

INSIDE:

+ Living Nativity

+ New Bible reading plan

ONE

A publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance Jan. 2015



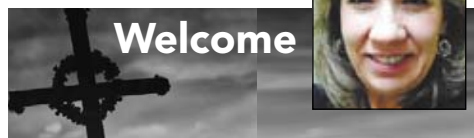
WELCOME

For the past several months, I have been one of the “behind the scenes” proof readers for One. I thoroughly enjoy working with the talented writers that we have, not only at The Hays Daily News, but also with the pastors of Ellis County. I think the pastors particularly are such skillful communicators because they have so many great things to communicate. They write about the “good news” of the Bible of course, but also the good news of what is happening in the churches in Ellis County. That’s all about you and the great job you are doing as the “hands, feet and voice” of Jesus in our communities.

One day, several weeks ago, I was pondering thoughts like these from the One writings and at the same time cooking in my kitchen. I pulled out a Tupperware lid to attach to a bowl of leftovers and as usual, I noticed my last name was written on it. Not that this one particular lid is rare, because it’s not. All of my lids have my name on them because they have all been out of the house for one reason or another, usually for church-related activities.

Just then, the thought went through my

Kathy Dinkel



head, “That’s the sign of a good church.” I don’t know about you, but our church eats together a lot, or the church ladies take food to people’s homes when they have been in the hospital or suffered a loss. The bottom line is, we haul a lot of food. Then another thought struck me: “You know you belong to a good church when ...”

It reminds me of that email forward we all circulated a few years ago, “You know you live in a small town when ...” Those comments still make me chuckle because they are so true. So here’s the plan: I would love to hear the thoughts of the One readers on the topic, “You know you belong to a good church when ...” Send an email to me at dinkelfam@ruraltel.net, mail a note to me at P.O. Box 566 in

Hays, KS 67601, or post a comment on our Facebook Page Liberty Foursquare Church, and I’ll assemble your thoughts in a follow-up article.

Here are some comments I’ve received so far.

You know you belong to a good church when:

- You show up with your small children, exhausted and ready for a break, and you don’t even have to ask for help. Your children disappear into other loving arms, and you have time to connect with other adults, and most importantly, you leave church *rested*.

- You have an emergency and you “feel” the people praying for you, and you pass through the struggle with an unknown strength that keeps you going.

- Christmas pageants are more about the message than the performance.

So, as you can tell, some thoughts might be amusing, but others heartwarming. I would love to hear from you.

Kathy Dinkel is the wife of Pastor Steve Dinkel of Liberty Foursquare Church.

RECIPE

One of my favorite memories from childhood was eating my grandmother’s frozen cherry salad. Every year for as long as I can remember, I would gladly eat my turkey and all the trimmings while anxiously awaiting my favorite treat. I’m not sure what it was about the frozen treat that was my favorite, but every time I eat it and the roof of my mouth gets that familiar coating on it I am transported back to Christmas with my grandparents.

— *Kyle Ermoian, senior pastor at Celebration Community Church*
Frozen Fruit Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 can cherry pie filling
- 1 20-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 8-ounce container of Cool Whip
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Pour into large loaf pan. Place in freezer overnight. When ready to serve, allow to stand in a little bit of hot water for a few moments. Flip upside down on a plate and cut into slices.

Contributed by Ericka Pfeifer, pastor’s assistant at Celebration Community Church.

ON THE COVER



Luth-Terian Youth Group members Brecken Leeds, left, as Joseph and Kelly Parr as Mary perform in the living Nativity on Dec. 13 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hays.

JOLIE GREEN
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SUBMISSIONS

ONE and the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance encourage submission from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to one@dailynews.net.

The ECMA advisory board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication.

The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

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Now's not the time to relax in our faith

Most of the big holidays are over now, and all the many are left with is a tummy ache and financial hang-over. It's time to breathe a sigh of relief, you've made it through the holidays, so take a moment to sit down and relax. It's important we take time to relax and let our bodies recharge after a long period of running to and fro. What we mustn't do, however, is allow ourselves to also relax when it comes to spiritual things.

