



# CROSS CURRENTS

December, 2021

Alpine Community Church (UCC), Alpine CA

Vol. 32 No. 12



**WHY DO WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS LIKE WE DO? WHERE DID WE GET THESE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS?** For millions of people around the world—religious or not—every December is a familiar scene. A Christmas tree is set up in the living room. Presents are bought and decorations displayed. Candles and lights adorn the houses and streets of neighborhoods. And nativity scenes are everywhere—complete with shepherds, wise men, and a little baby in a manger. But where did all this come from? Aside from the companies who relish in another reason for all of us to buy more stuff, why do we celebrate Christmas the way we do? What is the history behind the holiday? First of all, there is Jesus' birth—*"the reason for the season,"* if you will. Two different ancient accounts—the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke—record the birth of Jesus of Nazareth as occurring in Bethlehem of Judea. Truthfully, his birth wasn't that different from any other baby boy's at that time. Of course, there are a few unusual elements. There is the report of a remarkable star in the sky and stories of angels singing. But most of the details of Jesus' birth are quite ordinary. Though somewhat scandalous—an

unmarried couple having a baby out of wedlock—it's a story that normally wouldn't garner much attention. Except, of course, that this little baby grew up to be a revolutionary Jewish teacher, a threat to the religious establishment, and a crucified leader of a band of misfits who claimed to see him risen from the dead three days later. And that story certainly did garner attention, eventually transforming the mighty Roman Empire and launching the Christian movement that today counts over two billion followers. At first, Christians were focused on remembering just Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Few thought to commemorate his birth as an important marker. But by the early Middle Ages, Christian leaders had decided to celebrate this holiday on December 25 (in the western part of the Roman Empire) or January 6 (in the east). They could not be certain about the actual date that Jesus was born because there were no records. Jesus was born among the poorer classes, and no one stopped to mark the day or even the month a poor child came into the world. So the early church leaders chose a day to set aside for celebrating Jesus' birth. This may be hard for us to imagine, given the importance many cultures now put on birth certificates and birthdays. But it is important to remember that Christmas does not celebrate the day Jesus was born; it celebrates the fact that he was born. There are indications that early Christians attempted to calculate the date of Jesus' birth based on accurate calculations of other dates in Jesus' life. About the same time, in 274, the Roman Emperor Aurelian instituted a pagan festival celebrating the *"Birth of the Unconquered Sun,"* which coincided with the winter solstice on December 25. It's unclear if Aurelian was attempting to create a pagan alternative to a date already of some significance to Roman Christians, or vice versa. Either way, in the years that followed, as Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, celebrating Jesus' birth on December 25 as Christmas—*"Christ's mass"*—was adopted.

- Some information in this article was taken from Wikipedia

# The Meaning of Advent



**Advent** is a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Celebrating Advent typically involves a season of prayer, fasting, and repentance, followed by anticipation, hope, and joy. Many Christians celebrate Advent not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for his presence among us today through the Holy Spirit, and in preparation and anticipation of his final coming at the end of the age. The word advent comes from the Latin term *adventus* meaning "*arrival*" or "*coming*," particularly the coming of something having great importance. Advent season, then, is both a time of joy-filled, anticipatory celebration of the arrival of Jesus Christ and a preparatory period of repentance, meditation, and penance. In Western Christianity, Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, or the Sunday which falls closest to November 30, and lasts through Christmas Eve, or December 24. Thus, the actual season of Advent can last anywhere from 22-28 days, but most commercial Advent calendars start on December. Originally it was not the coming of the Christ-child that was anticipated, but the Second Coming of Christ. By the Middle Ages, four Sundays had become the standard length of the Advent season, with fasting and repentance during that time. The church also extended the meaning of Advent to include the coming of Christ through his birth in Bethlehem, his future coming at the end of time, and his presence among us through the promised Holy Spirit. Modern-day Advent services include symbolic customs related to all three of these "*advents*" of Christ. - Wikipedia

## Angel Tree 2021

We will be having our Angel Tree again this year. I don't know how many children will be included on the tree this year. It will start in December. I will have the names and ages of the children after Thanksgiving. The tree will be up on Sunday, November 28th and I will have names on the tree by Sunday, December 5th. All the gifts should be brought to the church by Sunday morning, December 19, 2021. I look forward to helping the children at East County Transitional Living Center celebrate Christmas.

