

SOUNDS OF SALEM

A MONTHLY PRINT AND DIGITAL NEWSLETTER OF SALEM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VENEDOCIA, OHIO

Volume 27 Issue 1

January 2025

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS

Whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God (Luke 12:8 NLT).

As we begin this New Year, we must consider setting our proper spiritual priorities. The most important concern is to obey the Word of God fully. God has a plan for our lives; it may not be what we expected, but it is perfect and blessedly eternal.

I came to Christ in my early twenties. I was open and interested in Christ but couldn't find anyone living as a biblical Christian. Believe me, I was searching and looking.

The *supposed Christians* wouldn't do as they told others. It was only later that I had a sales job that took me into many different families' homes that I began to see the difference between worldly and real Christian homes that I now experience.

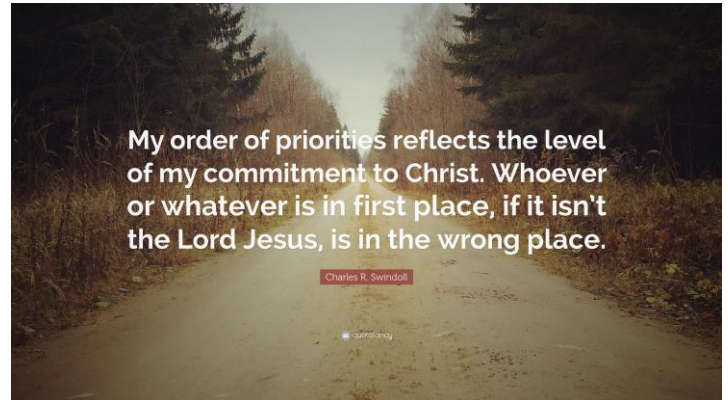
Worldly homes were full of unspoken pain, anxiety, unforgiveness, and anger; I could sometimes sense their vibes at the front door and knew what kind of home I was walking into.

But, in some houses, I noticed a spiritual transformation just by walking in the door. The real Christians had something that I wanted, but I was shy of directly asking them what was different about them. Sadly, many did not sense my spiritual needs. But in those homes, I got a sense of peace that the world didn't offer. It was a pleasant experience that I couldn't describe.

God directs that our first mission for this New Year involves our families and friends. They need to hear our testimony of what God has done for us. You need to let them see God in your lives by your lifestyles.

They need to see the Galatians 5:22-23 Fruit of the Spirit in you: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

They need to see you apologize and ask forgiveness when you have wronged someone. They need to see you while imperfect, that you have something they need



My order of priorities reflects the level of my commitment to Christ. Whoever or whatever is in first place, if it isn't the Lord Jesus, is in the wrong place.

Charles R. Swindoll

that only God can offer them. They need to see love in your life. You must let them see that God's Words have transformed your life.

In Mark 5:19, Jesus commands us to ...*go home to your family and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful He has been.*

Why not start the New Year by humbling yourself before God and others so the world will notice and glorify God?

Pastor Tom Emery

Just One Request

Dear Master for this coming year
Just one request I bring:
I do not pray for happiness,
Or any earthly thing—
I do not ask to understand
The way Thou leadest me,

But this I ask: Teach me to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee.
I want to know Thy guiding voice,
To walk with Thee each day.

Dear Master make me swift to hear
And ready to obey.
And thus the year I now begin
A happy year will be—
If I am seeking just to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee.

--Unknown Author

What Did the Gifts of the Magi Signify?

The Magi gave the young Jesus three gifts: **gold, frankincense, and myrrh**. These were not random gifts they had lying around; they were each significant at the time and have important meanings for us today.



During the Christmas season, the story of the Magi bringing their gifts to the Christ Child in Matthew 2 can be a helpful reminder of the kinds of “gifts” God wants from us. The gifts of the Magi weren’t just valuable; they were deeply meaningful and filled with spiritual significance. The gifts symbolized their recognition of Jesus as King, God, and Savior. In the same way, their story can inspire us to think about the “gifts” God desires from us today.

At some point, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, several Magi traveled to see him by following a unique star or light in the sky. These Magi (otherwise known as “Wise Men”) were a special class of priests in the Persian Empire that had been around for a long time, at least since Daniel was appointed to be their leader by King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5).

They were religious professors, philosophers, and scholars who were highly educated in many fields, including religion, astronomy, and even astrology (which is why they were paying attention to the stars in the first place).

It is possible that while Daniel was overseeing these Magi, he taught them the prophecies about the coming Messiah (such as in Numbers 24:17 and Micah 5:2). Quite possibly, they had been waiting on Jesus’ birth for a long time.

