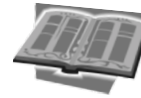


The Bluff Hall News

January 2025



Pastor's Thoughts

I hope that all of you are ready to celebrate Christmas with your friends and family, as it is just days away. Are you ready? Have you found that perfect gift for everyone on your list? Or is there that one person that seems to have it all that has you in a bind? This week several ministry emails I received talked about gift giving and how it seems that the Christ part of Christmas has been swap out for “giftmas”. As a person who not only enjoys receiving gifts, but also giving people gifts this is a tricky line to walk especially as a pastor. My loved ones know that I am always listening for clues on the “right gift” and that all year round I look for those good deals. In a way I want to embody the cliché “its the thought that counts”. I want to put so much thought and love into a gift that the person receiving it knows that they are cared for deeply. As I meditated on this idea of gift giving, I noticed a beautiful display that my god-parents gave me a few years back called “The Gifts of the Magi”. This display has three small ornate boxes each of a different design, and within each box is one of the gifts the Wise men brought. Let us look briefly at the account as recorded in Matthew 2:9–11.

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. (ESV)

The wise men who had traveled a great distance to find one who had been “born king of the Jews”, have finally reached their destination. Coming to the house these foreign dignitaries, who mostly likely served in the court of another king, now bow and worship the infant Jesus. As if this puzzling picture is not strange enough, these eastern stargazers take out treasures to offer the perhaps just months old king; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Do any of these gifts sound very practical to you?

Lets puzzle over these gifts for a moment beginning with gold. Gold is surely a treasured item. It is rare and dazzling. Not unlike today, gold was highly valued and so was present in the wealthiest of treasuries. Barclay writes, “And gold, the king of metals, is the fit gift for a king of men.” (William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible, “The Gospel of Matthew vol.1” pg.32) It stands to reason that if you were going to worship a king, even an infant one, then gold was the right kind of gift to bring.

The second gift as frankincense is a bit more unusual. Frankincense was the hardened sap of a particular tree. This crystalized sap was quite fragrant and was crushed up to make perfumes, medicine, and incense. Interestingly, if you were to look at Exodus 30:34-38 you would find that the Lord directs the incense for the Tabernacle to be made with an equal part of – you guessed it – frankincense. Again look at what Barclay writes, “Frankincense is the gift for a priest....The priest is the man who builds a bridge between men and God.” (IBID, pg 32) Could these foreign wise men possibly understand the significance this gift would mean?

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Sunday Worship Service: 9:00 am Sunday School Hour: To resume January 12

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The final gift of the three is myrrh. Myrrh is similar to frankincense in that it is also derived from the sap of a tree. This sap came from a small thorny tree and was used as a spice, medicine, or cosmetic. Barclay notes that myrrh as a spice played a significant role in the embalming process, “Myrrh is the gift for one who is to die.” (Ibid, 32) Myrrh is not exactly the kind of gift one might think appropriate for a king or a baby. Look at this list again; gold for a king, frankincense for a priest, and myrrh for one who is destined to die. All of a sudden this three gifts don’t seem so strange. Jesus was born to be the King of kings. He was to become the great high priest. Ultimately his life would take him to the cross and the grave for our sins and shame.

What gift would you bring to baby Jesus? Let me present two verses to help you answer this question as we go into Christmas and the New Year. The first is found in Hosea 6:6, “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (ESV) The second from Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (ESV) In both of these verses God reveals the gift he desires most, and the answer is you. God wants to be in relationship with you. He wants your heart, mind, body, and soul – simply put all of you. The wise men were wise enough to know that in the presence of little Lord Jesus they needed to bow down, worship, and offer fine gifts. Will we be wise enough to heed the Word of God and to offer ourselves completely to the Almighty King, the great High Priest, and the one who died to save our souls? Let us begin this New Year by affirming and growing in our relationship with the Lord, and if you have not committed to following Jesus it is not too late to start today. All you have to do is pray to God and ask Jesus to be Lord of your life and King of your heart.

To God be the Glory!

Important Information for Annual Meeting:

- This year we are asking that all ministries include a financial statement in their report. Annual Meeting Reports are due to Debbie by Sunday, January 12. May be emailed to: hrdodd@adams.net – please put “Annual Report” in the subject line.
- Disconnect your landline? Change your email address? Have a new cell phone number? Please let Debbie know of any changes in your family contact information, as a new church directory will be printed for distribution at the annual meeting.
- Annual Meeting: Sunday, February 2, following morning worship service. There will be no Sunday School for children, youth, or adults on that Sunday.



Prayer Needs



New, Recent, & Updated Requests:

- Rhoda Wohemer - Cancer treatment difficulties
- Alley Buck - Healing from terminal cancer
- Shelia Harwell Parkhill - Healing from many complications
- John Kapfer - Awaiting test results
- Pastor Dan Ormand - Cancer diagnosis
- Gary Jackson - Healing of broken back
- Dillon Cutforth - Healing of broken back
- Judy Booth - Recovering from a stroke
- Leo Dietrich - Cancer diagnosis
- Judy Piper - Healing from severe fall
- Rebecca Allen - Long road of rehab
- Anabelle Rhoads - Healing
- Robert Kramer - Terminal cancer diagnosis
- Sandy Beckert - Treatment for breast cancer
- Danny Thomure - Cancer treatment
- Chris Blackmore - Cancer battle
- Peace in Ukraine and Israel

Ongoing Requests:

- Dee Cole - Continued health
- Ross & Sandy Loos
- Betty Speckhart
- Ron Whittaker
- BJ Cutforth - Needs miraculous healing
- Jim Woods - Continued recovery
- Carolyn and Steve Kaiser - Health
- Ralph Venvertloh - Healing from fall
- Tim Davis - Continued health
- Janice Walbring - Health
- Gail Otiker
- Myanmar Mission and Seminary
- Those in our community battling cancer.
- Those in our community grieving the loss of loved ones.
- Those who gave us our freedom.
- Our local, state and federal leadership

Praises:

- Clayton Miller had successful surgery.

