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Trinotes

December 20, 2017





Brave like Joseph

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, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

*"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"*

which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him

Jesus -- Matthew 1:18-25

Some translations of this text are titled, "Joseph Accepts Jesus as his Son." This particular translation (the NRSV) titles it, "The Birth of Jesus the Messiah." I tend to like the prior better than the latter simply because it raises questions we may not have otherwise.

A former parishioner of mine in Paducah came up to me in November of last year. This man is labeled a jokester. My first few Sundays at Fountain Avenue I made sure to tell the congregation to continually remind me of their names (at least three times, to be exact) over the subsequent weeks. Dan did that. He was faithful to doing that. The only problem is that Dan told me a different name (the name of someone else in the congregation) every time he saw me. Dan was a jokester. Dan (or whatever his name was) would come to mean the world to me over time.

Dan approached me last November impassioned about something. I knew our conversation would lead to me laughing or rolling my eyes and so I braced myself for either. Dan came and plopped himself down in my office and said, "Sara, I'm really tired of the same old thing every Advent." I waited patiently to discover exactly what he was tired of. Dan continued; "I'm tired of hearing about Mary and the baby Jesus, and John the Baptist, and the Wise Cracks (Wise Men). We don't hear enough about Joseph. Joseph ALWAYS gets forgotten." I waited. I was still waiting for the joke. It never came. Dan was very serious and, well, Dan had a reason to be.

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PRAYER CONCERNS

Our country and the world - for the people of Puerto Rico; for people of faith around the world who are experiencing persecution; for refugees seeking asylum from war and social unrest; for safe drinking water for those living in developing countries; prayers for our country, that truth and justice will prevail; for people around the world experiencing terrorist attacks; safety for children going to and from school and while at school; for the poor, homeless, and disenfranchised in our city.

The United Methodist Church - for our Pastor, Rev. Sara Tate and her sons, Cooper and Aiden; for our Bishop, the Rev. Bill McAlilly; and for our District Superintendent, the Rev. Dr. Deborah Smith.

Trinity UMC - For homebound members in the congregation. For children and youth ministries. For new visitors to this congregation. For families who are grieving. For our congregation as we face transitions. Wisdom for our Trustees and Church Council facing difficult decisions.

Also, specific prayer requests by and for:

Joan Smith—granddaughter Sean's vision; Carrie Holborn as she grieves the loss of her husband and daughter; Qahtan, Dalia's uncle with metastatic cancer

Jeanne Napoli, who has persistent, severe back pain

Melba Abraham—Charles recovering at home—in rehab

Mary McConnell—niece Laura Fellin, cancer—pray for her family

Sara Tate—brother Charlie Corum recovering from successful surgery

Tom Allmon—Rita's mother, Cecil Gray, died peacefully December 1st

Charlotte Comes, completed radiation therapy treatments!

—Orville "Phil" Phillips—discharged from hospital: home with sister Maggi

Sue Taylor—the Howard family, for health reasons

Irene Dycus—Nora Dycus recovering from RSV; friend with cancer: Rosemary Norris and husband Noel; Melanie & Jerry LaRue in poor health; Melanie recovering from surgery

Alyson Foreman—victims of California wildfires, especially Elaine Phil & Kathy Isbell's daughter Alicia; Jane Crum's health; Peggy Tate's granddaughter, Angie Goodwin, in rehab

Elizabeth Hopper—death of David's mother on December 11th

Carol Miller—brother David—serious kidney & respiratory problems

(Please submit your prayer requests to Debby Marston at 901-274-6895 [voicemail available] or email to office@trinityumcmemphis.org.)



Christmas Eve Worship Service

Come to the manger at 4:00 p.m. on December 24th. We will worship in the Sanctuary and celebrate our Savior's birth.

Binghampton Food Pantry

Tuesdays & Fridays at 258 Merton 8:00-11:00 am

Room in the Inn

Tuesdays through March 31st: volunteers gather around 4:00 p.m. in Education Bldg., guests arrive 6:00 p.m. Departure Wednesday a.m. at 7:00 a.m.