Because of their knowledge and influence, they also served as political advisors and even “king-makers,” — which is a very interesting connection considering that the Book of Matthew (that presents Jesus as the rightful king in the line of Judah) is the only gospel account that mentions this story.

But these men did not risk their lives to make this journey (especially considering their interaction with the evil King Herod) to make a political move, teach a seminar, or advise a king—they were traveling from the Far East to worship “he who has been born king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2).

When the Magi finally found the house where the Christ Child was staying, they “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy,” fell on their faces before Jesus and Mary and worshiped him (an appropriate reaction to being in the presence of the King of Kings). Then, they opened their treasures and presented three gifts to the young Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Three Gifts of the Magi

- 1. Gold** is a precious metal used for jewelry, ornaments, currency, and idols throughout human history because of its color and shine.
- 2. Frankincense** is an expensive fragrance or perfume made from trees in India and Arabia.
- 3. Myrrh** is a specific kind of costly perfume made from rare thorn bushes in Arabia and Ethiopia that is used as an antiseptic anointing oil and embalming fluid.

While these gifts would have been rare and very costly for the Magi to give to Jesus’ family, they were not unheard of in first-century Palestine.

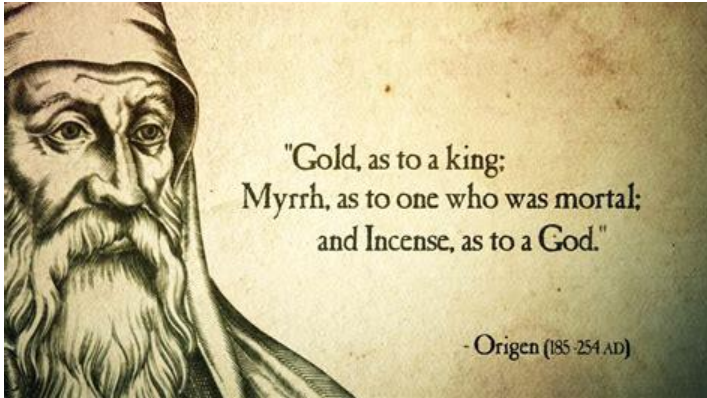
However, while gold and perfume might make nice “Christmas gifts,” myrrh is an odd (or even inappropriate) gift choice for a family with a newborn baby. As one writer put it, “Embalming liquid never appears to top the lists of baby shower gifts in society today.”

But as this author suggests, these gifts were diplomatic representations of each of the Magi’s cultures. Based on where they were each from, they “honored the King... in a way that fit their nationality.”

Similarly, because these gifts were expensive, they demonstrated their sacrificial love and worship for this newborn King. This was not a gesture of charity. It was deep worship. The Magi were not purchasing anything with their gifts. They were praising.

John Piper eloquently expressed it like this:

The gifts are intensifiers of desire for Christ himself in much the same way that fasting is. When you give a gift to Christ like this, it's a way of saying, "The joy that I pursue... is not the hope of getting rich with things from you. I have not come to you for your things, but for yourself. And this desire I now intensify and demonstrate by giving up things, in the hope of enjoying you more, not things. By giving to you what you do not need, and what I might enjoy, I am saying more earnestly and more authentically, 'You are my treasure, not these things.'"



Almost ironically, though, God is clear through His Word that He does not need anything we have to offer. As the apostles preached in the Book of Acts:

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:24-28, ESV).

Spiritual Meaning of the Magi Gifts

The ancient church understood that the three types of gifts clearly symbolize three key aspects of Christ's identity.

The gift of gold points to Jesus' royalty, the frankincense to his divinity, and the myrrh to his humanity.

In fact, you could argue that through their gift-giving, the Magi "preached" the gospel in a tangible way. Whether they fully knew it or not, their gifts told the story of how God himself came down from Heaven as our King (gold) to fulfill his priestly duties (frankincense) and eventually died for our sins (myrrh).

Since the gift of myrrh was the oddest gift, it especially points forward to the day that Jesus would die for the sins of the world.

This element was given to Jesus here at the beginning of his life as well as at the end of his life when he was hanging on the cross (Mark 15:23) and then was buried in the tomb (John 19:39).

Thankfully for humanity, though, that burial was only temporary — because three days later, he rose again. And because of his resurrection, we can have eternal life.

Today, as we read about this "first Christmas" event, there are at least two important lessons that we need to learn.

First, we need to learn that the main message behind the Magi story, gift-giving, and the rest of the Christmas (or Advent) holiday is that Jesus Christ came to earth to die to offer salvation for sinners — meaning you and me (1 Timothy 1:15; Luke 19:10). We must pray that we do not lose sight of that.

Secondly, just as the Wise Men responded to the heavenly light above them by going and worshiping Jesus, the Christmas season calls us all to respond to Jesus in one way or another.

