

Steeple Views

First Presbyterian Church
209 Union Street
Schenectady, NY 12305

Pastor Larry Roff

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December 2011

Christmas Greeting

One of the finest Christian poets of our generation is Luci Shaw. In this poem about the incarnation she has captured the wonder and mystery – and also the deep and lofty majesty – of Christ’s coming into the world to save us. And she has done so in a marvelously unique way, by presenting it through the eyes of Mary.

MARY’S SONG

*Blue homespun and the bend of my breast
keep warm this small hot naked star
fallen to my arms. (Rest ...
you who have had so far
to come.) Now nearness satisfies
the body of God sweetly. Quiet he lies
whose vigor hurled
a universe. He sleeps
whose eyelids have not closed before.*

*His breath (so slight it seems
no breath at all) once ruffled the dark deeps
to sprout a world.
charmed by dove’s voices, the whisper of straw,
he dreams,
hearing no music from his other spheres.
breath, mouth, ears, eyes
he is curtailed
who overflowed all skies,
all years.
Older than eternity, now he
is new. Now native to earth as I am, nailed
to my poor planet, caught that I might be free,
blind in my womb to know my darkness ended,
brought to this birth
for me to be new-born,
and for him to see me mended
I must see him torn.*

Luci Shaw, Listen to the Green, © 1971
Harold Shaw Publishers. Used by permission.

Pastor’s Points

Senior Pastor Larry Roff

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

8 Self-Control



As we come this month to the final installment of this series, I wonder if you can you recite them from memory. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness—and now, self-control. And can you recall the main principles that lie at the heart of Paul’s list from Galatians 5? These are all dimensions of a single fruit, meaning that all of these traits should be present in the heart of every believer. These are not merely qualities that reside in our natural personality, but are rather qualities that flow from our regenerate hearts. These are not qualities that we can produce on our own; instead they are the traits of Christ-likeness that come from the Spirit’s miraculous work in our new nature. And these are not qualities that automatically or mechanically come to us as we sit passively waiting for them but are traits that will grow stronger and more dominant in our thinking and speaking as we work diligently, in the power of the Spirit, to cultivate them throughout our entire lives.

The fruit of self-control is the ability to do what we know we should do and to refrain from doing what we know we should not. We each need this, not only because of the innate weakness of our frail human nature as fallible creatures but also because of the innate corruption of our fallen human nature as sinful creatures. The person without self-control will make unwise decisions that bring harm to self as well as to others. In contrast, the person with self-control will

(Continued on Page 2)



Fun, Food, Fellowship. The November outing for Prime Timers was breakfast at the Glenville Queen for thirty-eight hungry people. After our orders were placed, Dick started us off with some turkey jokes to which someone quipped “Don’t give up your day job!”

We were pleased to have a great turnout as we took over the beautiful atrium room at the Queen. After breakfast we had lots of laughs assembling our take-home Thanksgiving crafts.



Our next event will be filling Christmas gift bags for children of our own Friendship Center students as well as for those at the Schenectady City Mission. We’ll also enjoy lunch together. Join us on December 16 for another time of fellowship and service.



Pizza, Pop, Produce, Presents, Packing, Pudding, Pleasing!
December 16 at Noon

If you plan to attend, contact Dick Rose so we can get an accurate count.
 (email) richard22511@gmail.com (or, call 861-8581)

The Fruit of the Spirit, Self-Control

(continued from Page 1)

make wise decisions that bring benefits to self as well as to others.

And remember we are not talking about a personality trait that some people have and some people don’t. Even non-Christians will demonstrate self-control when it comes to spending habits and bodily exercise. The Christian form of self-control, however, is that ability that comes from the Holy Spirit’s presence in the heart, enabling one to do what is not only helpful but what is holy. When Paul speaks of self-control as a fruit of the Spirit, he means those things believers choose to do because they are right and pleasing to God, and helpful for building up one another in the body of Christ.

What are the spheres in which self-control demonstrates itself? They will include those which non-Christians care about but in which the Christian is motivated by a desire to honor God, not to improve one’s own quality of life. Think of self-control in such things as how we spend our money—not wasting it on self-indulgent pleasures but caring for our family and giving generously to gospel outreach; or our patterns of speech—controlling our tongue (James 3:1-12) so as to say only those things that are helpful for building up one another (Ephesians 4:29). Consider self-control in

resisting physical temptations such as overeating or exercise, impurity in sexual matters, or substance abuse. And a Christian will also pursue self-control in matters of spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, fasting, witnessing, meditating, etc. A key distinction for the Christian is that we will be motivated not by what others might think but what God would think, even if no one else ever discovered our secret vices.