- Brenda Clark, Angel Tree Coordinator for the Women's Guild

## Coffee Hour Has Returned!!

We are having Coffee Hour! It has been in Cross Currents and in the Sunday bulletin about how we will be organizing coffee hour for the next few months. We will need two people to help set-up and clean-up which is simplified because it is just coffee, hot tea, water and lemonade (*Brenda makes the coffee*). Plus putting prewrapped items on trays. There will be a schedule of assignments done according to the time and talent sheets. For the first month the Deacons will be helping with coffee hour. You can help by donating money to help buy the items we will be serving. No one will be baking or preparing food so we are purchasing the pre-wrapped items. Please write checks to ACC and on the memo line put "*coffee hour*". We appreciate any support from the congregation. You can give any donation to one of the Deacons or send it to the church office.

## Thank You from Cora Steffen!

*Thanks to all the hard workers at the Rummage Sale - most of whom also work for our church all year. Thanks to Pastor Ken for ongoing Sunday services and he is also available to those at home. Thanks to Denise for help into so many ways. Thanks to Dr. Richard for the Cross Currents. Thanks to William and the choir for music. Thanks to Miss Susie for Sunday School. And on and on - Thanks for all of you who make church possible for me!*

- Cora Steffen

Thank  
You!

# “Colman Contemplations”



Here it is the deadline for Cross Currents already. Where does the time go? It is a close to Thanksgiving and then we enter the Advent Season. As Thanksgiving arrives, we reflect on what we are Thankful for. Another way to ask yourself is: *“What has God been doing in my life? What blessings have I received this past year?”* It is known that people who live a life of thanksgiving are happier people. In fact, we should not wait to say “Thanks” just once a year. It is good to keep a journal of what we are thankful for every day.

As we live into thanksgiving, we enter the new church year of Advent. It begins the four Sundays before Christmas. It is a time, like Lent, to prepare the way for the birth of Christ. Even as the Christmas ads have already started, we tend to forget that the Advent season is a season of reflection and prayer. This year I encourage all of us to pause, pray, and listen for the Beloved call on our lives as we prepare for the birth of Christ. May we open our hearts, minds and souls to the wonder of the Beloved’s love in our lives. May this Advent season bring us peace and understanding in a world full of Chaos.

*Shalom, Pastor Ken*



We need an **AUDIO-VISUAL TEAM**. We have a few but we need some more. As we go hybrid in our worship, Bible Studies, Book Groups, and meetings we need to a team of volunteers to help make it work. Please let Tom Myers or Pastor Ken know if you are interested. Thank you for hearing God’s call for your life.

# Sermon Themes for November-December

## **November 28 - First Sunday in Advent**

Luke 21:25-36

*Sign of Things to Come*

## **December 5 - Second Sunday in Advent**

Luke 3:1-6

*Make Ready*

## **December 12 - Third Sunday in Advent**

Luke 3:7-18

*Hearing Good News*

## **December 19 - Fourth Sunday in Advent**

Luke 1:39-55

*Rejoicing in the Beloved*

## **December 26 - First Sunday after Christmas**

Luke 2:41-52

*Who is this Child*

# BIG Rummage Sale—Oct. 29-30th



# Message from the Moderator....



As we enter our final month of 2021, I want to thank our congregation for the amazing gifts you have given the church throughout the year. While our second year dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic is ending with much progress and much uncertainty, we are thankful that so many of us are fully vaccinated, and that we can safely resume many of the activities we enjoyed in the past.

