



Christmas Pageant Report: Chaos at the Manger

Look carefully and you will see a very worried Mary and Joseph trying to cope with all of those who have come— rather noisily—to greet their new baby. For more photos from our Christmas Eve 5:00 worship service, see below.

Worship Information

January 7, 2024

Sermon: *The Ships of Tarshish Bring Good News!*

Preacher: Rev. Drew Ditzel

Old Testament Reading 1: Isaiah 2:12-18

Old Testament Reading 2: Isaiah 60:1-16

January 14, 2024

Sermon: *Resting in Mercy*

Preacher: Rev. Drew Ditzel

Old Testament Reading 1: Ex. 20:8-10

New Testament Reading: Matthew 11:28-30

January 21, 2024

Sermon: *Humility Exposed*

Preacher: Rev. Drew Ditzel

Old Testament Reading: Ex. 3:1-6

New Testament Reading: John 13:1-12

January 28, 2024

Sermon: *A Righteous Grief*

Preacher: Rev. Drew Ditzel

New Testament Reading: Luke 19:41-44

Dear friends,

At the December Session meeting, the elders of Lex Pres officially adopted a new mission statement for our church. It reads:

We seek to be a community that does justice, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God in Lexington, throughout Rockbridge County, and to the ends of the earth.*

I love how this biblically-based sentence clarifies, challenges, and encourages me as I think about what it means to be the Church, and I am excited to begin to ask the question, “What does it look like to live into this mission as a community of faith in Lexington, VA?”

Yet, as I told the Session, if we engage this new mission as ‘buckets to fill and mark as done,’ we might be more focused and productive as a church, but it will come at the cost of joy and, in the end, a source of anxiety and burden. For even the most faithful action, done without God, is nothing more than a “noisy cymbal or clanging gong.” In the end, this mission statement will only begin to feel like full life when we have the faith to allow God to speak first. Only then will we notice how we haven’t been called to simply do God’s work on our own; we have been invited to join the humble God of justice and mercy who is already on the move in our life and the places we live.

Therefore, as we enter into the season of Epiphany, a time in the Church liturgical year where we remember the life of faith is full of moments of surprise and discovered joy, I thought it would be fitting to revisit our newly adopted mission statement and explore how God actually does justice, loves mercy, and walks humbly. All so we might start to be equipped to notice where this faithful way of life is already bursting forth in Lexington, VA and across Rockbridge County.

After all, Epiphany is a season full of biblical stories that, as Bobby Gross writes, declare “what was widely hidden has been made more widely known.” It is an invitation to reorient how we see the world through the lens of the grace of Jesus Christ that is in our midst. Over the next six weeks in Sunday worship, I pray each of us will allow these stories of scripture to reveal how we can join God’s Kingdom work that is already present and continues to come.

Grace and peace,

Drew

*Conversation within Session will continue about the best wording here.

RARA food collection basket - The Property Committee is removing the food collection basket in the hallway due to advice from the fire marshal, to minimize things that someone might fall over. Please make your donations to directly to RARA, located at 350 Spotswood Dr., Lexington, VA 24450, (540)463-6943, office@raralex.org. More guidelines regarding food donations to RARA will be coming soon.

Encisos Return In January

Exciting news: Jorge and Ginny Enciso, from South America Mission (an organization LexPres supports through its Outreach committee's work— click here for more information:

southamericamission.org), will return on **Thursday, Jan. 11** for a supper presentation about their work with youth in Colombia. They will delve into the theological underpinnings and practical logistics of this work, and help us ask, "Who are we in relation to world mission?" **Menu for this Thantastic Thursday includes Skip's famous baked chicken!** The meal starts at 5:45 with presentation to follow. **Note: For those who are comfortable paying, meals are \$8.00 person. They are free for college students and people under age 5, and there is a 'family rate' of \$20.00. Don't let cost keep you away – our table is open regardless of ability to pay.*

Lex Pres Men's Gathering Jan. 18th!

Save the date for a time of casual fellowship and intentional conversation on Thursday, Jan 18th from 7:30 to 9 pm. Location TBD. Looking forward to a time for men of all ages to enjoy each other's company, get to know one another, and learn from the diverse experience of those in our midst. Questions? Interested in hosting? Contact Drew at drditzel@lexpres.org.

Calling All Those Who Have Worked or Volunteered with Local Non-Profits . . .