The temptation many of us face this time of year is to give ourselves "passes" on many of the things we do for God. We skip our time reading our Bibles, we shorten our prayer times, or we start missing church. This is exactly what the enemy wants to have happen.

God has designed us for relationships, and the relationships we have with our Christian brothers and sisters has a sacred standing with God. Paul talks about the church as the body of Christ; each person representing a different part of the body. "The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it

Pastor
Kevin Daniels

**Hays Christian
Church**



is with the body of Christ." — 1 Corinthians 12:12 (NLT).

Without each person present in the community (or body), the body fails to function as it should. "If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?" — 1 Corinthians 12:17 (NLT).

Paul says each part of the body is valuable and necessary. "How strange a body would be if it had only one part. Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, 'I don't need you.' The head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you.' In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least impor-

tant are actually the most necessary." — 1 Corinthians 12:19-22 (NLT).

You see, when one part of the body is missing, we walk with a limp, we can't see as well, and often we misspeak. Your part in your local church is valuable and necessary for the body to function.

You might not believe me. And I understand why. The sad fact of the matter is many churches are not functioning as God has intended. We're not sharing the gospel with people. We're not teaching people how to live. We're not serving the poor. We're not defending the outcast.

And that is precisely why your local church needs *you*.

You can be the catalyst for change. You can be the one to help the rest of the body join in the kingdom work of Christ.

There are a lot of good ideas out there as to how to serve the world as the church

— maybe you have one of them. Maybe it's time for you to step up your game and approach your church leaders with the mission you have had laid upon your heart. Maybe it's time for you to start functioning as a contributing member of your local body of believers.

Church was never meant to be a spectator sport. It was designed to be a time of true worship, togetherness, service and sharing the gospel. Without you, someone is missing.

You matter to your church and you matter to God. Join with them this Sunday and worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Kevin Daniels is pastor at Hays Christian Church located at 22nd and Marshall.

He welcomes comments and questions at kevin@hayschristianchurch.org

HOLY HUMOR

Jock, the painter, often would thin his paint so it would go further. So when the church decided to do some deferred maintenance, Jock was able to put in the low bid and got the job. As always, he thinned his paint way down with turpentine.

One day while he was up on the scaffolding — the job almost finished — he heard a horrendous clap of thunder and the sky opened.

The downpour washed the thinned paint off the church and knocked Jock off his scaffolding and onto the lawn, among the gravestones, amid

puddles of thinned and worthless paint. Jock knew this was a warning from the Almighty, so he got on his knees and cried: "Oh, God! Forgive me! What should I do?" And from the thunder a mighty voice replied: "Repaint! Repaint! And thin no more!"

(Un)fortunately, you can hear more jokes like this — with alarming frequency — at Hays Christian Church, where Kevin Daniels is the pastor.

Share your funnies to kevin@hayschristianchurch.org.

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Prairie pak — \$28 (includes meats, fruits and veggies).

Meat only — \$15 (includes the meat that is in the regular Prairie Pak).

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Meat, fruit and veggie and Specials paks can be purchased with or without the Prairie Pak, giving you more flexibility when ordering; there is

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Order date: 2015 order dates. Order locally and pay with check, cash or EBT food stamps. Or you can order on-line at june@prairielandfood.com and pay with your debit card or check.

Food pick up date: Saturdays, 2015 distribution dates; Hays, The Mall, south hallway, 2918 Vine, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

For more information, call Vickie Rohleder (785) 625-6291 or June Glasgow (800) 998-9436.



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Youth Spotlight

Hays Christian Church



Back row: Monkey Hayden Bracken, Dorothy Kira Denny, Wicked Witch Billie Crawshaw, Scarecrow CJ Denny, Bexel Emily Quinn, Hexel Lisa Quinn; Front row: Citizens of Oz Cadence Warfield and Kylah Warfield, Lion Logan Daniels, Glinda the Good Kamryn Daniels, Wizard's Apprentice Anthony Austin, Tin Man Madison Lisman.

Hays Christian Church presented "Christmas in Oz" in December. A new Wicked Witch was ruling Oz and had banned Christmas. Dorothy was brought back to Oz by Glinda the Good, and with the help of her friends, both old and new, she helped defeat the Wicked Witch and restore Christmas; true Christmas — centered on Jesus.