October was very active culminating with a successful Rummage Sale. This was only possible because every person who was able to help did help. It was a lot of work and we were all exhausted at the end, but the community benefitted from receiving gently used clothing and household items at bargain prices while the church benefitted from the additional income. Our fall stewardship program was equally successful and in November we pledged our time, talent, and financial support to the church. Thank you all for your very generous pledges, but the giving didn't stop there. Many of you participated in the Christmas Child project, filling shoe boxes with gifts for children all around the world. And let's not forget the gifts of food and funds along with the help of the deacons to prepare and distribute Thanksgiving food baskets to folks in the Alpine community who need a little help at this time of year.

Also during November, the Trustees tackled the annual task of crafting a budget for 2022. This budget will be presented to the congregation for a vote at an in-person meeting after church on December 5. We encourage you all to review the budget and share your questions and comments with other members at this meeting.

As we enter the season of Advent, we will continue our Angel Tree tradition, donating gifts to needy families so the children will have a gift to open on Christmas day. We will also collect an offering to support the Veterans of the Cross charity which gives to retired UCC pastors who served in churches too small to provide a retirement account.

Thank you all for making 2021 a very good year with your generous donations of your time, your talent, and your financial support.

*Blessings to you and your family, Tom Myers, Moderator*

# An Unbreakable Spirit

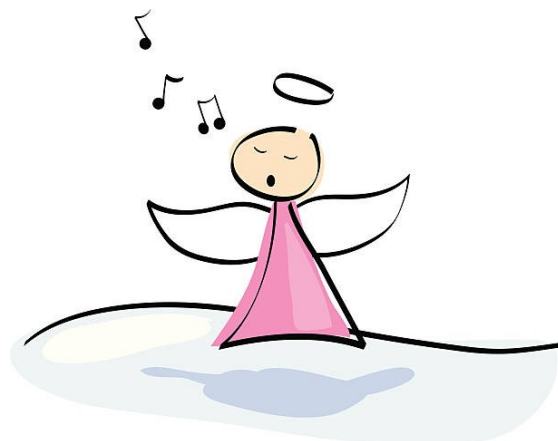


When I was in kindergarten, we were given angel ornaments to paint. Even all these years later, I can still remember the teachers taking them out of the box and remarking on how different they all were. I chose a singing angel with a choir book. I painted her pink. Oddly enough, I don't think she's ever made it on to the tree. Perhaps I didn't want to put her there. She still remains with us to this day, and has been glued together a few times. Like my love for Christmas, she still remains intact.

I think my angel is a symbol for the spirit of Christmas. Over the years, Christmas has meant many things to many people. Certain traditions have begun to change giving way to new ones. There was even a time in history where people saw Christmas as a pagan celebration. People were forbidden by their leaders from celebrating it. Yet, no matter how much some tried, and in some cases still try today, to break the loving spirit of Christmas, it remains unbreakable. We need to remember this every year. It is so easy to get lost in the hubbub and confusion of the holiday. People complain about overcrowded malls and how stressful it is to find the perfect gift. We must reflect on the fact that we already have received the perfect gift in the birth of Jesus. He showed us the love that will not ever die. Every Christmas we celebrate that love. With our family traditions and childhood ornaments like my enduring paper angel, we come together to take part in the best birthday party the world has ever known. The world isn't perfect even at Christmas time. That's why there is Christmas. It comes at a time when the world feels cold and dark. Within that darkness, if we are still, we can find warm and welcoming love; the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Merry Christmas!*

*Jordan O Neal*



# Women's Guild News



The Nov 13th meeting of the Woman's Guild had a very interesting program provided by Michael Eulitt from the organization *Common Ground*. He explained how three Spring Valley churches of different denominations work together to help elementary school children of that area many from low income families. They help support children and families by providing food packages for emergency distribution, they supply clothes and hygiene products plus books for the children. It was a very informative meeting. We have a lot to be thankful for in our communities. All their work is funded by donations.

