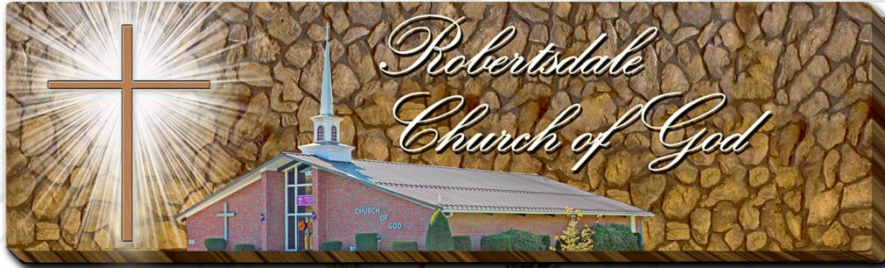


THE PURPOSE



Newsletter

Volume #2
December - January
2016 / 2017

*To keep you Informed
To keep you Inspired
To keep you In Touch*

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Jerry Buseck: Editor

Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday Evening:

Bible Study & Youth 7:00 p.m.

Join us Sunday mornings @ 10:30 a.m. for Sunday morning worship

Christmas History

Christ is born History.com staff (2010) Christ is born?

“Although most Christians celebrate December 25 as the birthday of Jesus Christ, few in the first two Christian centuries claimed any knowledge of the exact day or year in which he was born. The oldest existing record of a Christmas celebration is found in a Roman almanac that tells of a Christ’s Nativity festival led by the Church of Rome in 336 A.D. The precise reason why Christmas came to be celebrated on December 25 remains obscure, but most researchers believe that Christmas originated as a Christian substitute for pagan celebrations of the winter solstice.

To early Christians (and to many Christians today), the most important holiday on the Christian calendar was Easter, which commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, as Christianity began to take hold in the Roman world, in the early fourth century, church leaders had to contend with a popular Roman pagan holiday commemorating the “birthday of the unconquered sun” (natales solis invicti)–the Roman name for the winter solstice.



Every winter, Romans honored the pagan god Saturn, the god of agriculture, with a festival that began on December 17 and usually ended on or around December 25 with a winter-solstice celebration in honor of the beginning of the new solar cycle. This festival was a time of merrymaking, and families and friends would exchange gifts. At the same time, Mithraism–worship of the ancient Persian god of light–was popular in the Roman army, and the cult held some of its most important rituals on the winter solstice.



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After the Roman Emperor Constantine I converted to Christianity in 312 and sanctioned Christianity, church leaders made efforts to appropriate the winter-solstice holidays and thereby achieve a more seamless conversion to Christianity for the emperor's subjects. In rationalizing the celebration of Jesus' birthday in late December, church leaders may have argued that since the world was allegedly created on the spring equinox (late March), so too would Jesus have been conceived by God on that date. The Virgin Mary, pregnant with the son of God, would hence have given birth to Jesus nine months later on the winter solstice.

From Rome, the Christ's Nativity celebration spread to other Christian churches to the west and east, and soon most Christians were celebrating Christ's birth on December 25. To the Roman celebration was later added other winter-solstice rituals observed by various pagan groups, such as the lighting of the Yule log and decorations with evergreens by Germanic tribes.

The word Christmas entered the English language originally as *Christes maesse*, meaning "Christ's mass" or "festival of Christ" in Old English. A popular medieval feast was that of St. Nicholas of Myra, a saint said to visit children with gifts and admonitions just before Christmas. This story evolved into the modern practice of leaving gifts for children said to be brought by "Santa Claus," a derivative of the Dutch name for St. Nicholas—*Sinterklaas*."

History.com staff (2010) Christ is born?



Giveaway

Examine the Christmas Balls in the newsletter. There is a common theme within them, but you will need to read your Bible to figure it out. Print your name on the slip of paper which will be located in the blue folder in the narthex along with what the theme is within the Christmas balls. Fold the slip of paper and place it in the plastic container marked Contest Giveaway. You must have the theme correct.



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Swope House Renovation



What a blessing God has provided us with the water being turned on and the heating system in working order! Remodeling and repairs continue to bring the youth a place of their own.



Small Groups

If you have not been to one of the 6 small groups taking place on Sunday nights, you are really missing out on some great opportunities. A Purpose Driven Life has been the topic of discussion this year, discussing why we are here and what is our purpose. Not only is there the opportunity to learn more about God and our purpose, but there is also the opportunity of fellowship and getting to know our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is more than just a study. It is also a way to help us live our lives in a meaningful way that is pleasing to God.



