The Center Chronicles

December 2020

This past week, I came across a crayon and pencil drawing created by Sister Grace Remington of the Cistercian Sisters of the Mississippi Abbey. Though simple in design, yet profound in its message. A year after this drawing was made, another sister wrote a poem describing that creative moment when the first woman and the mother of Jesus first met. The poem reads as follows:

My mother, my daughter, life-giving, Eve,
Do not be ashamed, do not grieve.
The former things have passed away,
Our God has brought us to a New Day.
See, I am with Child,
Through whom all will be reconciled.
O Eve! My sister, my friend,
We will rejoice together
Forever
Life without end.

Though now sold by the Cistercian Sisters as a Christmas card, I wondered what Sr. Grace was thinking when she sketched this drawing. Scott Erickson writes, “It’s a painting imagining the meeting of these two matriarchs of faith and what that intimate moment may have been like.” Look at the image and notice with me how Eve, clothed with her hair and whose ankle is bound by the serpent “gazes down knowing that even though her actions caused the fall redemption will come through her (Mary’s) seed.”

Now look at Mary who graciously and tenderly guides Eve’s hand to touch her pregnant belly to know that God blessed her with bringing into the world Jesus, the second Adam whose life would take away the sins that were began by the first Adam. Look at the picture and notice the placement of Mary’s foot on the serpent head while it is wrapped around Eve’s ankle symbolizing the prophetic promise God makes to the serpent saying, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.” (Gen. 3: 15) Erickson writes, “In this incredible image, Eve is experiencing hope and grace from a brokenness she never thought she’d see an end to.” Is that not the hope and promise of Christmas? Paul’s put is this way in Romans 5: 12ff, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—..... For if the many died by the trespass (sin) of one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, overflow to many!...... Consequently, just as one trespass (sin) resulted in the condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For
just as through the disobedience of the one man that many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

This portrait from Sr. Grace proclaims the fulfillment the God’s promise which begins with Mary bringing into this world, God’s only Son, who would defeat Satan and become the Savior of the world.

Merry Christmas,

Jon

Currently the Christmas Worship is fluid in the sense the Session at Center will evaluate on December 17 what changes, if any, will be made for when we return to the sanctuary. Due to the growing surge of COVID related cases and the risk involved with physically meeting for worship heightened, the Session voted last month to suspend sanctuary worship until the next meeting. Those who make up the ministry team for worship along with family members and a few others who do not have Facebook or internet access do come to worship in the sanctuary wearing their masks when they enter and when they leave the sanctuary.

As the pastor, I pray for that time when all of us to regather for worship, especially during this Christmas season. The sanctuary is decorated with the hopes that we can gather to sing the classic hymns and hear the once again God’s Word about the birth of our Savior.

At the same time, I do not want to put our beloved Choir Director and Organist at risk of getting the virus because they are an essential part of the worship ministry at Center Church. Pray for the session as it meets on December 17 as they seek God’s guidance in the next worship steps we should take. We will keep everyone posted on what the Session decides.

Virtual Bible Study on Genesis
Debbie and I invite you to join us on Facebook every Wednesday at 7pm as we study the book of beginnings- Genesis. Questions are sent out every Thursday for anyone to study and are discussed during the virtual study. We encourage you to gather family and friends so that you may continue discussions for the questions that are given.

Shelter My Sheep News
The interior walls are finished. The Front Porch is not complete. The next step is to put the floor down, then the doors will be installed. Once the doors are in, the electrical work will be completed followed up with the installation of the cabinets, toilet, appliances and furniture. Our goal is still to have House #3 completed by
Christmas. If you want to help, please contact, the church office (423-253-2303), email @ jfaraone@bellsouth.net, or call the pastor’s cell number 270-705-2914

**Communion will be celebrated December 6**
Sunday, December 6, we will be celebrating communion during worship. For those who will join us for worship, we will have special individual communion containers that will be placed in the pews. For those not attending, we invite you to BYOE (Bring your own elements) and join us to remember the Lord’s Supper.

**Elders to meet December 17 at 6pm**
The Session will meet to discern what the next steps will be to bring the Center Congregation back together. Please keep them in your prayers.

**Youth Christmas Live Nativity happens December 19**
The Youth will have its annual Live Nativity show on December 19 with two presentations. The first Presentation will be at 7pm and the Second at 8pm. Invite your friends and join us for this Drive In Worship event at the Church.

**Christmas Food Totes for the Needy**
The Youth will continue its Christmas tradition to created and send out Food Tots for needy families. We will gather to go shopping at **9am on December 23** and then take everything to the church to be loaded. Deliveries and pickup will begin at **8am on December 24**. We are asking for volunteers to come and help in this essential Christmas ministry.

The Pastor will be taking some time to be with family December 26- 30 and will be doing a wedding in on January 2 in Greensboro NC. Merry Christmas to all and let us all pray for a better New Year in 2021.