



The Chimes

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Modesto Church of the Brethren

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Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.



The Christmas Stories in the Bible

Most people don't realize that there are four accounts of Jesus' birth in the New Testament. The one that gets the most play is Luke's version, told from the perspective of Mary. Luke's account also includes Elizabeth and Zachariah, Anna, Simeon, shepherds in the fields and in a minor role, a man named Joseph. Joseph does play a much more central role in Matthew's account, even though he never gets to say a word, his faithfulness is on full display. Matthew's account also gives us King Herod starring as the villain who kills all of all the two year old and younger boys in Bethlehem. Oh wait, I forgot that part of the story is so depressing we don't really consider it part of the Christmas story. The one aspect of Matthew's account that seems to be incorporated into the primary version, and therefore in every Nativity scene, is the visit of some magi from the east. (Note: if you like trivia, the Bible never tells us how many magi there were.)

John's gospel gives us a symbolic version of Jesus' entry into the world, telling us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. While we may occasionally hear a sermon based on John's poetry around Christmas time, I doubt very much that anyone pays any attention to the fourth version of Jesus' birth, the one that comes from the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation:

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter." There are a lot of images to unpack in this passage of scripture, but the one I want to focus on is the idea of the dragon waiting to devour the child as soon as it was born. When I contemplate the way the merchants of the world ramp up their appeal to consumerism during this time of year, pastors who manipulate scripture and exploit their congregants to line their own pockets and politicians who claim the Christian faith (presently 91 percent of Congress) but rarely if ever act in accordance to the principles that Jesus taught and lived, I wonder if the Revelation account might be the most accurate of the four stories. But since this is supposed to be a joyful time, I'll just finish with this thought. As depressing as the book of Revelation can be at various points and despite the fact that it can be impossible to understand at other points, the overall message is clear; the dragon is temporary, the child is eternal. Merry Christmas!



Invitation to Worship

December 24

Roadblocks - Luke 1:26-38

Life doesn't always go according to plan. Actually, life seldom goes as planned. Things happen and plans go out the window. The text this morning tells about when Mary's plans went out the window. When Mary receives the news that her life is about to be changed beyond her ability to even imagine, yet she trusts God enough to say, "let it be with me according to your word."

Someone once said that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond. How do we respond to God's call?

Dec. 31 - Guest Speaker - David Warner

Children Under 6th Grade

There will be no children's church on December 24th. Children are encouraged to sit with their families. The nursery is still available for children 4 yrs. and under.

From the Pastor



My Schedule

Over the next couple of weeks my schedule will be a little different from normal. On Wednesday December 20, Becky will be joining me to spend a few days in Modesto. We will be at Faith Bites that evening and then join the carolers after dinner. On Thursday we will participate in the Senior Ministries activity and Friday doing some visitation. On Saturday morning we will be at Frost Bakery on Carpenter Rd. from 9:30 till about 10:30, if anyone is interested in joining us for coffee and fellowship. Sunday evening will be

the Christmas Eve service and on Monday we will drive to our home in La Quinta with a stop along the way to see a couple of little girls.

I will then be taking a week of vacation and will be working from there for a few days before returning to Modesto on January 5. Please feel free to contact me by email at mfletch21625@aol.com or by phone at 313-303-1227. Texting is okay, but please identify yourself when you do text.

Upcoming Study and Fellowship Opportunities

I remain committed to trying to create new opportunities for Christian Education and fellowship gathering. A few that I will be offering in the new year are as follows:

Wednesday Evening Bible Study: Beginning on January 10, I will offer an overview of the New Testament as a Bible Study on Wednesday nights at 5:00 in the library.

Talk Around the Table: Following Faith Bites from 7:00 to 8:00 we will continue to have a time of conversation for anyone who desires to join in. January 10 our topic will be "Taking the Bible Seriously (and Progressively!).

Coffee and Conversation: After a December break, our Coffee and Conversation will begin again on the 2nd Saturday of each month at 9:30 in the Gathering Place. Our topic for January 13 will be: Can the Church Leave the Building?

Hold in God's Light

Keep in your prayers Sarah Glass in the hospital, Nancy Bupp in hospice care, and the Galts' daughter Libby facing surgery for a tumor. Be mindful of all those who have lost a loved one during the past year.

In the Days Ahead

Christmas Caroling For Young Children and Their Parents

You are invited to participate Wednesday night, December 20th in one of the wonderful Christmas traditions that will create endearing memories for young and old alike.