December will be a very busy month for the Guild with the Christmas Boutique and Bake Sale coming up. Here is the schedule for the month's activities:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Dec 7, 9-12 | Sorting & pricing for Boutique. At noon The Birthday Lunch will meet at LaCarreta Restaurant.      |
| Dec 8-9     | Continue Boutique pricing  |
| Dec 11      | 9:30 AM Guild Christmas Party-- Invitations will be sent. Bring baked goods for sale the next day. |
| Dec. 12     | Bake Sale & Boutique after church  |
| Dec 19      | Boutique after church  |

- By Donna Boyer and Brenda Clark

# Birthdays and Anniversaries

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAY WISHES:

DENNY, Ina	12/01
PAULSON, Gaylord	12/02
POINDEXTER, Darlene	12/06
KRANTZ, Marcella	12/23
FULLER, Louise	12/31
TURNER, Alice	12/31

## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES:

BRODERICK-KEARLEY, Lisa 12/11

## Church Office Hours

We can be reached at by telephone (619) 445-2110, or by e-mail at [acc1894@acc.sdcoxmail.com](mailto:acc1894@acc.sdcoxmail.com). Even if we are not here in the office after noon, you can slip envelopes, messages & requests through the mail slot in the office's front door. Many Blessings to you all as we continue to stay safe and well in this *new normal*.

***Please send articles and pictures for the Cross Currents to:***

**Cross Currents Editor:**  
**Email: [rdfreeman@outlook.com](mailto:rdfreeman@outlook.com)**

**Rev. Dr. Richard D. Freeman**  
**Cell Phone: (619) 701-0517**

# December 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2  KC Book Study – ZOOM @ 1pm	3	4  7:00 PM AA Meeting
5 9:00a ACC Worship CONGREGATIONAL MTG  ACSL 11-1 (FH)	6	7  <i>Xmas Boutique Pricing/Sorting 9am</i>  <b>LUNCH BUNCH</b>  CHOIR 7-8:30p	8  <i>Xmas Boutique Pricing/Sorting 9am</i>  5:30p – AA Fuller Hall	9  <i>Xmas Boutique Pricing/Sorting 9am</i>  KC Book Study – ZOOM @ 1pm	10	11  <b>GUILD Christmas Party 9:30am</b>  7:00 PM AA
12 9:00aACC Worship CHOIR Xmas Program <i>Xmas Boutique &amp; Bake Sale10am</i> <b>10:30a DEACON's</b> <u>ACSL 11-1 (FH)</u>	13  <b>6:30p TRUSTEES</b>	14    CHOIR 7-8:30p	15  5:30p – AA Fuller Hall	16  KC Book Study – ZOOM @ 1pm	17	18  7:00 PM AA
19 9:00aACCWorship <i>Xmas Boutique</i>  <b>10:30AM CABINET</b>  ACSL 11-1 (FH)	20	21  CHOIR 7-8:30p	22  5:30p – AA Fuller Hall	23	24 OFFICE CLOSED  Christmas Eve Service @ 8pm	25 CHRISTMAS DAY  7:00 PM AA
26 9:00 AM ACC Worship  <b>ACSL 11-1 (FH)</b>	27	28  Choir 7-8:30	29	30	31 OFFICE CLOSED FOR New Year's Eve WEEKEND 12/31	

## IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

11-27-21	10:00 AM	Christmas/Advent Decorating of Sanctuary
12-12-21	9:00 AM	Christmas/Advent Choir Cantata
12-24-21	8:00 PM	Christmas Eve Service in Sanctuary

## Mission Statement

*Our Mission as the Alpine Community Church is to serve God by creating an environment of fellowship following the teachings of Jesus Christ. We minister to the needs of our congregation and community, motivating ourselves with love, faith and hope.*

## Join us for Worship

In person in our sanctuary at 9:00 AM Sunday Mornings

(FACE MACK AND SOCIAL DISTANCING REQUIRED)

Also on **Facebook** and **Youtube** (*links found on [alpineucc.org](http://alpineucc.org)*)

### ALPINE COMMUNITY CHURCH

United Church of Christ  
2225 W. Victoria Drive  
P.O. Box 212  
Alpine, CA 91903-0212



## CROSS CURRENTS

Published Monthly  
Editor Rev. Dr. Richard Freeman  
Production Manager Denise Horan

The editor welcomes contributions  
But they must be received  
by the third Sunday of each month.