The play was written and directed by Pastor Kevin Daniels. For additional photos and videos of the program, visit the church's Facebook page, [Facebook.com/hayschristian](https://www.facebook.com/hayschristian).

Photos by Carolyn Smith

Scarecrow (CJ Denny) and Lion (Logan Daniels) discuss plans while in the Emerald Palace.



Glinda the Good (Kamryn Daniels) arrives with Monkey (Hayden Bracken) to thwart the plans of the Wicked Witch (Billie Crawshaw).

New year brings new reading plan to those interested

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. It's time to boot up with our Bible Reading Plan for 2015. My prayer is God will write His Word on your heart this year as you read along. I also want to say a big "thanks" to all of you who have joined me in past years. Your notes, suggestions and requests are always a huge encouragement to me.

For the Old Testament, we will complete the third in a three part reading strategy. This part is called "The Writings." It's an interesting grouping of books. Whereas the previous two groupings were assembled by chronology and audience, the books we will read this year are assembled by genre (type of literature). For instance, Psalms, Lamentations and Song of Songs are categorized together because they are books of collective songs. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job are the books of wisdom, then Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are



Pastor
Steve Dinkel

a sweeping history called temple history, where the tension between acceptable and unacceptable worship sweeps from generation upon generation upon generation. Some generations blessed, some cursed, all according to their choices about God. As in the past, I am using "The Books of the Bible" strategy from the International Bible Society, or "biblica" as they are now called. I would encourage you to use their resources at biblica.org. I am thankful for their ministry.

"The Writings" will begin in one of the most quoted books of the Bible; the book

of Psalms. This book is a collection of lyrics of worship songs gathered through 700 years, from the time of Moses until the rebuilding of the temple. We will be reading a lot more material this year, so you will have to keep the pace. However the materials are not so much that you won't be able to "catch up" during a weekend if you miss a day or two.

For our New Testament readings, we will repeat last year's strategy. The New Testament books are arranged by chronology and audience. We begin with the book of Luke. Many people don't realize but Luke and Acts are two volumes of a single work. The purpose of these books is easy to discern; that God is faithful and is totally trustworthy. Luke and Acts are full of "evidence" that convinces the reader God is who He said He is; our faithful Heavenly Father.

Welcome to the 2015 Bible reading plan, I pray your journey through the Bible

this year will be better than ever. God's blessings on you for this New Year.

January

1.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 1-2.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 1
2.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 3-4.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 2
3 & 4.....	Weekend Review	
5.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 5-6.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 3
6.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 7-8.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 4
7.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 9-10.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 5
8.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 11-12.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 6
9.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 13-14.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 7
10 & 11.....	Weekend Review	
12.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 15-16.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 8
13.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 17-18.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 9
14.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 19-20.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 10
15.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 21-22.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 11
16.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 23-24.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 12
17 & 18.....	Weekend Review	
19.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 25-26.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 13
20.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 27-28.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 14
21.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 29-31.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 15
22.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 32-33.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 16
23.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 34-35.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 17
24 & 25.....	Weekend Review	
26.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 36-37.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 18
27.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 38-39.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 19
28.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 40-41.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 20
29.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 42-44.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 21
30.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Psalms 45-47.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 22
31.....	Weekend Review	



St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church

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Rev. Daryl Olmstead

Rectory: 656-0336

Mass Schedule:

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Sunday at 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM

Daily Mass - Wednesday, and Friday at 7:30 AM

Reconciliation: Saturday at 4:00 PM

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Wednesday Spanish Mass—6:30 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday—8:00 a.m.

Weekend Mass Times:

Saturday—5:00 p.m.

Sunday—8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m.

Sunday Spanish Mass—12:00 p.m.



JOLIE GREEN • one@dailynews.net

The Luth-Terian Youth Group of Hays tells the story of Jesus' birth as a living Nativity on Dec. 13 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hays.

By DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN
one@dailynews.net

Megan Hopp wanted to make a difference in the community when she took over as director of the Luth-Terian Youth Group three years ago.