Evening UMW Meetings

The fourth Monday of each month in the Fellowship Hall at 6:30 p.m. (No meeting on Christmas Day.)

Covenant Discipleship

Wednesdays at 5:00 p.m. in the Conference Room.

Narcotics Anonymous meets at Trinity UMC five evenings a week: Wednesday through Sunday.

Scouts

Cub Scout pack meetings are held Sunday afternoons at 3:00 p.m. Boy Scouts meet Monday evenings at 7:00 p.m. There will be no scout meetings over Christmas break.

Trinotes

The deadline for submissions for the next Trinotes is January 8, 2018. Please email or deliver any articles to our administrative officer, Debby Marston, at: office@trinityumcmemphis.org. Trinotes is now available as an electronic file. Call Debby at 901-274-6895 if you prefer to receive the newsletter via e-mail. You may also access it on our website at www.trinityumcmemphis.org.

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Joseph got a whole Sunday to himself last year. Dan was pleased.

Somehow Joseph becomes a lesser character in the narrative of the birth of Jesus. I'm with Dan. I don't like that at all. The angel Gabriel has approached Mary and announced the "good news of great joy." Mary has spent some time with her cousin Elizabeth celebrating the children they carry. Joseph.....Joseph has all the time in the world to figure out how to get himself out of this mess.

We're told that he loved Mary and because of his love for her, in following through with appropriate tradition, he was working out how to quietly leave her. Now, let's get this straight. Joseph, who loved Mary, was trying to absolve himself from the scandal, not of the century but of all history, and leave her – leave her to fend for herself and child in a society where her parents would not have been obligated to take her back in and where the baby would not have been considered worthy of a future. Alone, with no way to procure work because women didn't work much and she'd have a newborn baby, Mary would have to try to find a way for both her and Jesus to survive – not an uncommon story, even today.

And an angel comes....

An angel of the Lord comes and tells Joseph the absolute least-comforting story of all time. Don't leave Mary. Of course, that's followed by a very important explanation but the reality here...Don't leave Mary because she's carrying the Son of God. Don't leave Mary. Deal with public ridicule. Risk being disowned and disinherited by your family. Embrace the scandal and all that will follow. Raise this child with the same love that you share with Mary as though he is your own. Be strong enough and brave enough to protect them from a future of judgment, assumptions, and turned-up noses.

And he does. He saves the gospel story.

We don't know what Mary and Joseph experienced concerning Jesus' birth. Perhaps everyone just assumed that Jesus was Joseph's biological child. Were they married soon enough that they could pull this off without unleashing the rumors? We don't know. We're never given an inside glimpse into Jesus' early years to know if Joseph put the Savior to bed at night and kissed him on the forehead. We're never privy to earlier discussions between Mary and Joseph. We don't hear them work out a plan and aren't invited into their anxiety – if there was anxiety. All we know is

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Poverty—Alive and Well in Memphis

SCENE 1—November 20, 2017

from Debby Marston's journal

It's 11:57 p.m. by the clock on my laptop. I can't sleep. I delivered some pre-Thanksgiving stuff to a family of seven: one mom, six kids. Since then, I've been trying to make sense of a world in which six children can all lie huddled together on a bed with a TV showing an animated children's program, while the sun is shining outside on a brisk autumn day. The bedroom is warm, thanks to at least one space heater. When I entered the house, I was shown into the kitchen, where a gas range was in the middle of the floor, its top gaping open as if someone had tried to put it in working order, then gave up in the middle of the effort. Upper cabinets hung crookedly on one wall, sagging perilously at such an angle that it didn't seem possible they could remain attached to the wall. Underneath the cabinets, the mother showed me the toaster oven, which, along with a small microwave, seemed the only appliances capable of heating food. A refrigerator of average size promised some hope of keeping food fresh and edible.

