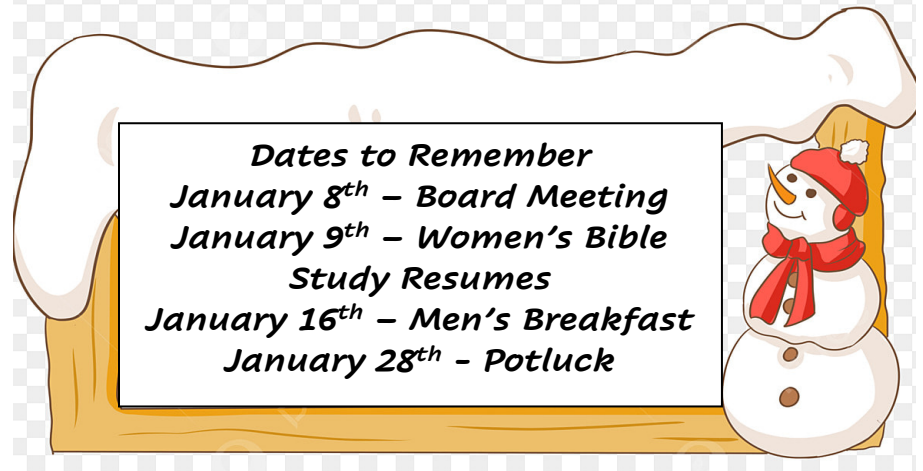


Westgate Witness



January 2024

2235 Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601 -- 717-394-1071



Greetings in the Name of our Lord!

Another Year!

Is there anything as over as Christmas? Colorful wrapping paper and bright ribbons are reduced to trash as quickly as gifts are torn open. Fresh green trees that have graced many homes for weeks begin to drop needles until they are discarded on streets, waiting collection. Even artificial trees are stored in plastic containers the size of coffins. Decorations are packed away in the basement, the attic, or the garage until next year.

Christmas is over! In the week following Christmas, we may become preoccupied with returning and exchanging gifts, cleaning the house, and paying bills. No wonder the days after Christmas mark a mood swing. The season to be jolly often dissolves into a time of exhaustion and for some a wintery melancholy. The post-Christmas season can also be a time of blessed relief. I felt that relief yesterday when I quietly sat down to read a motorcycle travel magazine that a friend from Westgate gave me for Christmas. The magazine reminded me of new adventures that I will hopefully experience in the summer.

The days between Christmas and New Year's Day give us time for reflection on the year past and the year ahead. And what a year 2023 has been—and what a year 2024 will be. Opening a new calendar can be an opportunity for a new beginning for those of us who still use printed calendars. It can feel like a fresh canvas full of un-lived adventure or **"seize the day moments"** (Carpe Diem). Getting that new calendar can also be another reminder of how God in his grace saw us through the difficulties of the year past—but here we go again—with a new year before us! Yippee, Yippee, Yeah!

Someone has said, **"People are so worried about what they eat between Christmas and the New Year, but they really should be worried about what they eat between the New Year and Christmas."** That's a profound thought but not easily lived. Henry Ward Beecher said, **"Every man should be born again on the first day of**

January. Start with a fresh page. Take up one hole more in the buckle if necessary, or let down one, according to circumstances; but on the first of January let every man gird himself once more, with his face to the front, and take no interest in the things that were and are past." Those seem like some good ideals and words of advice to start our New Year no matter how hard they are to live out.

Blaise Pascal, a French philosopher from the 1600's, is often quoted as saying, **"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator."** Pascal is saying that our happiness in the year ahead will not likely come from our possessions but by what possesses us. We read in Matthew 5:6 **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.** And Jesus calls himself the bread of life—and that in him our hunger is satisfied. John 6:35.

For many of us most of our focus is upon taking complete care of our physical bodies—and neglecting our spiritual needs which are addressed through an intentional communion with God. I wonder if we spent nearly as much time in pursuit of spiritual nurturance as we do our physical health if our souls would not be remarkably fuller and healthier.