Come join us for dinner at 6pm. There is an optional dinner donation of \$4.00 per person, but if you can't budget it, don't let this stop you from joining us. After eating, about 7pm, we will go caroling to three or four homes in the neighborhood. Be sure to bundle up in warm clothes and jackets as we will be walking to most of the homes and singing outside. Bring flashlights if you have them.

(Use the song sheets to help your children become familiar with the words if they don't already know them.) If you have questions please see or call Karleen Daniels 209-484-3163



Jackie the Cat

This is as much a golf and people story as a cat story. Derek Castle, myself and Matt Roy's dad, Les, were recently playing golf at Jacktone Golf Course. We had finished our round of golf and as we approached the pro shop to get our post round cold drinks (iced tea), we found Jackie the Cat on the job devouring an unlucky gopher. While we sat in the sun lamenting what could have been on the golf course and just talking, Jackie the Cat (Jackie for Jacktone) came sauntering over like John Wayne to join us. First she jumped up on a chair and then on the top of the table. She walked over and lay down on top of our score card (a good thing) and then used all of her energy to just soak up the sun. Jackie just wanted to come over and join us; fun, food and friends was her program. She was what you would call a happy cat. In this time of hustle and bustle of the Christmas

holidays, political turmoil and tension, it may be good to take a lesson from Jackie. Slow down, be with friends and family and enjoy the winter sun while we have it.

MCOB Golf, next Thursday, 9am at River Oaks in Ceres-9 holes open for now due to last years' floods. Join us!



Recital and Reception

On Sunday, January 14, at 4:00 p.m. there will be a piano recital in the sanctuary at MCOB. The theme for the recital will be "Hello, Winter and Farewell, Holidays" with presentation of both winter literature and Christmas pieces on piano. Following the recital will be a goodies and punch reception in the narthex area. -Linda Bustle

Senior Ministry Event Rhapsody & Rhythm: The Gershwin Concert Experience



"This is the official, Gershwin-Family authorized multimedia concert event, celebrating the ingenious music and legacy of brothers George and Ira. Three incredible singers and musicians, including celebrated pianist Richard Glazier, will remind you of why the Gershwins will forever be the most beloved and respected songwriting team in history." At Gallo Center for the Arts, Sunday, February 25, 2018 at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$23 per person. Give cash or check (made to Modesto Church of the Brethren, Senior Ministry on the memo line) to Margaret Johnson by January 21.

Items of Note

Thank-You from the Stewards

Stewards thank the congregation for making the job of monitoring funds for the year much easier.... The generosity of this body of Christ says volumes about your dedication to continuing the work of Jesus. You are to be commended. On the other hand, this is a gentle reminder for those who plan to fulfill their pledges before year's end. May the JOY of this Season be ours as we celebrate His birth. Pat Royer, Stewardship Commission

Attention Seniors!

Your Senior Ministry Committee has been working hard to schedule interesting events for the next six months. → **Instead of an easel in the narthex, we are going to start using the bulletin board near the drinking fountain for information, sign-ups and pictures.** Our "Save the Date" flyers will be out soon. Be sure to check out our new spot for up-coming events.

MCOB Website and Facebook Page



Many of you may already know that Modesto Church of the Brethren is on the Internet! For several years now, we have had both a Facebook page and a website. Since Pastor Erin's departure, I have been maintaining and updating both, with much help from those of you who take pictures of church activities, and from those of you who manage the many ministries of the church.

Having a social media presence helps promote one of our Vital Ministry Journey goals: "Create Stronger Connections to Community-Continue and strengthen existing relationships while exploring new ways to connect with and serve the greater Modesto community." When Pastor Erin was

preparing to leave, she approached me as Witness chair with the idea that furthering outreach to the community fell within the mission of the Witness Commission. Monique Sanders and I agreed to accept the task of keeping our social media up-to-date.

Both the website and the Facebook page are public; anyone can find these pages on the Internet and read them-and they do. We have had visitors to worship who have found us through the website. Our Facebook page gets "likes" and comments from many people outside our membership and even outside Modesto. Another feature of any public Facebook page is that anyone may share posts from one page to another, and thus spread information far and wide. Care must therefore be taken in deciding what we post.

Although the two social media pages are readable by the public, posting information on them is controlled. Only an administrator can post on the website. Presently, those administrators are Nancy Bupp, Jill Durossette, Tera Thayer, Karleen Daniels, and myself. Anyone can submit something to the Facebook page, but only an administrator or editor can approve publication. Those who can approve Facebook posts are Pastor Michael, Monique Sanders and myself. Posts from congregation members will be approved; posts from others may or may not be.

