

Pastor Peter's message notes from Dec. 24, 2020

Christmas According to Luke:

The Birth of the Savior

The gospel of Luke provides a vivid story of the birth of Jesus Christ that emphasizes with each detail that no matter who you are, Jesus came into the world for you.

Verse 2:7 tells us about the humble conditions of Jesus birth: **"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."** Luke 2:7

Mary and Joseph were forced to make a ten-day journey close to the time of her delivery. In his book, *The Journey*, pastor Adam Hamilton looks at archeology and Biblical studies to describe how Mary may have given birth in the extra room of a house built into the simple cave dwellings that surround Bethlehem. The room that Jesus was born in may have been used to house animals for the extended family of Joseph. Jesus' first bed was a manger, or a feeding trough for animals.

By including all of these rich details, the author of Luke describes the heart of God. The birth of Jesus is often called the, "incarnation," or the time when the God of creation chose to enter into the world to be with us. God could have chosen to enter the world at any time or any place, but God chose to be born to Mary and Joseph, two teenagers from small towns in a land conquered by the Roman empire. Jesus chose to be born into a family who lived at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum. He chose to be born at a time when the people of Judea were longing for a savior. Luke describes this vivid picture of Jesus birth to help us see that God has a heart for the poor and humble.

The guests whom God invites to witness the birth of the savior are also humble. God sent his angels to shepherds watching their flocks by night to be the first witnesses to the birth of the Christ child. Shepherds were hard-working, solid people. Still, they were not considered to be people of importance. By including the shepherds, the gospel of Luke emphasizes that all people, no matter their profession, income, or how society views them, are welcome in the family of Jesus.

The words we hear from God's messengers, the angels, affirm this: **"Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people."** Luke 2:10-12

When they witnessed the baby Jesus, the shepherds' lives were changed. **"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them."** Luke 2:20

This is the natural flow of the Christian life. Someone invites us to witness the miracle of the Christ child. We learn that God loves us and we rejoice. This Christmas season, we are invited by God to witness and proclaim the good news of Jesus birth. Hallelujah!

Preparing For Worship

Scriptures for the coming week

Monday	Jan. 4: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15
Tuesday	Jan. 5: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28
Wednesday	Jan. 6: Philippians 4:6-9
Thursday	Jan.,7: Psalm 107:1-9
Friday	Jan. 8: Daniel 6:10
Saturday	Jan. 9: 1 Peter 5:7

Upcoming Worship Messages

- Jan. 3: Living That All May Know Jesus: In Your Heart
- Jan. 10 Living That All May Know Jesus: In Your Church
- Jan. 17: Living That All May Know Jesus: In The World

Our Church Family

Prayer concerns from our church family

Aura Tavernner, Judy Murray, Donna Rosiere, Jaccie Blaszczyk, Linda Riddle, Camden Garcia, Peggy Province, Irene Miller, Ann Wilson, Nancy Walters, Michael Smith (Hubert Neth's son-in-law), Jim Hudson, Alice Hanrahan, Waneta Lane, Tilly Agymang's sister-in-law Anastasi in Ghana; Earlene Christie; Genevieve Case's son Mark Case, Michelle Schubert, family members of Thomas Gale--Douglas Gale and Brian Johnson, Doris Grigsby's nephews

Birthdays for the coming week

- Jan. 3: Jack Young, Robert Cooper III
- Jan. 4: Don Riffle, Susan Clark
- Jan. 7: June Mellinger
- Jan. 8: Shirley Hurst
- Jan. 9: Bruce Smith

Position Available

Audio Visual Technology Coordinator

The audio-visual coordinator will recruit and train an audio-visual team to accomplish the church's mission. The audio-visual coordinator will be self-motivated and able to prioritize duties.

He/she will be able to learn and train a team in essential audio-visual technology including the following: worship slide creation and projection, multicamera live-streaming video, and running a soundboard.

