

DECEMBER 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

Merry Christmas! Bah Humbug!

Depending on who you talk to, either of the above phrases can be used to describe the "Christmas spirit" people are feeling this year. For some, they're dealing with the loss of a loved one which makes understanding it hard to feel like celebrating. But for others it can be worries raised by all the fear-mongering that passes for the news these days. Russia and the Ukraine remain locked in battle, bringing uneasiness about the possibility of a nuclear future. The economic "experts" continue to raise the spectre of economic collapse. Retailers are worried whether Christmas sales will be off. Employees are worried about losing their jobs through corporate downsizing "to become more competitive" (certainly not because of corporate mismanagement!), fears not at all helped by the insensitivity of major companies in choosing the "festive holiday season" to announce massive layoffs. People who study our culture talk about a disappearing middle class amidst the rise of the super-rich as society primes itself to return to two classes: the "haves" and the "have-nots". Long dry spells punctuated by brief downpours seems to be more than the exception, raising the dark shadow of climate change. Add to this an endless round of parties, programs, and preparations intended to "make the season bright" and--voila!--your New Year's Day headache is here ahead of schedule.

We want Christmas to be memorable, both for ourselves and for our children. It has become a time for recapturing the past, for attempting to relive the best of our memories--the meals, the decorating, the caroling, the traditions. We don't want to see anyone--least of all the children!--disappointed by not having the right toy under the tree or the lutefisk and lefse not on the table (well, at least the lefse). Certainly all this seems a laudable undertaking. But in the process we drive ourselves to superhuman efforts, only to wonder why we're left tired and grumpy when Christmas day finally rolls around.

Could it be, dear friends, that we have done what Martin Luther suggested the world always does when it tries to take over essentially Christian ideas and celebrations? That we have somehow managed to turn the season into a new law? All the "musts" and "shoulds" are certainly firmly in place, as well as the guilt if we fall short of perfection in meeting the season's "demands". We don't want to disappoint anyone. We want to "do it up right". But is it any wonder, then, that so many people end up feeling tense and irritable during the "season of peace"? Failure, and the shame which follows, clouds the season and darkens its light. And the devil laughs once more to see God's people in despair. And all because our focus has become the holiday and not the Christ who came at Christmas.

No, let the focus this season be on Christ. Let it be on the surprise gifts of love, not on expected gifts given to avoid feeling guilty. Let it be on forgiveness--of self as well as others--if things are not exactly the way we wanted them. Let it be on doing things that bring joy, and not exasperation. And in so doing we will understand the true spirit of Christmas--Christ's Spirit come to earth in a manger in Bethlehem to bring love, forgiveness, joy, and peace to all people. You may not be perfect doing things this way, but you don't have to be. This is why Christ came. And even if you're not perfect, the season will be, and that should be enough for anyone. Grace and peace to you all.

Pastor Pete

Tri Parish Events

ELM RIVER SERVING TEAM

<i>Date</i>	<i>Usher & Bell</i>	<i>Communion</i>	<i>Coffee Hour</i>	<i>Church Cleaning</i>
December 1 st 9am	Joel & Bonnie Halvorson	Jesse Bring Ben Bring	Bonnie Halvorson	WELCA
December 15th 9am	Krist & Fred Vadnie		Kathy Ust	
December 24 th 2pm	Dave & Kathy Ust			

NORMAN COMMITTEES

<i>Calling Committee</i>	<i>Cleaning Groups</i>	<i>Coffee Hour</i>	<i>Head Usher</i>
Shirley Sand	Deb Kylo	1 st - LeAnna	Paul Knudsvig
	Shelia Anderson	8 th - Cindy T.	
		15 th - Deb K.	
Flowers	<i>Altar Cloths</i>	22 nd - Kayla K.	
	Donna Vadnie		

CIRCLE NEWS

Elm River – Tuesday, December 3rd WELCA Christmas party 5:30 @ Lori Paulsons
 Bible Study Wednesday, December 4th @ 1pm
 Stordahl – Sunday, December 8th will pack cheer baskets after services
 Norman - Wednesday, December 11th @ 1pm Christmas potluck and gift exchange
 Inez Olson hostess

Christmas Eve services
2pm Elm River, 3:30 Stordahl, 5pm Norman

No Worship Service on Sunday, December 29th.
 Blessings for a happy New Year!

Annual Meeting Dates:

Stordahl, Monday, January 13th at 7pm

Elm River, Sunday, January 19st following worship

Norman, Sunday, January 26th following worship

Reports Due:

Tri Parish & Elm River, January 6th reports due to auditors.

Stordahl reports due to Dori by January 8th

Norman reports due to Dory by January 15th

The Elm River, Norman and Stordahl Tri-Parish met on Wednesday, November 20, 2024 at 7pm at Elm River Lutheran Church.

Pastor Peter Schiefelbein, Secretary Dori Elliott and Treasurer Lori Paulson.

Elm River: Kendall Johnson, Beth Kainz, Kristi Vadnie

Stordahl: Alan Paulson, Nick Erickson, Mike Bring

Norman:

Quorum established, and agenda approved.

Secretary's Report: Motion to approve the minutes from the August 21st meeting by Alan Paulson, Seconded by Kendall, motion carried

Treasure's Report: all bills are current, will be under budget for the year Motion to approve from Nick Erickson, seconded by Beth, motion carried

Old Business: Will need to work on ideas for Mission Sunday earlier next year. Elm River will be removing the landlines from the church as there have been no messages or calls. Pastor's number is posted on Web Page, This will reduce the phone expense for the TriParish

Pastor's Report: continued visitation to shut ins

New Business:

*Tri Parish Agreement was discussed, found nothing to change at this time. Motion by Mike Bring, seconded by Kristi to keep agreement as is, motion carried

*Christmas Schedule/ Next Years schedule

Christmas Eve Worship 2pm Elm River, 3:30 Stordahl, 5pm Norman

*Annual Meeting Dates : Stordahl, January 13th reports due Wednesday, January 8th

Elm River, January 19th, reports due Wednesday, January 6th

Norman January 26th, reports due Wednesday, January 15th

*2025 Budget was discussed, as numbers have not changed that much budget should remain the same.

Motion by Nick Erickson and seconded by Beth to keep the same budget as 2024, motion carried

Next meeting :

Wednesday, March 5th after Ash Wednesday Lent service at Norman or Wednesday, March 12th following worship at Elm River

The Lords Prayer was said

Meeting adjourned.

Dori Elliott Tri-Parish Secretary.