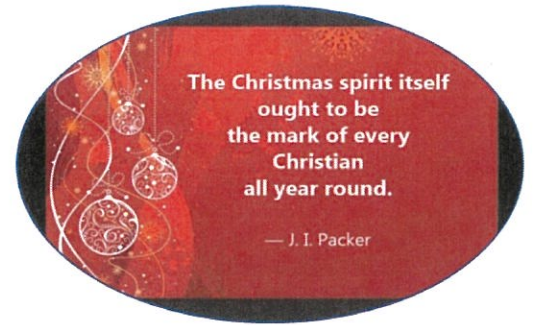




Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Have you ever thought about, "The Real Spirit and Meaning Of Christmas?" What are your real priorities for Christmas this year? Where would remembering and celebrating the birth of Jesus be on your list? I hope that you all will consider what the Real Spirit of Christmas is all about. There are many different ideas about what the Spirit of Christmas is...



Perhaps that phrase makes your mind immediately travel to the story of Ebenezer Scrooge and the Spirits of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future. But they are not the Real Spirit of Christmas...

For some people, the Spirit of Christmas is embodied in the shopping, searching the shops trying to find the right gift for the right person, fighting through the crowds of crazed shoppers, enthusiastic kids, determined mothers and fed-up dads, dashing from shop to shop, joining endless queues to pay for things that will probably be returned unwanted on Boxing Day, and probably ten times cheaper in the Post Christmas Sales. But that is not the Real Spirit of Christmas...

For some people, the Spirit of Christmas is the need to spend money they don't have on things they really don't need. Everything from the Life-size electric Santa Claus on the roof that waves as people go by to the Cinnamon Scented Yankee Candle that would smell sooooo good... if you actually lit it - but it cost so much, maybe you will save it till next year, or the year after. But they are not the Real Spirit of Christmas...

For some people, the Spirit of Christmas is an excuse to go out with the people from the office, or with friends, to get drunk and do all the things that they would never dream of doing the rest of the year. But that is not the Real Spirit of Christmas...

For some The Spirit of Christmas is tradition, the lights, decorations, tinsel, presents, Turkey, Brussel Sprouts, Christmas Crackers, Christmas Pudding, Christmas Cake, the Queen's Christmas Speech, and an afternoon nap. But none of them are the Real Spirit of Christmas...

At Christmas most of the world is so busy with celebrations that they ignore why we have Christmas at all. So many are busy with the holiday they don't even stop to consider the real meaning of what Christmas is for. So many focus on the presents they will give and get and they ignore Jesus - the greatest gift of all.

Christmas should be a celebration of the birth of Jesus. And there is the preparation, the decorating, the presents, the food, but somehow the world has chosen to forget whose birthday it really is. Imagine you decide to hold a birthday party for a friend. You send out invitations, decorate the room, ask Alison to do the catering. Everyone accepts the invitation. And they are all there in the right place at the right time, presents in hand. But the person the party is for is not there - because no one invited them.

Or, what if they did turn up, and everyone shouts "Happy Birthday" then ignores them and gives the presents they have brought to each other....

Christmas is when Christians are meant to celebrate the Birth of Christ! Jesus is not meant to be forgotten. He is not meant to be ignored. Friends, if I asked you what are your real priorities for Christmas this year - where would remembering and celebrating the birth of Jesus be on your list? Do you go through all the decorating, present buying, wrapping, card writing, feasting, drinking, parties, visits, lights, trees, tinsel, turkeys, and Brussel sprouts, yet somehow, somehow forget the Real Reason for the Season.

Do you ignore the One whose birthday it is? The one whose celebration it really is. Where is Jesus on your list of Christmas Priorities? How does celebrating Jesus and worshipping God fit into your Christmas Schedule. It really comes down to one very important question that we all can ask ourselves. Where is Jesus on your list of Christmas Priorities?

Will you be in church to celebrate the birth of the one who came to give you the greatest gift you could ever receive. Will you be here to worship the one who paid the price for your Sin - Or will your actions speak louder than your words? What does Christmas really mean to you?

Where is Jesus on your list of Christmas Priorities? What is the Real Spirit of your Christmas? Friends, this year are you willing to focus on the real meaning of Christmas? Are you willing to celebrate the real reason for the Season? Are you willing to focus on the Real Spirit of Christmas? Christmas should be more than enjoying ourselves, or visiting family and friends, eating and having a good time.

Christmas is more than an excuse for a holiday.

As I close let me share with you three thoughts about what the Real Spirit of Christmas is, and what Christmas Celebrations should contain for those of who love the Lord.

It is about Praise and worship, of the one who came to this earth on that first Christmas Night.

It is about us Speaking and living. Speaking about who Jesus is and living our lives in such a way that He is revealed to all the world.

