

- 6 He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds,
which cannot be passed.
- 7 Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
8 fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!
9 Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!
10 Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!
11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!
12 Young men and women alike, old and young together!
- 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his glory
is above earth and heaven.
- 14 He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.

All: **Praise the LORD!**

THE SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

THE VOICED PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Men: You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised.

Women: *You welcome us when no one else has a place for us. Your gifts reach us amid life's deepest shadows.*

Men: Your light shows us new paths.

Women: *Your will is for us to love you and serve others.*

All: **But too often our voices do not join to sing praise with the angels;
our feet are not quick to run with the shepherds.**

Pastor: Judge of all people, we confess that we have often chosen the
darkness instead of your light. We have worn the boots of trampling
warriors, pursuing national idols instead of peace for all. Our religion
has been tainted with worldly passions, ignoring the greater good of
your kingdom.

All: **We confess our sins, O God. Hear us and heal us. Lift our
burdens and help us to be your agents to establish justice and
bind up the broken-hearted. Forgive us, O God, and help us to
walk more often in your light. Amen.**

THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Pastor: Hear what the apostle Paul writes concerning the assurance we have in
Christ: "May the God of peace... sanctify you wholly; and may your
spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and will do
it." Friends, hear and believe the Good News of the gospel:

People: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH *from "A Declaration of Faith" PC(USA), 1977*
Chapter Four: God In Christ

God sent the promised Deliverer to his people.

**Jesus, the long expected Savior,
came into the world as a child,
descended from David,
conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of Mary, a virgin.**

He lived as a Jew among Jews.

**He announced to his people
the coming of God's kingdom of justice and peace on earth.**

**We affirm that Jesus was born of woman
as is every child,
yet born of God's power
as was no other child.**

**In the person and work of Jesus,
God himself and a human life
are united but not confused,
distinguished but not separated.**

**The coming of Jesus was itself
the coming of God's promised rule.
Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection,
He brings about the relationship between God and humanity
that God always intended.**

*THE PASSING OF THE PEACE & THE NOISY OFFERING

THE CHILDREN'S SERMON

THE HYMN 40 *Joy To The World* ANTIOCH

THE FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 52:7-9 *(Pew Bible p. 648)*

SPECIAL MUSIC *Rose of Bethlehem* Lowell Alexander
Logan and Suzie Olszewski, Vocalists

THE SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON Colossians 3:12-17 *(Pew Bible p. 189)*

THE HYMN 23 *Angels We Have Heard on High* GLORIA

THE THIRD SCRIPTURE LESSON 1 John 4:7-16 *(Pew Bible p. 223)*

THE HYMN 44 *O Little Town of Bethlehem* ST. LOUIS

A SAMPLING OF CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS & LEGENDS

GREETINGS TO ALL this day who have come to worship. We want to get to know you, especially if you are a visitor!

Please introduce yourself to others sitting nearby during the passing of the peace. Following the worship, everyone is invited to share a time of coffee, tea and fellowship downstairs in the Assembly Room. (exit at the rear of the sanctuary, go down the stairs and past the Library to the entrance near the Sallman painting of Christ knocking at the door.)

THE POINSETTIAS in the Sanctuary are given by members and friends in honor or in memory of Loved Ones. An addition to the list of donors: *Grace Sechler* in memory of Loved Ones. If you have given a poinsettia and wish to take it home, please select one today following worship and enjoy it this Christmas season! Thank you for sharing!

OUR MUSICAL GUESTS - Logan Olszewski is a freshman at Butler Intermediate High School and her mother, Suzie, teaches English at Mars Area High School. Both are active in community musical theater as well as singing at church. Logan sang here at Covenant in July of 2007.

THE COVENANT CHOIR will resume rehearsal this Thursday, January 3rd at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary.

YOU WERE GREETED TODAY by Donna Hobaugh.

THE USHERS: Nancy and David Blewett

THE ASSEMBLY ROOM FLOWERS are given by Nancy Jo Moorhead in honor of her Family Tradition of the Celebration of the 12 Days of Christmastide and in honor of Covenant Church for the service they provide for the Butler community.

FELLOWSHIP HOUR IN THE ENGLISH TRADITION - Nancy Jo Moorhead is hosting today's Fellowship Hour which immediately follows this worship service directly downstairs in the Assembly Room. Everyone is cordially invited to attend. Serving special traditional "goodies" to church, family and friends is part of Christmastide in the English tradition—still practiced by Nancy's relatives in England. Nancy is sharing this personal part of her childhood memories with her "cherished friends of the church"—her GIFT to the people of Covenant for all they have done for her.

THE CHURCH OFFICE will be closed this Tuesday, January 1st in observance of New Year's Day.

THE OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2008 - For those who choose to utilize them, offering envelopes are available in the narthex—arranged alphabetically. Please pick up your envelopes before or after this morning's worship service. If you do not see your name or wish to begin using envelopes, please call the church office at 724-287-7731.

SEEKERS CLASS FOR 2008 - The Seekers Class meets each Sunday morning at 9:45 a.m. in the Assembly Room. Coffee, tea and a snack are available before class. Leading off the new year in a four-part series which begins next Sunday, January 6th, is The Reverend Dr. William A. Jamieson. Reverend Jamieson will do a presentation on *The Lord's Prayer*.

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER will be celebrated next Sunday, January 6th, the Epiphany of Our Lord, during the 11 a.m. worship service.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

- Fellowship & Outreach - Sunday, January 13th following the morning worship service (Connell Room)
- Session Meeting - Tuesday, January 15 at 7 pm (Assembly Room)
- Note: NO Administration & Stewardship Meeting in January
- Annual Corporation Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 3rd following the morning worship service.

