

I think the first week of a new year

is often one of the hardest to get motivated on. I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that. After the busyness and activities and emotions of December, it feels like we come back down to earth this week. And that makes it really hard to get up in the mornings and keep motivated on what we need to do (the weather often doesn't help). I think that feeling is part of the reason we have New Year's Resolutions and why we give ourselves a day or so before the kids go back to school and we get back to our regular schedule. And it's hard to change a habit and the way we've lived for a long time, but I'm beginning to think that I need a shift in my mentality. Rather than Christmas being built up over a month (or two or more for some of us) and then suddenly ending on December 25th, maybe I need to allow Christmas to build a little later in my heart and mind and allow it to flow later into the New Year. Or, maybe even better, I could allow there to be a more permanent Christmas spirit in my life that doesn't just build up for a month or so but lives in my life consistently.

And, honestly, I don't think that's possible to slow the buildup of Christmas for a few different reasons. If nothing else my kid's anticipation and excitement that builds up to Christmas is contagious and our culture would make it hard to do that anyway.

But even if it builds during December, I do believe I need a little more of the Christmas joy all year round. There was a remake of 'The Santa Clause' on Disney+ this past month where in one particular episode a mother and wife who was passing away from cancer decided to set up Christmas decorations and play Christmas music even though it was the middle of July. And I've not done that, but I understand her mentality. There's something unique about the Christmas

spirit that is different from the rest of the year and, honestly, I want to find more and more of that outside of December.

In fact, I believe the early church leaders who planned and organized the church calendar felt this way, too. And though our tradition doesn't follow the church calendar too closely, I think there can be value in that traditional way of looking at our year and celebrating these liturgical events as they occur.

But even more, I believe Paul wanted us to find ways to have that joy and excitement all year round. In fact, Paul makes it clear that the essence of living for God is about joy: *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."* (Romans 14:17)

And we might consider this joy to be different than the Christmas spirit, but I don't think so. I think the joy we experience at Christmas time and the spirit we experience in that season is the same joy that God wants to provide to us through the Holy Spirit all year long.

And so, how do we go about that? I'm not sure I have clear steps for us to take, but I know it starts with the way we relate and connect with God and the Spirit he provides to us. And, as Paul writes, it's not about getting caught up in this world (like eating and drinking) but being caught up in God's kingdom and the work he desires for us.

And so, I pray you'll join me this year to work at finding joy in each and every day we are given. To focus on the joy of God's Kingdom and his Spirit and to live a life of joyfulness that comes from the Good News of Jesus.

Serving Him and you,
Matthew

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, January 15th** following our church service.

This is a time to vote for board members and consider other business of the church. Please bring any items needing discussion to Steve Trone to be put on the agenda.

Family Night

We will take January 4th off and resume regularly scheduled Family Night on Wednesday, January 11th at 6pm. If you haven't joined us or brought your kids or grandkids, it is worth checking out!

Ladies' Fellowship

Ladies fellowship will meet again on **Thursday, January 19th at 6:00pm** for all ladies' interesting in attending. We appreciate all they did this past month and look forward to their fellowship and work to continue.

Worship and Prayer

The Ministerial Alliance will resume our monthly worship and prayer nights on the **last Sunday of every month**. We will continue to meet at our church and encourage everyone to come and check it out.

Thank You

The Thiner family offers you a big THANK YOU for the Christmas gifts and the time away to be with family. We are truly blessed.

Prayer List

Dorothy Cleavinger – health issues
Bill Danner – continued healing
Jody Dean – treatments
Dennis Duckwiler - health
Mike Grater – cancer
Gary Hulett – heart failure
Danny Jones – new treatment
Rita Jones – nursing home
Sue Lindsey – nursing home
Bob Mummert – kidney issues
Clyde Prater-cancer, experimental treatments
Carol Riley - cancer
Lori Rodriguez – stage 4 cirrhosis of liver
Gale Roosa – cancer
Becky Watson – cancer treatments
Diane Walters – procedure on Jan 4th
Condolences:
Glenna Perry family
Garrett Collins family
Stephanie McCombs family
Sharon Ratcliff family

December Financials

Date	Weekly Actual	Yearly Actual	Yearly Budget
Dec 4 th	\$621.00	\$47,806.62	\$49,989.31
Dec 11 th	\$752.05	\$48,558.67	\$51,009.50
Dec 18 th	\$1,197.00	\$49,755.67	\$52,029.69
Dec 25 th	\$507.70	\$50,263.37	\$53,049.88

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You Are Welcome At
Our Services!

Sunday

Morning Worship.....9 a.m.

Sunday School.....10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Family Night.....6:00 p.m.

Events:

Wed, Jan. 11th, 18th & 25th-Family night 6-7:30 pm

Sun, Jan. 8th- Board Meeting @ 6 pm

Wed, Jan. 10th-Man Up @ 6:30 pm

Sun, Jan. 15th- Annual Meeting @10:30 am

Thurs. Jan. 19th-Ladies Fellowship 6 pm

Sun, Jan. 29th-Youth Offering

Sun, Jan. 29th-Worship & Prayer @ 6 pm

2023

HAPPY NEW YEAR

All events are subject to change. Please keep up to date by checking the bulletin, Facebook page or website.



Astoria Christian Church