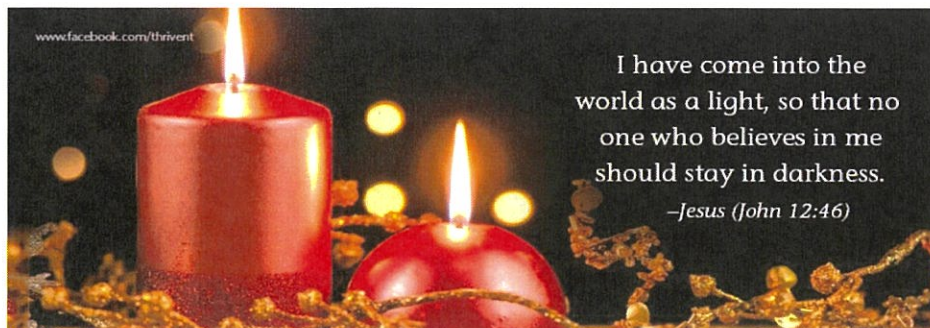
And finally, it is about Giving and Serving. Giving of ourselves not only for salvation but also to serve Him with all our strength.

Yours In Christ,

Pastor Don

P.S. From Annie and I, we want to take this opportunity to wish to each of you and your families.

MERRY CHIRTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEARS !



I have come into the
world as a light, so that no
one who believes in me
should stay in darkness.

—Jesus (John 12:46)



MAGICAL REINDEER CHOW is a Christmas candy treat that kids of all ages will love. It's made from cereal, pretzels, chocolate, and dried fruit. That mixture is coated with a white chocolate topping, then dusted with glittery gold sprinkles. This is a perfect candy treat to make in bulk. You can package it in cute cellophane bags to give as holiday gifts or bring

one big serving of it to a Christmas party. Guests can scoop some themselves or bring small baggies for guests to take some as a parting treat. Kids will love munching on this dessert. It's also a fun snack to leave out for Rudolph and his friends to enjoy.



Things that you will need:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups white chocolate chips
- 3 tablespoons coconut oil, optional
- 3 cups Rice Chex cereal
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- 1 cup thin pretzels
- 3/4 cup M&M's, divided
- 1/2 cup salted nuts
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries, or raisins
- 2 tablespoons golden sprinkles



Steps to Make It:

1. Gather the ingredients.
2. Prepare a baking sheet by lining it with aluminum foil and set aside.
3. Place the white chocolate chips and coconut oil, if using, in a large microwave-safe bowl. Microwave until melted, stirring after every 45 seconds to prevent the white chocolate from overheating.
4. Add the Chex, marshmallows, pretzels, 1/2 cup of the M&M's, nuts, and the raisins to the white chocolate, and stir until everything is completely coated with a thin layer of white chocolate.
5. Scrape the candy out onto the prepared baking sheet and smooth it into a thin layer.
6. Sprinkle the remaining 1/4 cup of M&M's on top and press down gently to adhere them. Adding some candies on top keeps them from being coated in white chocolate and gives your reindeer chow a pop of bright color. If you're using edible glitter or sprinkles, dust that all over the top of the candy.
7. Refrigerate the reindeer chow for at least 20 minutes to set the white chocolate.
8. Once set, break it into small pieces to serve.

If you would like to submit a recipe to be placed in the Newsletter, please send it in via email, or drop it off at the office. You can even give it to Pastor Don.

Approximately 206 Shoeboxes were filled this year from our church to be sent to children throughout the world with the love and message of Jesus Christ. Thank you all our church family who helped in anyway to make this possible.



The Women's Fellowship will be having their Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 12 beginning at 7 PM. Come and celebrate the season with some great food and wonderful fellowship.

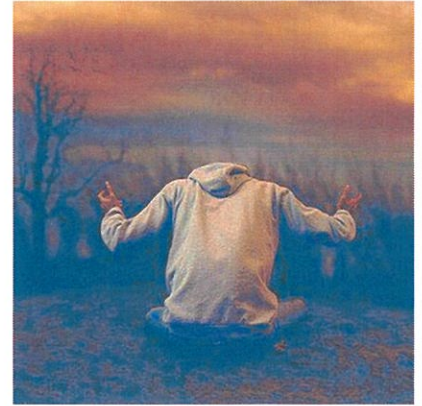
Christmas
PARTY



Sunday,
December 10
11 AM

The Power of Fasting and Prayer: A Spiritual Discipline Rooted in Faith

In the tapestry of our spiritual journey, fasting and prayer emerge as threads woven together to create a vibrant connection with God. This dynamic duo is not a mere religious ritual but a profound spiritual discipline that finds its roots in the pages of the Bible. As we embark on this journey of exploring the transformative power of fasting and prayer, let us anchor ourselves in the Word of God.