Do you volunteer for (or serve as a board member or officer) for a non-profit in the local area now, or have you done so in the past? If so, we'd love to have you help, just a little, with a church-wide supper event. On Sun. Jan. 28 (5:30 P.M., Dunlap Auditorium) we will host an intergenerational church supper meeting in which adults with experience in non-profits will talk about their work and their organizations with attendees. There's no need to prepare any presentation or speech! *The conversations will be informal and in small groups, but structured and intentional so that all the attendees will get to hear about multiple nonprofit experiences.* We're inviting everyone, and especially encouraging families with youth and children to attend so kids can talk with adults who have done non-profit work. You may be asked questions such as, "What does your organization do?" "How does it help the community?" "Why do you work with this organization?" "What is one of the most memorable things that has happened to you in your nonprofit work?"

The event is designed to encourage all of us – *especially* our children and youth – to look for and dream about the ways these organizations and people help us show mercy and envision/enact justice in our local area. We also hope to help us get to know each other better as we share our interests across generations. **If you think you may be able to help us on the 28th by informally sharing some information about your nonprofit experience, please put your name, contact information, and nonprofit name(s) by clicking on this form:** [NonProfit Info Share Sign Up 1/28/24](#) , or contact Sandra at shayslette@lexpres.org.

Would You Like to Place Flowers for 11:00 AM Worship?

Opportunities exist to place flowers in the sanctuary for the 11:00 AM worship service each Sunday in January: 7, 14, 21, and 28. If you would like to reserve one of these Sundays, please notify Philip Coulling at philip.coulling@gmail.com. Please note that those placing flowers are responsible for making their own arrangements for ordering the flowers and removing them after the service. You may use one of the local florists (such as University Florist or Jefferson Florist) or provide your own arrangement. Please also let Philip or Janice know the text you would like to include in that week's bulletin. Text should follow this format: "Flowers are given to the glory of God and in memory/honor/etc. of _____. " Bulletin announcements need to be received by the Wednesday before the service. Note: If you would like to reserve flowers for a later date in 2024, you may do so at this time as well. Please note that there will be lilies in the sanctuary on Easter Sunday (March 31) and poinsettias December 8-29.

'MUSIC AT NOON' RETURNS IN JANUARY

'Music at Noon' will return with two Wednesday organ concerts by William McCorkle.

–Wed., Jan. 10 - "Still Christmas" - a chance to extend the spirit of Christmas with some delightful pieces inspired by Christmas melodies

–Wed., Jan. 24 - "Still Epiphany" - Organ pieces on hymns ranging across the Epiphany season

Calendar of Events – January 2024

Lectio - Every Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.

Kids' Club Staging Event – Every Wednesday, 2:30-4:30

Handbells - Every Tuesday at 5:45 p.m. All are welcome! New day and time!

Choir - Every Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

Weeks of Jan 1/Jan 8: Final Micah 6:8 home-based discussion groups

Jan. 5– Kids Club Bible circle leaders' supper retreat – 6:00-8:00 p.m. – Dunlap Auditorium

Sun. Jan 7 –Congregational meeting for purposes of electing an elder to Session – immediately following the 11:00 a.m. service – Sanctuary

–Senior High (grades 9-12) youth lunch out – after 11:00 a.m. service – meet at Sandra's Office

Jan. 8 – Prayer Shawl group– 10:00 a.m. – Room 111

Jan. 9 – Worship Committee – 5:00-6:00 p.m. –Brady Chapel

Jan. 10 –Music at Noon: William McCorkle, organ: "Still Christmas" - 12:00 noon

- Leah-Ruth Circle – 1:00 p.m. – Brady Chapel

Jan. 11: Thantastic Thursday meal and presentation – Jorge and Ginny Enciso – 5:45 p.m.

–Dunlap Auditorium

Sun. Jan. 14: –Outreach Committee – following 11:00 a.m. service – Room 113

Youth grades 6-12 evening supper event– Time and place TBA

Jan. 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade (downtown) and Luncheon (Dunlap auditorium) – students in grades 6-12 are invited to serve soup to our community guests immediately following the parade