Now, the dozen or so members of the youth group have folks in Hays looking forward to watching "the true meaning of Christmas come to life" each December.

That's the motto the group chose for the living Nativity it has been portraying for three years on consecutive weekends at their two churches — Trinity Lutheran and First Presbyterian.

And come to life it does as Mary and Joseph walk out to the stable, followed by shepherds, with "Silent Night" wafting through the air and the voice of First Presbyterian member Pat Scott telling the story of the first Christmas.

The Nativity passage also is run simultaneously on a local radio station as people drive through.

O Holy Night

"People like that when it's cold," Hopp said of the radio music. "Otherwise, they get out and walk around and sit and watch."

This is more than just a play to the youth group, which ranges in age from sixth through 12th grades.

The most popular male role is Joseph, and the girls all barter for being the angel.

"I've always been a wiseman, so I told them this year I wanted to be Joseph," said Brecken Leeds, a seventh-grader from First Presbyterian who did indeed play Joseph the

second night this year.

"We all want to be the angel," said Hannah Norris, a sophomore at Hays High School.

That's because the angel has a few perks that go along with the part. "A couple of years ago, they wanted us to figure out how to make the angel fly," Hopp said. "They really have a lot of fun with that one."

Hopp grew up attending First Presbyterian Church in Hays, but there was no youth group. However, she did participate in bible studies while in college at the Univer-

sity of Kansas and saw the value of participating with a group.

When she got a job in interior design in her hometown, Hopp decided to volunteer at her church. Shortly thereafter, she got the chance to lead the youth group.

“I think a youth group is so important,” Hopp said. “It’s important for them to experience all different kinds of service. I wish they would have had one when I was young.”

Well, she has one now.

“I feel so much more involved in the church than when I was younger,” she said.

The living Nativity is just one of numerous activities in which the youth group takes part throughout the year, including putting up Christmas decorations for members of the congregation, shoveling snow and participating in Special Olympics, to name a few.

Making all those activities possible was the combining of youth at Trinity Lutheran and First Presbyterian into one group in 2011.



Luth-Terian Youth Group member Andi Rogowski plays the role of the angel in the living Nativity.

After serving with the youth group as a volunteer the first year, Hopp took over as youth ministry leader when that position opened just a year later.

“When I took over, we started the Nativity,” said Hopp, who got the idea from a family activity at her grandmother’s house one year.

Because the living Nativity is scheduled for two nights, the youth group members get a chance to portray more than one character.

Congregations at Trinity Lutheran and First Presbyterian are no strangers to working together, as they sometimes combine services. But the idea for the combined youth group stemmed from the two congregations holding a day camp together during the summer.

“Expanding our numbers definitely gives us the opportunity to do more things,” Zachary Hopp, Megan’s younger brother, said of the combined youth group.

The Nativity project involves members of all ages from both congregations, whether it be building sets, providing live animals or making cookies and hot chocolate.

“Working ecumenically is central to the gospel,” said Celeste Lasich, pastor of First Presbyterian. “This is a great way to help our young people develop a faith for life that will grow with them, one that isn’t simply centered where they sit on Sunday, but to live as disciples of Christ.”

Hopp said that while goodwill offerings they receive during the living nativity event help fund mission trips for the youth group, it’s not the main reason the youngsters want to keep doing it.

“We don’t do it for the money,” she said. “They really want to share the true meaning of Christmas.”



Trista Warnken, 4, Victoria, pets Ron McDonald’s horse between performances of the living Nativity on Dec. 13 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hays.

A Holy Land Christmas

This year I will have had the opportunity to celebrate two Christmases, events triggered not to accommodate the busy schedules of family members unable to celebrate Christmas together on December 25th. My year of two Christmases, 2014, came about because Orthodox Christians living in the Holy Land celebrate Jesus' birth in early January, a difference brought about by their use of the Julian calendar.