Have you heard the story of the king who fell into a very serious depression? Nothing could lift his spirits. His servants tried everything—music, dancing, court jesters, lavish banquets — nothing seemed to help him. Finally, an old, wise man came to the king with an unusual piece of advice: **"O King, if you can obtain the shirt off the back of a truly happy man, you yourself will be happy."**

Upon hearing those words, the king ordered his army to search the four corners of the earth and bring him the shirt off the back of a truly happy man. Weeks passed, then months. Finally, his soldiers returned. **"O King, after many days and much searching, we found a truly happy man. But your Majesty.....the man was so poor he was not wearing a shirt!"**

My prayer for us is that in this New Year we would understand that true peace and satisfaction will not be found lastingly through the acquisition of more THINGS—that all the turmoil so manifest around us will not likely be address with results of the next election—or with less strife around the globe—but will ultimately be found in Jesus who said, **"In ME you will have peace"** (John 16:33a). His peace is abiding and can't be taken from us. Keep your eyes on Jesus in the new year ahead and receive this blessing from the very Word of God:

Numbers 6:24-26: **"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace."**

As you know I am a poetry lover at heart—I offer the gift of a poem by Francis Havergal as we focus on beginning another New Year. Timeless words... Timeless Meaning!

"Another year is dawning; dear Father let it be,
In working or in waiting, another year with thee.
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving thy presence all the days.
Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace,
Another year of gladness, the glory of thy face.
Another year of leaning upon thy loving breast,
Another year of trusting, of quiet, happy rest.
Another year of service, of witness for thy love,
Another year of training for holier work above.
Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be,
On earth, or else in heaven, another year for thee."

May we experience his peace anew and afresh in 2024.

Pastor Robert





Next Board Meeting is scheduled for
Monday,
January 8th @ 6:30 PM

Congregational Business Meeting

immediately following Church
January 7th / weather permitting. If there
is a snow event the meeting will be rescheduled for Sunday
January 21st. The purpose of the meeting is to vote on the
approval of the 2024 budget and nominations. The meeting
is normally brief.



AB Men's Breakfast - Our next Men's Fellowship breakfast
will be on January 16th at 9:00 am. We will meet at the Family Fare
Restaurant, 5921 Main St., East Petersburg PA 17520 for a casual
Christian Men's fellowship time.

ABW Meeting originally scheduled for January 4th has
been rescheduled for January 11th @ 1:00pm



For decisions about worship on Sundays where
the weather is questionable, please check your
email by 9 a.m. Pastor Zimmerman will send out
a congregation wide email indicating any
cancellations of worship due to weather. If you
are not currently receiving Church emails and
want to be added to the email list please send

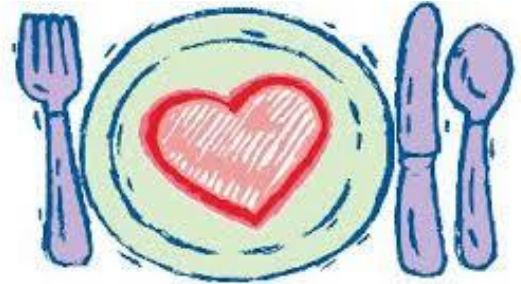
your current email to Lora Shirey at lorashirey1965@gmail.com or
to Robert Zimmerman at rszimmy@aol.com



Sunday Fellowship Meal

The Westgate Church Board enthusiastically approved the Pastoral request to resume regular post worship gatherings in the form of Potluck Luncheons on the last Sunday of each month. Unlike our former Linger Longer, which was previously held each

Sunday, this will only be for the last Sunday of each of the next three months. **Please feel free to bring a main course, vegetables, salads, desserts etc.** If you are not prepared to bring anything, please do not let that stop you from enjoying lunch with us. If the luncheon is well supported and attended, we will likely extend these lunches beyond the initial three months.



We're Back!!

In a new year with a new topic, this is a perfect time to join our Women's Bible study!

Join us at 9:30am each Tuesday for coffee, fellowship, study, and prayer. Beginning on Tuesday, January 9, we will be jumping into a topical study of the Importance and Power of Praise and Worship! We'll look at praise in the Old and New Testaments, the Psalms, the purpose of praise, the concept of 'Judah' and other areas. This is a joyous topic, and we'll include games, activities, and videos to enhance our study. See Lynda if you have any questions. We would love you to join us!"



The cradle that rocked the world

Don't miss the power of Christmas truth!

A few years ago, American Atheists launched two nationwide billboard campaigns urging viewers to celebrate Christmas by skipping holiday worship gatherings. The first billboard depicts a young woman informing a friend that she won't be going to church with them and that her parents will "get over it." The second billboard mocks Trump supporters, urging viewers to "Make Christmas Great Again!" by rejecting Jesus, who is the reason for the season.