Mark Brown has been busy heading up the project and bringing in volunteers to help with the work. Recently new drywall has been donated and installed where needed with one room remaining. Soon it will be time to start painting with the help of Stanly Palmer and the Youth Group. Jerry Smith has also been busy with cleaning up the outside of the house: power washing and hand scrubbing the exterior of the house, including the siding and porch areas which have also been repaired.

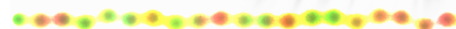
As part of upholding the integrity within the community, Pastor Don is asking for contributions for the purchase of (14) shrubs at \$50.00 each. If you are able to help by purchasing one or more shrubs, please contact Pastor Don.

Please continue to pray and support our youth.

Contact info:

Mark Brown
(814) 635-3023

Jerry Smith
(814) 448-3389



Join us Sunday mornings @ 10:30 a.m. for Sunday morning worship

Halloween

There was an exciting turnout this year for Trunk-or-Treat night at the church with about 150 kids showing up to receive delicious candies handed out by the youth group, decorating their own cookies, drinking warm cocoa, and having their pictures taken in front of the great pumpkin.



Not only do events like this help us serve our communities, but they also bring children and adults into the church, getting the children to ask their parents about God. And with hope in prayer, these events can bring families to the church where they can hear God's word, having the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.



Thanksgiving

So how did Thanksgiving Day begin and why is it also celebrated in Canada, Germany, Korea, Japan, and Norfolk? After all, didn't it all start at the Plymouth Colony sometime during the fall of 1621 between 52 European settlers and 90 Wampanoag Indians? Well, there is more that goes into this than just the three-day feast at Plymouth.

A day of Thanksgiving or what is also known as a harvest celebration has been around for thousands of years. It is even present in the Old Testament as a commanded Jewish celebration called Sukkot, which can be translated as "Feast of Booths", "Feast of Tabernacles", or "Feast of the Ingathering". Sukkot has a double significance: one in Exodus 34:22, which is agricultural in meaning, and one in Leviticus 23:42-43, commemorating the exodus and dependence of the people of Israel on the will of God. This was a celebration that even Jesus observed and participated in. - continued -

-continued -

There have been many other occurrences of the Thanksgiving or Harvest celebration throughout the ages. Some were of Christian origins and others of pagan worship. Although the days on which these celebrations were observed were all different, they did happen all over the world.

The events of Thanksgiving at Plymouth as we traditionally know it, can most accurately be described from the only two known letters written about the event, the most significant one from Edward Winslow.

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as

with a little help beside, served Company almost a week, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deer, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

Throughout the next 200 plus years, fall harvest feasts happened throughout the country as a celebration of the year's harvest, to give thanks and to enjoy the last of the fresh foods before they were preserved for the winter. For this reason it was celebrated more in the northern states than in the south. Along with the different climate zones, the harvest celebrations that did take place, took place at different times throughout the fall season.

It wasn't until 1863 that Sarah Josepha Hale (writer of Mary Had a Little Lamb and others) convinced Abraham Lincoln, after 36 years of effort, to combine all these fall festivals into a single holiday, recognizing the event at Plymouth as the first of all the fall harvests.



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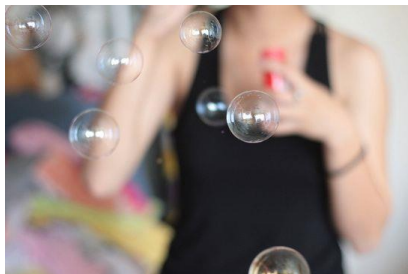
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Youth Corner

Burst your Christian bubble!

By Elisabeth Carter

I want you to take a moment to think about your friends. Think about who your best friends are. Why are you best friends? Is it because they are also Christians?



A lot of the time, Christians have Christian best friends. This makes a lot of sense! Of course you're going to be close to people who share your faith and your view of life. Of course you'll want to spend time with people who build you up in Christ and don't tempt you to sin. Conversations are easy, you see each other all the time at church, and you have the same ideas about what a great Friday night looks like (youth group!).

But here's the problem: many Christians, without even realizing it, are living in a Christian bubble. Their families are Christians. All their friends are Christians. They hardly ever see or talk to non-Christians, and when they do, it's only cursory interactions and niceties, nothing deep.