Christmas in the Holy Land began with an early morning January stroll with friends through the limestone-lined streets of Bethlehem, the same town where Joseph and Mary went for a census and returned with a son. Making our way from Christmas Lutheran Church, our home for the week, we headed for Manger Square before the barricades would be set in place to control the throngs of onlookers gathering to watch the city's residents, many of whom were outfitted in colorful costumes, parade through the narrow streets of the



Pastor Jon Brudvig

city as part of their traditional Orthodox Christmas festivities. Walking the streets of Bethlehem as throngs of pilgrims lined the streets to celebrate the Orthodox Christmas, was no easy task – even with the helpful assistance of Palestinian police officers eager to clear a path for visitors from the United States of America. Here, in the midst of noisy and excited onlookers, I was suddenly struck by both the vast numbers of people gathering together in the place of Jesus' birth and the great diversity of pilgrims slowly making their way to Manger Square. "This was indeed a day for celebration," I thought to myself.

Christians from all over the world were gathering at this place, even in the midst of long-simmering animosities and differences between Israelis and Palestinians, to witness to the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Like other pilgrims, we also visited the Church of the Nativity. The church, in existence since 326 AD, bears significance for Christians regardless of denominational affiliation, for it marks the location of Jesus' birth. After visiting the church complex, our tour guide directed us to a prime location on the outskirts of Nativity Square to await the procession of the Patriarch of Bethlehem and other religious leaders. Once the long-awaited procession commenced I could not help but reflect upon the gift of my Holy Land Christmas. A gift of celebration, prayer, and Christian witness spent in the company of Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Christians who came to Bethlehem from parts far and wide. A representative gathering of God's beloved

children from across the globe, people for whom God so loved that "he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). At that moment, near the very place that welcomed the Christ child into our midst long ago, it hit me. Christmas in Bethlehem involved much more than visiting the sacred stones -- the churches, archaeological remains, and places associated with Jesus' life and ministry. No, it was much more than that. Standing in the midst of the crowd that day during the first of my two Christmases I gave thanks for the gift of the living stones — sisters and brothers gathered together on Christmas day, people for whom Jesus Christ became human and died. The living stones, an unexpected Christmas gift, helped me to see and to give thanks for the universality of the one church on earth, Christ's church.

Jon Brudvig is intern pastor at St. John Lutheran Church, Ellis.

Message at the Top: A nightmare dressed as a daydream

The Scripture reading directing Peter to love and Taylor Swift's song "Blank Space" present a picture of opposites. The Scripture reading is the perfect statement of true love, and the song presents a picture of fake love.

In the Scripture passage, Jesus knew that Peter still did not possess a true love of a friend because he had denied Jesus just a few days before. Jesus reminds him that one cannot "toy" with love, that is "fool around" with love.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you



Father Mike Scully

know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

If one says the word "love," it means just that--love. You do not act like it is love or say it is love and not mean it. Jesus tells Peter three times, matching the three times of his denial, that love must be real, not simply a selfish act. Jesus was giving Peter the chance to lessen the personal pain his denial had caused Peter.

Taylor Swift's song is just the opposite. The song is about a girl who is a "nightmare dressed like a daydream," one who is fooling around with love, an action that hurts both her and her boyfriend.

"So, it's gonna be forever, or it's gonna go down in flames. You can tell me

when it's over if the high was worth the pain. They'll tell you I'm insane 'cause you know I love the players and you love the game. 'Cause we're young and we're reckless. We'll take this way too far. Got a long list of ex-lovers. Screaming, crying, perfect storms, I can make all the tables turn, rose garden filled with thorns. Keep you second guessing like 'who is she?' I get drunk on jealousy, but you'll come back each time you leave, 'cause I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream. I've got a blank space, and I'll write your name."

The video for the song expresses the thought perfectly: if you "toy" with the concept of love, you cause pain for everyone involved.

The song presents an excellent opportunity to study any relationship in which we find ourselves, whether a romantic involvement or a relationship between friends. How are we showing the "love" that we profess? Is it a love that will "give to" another, one that is "forgiving" and "caring for" the other? Or is it one that satisfies a selfish desire to please ourselves,

using the other for what we want, one that makes another "second guess" about the love we are showing?

If we use the word "love" to describe a relationship of ours, it can never be fake or put on or selfish; it can only mean true love.

