

## Christmas 2015

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*(Philippians 4:4-7)*



# Rejoice

One of the greatest joys of the Christmas season is getting cards and letters from folks we don't usually hear from. These people may be friends or relatives whom we've had a close relationships with in the past,

but with whom we've become separated from due to life circumstances. A dear friend of mine and I parted company 12 years ago as I was sent to a new church and he moved to Wisconsin. And due to our various busy schedules, we don't get to see each other that often. What a joy it is to receive a letter from him at Christmas. I really look forward to hearing from him and what is going on in his world.

It always brightens my day because no matter what the letter says, I am transported back in my mind to the times we were together. He was such a great friend and a positive influence in my life. He was my first mentor in pastoral ministry and he ended up becoming a life long friend. It takes a special person to be able to do that. One who is relational and other-centric from the get-go. He was a person confident in his own skin, yet he never allowed that confidence to make him arrogant. The joy I experienced in his presence I feel today when I have that letter in my hands.

It's truly a special gift when someone takes the time to write to someone they care about. The process of giving and receiving a letter has caring written all over it. First comes the gathering of pen and paper or computer keyboard. Then thoughts come to mind of the person you are writing to and what you want to say. You go about your task of choosing the right words to convey your caring. Then reviewing what you wrote to make sure your thoughts transferred to the text. For the one receiving- the anticipation that comes from hearing from someone you care about. You open the letter or e-mail and read the contents. You take your time and digest each word all the while pondering what it says and what the person means to you. It truly is one of the greatest things we can give to or receive from someone we care about.

I can imagine what the Philippians must have felt when they received this letter from Paul. From the contents of the letter it seems as though Paul really loved them. Within it we find love, compassion, vulnerability and encouragement written all over it. Paul's caring for them is plainly evident. I wonder if they felt the same joy and anticipation I felt when I received my letter from my friend in Wisconsin? Did they, like I feel transported back in their minds to the time when Paul was in ministry with them side by side almost ten years prior? Were they willing to receive the advice and encouragement he had for them to face the challenges he was addressing?

One thing I do know is its truly a gift that this letter has been preserved through the ages that we might read it and ponder anew Paul's words as Advent gives way to Christmas. May we allow the peace of God, which transcends all understanding to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. May that peace arise above the hustle and bustle of this Christmas season. May God's peace settle our hearts and minds despite the anxious times we live in. And may our hearts be thankful, rejoicing in the Lord always.

*Pastor Matt*



**Sunday, December 20 – Cantata (10:45 Service)**



**Thursday, December 24 – Office open 9 – Noon**

**Thursday, December 24 –**

**4:30 PM – Early Christmas Eve Service**

Carols and stories to bring the ancient Christmas story alive in our present context!

**Wednesday, December 24**

**11:00 PM – at Eason Hall**

Noel candlelight service

An Ecumenical gathering of Westfield Youth sharing the story of Christmas  
(Youth from area churches will be participating)



**Friday, December 25 – Office Closed**



**Sunday, December 27 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday worship –  
10AM combined fireside service (Fellowship Hall)**

No Sunday School

**Coffee Fellowship Time:**

Please bring some of your favorite Christmas cookies to share



**Thursday, December 31 – Office open 9 – Noon**

**Friday, January 1 - Office Closed**



**Sunday, January 17 – Budget meeting following 10:45 service**