When interviewed about the billboard campaign, American Atheist President David Silverman responded, "It is important for people to know religion has nothing to do with being a good person, and that being open and honest about what you believe—and don't believe—is the best gift you can give this holiday season."

While I find it tacky and a little weird that Silverman gets such pleasure thinking about family division during the holidays, I agree with him that honesty is a good policy. So, in the spirit of Silverman and the American Atheists, I want to tell the honest-to-God truth about Christmas.

The Christmas story is bigger than you think.

Start by reading Luke or Matthew's account of Jesus' birth; but don't stop there. Tell the whole story, starting with Genesis and ending with Revelation.

You see, the Christmas narrative—fully told—is quite different from what one might typically imagine. It's not the sappy and sentimental tale of a harmless baby, welcomed by shepherds and angels. It's not only the true story of the whole world, but it's one in which the "harmless baby" engages in a cosmic battle to defeat the forces of evil.

The cosmic battle begins in Genesis. After God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden as the crown of creation, a serpent slithers up to the first couple, questioning God's word and his character. For unknown reasons, the first couple fell for the serpent's lie and rose up in mutiny against their Creator.

By way of response, God arranges a meeting with them in the Garden, replete with a curse and a blessing. The curse is that humanity would now be alienated from God, live under the harsh yoke of Satan, and experience the many consequences that stem from rebellion. The blessing is that God would provide a way "out" of Satan's clutch, an escape hatch, through the birth of a baby (Genesis 3:15).

The whole Bible—and all of history—is about the triumphant march of God to fulfill His promise.

Following this promise, the whole Bible—and all of history—is about the triumphant march of God to fulfill His promise. We learn that the baby would come from the nation of Israel (Genesis 12:1-3), specifically from the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13); be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in the town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); and offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

What's more, we are reminded regularly that this baby will destroy the Evil One (1 John 3:8). His fate is sealed. He will be crushed by the baby born in a manger.

You see, baby Jesus' first cries weren't merely the cooing of a swaddled babe. They were the first battle cry of the Warrior who would gain victory over humanity's evil overlord (Romans 16:20), gather the world's worshipers to Himself (Revelation 5), and purge the world of evil once and for all (Revelation 21-22).

Jesus is the hero we need, whether we know it or not.

The Bible's story of the world—centered on a heroic baby who would one day crush the Evil One and set the world to rights—is the master narrative on which many human stories are modeled.

Thus, Christmas is a time to pause and reflect. We are able to celebrate this holiday because the God who created the world also entered it as a babe and experienced all the world's evil so that He could be our Comforter and Sustainer in times of trial.

So, if the atheist at your Christmas table is open and honest about his disbelief, take it as an opportunity not to debate but to tell a story—*the* Story. Use the moment to demonstrate how the Christmas story, with its redemptive Hero and doomed nemesis, speaks a word to us all. And know that your skeptical friends, deep down in the recesses of their hearts, want this Story to be true. Mary may have rocked Jesus' "cradle," but his cradle is one that rocked the world.

By: Dr. Robert J. Pacienza
Senior Pastor Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church
President of Coral Ridge Ministries
Founder of the Institute for Faith and Culture.

The Diary of a Snow Shoveler

This hilarious story was written by someone who's clearly had to shovel way too much snow in his lifetime. If you've ever lived in a place where it snows, you will die laughing.

December 8 - 6:00 PM

It started to snow. The first snow of the season and the wife and I took our cocktails and sat for hours by the window watching the huge soft flakes drift down from heaven. It looked like a Grandma Moses Print. So romantic we felt like newlyweds again. I love snow!

December 9

We woke to a beautiful blanket of crystal white snow covering every inch of the landscape. What a fantastic sight! Can there be a lovelier place in the whole world? Moving here was the best idea I've ever had! Shoveled for the first time in years and felt like a boy again. I did both our driveway and the sidewalks. This afternoon the snowplow came along and covered up the sidewalks and closed in the driveway, so I got to shovel again. What a perfect life!

December 12

The sun has melted all our lovely snow. Such a disappointment! My neighbor tells me not to worry- we'll have a white Christmas. No snow on Christmas would be awful! John says we'll have so much snow by the end of winter that I'll never want to see snow again. I don't think that's possible. John is such a nice man, I'm glad he's, our neighbor.