I didn't see a table where the family could gather together for a meal. How in the world was this mom going to be able to put together a Thanksgiving dinner, even with all the food Trinity folks had contributed? It was like putting a bandaid on the site of an amputation. Oddly, I wasn't horrified at what I saw until later, after I was home in my comfortable bed, in my house with its central heating and air conditioning. Now I cannot sleep. I've spent the time since going to bed, ostensibly to sleep, tossing and turning, praying and pleading with God to send me clarity: what does one do with such a discovery? The children are not neglected. There are no obvious signs of abuse. They appear to be clean and well-nourished. But they live in a house that's almost falling down around their ears.

This family lives in Memphis, not far from my own home. How can I ignore their needs? Yet how can I, with my limited resources, make any significant difference in their lives? I cannot just walk away and pretend that the provision of a Thanksgiving meal is going to have any significant impact on this family's life. The job of just figuring out where to put anything donated to make their life better would be overwhelming, even to one of the home remodeling gurus seen on HGTV. The question – how can people live like that? – has no answer that satisfies. People do live like that – in Memphis, Tennessee, in rural Arkansas, in Pine Ridge, South Dakota – in other words, all over this, the richest country in the world, not just in developing countries.

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January Birthdays



John Curry	January 2
Horace Phelan	January 3
Poppy Belue	January 4
Kay Jordan	January 4
Eleanor Brooks	January 5
Roscoe Dodson	January 10
Tom Wilson	January 10
Les Johnson	January 12
Jan Young	January 14
James Keller	January 16
Philip Brooks	January 19
Irene Dycus	January 25
Lila Ruth Dycus	January 25
Jeff Corbett	January 27
Caley Foreman	January 29
Carol Miller	January 30
Sarah Humbert	January 31



BENEVOLENCE GIVING UPDATE

Thank you for your generosity in donating to the grocery voucher fund so we can continue to help those who lack the basic needs for life. Since our last Trinotes, we have handed out or promised 18 vouchers at \$25 each. Because this need is ongoing, please consider making a regular donation to offset the cost of maintaining this part of Trinity's benevolence giving.

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that Joseph is obedient to the Messenger of God. Joseph follows through, loves Mary, protects Jesus from Herod, and counts Jesus as his own. All we can know is that the faith of this unlikely character is of great importance in the beginning of the Good News; it could not have happened without Joseph.

In C. S. Lewis' *Miracles*, Lewis describes the birth of Jesus like this: "In the Christian story, God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb ancient and pre-human phases of life; down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world with Him."

I think what we must take from Joseph's role in the incarnation narrative is manifold. Obedience is of value in God's economy. Reaching deep within ourselves to deny the cultural ties that keep us from being brave for the sake of God's work in the world, is as necessary in the Kingdom to come as it was in the Kingdom that did come. Maybe the incarnation begins, not in the manger at Nazareth, but in the spirit of faith of those who chose to be a part of the story of Christ's coming into the world. Maybe that power is reincarnated in the same spirit of faith we bring as we share the incarnation in the present.

Yes, sing like Mary. Proclaim like John. But, also, be brave like Joseph in your welcoming of the Christ child again and again, this season and in all your seasons of life in the days to come.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Sara



Trinity RITI Donation Request List

FYI, a list of donation item requests is kept on the bulletin board next to the kitchen. Items **most needed** are:

New or used backpacks
Travel size anti-perspirant/deodorant
Disposable razors
Rain ponchos
Disposable hand warmers
Small LED flashlights with batteries
Winter cap/skull caps/beanie hats
Thermal underwear

Women's Hanes or Fruit
of the Loom underwear,
sizes 4-12
Sports bras, all sizes
Women's long-sleeve
shirts for layering
Warm gloves

[Call Lois Young at 870-559-2228 for more information.]

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Jesus said, "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

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### SCENE 2

The Monday after Thanksgiving, the single mother called the Trinity office to say, "Thank you!" She shared that the children were so excited to have a holiday meal that she had no words that would express their happiness. A week later, that mother of six called me again. MLGW had turned off the gas, so they had no heat. It wasn't due to non-payment, but rather due to substandard and unsafe equipment. The temperature was in the low 30's, and just as cold in the house as it was outside. The landlord said he couldn't get to the needed repairs for at least a week. I called the Department of Human Services' Family Assistance Service Center. (I was on hold for 37 minutes.) Once I finally spoke to a worker, she was quick to make suggestions. One involved moving the family to emergency housing. The single mom quickly went to the recommended housing office, but was told there was a six month waiting list.

