring a non-perishable food item for the food pantry.
- \* November 30 ~ 9:00 am – Help decorate Zion for Christmas
- \* December 1 ~ 8:30 am – Joint Worship Service at Zion with Holy Name ~~We will be worshipping with Holy Name on the first Sunday of each month~~
- \* December 5 ~ 6 pm – 7:30 pm - Adult Education at Cross
- \* December 8 ~ 6 PM – Ashippun Christmas Tree Lighting (Hwy 67 and Hwy O)
- \* December 11 ~ 9:30 am – 11 am - Adult Education at Zion
- \* December 15 ~ 10 am – Joint Worship Service and Children's Christmas Program at Cross. Zion will not have an 8:30 am worship service this day, everyone is encouraged to worship at Cross and support our Zion young people.
- \* December 15 ~ DEADLINE: January Newsletter
- \* December 19 ~ 6 pm – 7:30 pm - Adult Education at Cross
- \* December 24 ~ 4 pm – Joint Christmas Eve Worship Service at Zion with Holy Name  
~ 6 pm – Christmas Eve Worship Service at Cross  
~ Would you be interested in attending a nighttime Christmas Eve candlelight worship service with Holy Communion? It would begin at either 9:30 pm or 10:30 pm (location to be determined). Each member please fill out the brief survey that will be available this Sunday.
- \* December 25 ~ 9:00 am – Christmas Day Joint Worship Service at Zion – with Cross and Holy Name
- \* January 2 ~ Zion will be hosting at Bread & Roses, more information to come
- \*\* We are doing a food drive for the month of November, items will be donated to the Ashippun Bread Basket. Monetary donations may be made as well, checks can be made out to Ashippun Bread Basket or to Zion for the food pantry and placed in the offering plate.

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, we witnessed the Affirmation of Baptism ~ Confirmation, of the following young men. It is our prayer that this milestone will be the beginning of a lifelong practice of meditation and study as they continue to discover what it means to be the people of God in the world today.

*Kristofer Scott Schultz, son of Scott & Carmen. He was baptized on July 12, 2005 and received his First Communion on April 17, 2014. His godparents are Sara Weber, Paul Ehrlich and Frank & Tina Kopp.*

*Kyle Benjamin Schlieve, son of Brian & Sara. He was baptized on August 20, 2006 and received his First Communion on April 9, 2017. His godparents are Amanda Peirick, Keith Fredrick & Kelly Nigbor.*

*Nolan Ryan Altreuter, son of Ryan & Gina. He was baptized on June 11, 2006 and received his First Communion on April 9, 2017. His godparents are Scott Peirick, Aaron Altreuter & Jody Peter.*



To Zion's Council & Members ~

A sincere Thank you for the totally unexpected generous gift!

I truly always considered it a privilege and a blessing to work with our youth at Zion. Taking age old scripture and applying it to the real-life scenarios of today's world.

I thank god for granting me the years to teach and the parents for sharing their children with me.

In Appreciation,  
Erla Newbecker