December 14

Snow, lovely snow! 8 inches last night. The temperature dropped to -20. The cold makes everything sparkle so. The wind took my breath away, but I warmed up by shoveling the driveway and sidewalks. This is the life! The snowplow came back this afternoon and buried everything again. I didn't realize I would have to do quite this much shoveling, but I'll certainly get back in shape this way. I wish I wouldn't huff and puff so.

December 15

20 inches forecast. Sold my van and bought a 4x4 Blazer. Bought snow tires for my wife's car and 2 extra shovels. Stocked the freezer. The wife wants a wood stove in case the electricity goes out. I think that's silly. We aren't in Alaska, after all.

December 16

Ice storm this morning. Fell on the ice in the driveway putting down salt. The wife laughed for an hour, which I think was very cruel.



December 17

Still way below freezing. Roads are too icy to go anywhere. Electricity was off for 5 hours. I had to pile the blankets on to stay warm. Nothing to do but stare at the wife and try not to irritate her. Guess I should've bought a wood stove but won't admit it to her. I hate it when she's right. I can't believe I'm freezing in my own living room.

December 20

The electricity was back on but had another 14 inches of snow last night. More shoveling! Took all day. The snowplow came by twice. Tried to find a neighbor kid to shovel, but they said they're too busy playing hockey. I think they're lying. Called the only hardware store around to see about buying a snow blower and they're out. Might have another shipment in March. I think they're lying. John says I have to shovel, or the city will have it done and bill me. I think he's lying.

December 22

John was right about a white Christmas because 13 more inches of white snow fell today, and it's so cold, it probably won't melt till August. Took me 45 minutes to get all dressed up to go out to shovel and then I had to go pee. By the time I got undressed, went to the bathroom, and dressed again, I was too tired to shovel. Tried to hire John who has a plow on his truck for the rest of the winter, but he says he's too busy. I think he is lying.

December 23

Only 2 inches of snow today and it warmed up to 0. The wife wanted me to decorate the front of the house this morning. What is she, nuts?! Why didn't she tell me to do that a month ago? She says she did, but I think she's lying.

December 24

6 inches - Snow packed so hard by snowplow, I broke the shovel. Thought I was having a heart attack. If I ever catch that snowplow driver, I'll drag him through the snow and hit him with my broken shovel. I know he hides around the corner and waits for me to finish shoveling and then he comes down the street at 100 miles an hour and throws snow all over where I've just been! Tonight, the wife wanted me to sing Christmas carols with her and open our presents, but I was too busy watching the snowplow.

December 25

Merry Christmas! 20 more inches of slop tonight - Snowed in. The idea of shoveling makes my blood boil. I hate the snow! Then the snowplow driver came by asking for a donation and I hit him over the head with my shovel. The wife says I have a bad attitude. If I have to watch "It's A Wonderful Life" one more time, I'm going to stuff her into the microwave.

December 26

Still snowed in. Why did I ever move here? It was all HER idea. She's really getting on my nerves.

December 27

The temperature dropped to -30 and the pipes froze; the plumber came after 14 hours of waiting for him, he only charged me \$1,400 to replace all my pipes.

December 28

Warmed up to above -20. Still snowed in. My wife is driving me crazy!!!

December 29

10 more inches. John says I have to shovel the roof, or it could cave in. That's the silliest thing I ever heard. How dumb does he think I am?

December 30

Roof caved in. I beat up the snowplow driver, and now he is suing me for a million dollars. The wife went home to her mother. Nine more inches predicted.

December 31

I set fire to what's left of the house. No more shoveling.

This is not a true story.....but could be!



Birthdays – January



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- 2nd Robert Zimmerman
- 8th Sarah Tebie
Dottie Jones
- 12th Shiloh Tebie
- 13th Margaret Rogers
- 14th Rev. Richard Cook
Connie Appleby
- 15th Jennifer Ryan
- 17th Dick Papez
- 18th Stephen Appleby
- 20th Susan Miller
- 21st Nicholas Vital
- 29th Caleb Pate
- 30th Timothy Ferris



Treasurer's Report

December 2023	\$12,997.00
Budget Income	\$10,225.00
Non-budget income	\$2,772.00