Jesus calls us to share the gospel with everyone in the world. But how are we supposed to do that when we only know people who already have the gospel? If you think you're in a Christian bubble, here are some ways to break out.

Do it now!

As you get older, it will only get harder to make new friends. After you finish school you'll go to university or college, or into a job, and you won't have the same social structures around you to help you make friends. Many adult Christians reach 30 and realize that their social life is completely linked to their church life and they have no friends outside of their church brothers and sisters. Be intentional now about widening your social networks, and set yourself up for a future of diverse friendships full of gospel opportunities.

Look at where you spend your time

Every ministry or church commitment you say "yes" to is great, but it's also your saying "no" to free time to spend with people who need the gospel. Definitely commit some of your time to Christian ministries, but make sure you have space in your life for hanging out with non-Christians and building friendships. -continued -

-continued -

Find connections based on something other than Jesus

I find it easiest to make friends with Christians because there's a built in connection - we both love Jesus! But there are plenty of connections we have with people who don't (yet!) love Jesus. Go looking for these connections! Maybe you love the same music, or you read the same books or both hate mushrooms. When you start looking for friends based on these connections, you'll find yourself growing relationships with non-Christians as well as Christians.

Go where the non-Christians are

If you only spend your time at youth group, church or with your Christian friends at school, how are you going to meet non-Christians? You need to go where they are. Obviously some places and events are not great things for Christians, but it may be as simple as joining a sports team, sitting at a different place in the classroom or going to local events. When I moved into my current suburb, I joined a local gym, mostly to get fit but also because I knew I might be able to meet some non-Christians in the area. It's a slow process (mostly because of my own fear!) but I'm starting to build connections with the women in my Saturday morning Zumba class.

A warning...

If you're in a Christian bubble, then definitely try these steps to break out of it. But don't do it simply to convert people! Your new friends will not feel valued or loved if they find out you just became friends with them to turn them to Christ. Relationships should be built on mutual admiration, shared connections or experiences, and kindness, first and foremost. Showing love to your friends is extremely important, and though they need the gospel, you should share it with them out of love in sensitive and appropriate ways.

Are you in a Christian bubble? How are you going to break out of it?

Upcoming Events

Children's Christmas Program to be held on December 18th during the morning worship service.

Christmas Eve Communion hosted by the Foster family will take place between 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm on December 24th.

Christmas Service will be a real delight this year as it will be held on Christmas Day. Bring your friends and family to celebrate this special day.

Christmas Cantata - Light of the World

So how much work and dedication does it take to prepare for one of our favorite events? Lots!

This year's theme will be a mini-musical called Light of the World.

This is one of those yearly events that you do not want to miss, and what a more appropriate day to listen to such an amazing performance than on Christmas Day.

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Sing A New Song

December

"Jesus"

Verse 1

There is a truth older than the ages
There is a promise of things yet to come
There is one, born for our salvation
Jesus
There is a light that overwhelms the darkness
There is a kingdom that forever reigns
There is freedom from the chains that bind us
Jesus, Jesus

Chorus 1

Who walks on the waters
Who speaks to the sea
Who stands in the fire beside me
He roars like a lion
He bled as the lamb
He carries my healing in his hands
Jesus

Verse 2

There is a name I call in times of trouble
There is a song that comforts in the night
There is a voice that calms the storm that rages
He is Jesus, Jesus

Repeat Chorus 1

Bridge

Messiah, my Savior
There is power in Your name
You're my rock and, my Redeemer
There is power in Your name
In Your name

Chorus 2

You walk on the waters
You speak to the sea
You stand in the fire beside me
You roar like a lion
You bled as the lamb
You carry my healing in Your hands
2X

January

"Impossible Things"

Verse 1

You heal the broken hearted
You set the captive free
You lift the heavy burden
And even now You are lifting me

Chorus

There is no healer
Like the Lord our maker
There is no equal to the King of kings
Our God is with us
we will fear no evil
Cause You do, Impossible things
You do Impossible things

Verse 2

Though I walk through the valley
Darkness surrounding me
There You prepare a table
In the presence of my enemies

Repeat Chorus

Bridge

One Word and the walls start falling
One Word and the blind will see
One Word and the sinner's forgiven
Cause You do Impossible
2X

Repeat Chorus 2X

Verse 3

You do more than I could ask
Or even imagine
You are, more than I could ask
You're more than enough

Repeat Verse 1

Songs by Chris Tomlin

Pastor

Appreciation Day

Even though we should give God the glory and credit for all that we do, and all we accomplish, it still feels good and puts a warm fuzzy in your belly when you are shown appreciation by others. This is how Pastor Don and his lovely wife Kerry felt on Pastor Appreciation day.