Where self-control is lacking, a person will be controlled by such things as laziness, fear, weakness, and a desire for instant gratification. Such a person will become a victim of countless forms of temptation that Satan will set before him or her, whether they realize the devil is involved or not. And make no mistake; Satan is an expert when it comes to exploiting our weaknesses. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 6, we are engaged in spiritual warfare every day of our lives. In one of his best-known quotes, John Owen, the great 17th century Puritan divine, wrote, “Be ever killing sin, or it will be ever killing you.” A key to victory in that spiritual struggle is the spiritual fruit of self-control. And we have confidence that “greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Blessings!
 Pastor Roff



Was there a real Santa Claus?



“I was wondering ...”

(Don't forget to submit questions you'd like to have answered in this column.)

Though we usually think of the plump jolly fellow in the Clement Moore's 1823 poem "The Night Before Christmas," there actually was a real historical figure who inspired many versions of the tale in different cultures around Europe. Nicholas was the Greek Bishop in the fourth century city of Myra in Western Turkey. Legends grew around him for his

reputation of giving gifts to the poor.

This Saint Nicholas was a Christian who believed that Jesus came into the world to save sinners like himself. As a pastor he studied the Scriptures to be able to preach the gospel of Christ to the people of his community. He devoted his life to teaching people how to live for the glory of God.

Early church tradition identifies him as one of the commissioners who attended the Council of Nicea in 325. This gathering of church leaders clearly established questions about the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, the real Santa Claus may well have been one of those who helped compose the Nicene Creed, which is one of the primary confessional statements of Christian truth used around the world for centuries.



Cook's Corner

Ingredients

- 1 Year (divided into parts as directed)
- Faith, Patience, Courage, Work
- Hope, Faithfulness, Generosity, Meditation
- 1 Good Deed
- Seasoning

1. Take twelve whole months, cleaning them thoroughly of all bitterness, hate and jealousy. Make them just as fresh and clean as possible.
2. Now cut each month into twenty-eight, thirty or thirty-one different parts, but don't make the whole batch at once.

Prepare it one day at a time out of these ingredients.
3. Mix into each day one part of faith, one part of patience, one part of courage and one part of work.
4. Add to each day one part of hope, faithfulness, generosity, and meditation, and one good deed.
5. Season the whole with a dash of good spirits, a sprinkle of fun, a pinch of plan, and a cupful of good humor.
6. Pour all of this into a vessel of love.
7. Cook thoroughly over radiant joy.

Recipe for Happiness
(Author Unknown)

Two Retire After Years of Service

John Polimeni wanted to serve in the church and use his God-given gifts. He found that he had a way of making people feel welcome and remembered, and so the perfect match for him was as an usher. Each week he came faithfully to his post, making sure that ushers were in place ready to greet congregants and visitors alike. John was the go-to guy if the nursery needed to locate a parent or if someone had a special need. He was prompt with bulletins, handshakes, and hugs. He was on the job every Sunday morning and evening.

Now, after many years of faithful service, John has retired as Head Usher. Thank you, John, for all your efforts.

Sherry Walkup, whose beautiful voice has blessed our congregation countless times, has also served for thirteen years as music team leader for the early service. We value the fine leadership she has provided in finding and learning new music, preparing it for the other instruments and voices in the music team, and bringing it to our congregation in a more contemporary setting each week.

Sherry's joy is contagious; and although she has now retired from her leadership role, we count on the Lord continuing to use her in other ways to serve and to bless.



Missions Committee Update

Submitted by Philip Schiesswohl, Missions Committee



Thank You Notes

We have received a number of thank you notes from missionaries and missionary children in the last month.

Russ, Mirelle, John & Jeremy Livingston

Thank you for your many encouragements and hospitality to our family throughout the wonderful missions week. I am sure our boys will take some blessed memories from the week as well as a godly model for fellowship in ministry partnership in the great commission.

We rejoice to represent you as we go back soon to France & Tunisia.

Thanks for your prayers as we go. We rejoice to lift up also your outreach locally through the Friendship Ministry.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be mightily with you.