Good and gracious God, love may be the most important topic of our time here on earth because every one of us will love or be loved. May we study the example of your Son to love the way you want, and never harm ourselves or others. Be with us, we pray.

The Gospels in Father Mike's Top 5 (as of Dec. 15)

- 1 — "Blank Space" / Taylor Swift John 21:15-17
- 2 — "Animals" / Maroon 5 Matthew 26:36-39
- 3 — "Habits" / Tove Lo John 18:25-27
- 4 — "Love Me Harder" / Ariana Grande Mark 10:17-22
- 5 — "Jealous" / Nick Jonas Mark 15:6-11

Finding the Epiphany in your life

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage" — Matthew 2

My mom grew up in western Pennsylvania among Serbian and Croatian Eastern Orthodox Christians. She fondly remembers that most of her neighbors did not celebrate Christmas on December 25th like her Scots Presbyterian family, but instead celebrated Epiphany on January 6th, 12 days after Christmas. Epiphany recalls the journey of wise men from the East who travelled to find and pay homage to the baby King. On that day the Orthodox community and their friends would gaily travel from house to house, someone always remaining at home to welcome visitors with festive treats and simple gifts.

Epiphany falls on Jan. 6, the 12th day of the Christmas season. Christmas in the Christian church is a season rather than a day. The English word "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word epiphaneia, which means "appearing" or "revealing." In the long cold darkness of winter, I have come to cherish the illuminating spirit of Epiphany: God's Emmanuel self-revelation in Jesus Christ; the still appearing Light of the world which the darkness has never overcome.

Our family adapted Epiphany as our holiday season time to gather neighbors and friends. "Blessed Epiphany" is the tongue twisting traditional greeting. I had

Celeste Lasich

First
Presbyterian



a lisp when I was little, so that phrase was a real challenge! I can still hear my nieces when they were little practicing intently to pronounce that peculiar word. But once they mastered it, it was delightful to watch them race to be first to greet guests with a chorus of "Blessed Epiphany!" The season of Epiphany, of the God revealing, illuminating Light of Christ continues all the way to Lent. Epiphany is also the perfect excuse to keep festive lights up until just before Ash Wednesday. So if you visit and our tree is still up in February – that is our story and we are sticking to it!

Another Epiphany tradition involves "chalking the doors" of homes and churches. Usually the first symbol is the number of the century since Christ's birth. Crosses alternate between the numbers and initials C.M.B. which I remember I was first told was to symbolize the initials of the magi - traditionally been named Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar- and finally the year. I wonder if the use of C.M.B. originated as initials for the phrase Christus mansionem benedicat, which translates as "may Christ bless the house." If so, the tradition was probably carried by travelers who created their own interpretation of the initials. For

the coming Epiphany, the chalk marking would be: 20 + C + M + B + 15. Regardless of the original meaning, seeing the chalk markings above our doors reminds us each time we go out, that even today in Northwest Kansas, we also are journeying to follow Jesus.

In my birth family, as we married and formed families and traditions of our own, Epiphany became our blended and extended family Christmas. The gift of gathering 12 days after the busyness of Christmas eliminated so much stress, even before I became a pastor! Bonus was the after Christmas sales that made our small gifts of tree decorations and stocking stuffers a bargain. The point was never the gifts anyway. The enduring central component of our Epiphany was to gather in a circle

around the darkened dining room table with candles left over from Christmas Eve. Starting with the most senior person present, the candles were lit clockwise with each offering a prayer of gratitude for the last year and a brief prayer of blessing for the person whose candle was being lit. Gratitude, prayers and blessings continue until the Light of Christ encircles and illuminates the room, our hearts and our lives. This year we won't be at the family home, but I am so aware of the wonder and gift of this time. What are you grateful for? Who can you bless with your prayers and hospitality? In this season, may you see and follow the guiding Light of Christ- wherever it leads. Blessed Epiphany!

The Rev Celeste Lasich is pastor at First Presbyterian Church

FAITH BRIEFS

• Celebrate the birth of Jesus on Jan. 4 at the bilingual Three Kings Day service and toy-giveaway at 3 p.m. Contact Lory Herrick to reserve your child's toy at First Baptist Church, Hays.

