

JOURNEY NEWS

A publication of Journey Church of Clinton, Iowa

PICTURE PERFECT

BY SENIOR PASTOR TOM LOYOLA

Well, Christmas is coming.

The commentators at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade proclaimed that the arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus on the last float of the parade officially began the holiday season. Christmas, by which I mean the present-day American holiday, carries many memories and different meanings from person to person. Families celebrate the holiday in a variety of ways. In your mind, what would be the picture perfect Christmas?

For me, it would include my wife and children. Now that Sue Ann and I are "empty nesters," having the children at Christmas is not a given. I think back a number of years ago to when our children were younger and we would go celebrate Christmas with Sue Ann's family. Everyone would convene at Grandma's and Grandpa's—Sue Ann's siblings, their spouses, and children ... thirteen of us. On Christmas morning, we all gathered around the tree, read the Christmas story from the Bible, and opened gifts. We didn't hurry the opening of presents, so it lasted for a pretty good while. We tried to pay attention to each gift opened and "ooh" and "ahh" accordingly.

After the last present was opened, we might play for a little while with one or another of the gifts, but pretty soon it was time for the Christmas meal.

We had to join a couple of tables to get everyone together. Once everyone was settled, we prayed and enjoyed the feast Grandma and others had prepared.

It was a traditional meal: turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing (or, dressing, whichever is your term), sweet potato casserole, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce ... and, of course, gravy. The more, the better. Those were good times!

Does your "picture perfect" Christmas look similar to that, or is it different?

And do you think your Christmas this year will be picture perfect? Possibly, for some, but not likely for others.

Things change over time, loved ones pass away, and what may have been treasured in the past will never be recaptured exactly as it was. Perhaps for you, your picture perfect Christmas is not something you have ever experienced, but is more of a dream, a wished-for special day ... a longed-for reality.

A longed-for reality. Indeed, that is what Jesus came to bring about ... life as God intended it, unmarred by sin and sin's corrosive destruction ... the kingdom of God. And this first coming of Jesus, His birth some 2000 years ago is, of course, the real "Christmas."

If we had been in Bethlehem the night Jesus was born, watching as observers, I doubt we would have described the scenario as "picture perfect." Mary and Joseph were not at home in their own town of Nazareth. No, they had been displaced by a decree of Caesar Augustus ... for government red tape! After traveling to Bethlehem to register for taxes, Mary was in labor.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

December

- 1 Communion
- 7 Lyons Christmas Walk
- 8 Send-Off for the Johnsons
- 14 Children's Christmas Program
- 15 Students Christmas Party
- 24 Christmas Eve Service

25 *Merry Christmas*

Office & Church Closed

January Snapshot

- 1 Happy New Year's!
Office & Church Closed
- 12 Journey With Us
- 22 Gear Up!
- 25 Tom's 15th Anniversary Party
- 31 Trivia & Pie Night

For a day-to-day calendar go to
JourneyClinton.org/calendar

PICTURE PERFECT continued

BY SENIOR PASTOR TOM LOYOLA

There was no room for them in the inn. Can you imagine the situation? ... traveling on foot or by donkey, being in labor, and finding no hotel room (of course, in our day, we would be looking for the emergency room!). Not ideal.

Add to that the fact that the One being born was the eternal God, now God in the flesh. He was the Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. You would think His birth should have been marked by splendor and beauty, certainly something along the line of picture perfect.

No, our Savior humbled Himself. He took on human flesh and adopted the position of a servant. As the Servant, He lowered Himself to the point of death by crucifixion, death in our place to accomplish salvation, forgiveness, and restoration to God. In fact, the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus will eventuate in the complete overthrow of all sin and evil in the universe! The work of Christ will make possible the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.

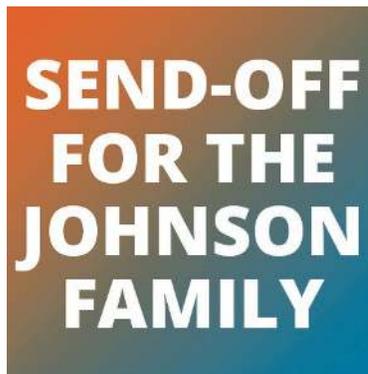
That, friends, is the longed-for reality planted deep in each human heart. We long for the kingdom of God, that picture-perfect world in which grief, pain, and sin have no part. Joy, love, and peace instead! And that is the future reality for each person who believes in the Lord Jesus!

Jesus's less than picture perfect entry into the world will one day bring about the ultimate picture perfect reality. Merry Christmas!

M&Ms-50's & Up

December 19 • 11:30 am
Fellowship Hall

Hi Seniors: 49 and over! Don't forget to come and enjoy good food and fellowship at our next potluck lunch meeting on December 19!