Mark & Babe Smith

WOW! I can't believe the time has come and gone already! What a great time for us. It was so good to see you, to worship with you, and hear of God's work around the world!

Thank you for every time you lift us and our beloved people to the Throne of Grace. Thank you for all you have given to us and our family over the years. We just couldn't do it without you!

Please continue to pray for safety over the miles and for the last few meetings – that the Lord of the harvest will call forth the workers. We are still short in our support needs – pray for those who will step in to be a part of our team – so many elders who supported have gone home. Also could you pray for a healthy and good re-entry with the folks at home? Also can you

remember our dear ones – Chief Bradley Jack and Ken McEwen as they battle health issues? We are asking for their lives to be preserved, so the fellowship will have a good foundation. Thank you from our hearts for your love, support and kindness.

Dominica Ayala

Thank you for the Bible you gave me for my graduation. I really like it and have learned a lot from it.

Blair & Jane Cook

We have wonderful memories of our time with you last October – and the glorious leaves.

We wanted to let you know how grateful we are to be partners with you in taking the Gospel to children and their teachers. It is a joy to serve the Lord with you.

Alex and Laura Crum

We prayed as a family tonight [Nov 2nd] for God's blessing on your church. We want our children to know who our missionary partners are! Thank you for partnering with us in our work spreading the Gospel! Today was Alex's second day working for the Seed Company and supporting its 430+ language projects with computer skills.

Candice Holtz

Dear Ladies at First Pres, what a lovely surprise in the mail yesterday, especially as I was feeling a little pressured financially with the holidays approaching. Thank you so much for your generosity.

Ed and I always enjoy the Missions Conference. We certainly feel loved and cared for (the cash gift while we were there was so helpful) and so enjoyed hearing what the Lord is doing through First Pres and the other missionaries

Thanks for your prayers for Ed in Estonia. The training went so well he

may be going back in the spring. We just had an outreach event downtown yesterday [Nov 4th] and look forward to following up with some of the guests. Two men Ed led to Christ in England are visiting us right now. It is go, go, go.

News from Old Friends – John & Joyce Sanford

This is an overdue note of thanks to you for the many years of support, while John was working with Mission to Unreached People in Seattle, and then with Christian Veterinary Mission in Seattle. There have been many changes for us in the past year, as John is doing consulting work along side USAID. We're thankful that we have been able to stay in the Seattle area, since that has been our home for the past 18 years.

Our son Zach is married to Allison, and they live in Seattle. Allison is on staff with Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship, now [in] her 2nd year on staff at Univ. of Washington in Seattle. Zach continues his work as an electrical engineer with Puget Sound Energy in nearby Bellevue.

Our daughter Bea and her husband Jeffery moved to Oxford, England, six weeks ago. Jeff is tutoring in Philosophy at Magdalen College. Bea is working on her English studies long-distance with Princeton Univ.

John travels quite a bit, and has been in Afghanistan for the past 3 months. He is scheduled to return home in less than a week. We've been able to e-mail regularly, and John can call fairly often when he's in Kabul. We are grateful for God's faithfulness to us as a family.

Thank you again, for your help and care for so many years.





Missions (continued)

Special Offerings

This past month the Mission Committee recommended and Session approved two special offerings. On Thanksgiving Day the offering went to City Mission of Schenectady. City Mission does not receive any government funds but depends entirely upon the contributions of concerned individuals, churches and businesses. Volunteers help year-round in a variety of capacities. Serving meals, preparing food boxes, mentoring, and assisting with special events, are just a few of the fulfilling volunteer opportunities available. Contact Nicole Amedore (518) 346-2275 ext.311 if you would like to volunteer.

This year the missionary Christmas Gift offering was received on November 20th and 27th. The missionary Christmas offering is divided evenly among the retired and active missionaries, including children who still reside at home. This gift lets them know we appreciate what they are doing for Christ and that we remember them.