• On Jan. 6 around the world Hispanics are celebrating Dia de Reyes. The day that we remember Christ's birth. The Wise men (Three Kings Day) visit baby Jesus and bring Him gifts. Kids learn that the best gift we can give Jesus, is our hearts. That morning the Three kings also bring gifts to kids all over the world and the kids leave grass and water for their camels. Whichever traditions the world celebrates, may Jesus Christ be the center of it! Matthew 2:11 NKJV "And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother and fell down and worshipped him ..." Let's worship the Lord our God all the rest of our lives, because He is worthy to be praise!

Rohrberg saying goodbye to Messiah Lutheran

By **DIANE GASPER-O'BRIEN**
dobrien@dailynews.net

Kenton Rohrberg had second thoughts about turning down a call back in the late 1990s to serve as pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church.

Is he ever glad he changed his mind! And the Hays community feels the same way.

Rohrberg spent nearly 16 years as pastor at Messiah Lutheran before retiring in late October.

"I had buyer's remorse, so to speak," Rohrberg said of the decision to tell the parish life committee of the Hays church "no" in 1999. "You know, when you're sad you didn't buy that car but it usually goes away in a couple of weeks?"

"Well, reticence from not accepting the call did not go away. So six weeks later, I called them back up and said, 'If you're still looking and want me to serve, I would accept the call.'"

As it was, Messiah Lutheran still was looking and was happy to accept Rohrberg's offer.

Now, the parish life committee is looking

again, and that pastor will have some big shoes to fill.

"He has a very caring, nurturing heart, and his heart for outreach was huge," Jana Horsfall, chairperson of the parish life committee, said of Rohrberg. "He was constantly encouraging us to look outward instead of inward."

From various programs for local school children to funding water wells in foreign countries, from beginning a ministry for Chinese students at Fort Hays State University to starting a school in Uganda, Rohrberg and his flock were constantly helping others.

As Messiah Lutheran members prepared for Christmas 2014 without a pastor, they drew on what it learned from Rohrberg.

"He showed the congregation how you could share your faith to others without being pushy," Horsfall said.

"Oftentimes churches get consumed with their own programs and serve those who come in the door," Rohrberg said. "I thought it was time to get the church out of the building and into the streets. Jesus

never spent his time in the temple. He was out in the fields and the market place and the mountains teaching."

Horsfall said that also describes Rohrberg's philosophy to a T.

"He was a great teacher," she said. "And he was a great preacher. He brought in a lot of personal stories, talked a lot of how he would share his life in public."

Matt Brooks, another member of the parish life committee, thinks it will be a smooth transition with the new pastor, because of what Rohrberg taught the congregation.

"You need to grow," said Brooks, who came to Hays in 1979 when his dad, Tom, became pastor at Messiah Lutheran.

"We're going to miss (Rohrberg) tremendously. But he was a huge leader with our church growth, and we know this gives another opportunity to meet another pastor — and continue to grow with him."

Rohrberg said he had two calls to serve churches in other towns during his time in Hays, but he turned both down.

"I liked Hays, liked the work we were doing mainly," he said. "I liked the attitude

of the congregation to stretch and grow and reach out in the community."

"And," he added, "one of the things I've liked about the Hays community is the cooperation among churches and their ability to work together. There's always been a good sense of cooperation and respect among the churches and clergies."

Now, Rohrberg said his retirement is bittersweet.

He is trying to get used to the idea of not dealing daily with church members.

"That's been a difficult thing, losing the relationships that we made over the years," he said.

He and his wife, Eileen, plan to move to eastern Kansas after the first year to be near a large airport. Two of their children and their families live in Wichita and the other in Michigan.

For the immediate future, Rohrberg said he was looking forward to spending the holidays with family in another city, something he hadn't been able to do for 40 years.

"We'll miss him," Horsfall said. "We already do. But I'm happy for him. He deserves to take a break."

THIS IS YOUR SIGN



A message on the marquee at New Life Center Assembly of God Church in Hays lights up the church grounds the week before Christmas. Wanda Gipson, a member of the congregation for more than 35 years, chooses the inspirational messages. Gipson, who changes the marquee every two weeks, said she arrives at her decision what to display by several means — Facebook, Christian quotes from online, suggestions from Pastor Sabian Chaney or other church members.