This truth is not only clear in the story of the Magi, but we also see it in the stories of the angels, the shepherds, the older saints in the temple, and even Herod (who responded to the news of a king by trying to kill him).

This is because Christmas presents us with the gospel, and the gospel demands a response. For Christians, Christmas calls us to worship. However, we have to choose what we worship. This is not just about avoiding materialism through the holidays (although that is important to do). It is about choosing to worship Jesus over *everything else*.

And because Jesus is the only true King, when we bow our hearts to him and lay our precious "gifts" before him, "then we are saying that he alone can satisfy our hearts." Thankfully, King Jesus "never turns away from any heart that is open to him. Those who seek him will find him every time."

God isn't asking us for gold or rare spices, but He invites us to give Him the best of what we have—our time, talents, love, and trust. Just as the Magi offered their treasures with joy and reverence, we're called to offer our hearts and lives to Him as acts of

worship. This season is the perfect time to reflect on what we can bring to Jesus. Is it more time in prayer? A step of faith in sharing His love with others? A sacrifice of selfless service to someone in need?

The story of the Magi reminds us that the greatest gift we can offer isn't something material. It's the devotion of a heart fully surrendered to Him. Christmas is a time to celebrate the ultimate gift we've been given by Jesus and consider how we can respond with gratitude, faith, and love.

Adapted from: What Did the Gifts of the Magi Signify and Represent? by Robert Hampshire. Christianity.com. Updated Dec 06, 2024.

Welsh Recipes

Mamgu's Bara Brith

A traditional Welsh family 'Bara Brith' (tea bread) recipe. Delicious smothered in butter with a nice hot cup of tea.

300g dried mixed fruit
350ml boiling water
3 tea bags (I use PG Tips)
180g soft brown sugar
230g self-raising flour
1 medium egg
1/2 tsp mixed spice
1 tsp ground cinnamon



Step 1 Place the three tea bags into a jug and add the boiling water. Leave to brew for 5 minutes. **Step 2** Place the dried mixed fruit in a mixing bowl, pour over the tea and dispose of the tea bags. Leave overnight. **Step 3** Add the sugar to the mixture and stir until dissolved. Next, add the whole egg, the flour, and finally the mixed spice and ground cinnamon. Mix until the mixture resembles a thick cake-like batter. **Step 4** Grease a loaf tin and pour in the cake mixture. It should come up no higher than halfway, as the cake will rise in the oven. **Step 5** Place on the middle shelf of a preheated oven at 150 degrees for 1 hour and 15 minutes. **Step 6:** Remove from the oven and leave to cool for 10 minutes or so until the cake comes away from the sides of the tin. **Step 7** Leave to cool on a cooling rack. **Step 8** Serve with butter and a nice hot cup of tea!

Source: A small Welsh cooking Club.

Church Financial Update

Prayerfully consider donating to Salem Church. Offerings should be mailed to the church at:

Salem United Presbyterian Church, PO Box 678, Venedocia, Ohio 45894.

Needed to Date \$119,501.25
Received to Date \$120,359.75

Salem Scenes



2024-12-14 Christina (Emery) Youngpeter December graduation with an MA in Archeology in pursuit of a Ph.D. at Washington University in St. Louis. She is standing in front of one of her teaching exhibits.



2024-12-04 Senior Luncheon and Bingo. Marilyn Foust and Kim Coil.



2024-12-15 Youth Service Program.



2024-12-08 Time for Children prayer.



2024-12-08 "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" sung by toddlers and youth.



2024-12-08 Older Children's Bell Choir.



2024-12-15 One of the visits during Christmas Caroling.



2024-12-15 Manse Party getting started by dropping off food.



"Silent Night" was sung by the Congregation in candlelight.



IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

Remember our elderly members, soldiers, and college students with cards and visits.

"Young at Heart"

Paul Price

18890 Bebb St
Venedocia, OH 45894

Marilyn Stockton

Lochhaven, Apt 220
1640 Allentown Rd
Lima, OH 45805

Marjorie Eutsler

Room 302
Homestead at Town Ctr
240 Towne Center Blvd
Van Wert, OH 45891

Ellen Freisner

Delphos Van Crest
1425 E. 5th St
Delphos, OH 45833

Ann Rees

Hearth & Home
1118 Westwood Dr
Van Wert, Oh 45891

Serving our Country

Cory McCollow

(U.S. Coast Guard)
7225 Altura Place
Oakland, CA 94605

Dillon Ellerbrock

(Marines)
Grandson of Gloria Leiter

Lloyd (Butch) Eutsler

(National Guard)
14975 Van Wert-Mercer
Co. Line Road
Venedocia, OH 45894

Madison Pugh-USCGA

64 Main St
Floor 3
Stonington, CT 06378

Corbin Evans (Marines)

Grandson of Bill & Ruth
Evans

Away at College

Landon Price. Ohio University,
77 Mill St, 101, Athens, Ohio 45701

Isaiah Pugh (at the University of Toledo)
2632 Greenway Street
Toledo, OH 43607

Birthdays

2 Chris Beck	3 Emily Blackmore
5 Karen Pugh	6 Jim Lloyd
7 Nell Jean Wienken	7 Loretta Williams
10 Dominic Adkins	11 Chelsey Lloyd
11 Ashlyn Price	12 Christina Youngpeter
16 Rob Breese	16 Liz Hobbs
19 Wrettic Breese	30 John Smith
31 Carrie Jones	

Anniversaries

9 Michael & Lendsay Breese

Condolences to the family of ???????

Prayer Concerns

LaDonna Allenbaugh (shoulder surgery)
Charles Boroff (heart issue)
Dave Burnett (heart)
Tom Burnett (tractor accident)
Pastor Tom Emery (Long Covid recovery)
Marjorie Eutsler
Millie Fletcher
Ellen Friesner
Cecil Foust (heart surgery)
Shana Fryer
Stephanie Gamble (eye issues)
Bob & Jane Harter
Sheryl Hefner (cancer)
Carla Hillabrand (Medical issues)

Jerry & Elizabeth Holscher
David Kroeger (pancreatic cancer)
Jim Lloyd (recovering leg surgery)
Mary Lou Morgan (Eleanor's daughter)
David Morris (Zeb)
Tim Morris (broken ribs after a fall)
Steve Muhlenkamp (cancer)
Bev Place
Patti Poling (pancreatic cancer)
Paul Price
Denise Pugh (broken leg & other injuries)
Ann Rees (at Hearth & Home)
Bianca Richards (Leukemia)
Evelyn Schwartz
Marilyn Stockton

6 The area Nursing Homes and their residents

January 2025

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Meeting at the VW Promise Church.	3	4
5 9:30 AM Worship	6	7 7:30 AM Men's Bible Study at the Living Truth Church in VW. 7:00 pm Women's Bible study	8 Auditor reports due to Pete & Todd	9 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Meeting at the Promise Church.	10	11
12 9:30 AM Worship 10:45 AM Session Meeting 5:00 PM Trustee meeting	13	14 7:30 AM Men's Bible Study at the Living Truth Church in VW. 7:00 pm Women's Bible study	15 Auditor reports due to Liz	16 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Meeting at the Promise Church.	17	18
19 9:30 AM Worship, Installation and Ordination of officers 10:45 AM Session meeting. End of year reports will be available to the congregation	20	21 7:30 AM Men's Bible Study at the Living Truth Church in VW. 7:00 pm Women's Bible study	22	23 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Meeting at the Promise Church.	24	25
26 9:30 AM Worship Congregational meeting following the service to approve the annual reports	27	28 7:30 AM Men's Bible Study at the Living Truth Church in VW. 7:00 pm Women's Bible study	29	30 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Meeting at the Promise Church.	31	

Week of	Nursery	Flowers	Organist
Jan 5	Jeremy & Samantha Morris		Lexi Greer
Jan 12	Liz Hobbs		?Becky Reichard
Jan 19	Todd & Jayne Morris		?Jake Wilder
Jan 26	Michael & Lindsay Breese		?Lexi Greer
		Greeter:	?

*Salem Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 678
15240 Main Street
Venedocia, Ohio 45894*



*2024-12-24 Christmas Eve.
Pastor Tom and Carol Emery praying.
Happy New Year!*

Sounds of Salem Newsletter

Church Phone: 419-667-4142

Church Web Pages: www.SalemChurch.cc
www.facebook.com/salemchurchvenedocia

Secretary E-Mail: Secretary@SalemChurch.cc

Secretary's cell: 419-303-2032

Rev. Thomas Emery's cell: 419-863-9131
Pastor's Email: PastorTomEmery@live.com

Jan 2025 REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY YEAR C

2nd Sunday of Christmas – Jan 5

Jer. 31:7-14	Psalm 147:12-20
Eph. 1:3-14	John 1:(1-9)10-18

Baptism of the Lord – Jan 12

Isa. 43:1-7	Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17	Luke 3:15-17,21-22

2nd Sunday after Epiphany – Jan 19

Isa. 62:1-5	Psalm 36:5-10
1 Cor. 12:1-11	John 2:1-11

3rd Sunday after Epiphany – Jan 26

Neh. 8:1-3,5-6,8-10	Psalm 19
1 Cor. 12:12-31a	Luke 4:14-21