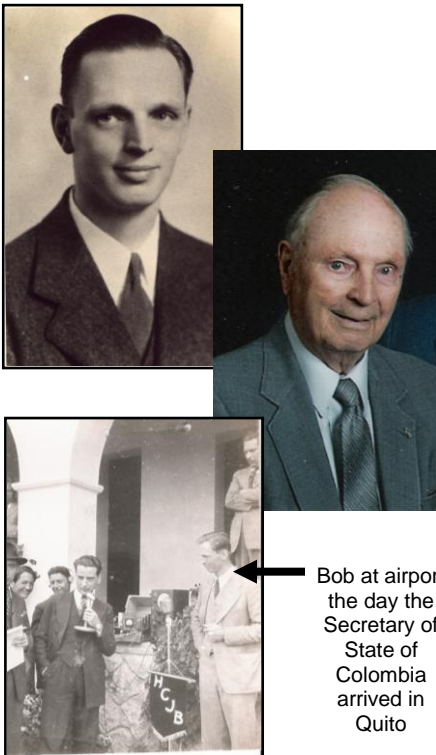
Short Term Mission

God has provided Olivia Privitera the opportunity to travel to Italy and spend a semester teaching English as a Second

Language in the towns of Casarsa and San Lorenzo (about an hour from Venice in Northern Italy) with Tom and Maureen Little. They are with an organization called Saints Equipped to Evangelize (SEE). SEE is a small church-planting ministry and they use ESL as an essential tool to reach communities, build relationships, and share the gospel. Maureen is in charge of the ESL program and teaches many classes for children and adults. She has assistants/co-teachers come on a semester basis and Olivia will go from January 23rd – May 2nd 2012. Olivia will be actively involved in teaching about 24 hours a week and will spend the rest of her time hanging out with the Italian students and building relationships with them. These relationships are the framework for reaching out, sharing the gospel, and seeing churches planted in this region! The Missions Committee has agreed that First Pres will provide \$1000 to help support Olivia in this mission outreach. Please pray for Olivia as she serves the Lord in Italy.

Giving

Missions giving through October dropped to 90.7 percent of the budget. Many of our missionaries continue to experience significantly reduced financial support. Our continued care for them and sacrificial giving to their support make it possible for them to remain on the field.



Bob at airport the day the Secretary of State of Colombia arrived in Quito

Robert Remington,

missionary to Ecuador and Costa Rica, died on November 6th. Bob and his first wife Eileen were among the first wave of missionaries sent out by First Pres after World War II. Bob was taken under care of Session in 1942 and went to Princeton Seminary. Because it was war time, Bob taught at Princeton and that provided his support for seminary. Session took on his support as a missionary in 1945. He and Eileen served in Ecuador and Costa Rica for many years. Bob was involved in DIA, a ministry that produced Spanish language radio programs for broadcast on stations throughout Latin America. He told how much he liked radio and felt blessed that God allowed him to work

in radio as a missionary. Eileen went to be with the Lord in 1982. Bob remarried and he and Esther went to Costa Rica to continue service on the field. In addition to Bob's work with Gospel Radio Station TIFC, he and Esther shared ministries of counseling at the Spanish Language Institute, helping the Tirrases Church (in the Eileen Remington Memorial Chapel), and encouraging the Escazu Christian Fellowship, a ministry among English-speaking families. In 1992 the Remingtons returned to the US to reside in a missionary retirement community in Pasadena, CA. Bob and Esther were married for twenty-nine years.



Bell Choir accompanying Senior Choir



Men's Quartet at 8:15 service

Prime Timers enjoying breakfast at the Glenville Queen



Congratulations from Whoot the Owl

Contest Winners

Congratulations to Becca Fiveland and Marie Jahne, winners of last month's newsletter contest. Thanks to all who participated.

Now look through this edition and see if you can find all the new responsibilities Whoot has been given.

Email us at steeplenews@yahoo.com or call 399-6840 and leave a message with your answers.

Session Report - Submitted by Philip Schiesswohl

Session held a called meeting on 1 November at which Dick Rose was examined for the office of deacon and Rowland Elwell was examined for the office of elder. In addition a commission was set up to examine Joseph Gerardi for the office of deacon.

