

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

This truly is the most wonderful time of the year. The air grows cooler, the evenings come earlier, and our homes begin to glow with the warm lights of the season. Wreaths appear on doors, Christmas music fills the stores, and families gather to celebrate traditions passed down through generations. In our little town of Lillian we gather on December 6 at the Lillian Recreational Park to watch the lights shine warming our hearts with scenes of the season, on December 13 at 1:00 PM we enjoy the festivities of our Annual Optimist Lillian Christmas Parade and on December 20 at 9:00 AM we watch the excitement of the children as they receive gifts at our Annual Optimist Breakfast with Santa. Yet as beautiful and meaningful as these traditions are, they all point to something far greater, the unchanging truth that Christ, the Light of the world, came to dwell among us.

More than two thousand years ago, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2). That “great light” was not a star, nor a flame, nor a symbol, but a Savior that was born in a humble stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. God stepped into our world not with fanfare, but with tenderness. He chose an ordinary night, an ordinary town, and ordinary people to carry out His extraordinary plan of redemption. The Christmas story reminds us that God often works in ways we do not expect. The Messiah didn’t arrive as a mighty king but as a newborn child. He didn’t come to be served but to serve. And He didn’t come only for the strong and righteous, but for the weary, the broken, and the searching, for people like us.

In this busy season, we can easily lose sight of that truth. Our calendars fill quickly, and to-do lists stretch long. The pressure to create the “perfect Christmas” leaves us feeling worn out instead of worshipful. Yet, the message of Christmas invites us to slow down, breathe deeply, and remember that the greatest gift has already been given. When we center our hearts on Christ, our celebrations take on deeper meaning. The lights we hang become reminders of the Light who defeated darkness. The gifts we give echo the generosity of God, who gave us His Son. The meals we share reflect the fellowship we have through Christ, who welcomes us to His table with joy. But Christmas also meets us in our pain. For many, this season brings memories of loved ones no longer with us, empty chairs at the table, or personal struggles we quietly carry. If this is a difficult December for you, hear this truth: the hope of Christmas is not fragile. It does not depend on perfect circumstances. Jesus came into a world that was weary, troubled, and longing for peace, and He still enters our lives in those very moments today. Matthew 1:23 tells us, “They shall call his name Emmanuel,” which means “God with us.” Not “God above us” or “God far from us,” but God with us, walking beside us through every joy, every sorrow, every uncertainty, and every new beginning.

This Christmas, may we open our hearts to that promise. May we allow Christ’s light to shine not only in our decorations, but in our words and actions. Let us reach out to someone who may be lonely. Let us offer forgiveness where there has been hurt. Let us give generously, pray earnestly, worship joyfully, and love deeply. My prayer for each of you is that this season will fill your homes with peace, your hearts with gratitude, and your lives with the renewing hope of Jesus Christ. On behalf of the Lillian Methodist Church, I want to invite you to join us for worship on Sunday at 8:00 or 10:00 AM. I also want to invite you to our Christmas Cantata on Sunday, December 14, at 8:00 AM & 10:00 AM, our Christmas Potluck Supper on December 15 at 5:30 PM, and our Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service on December 24 at 5:00 PM. From our church family to yours, may you experience the beauty, the wonder, and the everlasting joy of Christmas. Christ is born! Let His light shine brightly in you and through you this season, which truly is the most wonderful time of the year.