If there is an event or information about church activities that you want posted, either on Facebook or the website, please email one of the administrators with your information. I will continue to post upcoming church events that are clearly open to the community on the website, in the interest of creating stronger connections to the greater community.-Luella Cole, for Witness Commission

Church Security

As we wind down 2017 the Building and Grounds Commission has found itself focused on church security. We have had a few instances recently of intruders being where they were not supposed to be. So along with Family Promise, we have taken a

number of steps in shoring up our security. We put new lamps in our exterior hallways that light up our walkways nicely. We have rekeyed all our doors, as well as the doors of the Family Promise offices. The new keys will open both the exterior Education wing doors as well as the exterior doors on the main building. We have met with our current security firm, 1st Security, and we are investigating putting in video surveillance recording cameras at all of our entry doors. These cameras will have a console screen at Jill's desk and will record all activity day or night for 3 months at a time. We are also considering installing interior motion detectors in certain areas of the church.

Family Promise has rekeyed locks on their office doors and they are also installing cameras inside and outside of their rooms. We recently had four trees trimmed bordering room 9 by Family Promise to make way for their new floodlight to be mounted in the eaves above room 9, that will illuminate the West parking lot and surrounding area.

We are taking these security steps to make our facility safe for those who worship here as well as those who work here. -Bill Johnson, for Building and Grounds

Sierra Vista Motorcycle Group

There is an event that is held once a year at our church that very few of us get to see. It is the Sierra Vista Christmas Toy Ride. About a dozen kids and young people under the care of Sierra Vista are treated to a day of gifts and Christmas cheer thanks to the generosity of benevolent chapters of law enforcement and fire departments. The 50 plus motorcycle riders arrive around noon to deliver presents and allow the kids to sit on the motorcycles, put on the helmets, start the bikes, rev the engines and honk the horns!! What fun! A little later all go inside the Gathering Place for gift giving, sharing of cookies, etc. A few little song and dance routines may happen. When all is done the motorcycles dash off into the sunset and the kids receive a

special escort back home. In the pictures that were taken you will note that no pictures were taken of the faces of the kids for security purposes. The three ladies' pictures were from Sierra Vista and they were the "set up crew". Their names are Marilyn, Miriam, and Jenn. The large guy in one picture is Big Jay, the organizer of the event.

The event was fun to watch as it unfolded. Very organized with lots of laughter. Apparently MCOB has been hosting this event for over 18 years. Members of our church should be proud that our facility is seen as a safe place for these kids to come and have a little bit of their Christmas here. (Editor's note: Although pictures are mentioned in this article, none were received.)



The Condensed Calendar

Tuesday-

Pastor's Sabbath

Wednesday-

5p Advent Bible Study

6p Faith Bites

7p Choir

Thursday-

9a Sr. Ministry – Visit McHenry Mansion & Museum

Lunch-Ralston's Goat

Friday-

Saturday-

Next Sunday – December 24th

9:30a Advent Bible Study

9:30a Sunday School – Jr. High-adult

(Infant to 5 years welcome in the nursery
with Shaun and Kelly!)

11a Worship

7:30p Christmas Eve Service

IN THE NEAR FUTURE

January 6 8:30a Retreat for board members, search committee,
commission members.

January 6 12p Board meeting

January 9 7p John McCutcheon Concert

January 13 9:30a Coffee & Conversation

January 14-20th Family Promise

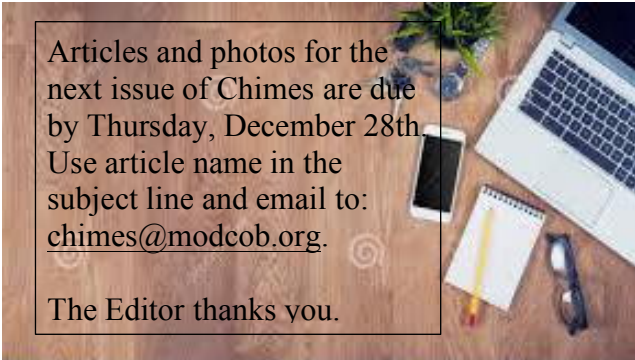
January 14 4p Piano Recital–Linda Bustle

January 25 12p Sr. Ministries- presentation by Jim Brugger

New Chimes Editor

This issue of the Chimes may look a little different, since it is my first try at doing what Nancy Bupp has been doing so well for many years. Please be patient with me as I learn how, and please keep Nancy in your thoughts and prayers.

Luella



Articles and photos for the next issue of Chimes are due by Thursday, December 28th. Use article name in the subject line and email to: chimes@modcob.org.

The Editor thanks you.