At the regular November session meeting the session received the treasurers' reports through October 20:

Church Support (44 weeks, through October):

regular giving \$377,307.34 (93.5% of budget)
 budgeted needs \$403,483.38

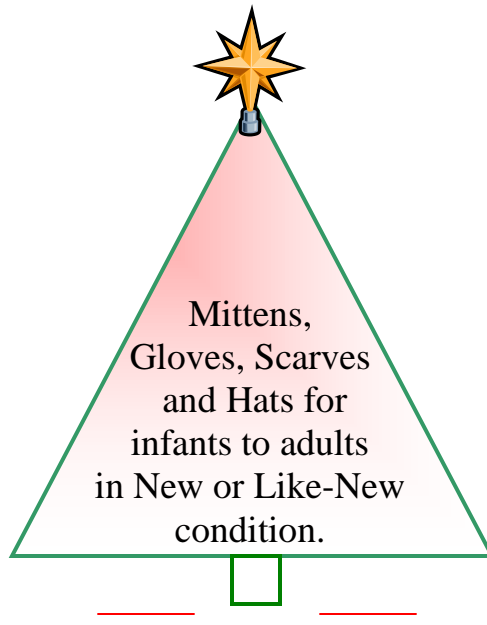
Missions (44 weeks, through October):

regular giving \$283,137.24 (90.7% of budget)
 budgeted needs \$311,976.92

In other business Session:

1. Transferred Robert Washburn to the church triumphant as of 31 October 2011.
2. Approved applying all of the \$1000 approved at the 11 October 2011 session meeting for Jonathan Meo's M. Div studies to the spring 2012 term.
3. Directed Dr. Roff with elder Vincent and elder Tom Bird to set up a meeting to discuss an issue that was raised.
4. Directed elders Leib, Privitera and Roy, in consultation with Dr. Roff, to draft a statement on behalf of session to be read to the congregation at the annual meeting.
5. Approved presenting Charles Essepian and Ward Fellows in nomination for Operations Board of Deacons instead of Ministry Board of Deacons at the annual meeting.
6. Approved the minutes of the commission to examine Joseph Gerardi as a candidate for the office of deacon.
7. Approved approve the following communion dates for the year 2012:
 - a. Morning communion:
 15 January, 19 February, 18 March, 13 May, 15 July, 7 October - (World Communion Sunday), 16 December
 - b. Evening communion:
 6 April - (Good Friday), 19 August, 18 November.
8. Approved that the Thanksgiving offering be entirely for the City Mission of Schenectady.
9. Approved that the 2011 Missionary Christmas offering be taken November 20 and 27.

Mitten Tree



Items will be collected through January 2, 2012 and donated to City Mission for their community outreach and shelter programs.

Kids' Zone

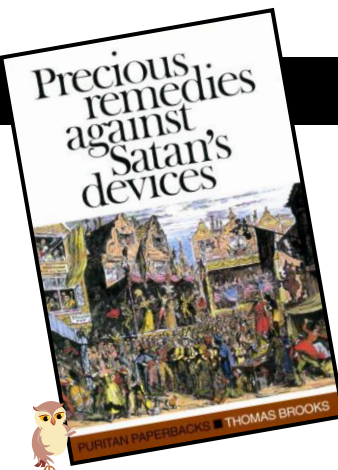


If you would like to participate, please bring your items to help decorate our tree located in the center hallway area of Turnbull House. Place your items on the tree or in the boxes provided.

Pastor's Reading Recommendations

Read any good books lately?

Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices by Thomas Brooks



J. I. Packer (author of *Knowing God*) has written that most of his best friends are dead! He was referring to authors of previous centuries whose writings continue to have great value for us and influence in our lives. I intend to feature some of these in alternate issues in the months ahead.

His statement is a helpful reminder for us who live in an age when so many people think only that which is new is worth examining. We tend to be drawn to the most recent publication to hit the bookshelves. But there aren't many truly "great" books being written today, books destined to become classics.

Christian literature of previous generations ought to be a regular part of our reading diet. Giants in the faith have passed on to us a magnificent legacy of doctrinal instruction and practical guidelines for godly living.

That's especially true of writers during the 17th – 19th centuries, from the Puritans (John Owen and John Bunyan) to the evangelists of the Great Awakening (Jonathan Edwards and John Newton) and the preachers of Victorian England (Charles Spurgeon and J. C. Ryle).

Banner of Truth is a publishing company that reprints much of the best Puritan literature. You ought to check out their website to look over the titles, and sign up to be on their email list for notices of freshly reprinted books. www.banneroftruth.org

This month I want to feature Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) and his excellent book, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*. This would be a great follow-up for those who have been in Lamont Truttling's Sunday School class where he has been teaching Kurt Lundgaard's splendid summary of John Owens' classic trilogy about overcoming sin.