Resumes and references can be emailed to contact@umcburg.org or mailed to the church office at 141 East Gay St. Warrensburg, MO 64093

Hannah Hunt Shares Her Gift Of Dance To Bring Joy To Others

-by Evan Holmes

God calls all of us to use the gifts that he has given us to glorify him and grow his kingdom on Earth. One member of the First United Methodist Church using her God-given talent of dancing to help her know Christ and make Christ known is Hannah Hunt.

Hannah, a 16-year-old sophomore at Warrensburg High School, is the daughter of Bryan and Beth Hunt and the sister of Brett Hunt. Hannah has been a member of UMC-Burg since she was born in 2004 and has been baptized and confirmed in the church. She has also been on multiple mission trips with the youth group, and she has also volunteered with Vacation Bible School, Kingdom Kids, and Sunday School.

Hannah not only has a God-given gift for serving with the youth, but she also has a gift for performing in the spotlight on a dance stage.

Hannah has been a dancer at The Center Stage Academy of Performing Arts for the past 12 years. "I take classes in a range of styles," said Hannah, "including ballet, lyrical, tap, jazz, contemporary, hip hop, and musical theatre." In an average week of dance practices, Hannah attends Center Stage Academy five days, puts in 12 hours, and takes seven different dance classes.

Despite the strenuous days and hours of commitment it takes to perform for Center Stage, Hannah still enjoys the joy that being a dancer brings. "I love dance because it's a stress reliever and is soothing. It's my competitive niche and keeps me physically healthy and in shape," explained Hannah.

Recently, Hannah took part in Center Stage's annual performance of the world famous ballet *The Nutcracker*. This year's performance was Hannah's eighth time participating in *The Nutcracker*, and she got the privilege of playing multiple parts. "This year I was cast as Lead Chinese Tea, one of Clara's friends, and I was a part of the snow corps," said Hannah. "We started preparing for *The Nutcracker* towards the end of August, and every weekend after that was spent rehearsing for hours on end. Towards the end of November leading up to the show, though, the rehearsals were happening more frequently so we could feel confident about stepping on to the stage."

But when Hannah feared that she might be exposed to the coronavirus before her *Nutcracker* performances, she decided to switch to online school classes. "For the performance of *The Nutcracker*, I decided it was in my best interest to go virtual for school for a week. If I was ever potentially exposed in my classroom setting at school, I would have been required to quarantine thus missing all of my rehearsals and performances of *The Nutcracker*."

The rehearsals leading up to the show were physically demanding. Hannah explained, "Wearing pointe shoes for hours on end was draining due to the multiple feet blisters, strained calf muscles, and tired limbs. Additionally, there were four shows of *The Nutcracker*, each being an hour and a half long, with two being evening shows and two being matinees filled with roughly 200 dancers." But despite all the challenges Hannah had to endure before she could take the stage, she still takes great joy in dancing for audiences and sharing her God-given gift.

Hannah's commitment to dance has helped in her walk with Jesus Christ as her passion for her faith has been growing from her dance lessons. "Through dance I have learned commitment which has helped me channel that into my faith life with my church attendance being a priority," Hannah explained. "When I entered middle school, I realized I could use my gift of dancing to uplift and encourage people instead of doing this art just for me."

Throughout Hannah's years of dancing, her faith has helped her to understand how God is always with her. Hannah explained, "As I've grown older, I've witnessed some of the negative sides to this competitive world of dance. I've learned to go to God and my family for advice on difficult situations that arise. My fellow dancers and I don't always have the same viewpoints, but I've learned to show more compassion and give grace during these challenging times."

When Hannah was asked what advice she would give to her church family about sharing their God-given gifts, she replied, "Don't waste the gifts that He has given you because you never know what kind of impact you can have on another person."

Just like Hannah Hunt, we've all been given gifts from God, and He wants us to use those gifts to serve His kingdom. So ask yourselves . . . what gifts has God given you? And how can you use those gifts to glorify God on Earth?

