

When Christmas is about the joy of Jesus coming into our world,

why is there so much depression around the holidays? I'm sure we've all wondered that at one point or another and probably when we first couldn't find joy at Christmas for whatever reason.

And all of us have been there, right? If you haven't, consider yourself blessed, because for many of us, the holidays aren't as jolly as we'd like.

And there are a variety of reasons why this year might not be as joy-filled as others. Maybe you lost a loved one this past year (or even 5 or 10 or more years ago) and the pain of their absence is highlighted during this season. Maybe another loss (a job or some dream) has cast a shadow on any joy that may come with the season. Maybe the busyness or chaos of the season has killed any joy that possibly was associated with it. Or maybe it's any number of other reasons. The point is, too often the time of year that should bring us the most joy and fill our hearts with light brings us the opposite.

And so what do we do about it?

I think there are any number of ways we can 'get through' the holidays with some semblance of joy, even if we don't really feel it. And maybe you've found a way to do it. Maybe it's through grinning and bearing it. Maybe it's through distractions and substances. Maybe it's through hibernating away from everyone. Hopefully it's not any of those. But sometimes, it seems, that's the only way to manage.

But what I offer to you is that Christmas shouldn't just be about joy. Sure there is joy tied with the Savior of the World coming to earth as a baby, but that's not all of it. Jesus came more than just to bring us joy. He came to heal and to bring life and light to this world. He came to carry our pain and to

reveal to us that there's a different way to live. And those things should bring us joy, but we also need to accept the reality of our lives.

Which brings me to my point: joy isn't a reaction to our circumstances. Joy is a choice. Even in sadness we can have joy. Even in pain we can find joy. Joy isn't just about being happy or excited all the time. Joy is really something we can find no matter what is happening. But that type of joy only comes through a fruitful relationship with Jesus.

In Galatians 5 we see the fruits of the spirit, those things that result because we know, love and trust God. And joy (along with the others) is the fruit. As Paul writes, 'Rejoice always' (1 Thess 5.16) and the psalmist writes, 'let us rejoice today and be glad' (Ps 118.24). These things suggest that we can find joy no matter what our feelings or our circumstances.

Which brings me back to the original question: how can I find joy in depression or pain or hurt, especially around Christmas? My only answer is Jesus. It is through him that the fruit of joy can bear itself in our lives. But that doesn't mean we do this on our own. On the contrary, I don't believe we can truly find joy, especially in our pain, unless we find others to share it with, talk it over with and to pray with together.

So this Christmas, if you find yourself depressed or overwhelmed, I pray you find a person or two who can help you find joy in the midst of those feelings and who help you connect with Jesus.

Serving Him and you,
Matthew

Blood Drive

Saturday, December 7th from 7am to 10:30am is our next blood drive at the church. If you're interested in donating go to bloodcenterimpact.org and use the code 2092 or contact Matthew.

Service of Hope and Remembrance

On Sunday, **December 8th at 4:00pm**, Shawgo Memorial Home is offering a Service of Hope and Remembrance for our community, especially those who have lost someone this past year. Everyone is encouraged to attend this service to hear the hope that Jesus brings us despite the losses that we face.

Family Night Keepsake Christmas

On **Wednesday, December 18th at 6:00pm**, families are invited to this engaging and interactive program, to hear a dramatic retelling of the Christmas story from cast members onstage. You'll hear from Mary, Joseph, and an angel how the amazing events unfolded on that first Christmas. Plus each child will create his or her very own Keepsake nativity scene to cherish for years to come.

We start with a potluck-style meal followed by our event. This is for the whole family! We hope to see you there!

We can also use several adult helpers to clean up supper quickly, reset tables downstairs as well as be table leaders to help with our craft. If you're available to help, please let Matthew know.

November Financials

	Weekly Actual	Yearly Actual	Yearly Budget
Nov 3	\$1,198.26	\$53,962.51	\$58,576.76
Nov 10	\$823.00	\$54,785.51	\$59,908.05
Nov 17	\$978.20	\$55,763.71	\$61,239.34
Nov 24	\$1,575.50	\$57,339.21	\$62,570.63
Totals	\$4,574.96		

Prayer List

Tina Althiser (Judy B's friend) – cancer spreading
Kelly Lund-Bollinger - surgery
Tammy Bowman – stage 4 kidney failure
Dorcees – stuck in U.S., waiting to return to Haiti
Egleton house fire

Jenny Farr – sudden, severe cancer
Todd Hamm – cancer treatments

Sharon Jones – heart concerns

Lori Rodriguez – stage 4 cirrhosis of liver

Ellen Stevens – upcoming procedure

The Thiner family

Marissa (Letha Stambaugh's friend) – cancer

Hailey (14 y/o friend of Carlocks) – cancer

Pam (Tammy B's sister) – kidney issues

Heidi (Cindy M's nephew's fiance) – growth on stomach, surgery

Praises:

Margaret Miller breathing better

Condolences:

Bernard Heath family

David Mann family

Taylor Rudd family

Mary Ellen Farwell family

Christmas Concert

ACC invites you to a Christmas concert on **Sunday, December 15th at 6:00pm** which will include trios with flute, harp and cello. There will also be guest vocalists singing songs of the season. Performers include Tony Roberts, Jarod Hazzard, Katie McLuckie, Bethany Pothoff, Kosuke Uchikawa and Madeline Wood.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

The Astoria Christian

Vol. 43 No. 12 December 4th, 2019

The Astoria Christian (USPS 352-870) is published monthly by Astoria Christian Church, 219 W. State St, PO Box 677, Astoria, IL 61501. Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, IL.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astoria Christian, PO Box 677, Astoria, IL 61501

You Are Welcome At
Our Services!

Sunday

Morning Worship.....9 a.m.

Sunday School.....10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Family Night.....6:00 p.m.

Events:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Wed, Dec 4 th | 6:00 pm Family Night |
| Sat, Dec 7 th | 7:00 am – 10:30 am
Blood Drive |
| Sun, Dec 8 th | 4:00 pm Service of
Hope and Remembrance at
Shawgo Memorial Home |
| Sun, Dec 8 th | 6:00 pm Board Meeting |
| Wed, Dec 11 th | 6:00 pm Family Night |
| Sun, Dec 15 th | 4:30 pm Youth Meeting |
| Sun, Dec 15 th | 6:00 pm Christmas Concert by Tony Roberts & friends @ ACC |
| Wed, Dec 18 th | 6:00 pm Family Night Potluck & Keepsake Christmas Event |
| Tues, Dec 24 th | 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Service |
| Sun, Dec 29 th | Youth Offering |