The Bible is replete with instances where fasting and prayer played pivotal roles in the lives of individuals and communities. Jesus Himself set the precedent when He embarked on a forty-day fast in the wilderness, demonstrating the potency of fasting as a means of spiritual preparation and empowerment (Matthew 4:1-2). The disciples, too, engaged in fasting and prayer as they sought God's guidance for significant decisions (Acts 13:2-3).

Fasting is not about earning favor or manipulating God; rather, it is a physical and spiritual posture of humility. The psalmist David, in the midst of his repentance, proclaimed, "I humble myself with fasting" (Psalm 35:13b, NLT). Fasting invites us to lay aside our physical needs temporarily, acknowledging our dependence on God and surrendering our desires to His sovereign will.

Prayer is the heartbeat of our relationship with God. It is not a monologue but a dialogue where we commune with the Creator. Jesus emphasized the power of prayer in conjunction with fasting, stating, "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21, NKJV). Through prayer, we align our hearts with God's purposes and tap into His wisdom, strength, and grace.

Fasting is often likened to a spiritual detox, cleansing our hearts and minds. Isaiah 58 paints a vivid picture of the transformative impact of true fasting: breaking the chains of injustice, freeing the oppressed, and sharing with those in need. It's not merely abstaining from food but actively engaging in acts of compassion and justice.

James 4:8 encourages believers to "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (ESV). Fasting and prayer create a sacred space for us to draw near to the Almighty. As we set aside the distractions of this world, we make room for a deeper, more intimate connection with God. In the silence of fasting, we often find the voice of God speaking into the depths of our souls.

Fasting and prayer are not antiquated practices but timeless spiritual disciplines that propel us into the presence of God. They are instruments of transformation, forging a path toward spiritual maturity and a deeper understanding of God's will. As we embark on this journey of fasting and prayer, let us remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:18 (NLT), "Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you." May our fasting and prayers be a fragrant offering, drawing us closer to the heart of God. **Grover Duling, CBC Executive Board**

Anger and Harsh Words

I sat fuming. Words of someone I loved dearly had hurt to the core and broken my heart. Doing the same thing to them, I lashed back with those same hurtful words. I was angry, upset, and yes, bad thoughts were running rampant through my head.

At times, we all get angry and upset- it doesn't always mean it's right. I had been wrong to return fire in the volley of harsh words, causing strife on both sides. I knew I had to turn to God's Word- words I had read so many times, like this instance, did not heed the advice. The Holy Spirit led me to these verses:



Ephesians 4: 26-32

²⁶ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

²⁷ Neither give place to the devil.

²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing, which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

³⁰ And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

What did I learn?

First, I should have God's love in my heart always. Something not of God should not be coming out of my mouth or in my mind (harsh words and bad thoughts- because God knows all about them- Prov. 15:3)

Second, I should not let the devil manipulate me, because in doing so, I grieved the Holy Spirit.

Third, I need to be careful about my witness. Others are always watching and listening. This includes God! What kind of witness am I being when I lose my temper and act in ways unpleasing to God?

Fourth, make things right. Swallow sinful pride and apologize- before the day ends. Ask God to give guidance on how to do this, so there is no more strife. James 3:17-18 tells us:

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

John Swonger – Executive Board

Looking Ahead to January

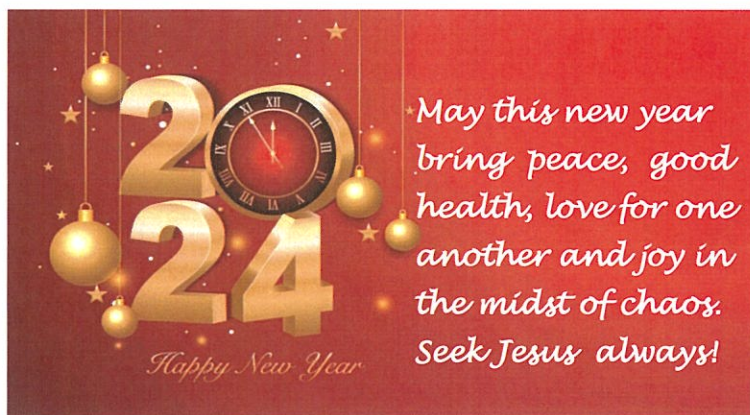


There will be a Church Board Carry-in Meal & Meeting on Monday, January 8 in the Fellowship Hall. Board reports are due to the church office by January 3, 2024.

In case of bad weather, there will perhaps be cancellations to some church activities. The church office will send out a call message to inform everyone of any of such cancellations.



The "All U Can Eat" Breakfasts sponsored by the Men's Fellowship are planned for January 20, February 17 and March 16, 2024. The times are from 7 AM- 11 AM . These fine and tasty breakfasts are open to the public. Please spread the word.



May this new year bring peace, good health, love for one another and joy in the midst of chaos. Seek Jesus always!

THE Lamplighter

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