Meanwhile, for some reason (answered prayer?), the landlord decided to move faster, loaned the family an electric heater for the night, and dispatched a work crew the next morning. Next, we learned that the water heater was defunct. The landlord replaced it. Within two days, the crisis had been averted. The house was warm, and there was hot water. The family is still poor. Trinity folks chipped in to give them lots of food for Thanksgiving, as well as a few small appliances. They've been "adopted" by the Nowlin Class for Christmas. We helped Mom apply for legal aid. So why does it still seem so hard? Why are the needs of this one family so huge and seemingly impossible to meet?

Jesus warned us that the poor would be with us always. He also said that whenever we help someone in need, we are giving that love and care to Him. So what now? The answer seems obvious: We must do what we can and trust that God will increase that gift in some way that this family's needs are met, not lavishly, perhaps, but adequately. A former colleague of mine used to sign off on her e-mails with "Wishing you enough" instead of "Sincerely," or "Grace and peace," as I am wont to do. My heartfelt desire for this family is that they will have "enough," whatever that may be. God knows. I certainly don't.

# Memorials & Honorariums

## **Memorials have been received:**

*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from Jan & Lois Young*  
*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from Eddie & Sally Ramsey*  
*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from Elaine Amis*  
*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from Cile & Flip Brooks*  
*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from an anonymous donor*  
*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from Mark & Pat Smith*  
*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from Margaret Spain*  
*In memory of **Louise P. McCarty** from Jesse Nowlin Class*  
*In memory of **Frances Skinner** from Fellowship Class*  
*In memory of **Frances Skinner** from Ann Skinner*  
*In memory of **Frances Skinner** from Mike & Rosemary Potter*  
*In memory of **Virginia Blanton** from Jim & Charlene Ricks*

## **Honorariums have been received:**

*In honor of **Shirley Flint** from Charles Hopkins*  
*In honor of **Rosemary Potter** on her birthday from  
Margaret Spain*  
*In honor of **Mike & Rosemary Potter** at Christmas time  
from Margaret Spain*  
*In honor of **Debby Marston** on her birthday from Elaine Amis*  
*In honor of **Carol & Carey Miller** from Catherine Hutchison*  
*In honor of **Connie Potter** from Mike & Rosemary Potter*  
*In honor of **Mike & Rosemary Potter** from Connie Potter*



# CHOIR NEWS: A Music Note



## **The Aftermath**

First - Let me express my appreciation for each and every choir member who worked so diligently to make our “Trinity Christmas Homecoming” a blessed event. We are blessed to have a wonderful choir that is willing to take time out of their schedule each week to practice and to sing in the services. I also appreciate everyone who came and was part of this experience.

Second - I am looking forward to Christmas Eve, especially the evening service in the sanctuary. It is easy to see that I am not a “high church” musician or music director; however, on Christmas Eve I love to play the traditional music on the organ. It is my favorite service of the year. I look forward to playing “Silent Night” while the candles are being lit at the end of the service. “Silent Night” was the first song I learned to play and, as I play it, my mind is flooded with many precious memories.

Third – The aftermath. So much time and work is put into music for the holidays, it can sometimes leave you a little empty when it is over. Sometimes it makes you question, Why all of the effort for one 45 minute service? Here is the answer I found: our music programs are an outreach. It is an opportunity to invite friends and family. Some may attend other churches and some may not. For those who don’t have a church home, this may open that door for them. Music draws people, and it thrills me when I hear someone say they enjoy coming to church in part because of the music. So if music gets them in the door, once they are here, they will feel the love of the congregation and the compassion that comes from our pastor each week. We all want to be loved, and if people feel the love, they will come back for more. So yes, it is worth it, it is well worth the effort.

My Christmas wish to you is that you may be blessed to see the Christ child in the manger in a whole new way!

Blessings,  
John Holtzman  
Music Director  
Trinity UMC