Jan. 16: Property Committee– 12 noon-1:00 p.m.-- Room 113

Campus Ministry subcommittee– 5:30-6:30 p.m. – Room 113

Session– 7:00 p.m. – Brady Chapel
 Jan. 17: Preschool Board– 4:30 p.m. –Room 111
 Jan. 18: Men’s Gathering – 7:30-9:00 p.m. – Location TBA
 Jan. 19 (tentative, pending confirmation of staffing): Parents’ Time Out– 5:30-8:30 p.m. – Dunlap Auditorium
 Sun, Jan. 21: Brunch – following 11:00 a.m. service – Dunlap auditorium
 Jan. 22– Prayer shawl group – 10:00-11:30 – Room 113
 – Lex Pres provides Community Table desserts – contact Pam Luecke (lueckep@wlu.edu) to help as a dessert baker
 Youth + families outing to eat at Community Table– 6:00-7:00 p.m.
 Jan. 23: Administrative Committee – 7:00-8:00 p.m. – Room 113
 Jan. 24: Music at Noon: William McCorkle, organ: “Still Epiphany” - 12:00 noon
 Sun. Jan. 28: Intergenerational Sunday Supper – Stories from Lex Pres Folks Involved with Local Non-Profits – Dunlap Auditorium – 5:30-7:00 p.m.
 Jan.31: Children and Family Ministry Committee – 7:00-8:00 p.m. –Brady Chapel

Goodnight, Manger!

Part of our Christmas Eve 5:00 P.M. worship service featured an adaptation of Laura Sassi’s book, *Goodnight Manger*, with a cast of 33, including some animals not typically associated with ancient Palestine. Lovely candlelight followed the joyous celebration of the nativity.



Top left: A cow (Jay Braddick), a wolf (Calvin Rhamey), a hedgehog (Cyrus Green), the star (Olivia Tarris), and the pig (Ann Evelyn Ditzel) await their entrance; *Top right:* Narrators Kathryn Kvech, Catherine Keesee, William Keesee, and Will Ditzel listen to the baby, who was crying – again. *Bottom left:* Mary and Joseph (Tim and Kara Braddick), preoccupied with a fussy baby, do not seem perturbed about the fact that there is a zebra in the stable. *Bottom right:* Most of the cast in a rare quiet moment.

Skip's Meatloaf

I developed this recipe for Lexington Presbyterian Church's Thantastic Thursday dinner in Dec. 2023. It is not a difficult recipe and you may customize it to fit your taste. I hope you enjoy it.

Next day cold meatloaf sandwiches are the best!-- Skip Hess, Director of Culinary Ministries

Ingredients

- 1 ½ lbs lean ground beef (more fat, more flavor)
- ½ lb ground pork
- ½ lb onions, chopped into ¼ inch dice (I coarse-cut the onion and pepper, put them in the food processor, and pulse a few times).
- ¼ lb green bell pepper, diced
- 2 Eggs lightly beaten
- 1 Teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1/3 Teaspoon ground pepper
- 1/3 Quart - Cento-San Marzano Peeled Tomatoes - cut up
- ½ Cup Italian Bread Crumbs
- 1/3 Cup ketchup
- 1 Teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce (more or less to your taste)
- ¼ Cup Brown Sugar
- 1 Envelope McCormick's Brown Gravy Mix

Directions:

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together until well combined but do not over mix (that will make it tough).

Generously spray sides and bottom of 3 loaf pans with PAM cooking spray (I use medium size disposable loaf pans so I don't have to wash pans). Cut 3 strips of parchment paper large enough to cover the bottom and sides of the pans and leave at least 2 inches above the pans. Spray paper. The paper extending out of the pan gives you something to hold onto when removing the meatloaf from the pans. Divide the mixture into three portions and press down one portion in each pan. Press down so that there are no air pockets. Air pockets will cause the meatloaf to crumble when sliced. Brush the top of each loaf with ketchup.

Bake in 300 degree oven for 60 minutes or until thermometer reads 160 degrees. Remove from the oven and invert (still in pans) on a wire rack to drain off juices. **SAVE THE JUICE!** Allow meatloaf to cool before slicing. Hot meatloaf will fall apart when sliced. Slicing meatloaf is easy with an electric knife! While meatloaf is cooling, prepare the sauce. Place saved juices in a sauce pan and add Worcestershire Sauce and brown sugar. Heat and stir until smooth. Remove from heat. You can ladle off the excess grease if wish. In another pan, prepare brown gravy mix according to directions. Add the juice mixture and stir. Ladle over the sliced meatloaf and serve warm.

Note: Customize your meatloaf! If you don't like onions or peppers, leave them out. You may add an envelope of Knorr's Vegetable Soup/dip mix or finely chopped carrots. If you can't find Cento tomatoes,

use finely diced tomatoes. This meatloaf can be gluten-free by using gluten-free bread crumbs– check gravy mixes to be sure that they don't use wheat in their ingredients.