Receiving a day of blessings through our love and prayers for them both, Pastor Don saw just how much we appreciate him. Could a yearly membership to a golf club say anymore? Only if you love the sport of golf as much as Pastor Don does. Was there a perfect gift of appreciation for Kerry as well? You bet! Perhaps one of her favorite things being pampered at the spa. Thank you so much, Pastor Don and Sister Kerry!

Pastor

Installation

The installation ceremony kicked off with special guest speaker Rebecca New-Edson, Director of Western PA Ministries of the Church of God, followed by the anointing of Pastor Don and a gathering of all to enjoy a celebration dinner.

It has been a long awaited day. And though it has certainly felt like Pastor Don and Kerry have been our shepherds for quite some time (and they were), it was finally made official November 20th.

I couldn't tell if the smile and glow on Pastor Don's face was from the installation day ceremony or from having his whole family: children, spouses, and grandchildren all together at the same time. Either way, he looked like one very proud man and rightfully so.



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Did You Know!

No amount of good works or good deeds can earn you a place in heaven. Although these are all good qualities to have, the Bible tells us: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

We have all sinned, but do you know the cost? The Bible tells us in Romans: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) And in more detail: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

There is only one way to get to heaven. Jesus himself told us: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) And again in John: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

There is good news. We can know for certain, without any doubt, if we will be glorified and allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. For Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and allow us to be spotless in the eyes of God. To receive this free gift (remember, Jesus paid for it and there is nothing we can do to earn it), we must put our faith, all of it, in Jesus Christ. Trust that Jesus paid the price for our sins to allow us into heaven. Put all of your faith upon him and only him. Praise be to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!

Tomorrow has never been guaranteed to us. We could perish unexpectedly or in an accident within the next hour. If you have not accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, it will be too late. You do not get a second chance. Are you willing to risk that? Are you willing to chance your eternal life? Do you realize just how long an eternity in hell is if you do not accept Jesus now. Or risk an eternity in hell following your own beliefs or feelings? Are you really willing to risk all that? Let me tell you how long eternity in hell is. It is never-ending. Never! Once you die it is too late. You need to make that important decision in your life now. Today!

How To Be Saved

God created us to be with Him. (*Genesis 1-2*)

Our sins separate us from God. (*Genesis 3*)

Sins cannot be removed by good deeds. (*Genesis 4, Malachi 4*)

Paying the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again. (*Matthew-Luke*)

Everyone who trusts in Jesus alone has eternal life. (*John*)

Life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever. (*Acts-Revelation*)

Sample Prayer of Salvation

"Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life towards you. Please forgive me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your Son, Jesus Christ, died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayers. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

To Be Saved

Realize you've sinned.

Believe upon Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Confess and repent of your sins.

If you would like to talk further or if you have any questions, please give our pastor a call at: **(814) 635-2268** or e-mail him at: **robertsdalechurchofgod1@msn.com**

Kids Kaleidoscope

Can you color in the picture of baby Jesus in the manger?



Pastor's Box

Listen up, Church!

The stage was set over two thousand years ago when God rolled out His greatest gift of all for you and me . . . His Son! Since that time, Jesus has never failed to show up. Even when He ascended back to His father, His message for us was: "Watch for me. I'm coming again!" But even in His absence, His presence is extremely evident.

As I anticipate celebrating His birth, I can hardly wait to see how He will choose to show up in our midst even in his absence. Let's all keep ourselves acutely alert for what He chooses to throw in front of us to accomplish for Him. When we clearly see His vision, let's all leap into action and magnify His name through our work to achieve His goal for us.

And yes, keep your gaze upon the eastern sky . . . He IS coming!

Pastor Don

P.S. As I get my "giveaway" ready, don't fail to follow the instructions in "The Purpose." I have a great surprise for you!



- ☐ New member info
- ☐ I would like to become a Christian
- ☐ I/we are looking for a new church
- ☐ I attend a church regularly
- ☐ I/we are visiting
- ☐ I would like to talk to someone who cares about me

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone # _____

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