Covenant Cupboard:

January - spaghetti or spaghetti sauce

*Baskets for your donations are located in the front hallway.
Monetary donations are always appreciated and needed.*



Please make checks payable to Covenant Cupboard.

In The Life of Our Church

Prayer Concerns:

- Bill Wilson At St. John's Specialty Care Center in Mars, PA
Rogelio Guimong Shari Swanson's father in Manila, Philippines
Bob and Joan Moore In the nursing home (Concordia at Rebecca)
Mary Elizabeth Goehring In the nursing home (Concordia)
Julie and Bud Bruno For improved strength and health (at home)

Birthdays: Pastor James E. Swanson - January 3

LENT BEGINS EARLY FEBRUARY 2008

Tuesday, February 5th, 2008

Shrove Tuesday

Traditional Pancake Supper & Silent Auction

Wednesday, February 6th, 2008

Ash Wednesday

God's Mercy Remembered

I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord,
the praiseworthy acts of the Lord,
because of all that the Lord has done for us,
and the great favor to the house of Israel
that he has shown them according to his mercy,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely";
and he became their savior in all their distress.
It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

-- Isaiah 62:7-9

"He's making a list, checking it twice, gonna find out who's naughty or nice. Santa Claus is coming to town!" Millions of parents have reminded younger children as Christmas approached that Santa was going to deliver presents to all the good little boys and girls on Christmas Eve, but those who were naughty could expect nothing but coal in their stockings. Even children who were beginning to doubt the stories about Santa Claus figured it didn't pay to take any chances as Christmas approached. Among other things, traditions about the jolly old elf are ways to encourage good behavior as the excitement of Christmas grows, as school lets out, and as holiday festivities begin.

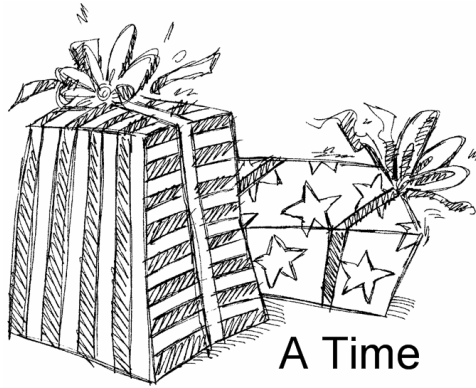
The historical setting for today's reading from Isaiah is probably the period of the Jewish exile in Babylonia. The prophet reminds the people of God's grace to his people, particularly during their sojourn in the wilderness prior to entering the promised land. The grace was offered freely, but God expected proper behavior in return. "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely," God says. Unfortunately, the people *did* deal falsely, abandoning God's way to pursue their own selfish paths. We are that people's spiritual descendants. Just as our ancestors in the faith forsook God from time to time, despite God's acts of deliverance in their lives, so do we abandon God when we begin to feel content, self-reliant, or just plain selfish.

If we are not doing all that God expects of us, does that mean that God put a lump of coal in our stockings this Christmas? The season of Christmas reminds us that God loves us in spite of our shortcomings. God loves us despite our failure to follow God's will to the fullest. God loves us so much, in fact, that God became flesh, a mysterious, unimaginable act that we Christians cannot comprehend but which forms the centerpiece of our faith. When we recall the gracious deeds of the Lord this Christmas season, we might think about the gift of our families, our friends, our homes, our careers, or any of a multitude of other blessings, but the one gracious deed that surpasses all the others is the gift of a baby in a manger, the Incarnate Word, God with us. It is his birth that we celebrate at the turn of the year, and it is his special relationship with God the Father that remains the greatest gift the world has ever known.

From: "Exegesis of Word and World," Tod O.L. Mundo,
Progressive Theology Weblog, 2004

December 30, 2007
First Sunday after Christmas Day

A Service of Legends & Carols



**A Time
for Giving**

The Reverend Dr. James E. Swanson

Home Phone: 724.752.8383

Church Office: 724.287.7731

Website: <http://covenantbutler.org>



Guess the Christmas Carol !

1. Far Off in A Feeder

2. Approach! Loyal Followers

3. Nocturnal Noiselessness

4. Arrival Time: 2400 hours Weather: Cloudless

5. Oh, Righteous Darkness

6. Array The Corridors with Sprigs of Greenery

7. Delight For This Planet

8. Query Regarding Identity of Descendent

9. Give Attention to the Melodious Celestial Beings

10. Monarchial Triad

11. Proceed and Enlighten on the Pinnacle

12. Frozen Precipitation Commence!

13. Bleached Yule

14. Red Man Is Enroute to the Borough

15. The Quadruped With The Vermillion Proboscis

16. Singular Yearning for the Twin Anterior Incisors

17. The Bantam Male Percussionist

18. The Christmas Preceding All Others

19. Small Municipality in Judea, Southeast of Jerusalem

20. Seraphim We Aurally Detected In The Stratosphere

ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Away In A Manger | 17. The Little Drummer Boy |
| 2. O Come, All Ye Faithful | 18. The First Noel |
| 3. Silent Night | 19. O Little Town of Bethlehem |
| 4. It Came Upon A Midnight Clear | 20. Angels We Have Heard on High |
| 5. O Holy Night | |
| 6. Deck The Halls | |
| 7. Joy To The World | |
| 8. What Child Is This? | |
| 9. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing | |
| 10. We Three Kings | |
| 11. Go Tell It On The Mountain | |
| 12. Let It Snow! | |
| 13. White Christmas | |
| 14. Santa Claus Is Coming To Town | |
| 15. Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer | |
| 16. All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth | |