

Emmanuel, God is with us

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife... "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel" which means, God is with us."

Matthew 1:18-23

The Advent-Christmas season of 2008 is to come shortly. Christmas is always special and beautiful. The houses in the Christian neighborhood are decorated with Christmas ornaments and beautiful accessories, and stores are busy for the holiday sales. Although this year, the world economy has gone down and many people have lost their jobs, the holiday season still makes us feel uplifted. I cannot deny my feelings of joy and excitement when Christmas comes near.

Well, Christmas is not just about the sales, gifts and decoration. It is the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. However, unlike today, his birth was neither blessed nor recognized by many people in the beginning. Joseph was troubled by the news that his fiancée, Mary got pregnant. According to Deuteronomy 22: 23-24, if a woman, who has been engaged to a man, has a baby of someone else, she would be stoned to death. Thus, the pregnancy of Mary was not acceptable to the Jewish community. On the one hand, Joseph was so righteous that he did not want to have Mary as his wife. On the other hand, he was also very merciful that he did not want Mary to be stoned to death. Thus, he

decided to dismiss their engagement secretly in order to save her life.

In such a moment, the Angel of the Lord appeared in Joseph's dream and said what I cited at the top from the Gospel of Matthew. Admirably but not surprisingly Joseph took the dream seriously to have Mary as his wife and saved the life of Jesus. With love, honesty, courage and faith, Joseph and Mary became the parents of Jesus.

Jesus was born to be with us. The word, "Emmanuel," means, "God is with us." What a wonderful word it is! When we are in the midst of sufferings, pains and sorrows, our Lord Jesus is with us, carrying our pains and burden together. When we are happy, he embraces our happiness and multiplies our joy.

If you have difficulties, carrying pains and bitterness or any other agonies right now, may our Lord Jesus comfort you and give you peace, hope and joy through this Advent-Christmas season! If you have had a wonderful year, may Jesus continue to be with you and embrace your fortune!

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and blessed New Year!

Peace,

Jim



Scripture Lesson of the Month:

December:

7th: Isaiah 40:1-11, 12-20, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13,
2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8

2nd Sunday of Advent

14th: Isaiah 6:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126,
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28

3rd Sunday of Advent

21st: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:47-55,
Romans 16:25-27, Luke 1:26-38

4th Sunday of Advent

24th: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve

(25th: Isaiah 52:7-10, Psalm 98
Hebrew 1:1-4, John 1:1-14)

Christmas

28th: Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Psalm 148,
Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40

January 2009:

4th: Isaiah 60:1-6, Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14,
Ephesians 3:1-12, Matthew 2:1-12

11th: Genesis 1:1-5, 14-25, Psalm 29,
Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:4-11

18th: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18,
1 Corinthians 65:12-20, John 1:43-51

Human Relations Day

25th: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10, Psalm 62:5-12,
1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20

Announcement and Upcoming Events:

The Advent-Christmas Decoration of the Sanctuary and Potluck Dinner will be held on Saturday, December 6 at 5:00 P.M. You are all invited to this special potluck dinner. There will

be attractions such as singing and a magic show. Please bring your family, friends and neighbors.

*If you have Christmas ornaments and decorations which you no longer use but are still in good condition, please donate them to the church before December 6.



*Please write your name in the Sign-up sheet for the dish you bring or things you do. For questions, please contact Ms. Shereen Mohamed.

The Adult members' Advent Presentation will take a place in the service of December 7. It is a dramatization of Advent-Christmas story, which you will enjoy. This does not mean that children are excluded from this service. Everyone is invited!

There will be a **Council meeting** on Sunday, December 7, right after the coffee-hour at the church parlor.

There will be a **Board of Trustee meeting** on Friday, December 12 at 7:00 P.M., at the church parlor.

Children's Christmas Pageant is scheduled on Sunday, December 21 at 10:30 A.M., during the worship service. All Sunday school children, youth and helpers are encouraged to be involved in these special events. A special thanks goes out to Peggy Gilles, Nolly Dayrit and volunteers.

A traditional Christmas Candlelight and Carol Service is scheduled on December 24, at 7:00 P.M. Please come and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Watch Night Service will be on December 31, at 7:00 P.M. You are all invited to the end of the year service.

Thanks:

Thanksgiving Worship Service was held on Wednesday, November at Our Church. The friends from the several churches and the Jewish temples came and celebrated a wonderful service. The Church of the Good Shepherd was very blessed by God for hosting the Ecumenical Service this year.

Congratulations! We welcomed new members. Richard and Gerbie Aganosa, Rolando and Elizabeth Trinidad and Izumi Yoshimatsu on Sunday, October 26. May God bless and nurture them continuously and the Church of the Good Shepherd as well!

Thank you very much for those who contributed food and clothing to CUMAC/ECHO. We had 18 bags of clothes and 12 bags of canned and dried foods.

Other Concerns:

Birthdays and Anniversaries:

In the coming weeks will be asking everyone for their birth dates and anniversary dates just to help keep people aware of such joyous occasions.

Join the Church?

If you are interested in joining the church formally and properly, please let Pastor Jun or the church office know. There will be a reception service in January.

Volunteer Church Secretary needed.

Ms. Nancy Rounds has been the volunteer church secretary for several years. Yet due to her busy schedule, she needs to resign. Hence, we need volunteer secretaries for the church office. Ms. Shereen Mohammed is kindly offering her time on Saturdays, so if one or more volunteers can come to the office on weekdays, the office will function well. Please let Pastor Jun know if you can do the office work or know someone. We thank Nancy for being a very faithful church secretary for many years.

Special Appeal:

Enclosed, please find a Christmas envelop for the church. The church needs your support for not only its administration but also for its out-reach programs and ministries. So give thanks to God and give Christmas donation generously.

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| Pastor: | Jun Yoshimatsu |
| Church Secretary: | Nancy Rounds |
| Music Director: | Dorothy Henry |
| Lay Leader: | Nova Vitug |
| The Office: | (201) 385-4100 |
| Parsonage: | (201) 338-2744 |
| Pastor's E-mail: | junyoshim@optonline.net |

The Office Hours:
10:00 A.M to 12:30 P.M on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Other days are by appointment only.