Military:

Seth Miles, Henry Dodd, Ryan Mena, Dustin Speckhart,
Blaine Brown, Gary Velasquez, Lucas Velasquez, Kason Spratt

If you have any prayers concerns, please let the prayer chain know by contacting Pastor Richard. Also if you are in need of pastoral care please contact Pastor Richard or a Deacon.

Date	Jan 5 th	Jan 12 th	Jan 19 th	Jan 26 th	Feb 2 nd
Children's Message	Mary	Penni	Laurel	Penni	Mary
Announcements & Prayer	Geoff	Bill	Geoff	Richard	Bill

Deacons for the month: Geoff and Trevor

Flowers: Oct. 2024 thru March 2025 artificial or donated flowers



Bluff Hall Outreach Mission

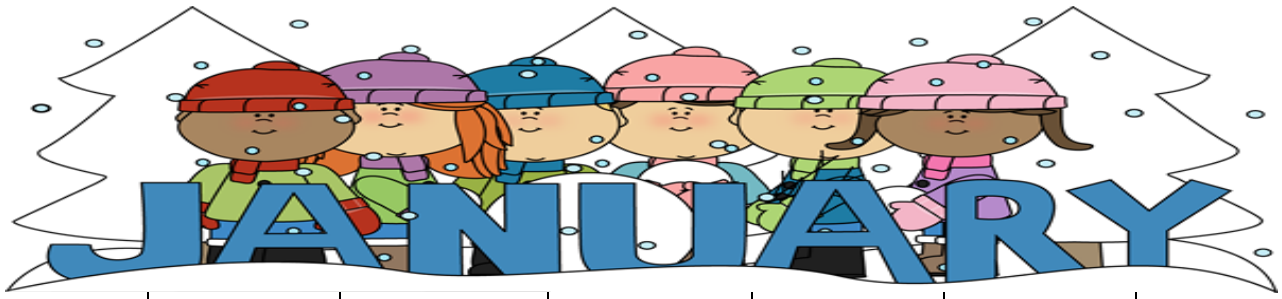
If you would like to support Bluff Hall Missions, please use the envelopes in the pew-backs and place in the offering plate at the back of church.

Please be in prayer for Ahdi and family during this time of upheaval in Myanmar. Also if you have a neighbor or know someone that the church might be able to serve in our community, please let the Missions Team know. - Thank you!

Looking for a way to serve the Lord on Sunday? We are always in need of people who can help lead the announcement/prayer times during Sunday service once a month or so. See Pastor Richard for more information.

Service Live Stream

For those who are unable to join us Sunday on mornings check out our live stream. You can find our youtube channel by searching bluffhallefc at youtube.com or a link can be found on our website at bluffhallefc.org/sermons.



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1 Happy New Year's	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 Deacon Meeting 7pm	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 Church Council 7pm	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Bible Study

Mid-Week Bible study will resume on Tuesday, January 21 at 6:45pm. The Study is entitled "Learn the Gospel".

We'd love to have you join us!



- Jan. 3 Steven Loos
- Jan. 4 John Felton
- Jan. 14 Junior Mena
- Jan. 19 Richard Moore
- Jan. 20 Megan Maiers
- Jan. 28 Melanie Conaway



**BLUFF HALL NOW
ACCEPTS ONLINE GIFTS**

Want to give online?

Go to
bluffhallefc.org/donate and
click the link to fill out the
giving form.

Women's Fellowship News

Meeting: No January meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for February 26.

Reminder:

Please do not place any sticks or tree limbs in the burn ring.

If you are helping to clean up sticks just toss them into the woods.

Thank You

Next friday we will be serving hot gods for lunch.

Pastor is on vacation. Massages can be given to church secretary...

Church Chuckles

Announcements

- Putting away the Greens is Sunday, Jan. 5 following worship. All help appreciated.
- Deacon Meeting is Wed., Jan. 8 at 7pm
- Sunday School resumes following worship January 12th.
- Reports due for Annual Meeting Booklet Sunday, Jan. 12.
- Church Council meeting is Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 7pm.
- Mid-week Bible Study resumes Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 6:45.
- Mid-week Bible Study is Tuesday, Jan. 28 at 6:45.
- Please check website for any updates.

Looking Ahead

February 2 – Annual Meeting

February 12 – Deacon Meeting

Sermons Online

Miss a Sunday? Want to listen to a message again? You're in luck!
Sermons can be found online through our website: bluffhallefc.org/sermons
Sunday's messages typically post on the following Tuesday.

Please pass along any information you have for the newsletter. It may be emailed or called-in to Pastor Richard. Thanks!



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