Brooks' volume is very accessible for people unaccustomed to reading the Puritans. It is not too

lengthy (253 pages) nor too "wordy." It is Puritan devotional writing at its best. And it is divided into very clearly marked sections with an outline that makes it not only easy to follow, but also convenient to read just a little bit at a time, completing one section each day.

Here is a sample of the way the book is laid out. There are four major divisions:

1. Satan's devices to draw the soul to sin
2. Satan's devices to keep the soul from holy duties
3. Satan's devices to keep saints in a sad condition
4. Satan's devices to destroy and ensnare souls

Each division includes a series (as many as 12 in each division) of descriptions of devices Satan uses to that end, and with each of those, Brooks offers 4 or 5 wonderfully practical suggestions as remedies.

For example, here's the outline of the first device. Satan draws the soul to sin first by presenting the bait and hiding the hook. And here are the four remedies Brooks then describes.

1. Keep at the greatest distance from sin and from playing with the bait
2. Consider that sin is but a bitter sweet
3. Consider that sin will usher in the greatest and saddest losses
4. Consider that sin is very deceitful and bewitching

All of this Brooks covers from pages 29-34, easily read in a single sitting.

When I taught the pastoral counseling courses at Knox Theological Seminary, I made this required reading for the students, not only for the sake of those they would counsel, but also for their own souls' struggle with sin. I have gone back and re-read it in my own life several times. I would love to hear from any of you who will sample this Puritan treasure.



December Birthdays and Anniversaries *

2	Bill Beadnell
4	Lisa Sarnacki
5	Flora Ramonowski
6	Rob Roy
7	Chelsea Culora
8	Kathy Culora
8	Kirsty Fittro
12	Anniv: Matthew & Sandra Butts
14	Zoe Elwell
15	Olivia Privitera
17	Lila Serapilio, Ermilla Singh
18	Dick Himmelwright



20	Adrienne Barnett, Kerith Pott Anniv: John and Sue Parnaby
21	Mary Ellen Gale
22	Charles Essepien, Skip Pott, Valerie Sickler
23	Lenore Martin Anniv: Jim & Beth Clevenstine
24	Carol Rogers
26	Sheila Martin
27	Joe MacPherson Anniv: Bob & Lena Degeneff
28	Ernie Arnold, Ward Bailey
30	Bill Chu
31	Wes O'Neill

* Don't forget your missionaries! Check your Missionaries Handbook to find their birthdays.

Women's Ministries



Submitted by
Adrienne Polenz

Women's Advent Tea

December 5, 2011

Mekeel Hall - 7:00 pm

Service of Lessons and Carols
Light Refreshments

Bring a gift of toiletries
or small personal items
to support the City
Mission's outreach to women

Invite your friends
and neighbors!

(Babysitting
available)

Christmas Outreach to the Stockade

When our neighbors along the river experienced catastrophic flooding, we made some new friends. Now we want to keep in touch with them by hand-delivering home-made Christmas cookies and invitations to our Christmas dinner and Christmas Eve Candlelight service.



Needed: Volunteers to bake a total of 100 dozen cookies.

They will be delivered on Sunday afternoon, December 4.

To help with cookie baking or assembling the trays please call Helen Challener (357-3988).

Thank you!



Looking Ahead

Dec 3	Hanging of the Greens 9:30 – 11:30 am
Dec 5	Women's Advent Tea Mekeel Hall, 7:00 pm
Dec 11	Christmas Communion, am services Festival of Lessons & Carols, 6:00 pm
Dec 14	Christmas Dinner, 5:45 pm
Dec 16	Prime Timers Mekeel Hall, noon
Dec 17	Caroling to Homebound, Meet at church, 3:00 pm
Dec 18	Christmas Cantata 6:00 pm, Sanctuary
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Service, 6:30 pm
Dec 25	Combined Service, 11:00 am no Sunday School or Evening Service



Christmas Humor

It was the day after Christmas at a church in San Francisco. Pastor Mike was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures.

Immediately, Pastor Mike turned towards the church to call the police. But as he was about to do so, he saw little Jimmy with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

Pastor Mike walked up to Jimmy and said, "Well, Jimmy, where did you get the little infant?" Jimmy replied, "I got him from the church."

"And why did you take him?"

With a sheepish smile, Jimmy said, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to little Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it."

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Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. ~Philippians 4:8 KJV

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