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First Presbyterian Church
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Pastor Jerry Sprock
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 Nursery Available
 Iglesia Hispana Bautista
 Pastora Lory Herrick
 Sunday Domingos 2:00 p.m.
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 Nursery Available
 12th & Fort 625-9454



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 Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
 Worship Service: 10:45 a.m.
 Nursery
 Children's Church Provided
 For additional
 services and information
 call the church or 625-0094
 22nd & Marshall 625-3100
www.hayschristianchurch.org

THE BASILICA OF ST. FIDELIS, VICTORIA

Saturday Mass: 5:00 p.m.
 Sunday Mass: 10:00 a.m.
 Eucharistic Adoration
 Thursdays:
 7:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
In St. Fidelis Church behind the main altar
 St. Ann, Walker
 Sat. Mass: 6:30 p.m. Nov thru April
 Sun. Mass: 7:30 a.m. May thru Oct.
 St. Boniface, Vincent
 Sun. Mass: 8:45 a.m.
 Fr. John Schmeidler
 735-2777
fidelis@ruraltel.net
www.stfidelischurch.com

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA)

Intern Jon Brudvig
 Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.
 Sunday Worship with Holy
 Communion: 10:30 a.m.
 394 St. John-St. Andrew Rd.
 Get off the Ellis exit on I-70,
 and go six miles North
 on the paved road
 726-3207

WESTVIEW CHURCH

Pastor Wes Oakley, D. Min.
 Assoc. Pastor Tim Nunnery
 Assoc. Pastor Brandon Prough
 Assoc. Pastor Jeremy McGuire
 Sunday Adult & Children's Church
 10:30 a.m.
 Tues. R3 Live College, 8:30 p.m.
 Wed. R3 Youth, 7:00 p.m.
 Wed. Elevate Kids & Midweek Adult
 Service, 7:00 p.m.
 3000 W. 41st St 785-625-6359
www.westviewchurch.tv

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH (LCMS)

Traditional Worship: 8:30 a.m.
 Study Hour: 9:45 a.m.
 Contemporary Worship: 11:00 a.m.
 (Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays)
 Lutheran Hour: Sunday 7:30 a.m.
 KHAZ FM 99.5
 e-mail: messiahsec@ruraltel.net
 2000 Main 625-2057
www.messiahlutheranhays.com

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Jerre Nolte, Senior Pastor
 Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
 Sunday Service: 8:30 & 10:45 a.m.
 10:45 a.m. Service Broadcast
 on KAYS 1400 AM
 Wed. Afternoon Kid's Club:
 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.
 Wednesday Service: 5:00 p.m.
 (Light Supper & Informal Worship)
 305 W. 7th 625-3408

ST. MICHAEL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Pastor Harvey Hillem
 Sunday Holy Eucharist
 9:30 a.m.
 2900 Canal Blvd. 628-8442
stmichaelsays@gmail.com

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 Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.
 Sunday Adult Bible Study
 6:00 p.m.
 Sunday King's Kids 6:00 p.m.
 Wed. Devotion/Prayer 7:00 p.m.
 29th & Indian Trail 625-9500
www.hayscornerstonesbc.com

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA)

Interim Pastor John Kreidler
 2703 Fort St. 785-625-2044
 Sunday 10:15 a.m.
 (Holy Communion
 is Celebrated Every Sunday)
 Fellowship Following Worship
www.trinityhays.org
tchays@eaglecom.net

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Celeste Lasich
 Nursery available
 Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.
 Adult Study Group: 11 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour: 11 a.m.
 Youth Group Sun. evenings
www.haysfpc.org
pastorceleste@ruraltel.net
 2900 Hall 625-2847

NORTH OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pastor Ken Ediger
 Associate Pastor John Wiker
 Youth Pastor Jeff Neher
 Worship Service:
 8:30 a.m. & 11 a.m.
 Sunday School: 9:50 a.m.
 Nursery &
 Children's Church Available
 Wed. K-12 programs
 3000 Oak 785-628-8887
www.northoak.net