December 8 • After service
Fellowship Hall

There will be a send-off lunch for Nate, Christine, Rebekah, and Ellie Johnson on December 8. Come join us for a time of fellowship and connection as we send them off!

Dear Church Family,

At this Christmastime, we find ourselves again grateful to the Lord for you. We count it a privilege and a joy to be part of the Journey Church family! As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, may your hearts be warmed with a fresh realization of the greatness of the Father's great love for us, that He would send His Son into this sin-sick world to bring grace and truth. We trust yours will be a truly blessed Christmas and New Year!

With love, Pastor Tom & Sue Ann

MEN of **HONOR** AND JOURNEY CHURCH ELDERS PRESENT

GEAR UP!

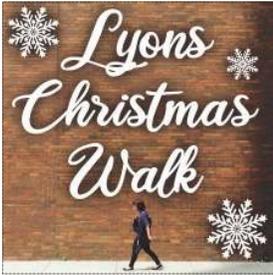


Calling all men, high school age and older! Men of Honor and the Elder Board are partnering to offer this unique opportunity for you to enjoy a meal with other men and to be encouraged and equipped.

- **What:** growth opportunity for all men
- **When:** every fifth Wednesday 6:00-8:00 pm: January 22, February 26, April 1, May 6, and June 10 ([also on the church calendar online](#))
- **Where:** Youth Room (Room Y—upstairs in the CE wing; access from the gym)
- **Why:** to be strengthened to lead where God has placed you

Where does God have you right now in life? Well, that's where He wants to use you, where He wants you to be His man! Put the Gear Up! dates in your calendar, sign up at the **toolbox in January**, and get ready to grow!

CHRISTMAS SEASON EVENTS



Lyons Christmas Walk
Saturday, December 7 • 4:00-6:00 pm
 Join us for this outreach opportunity to engage our community! We still need people to serve in 30 minute blocks. Make plans to join us there!



Children's Christmas Program
Saturday, December 14 • 6:30-8:00 pm
 Plan to join us as the children present "Building Christmas," a play incorporating some familiar Christmas carols while presenting the Good News of what Jesus' birth really means for us! Invite a friend to join you!



Journey Students Christmas Party
Sunday, December 15 • 6:00-8:00 pm
 We'll have lots of delicious treats, a White Elephant Gift Exchange, and several other Christmas-type games. Students are encouraged to wear crazy Christmas attire. [Need more info? Contact Nate >>](#)



Hightower Place Gift Drive
Through December 22
Drop off: blue tub by the Main Office
 Help bless the residents of Hightower Place with these items for children and women: Winter coats, scarves, gloves/mittens, socks, and (new) twin bed sheets. Contact [Annette E.](#) or [Joanne T.](#) for more information.



Thanks to all the people who donated to Awana's Shoebox night. Thirty-four boxes were prepared and another 5 were supplemented from left over materials. Reminder: Awana finishes 2019 on December 18 and will start again on January 8, 2020.



CELEBRATE OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Happy Birthday!

- 1 Brian Decker
- 2 Kaitie Martin
- Laura Norman
- 5 Anna Traverse
- 7 Judy Portz
- Kyler Lower
- 8 Jon Balk
- 11 Casey Overberg
- 12 Ruth Foley
- 14 Tiffany Prince
- 15 Ken Okland
- 16 Sue Ann Loyola
- 17 Laikynn Jo Gordon
- 18 Janet Ketelsen
- 20 Joyce Wiersema
- 21 Larry Cornelius
- 23 Joyce Duey
- 25 Cindy Nelson
- Rick Wilke
- Shirley Carpenter
- Tammy Bandixon
- 26 Kristin Brown
- Wayne Gordon
- 27 Maggie Foust
- William Foust
- 28 Rick Frantz
- 29 Lillie Decker

Happy Anniversary!

- 12 Bill & Ann Klahn
- 19 Larry & Linda Cornelius
- 28 A. Dean & Lauran Decker
- 29 David & Martha Harris
- 31 Jeremiah & Jackie Haas

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes FROM THE MISSIONS LEAD TEAM

We don't know if it's possible to thank someone too much, but, nevertheless, the Missions Team once again gives thanks to you for the wonderful response to the Shoebox gifts. There were 143 filled boxes returned, with 34 filled by the Awana kids and their leaders! This was an increase from last year's 126.

10 years ago Samaritan's Purse launched a follow-up discipleship program called The Greatest Journey—a 12-lesson series that equips churches to teach more about the Bible and Jesus. Nearly 9 million children in 124 countries have made decisions for Christ through The Greatest Journey. Please pray that the Lord would draw the child who receives your Shoebox to Himself, for the safe delivery of the boxes, and for those who deliver the boxes.