

# THE MOSAIC

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**EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH**  
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## The Unholy Family of Christmas: The Scandal of Incarnation



Scherenberg-Psalter, 1260

Jesus was descended from royalty, but his ancestors also included shepherds, prostitutes, foreigners, peacemakers, adulterers, deceitful schemers, justice-seekers and just plain folk. In other words, his family tree looked a lot like yours or mine.

This Advent season, we will explore Jesus' family photo album, looking carefully at snapshots of Tamar and Judah, Rahab (of the Jericho Red Light District), David and Bathsheba, and Mary and Joseph. Maybe we will see how the "holy family" of Christmas is also an unholy family with dysfunctions and irregularities that become the turning points where we see God at work in the lives of regular people. Join us for some of the juiciest stories in the Bible.

*Every Sunday*  
**Worship at 10:00 a.m.**

*For all ages*

- Dec. 1** – Hanging of the Green, during worship
- Dec. 2** – Christmas cookie exchange following worship  
(packing goodies for friends in need of cheer)
- Dec. 14** – 4:00 Christmas caroling in church neighborhood  
5:00 Pizza Supper  
6:00 "A Christmas Carol" Reader's Theatre
- Dec. 22** – Christmas Reception following worship

*Christmas Eve Worship at 7:00 p.m.*



As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, the arrival of God-with-skin-on, we will use the stories of Jesus ancestors to remind us of his very real humanity. This season of preparation is called Advent. This Advent our weekly worship will also incorporate a French tradition of preparing a manger for the Christ child. We will use strips of cloth instead of hay. Look for a ritual of preparation each Sunday.

After worship on December 8, we will pack cookie bags for guests at the FOCUS breakfast program. Look for a sign-up sheet to indicate how many cookies you can contribute. All ages are welcome to be part of the assembly line.

### **Art and Story, Visual Imagery of the Bible**

*Who is this woman and what is she doing?*



The bible has inspired beautiful and provocative art for hundreds of years. These images can both enlarge and constrain our understanding of the stories they portray. Come explore some of the art that depicts our advent stories on two Sundays after worship, December 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Our facilitator will be Judith Henningson.

*Escape from Rahab's House , circa 1851-60: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)*

### **Christmas Caroling and *A Christmas Carol* -- EBC Style Saturday, December 14 at 4:00**

Let's enjoy an evening together with no agenda other than to share some Christmas cheer. We will carol around the Center Square Neighborhood and then return to the church to warm up and enjoy a light supper together. Then we'll hand out parts and "perform" a condensed version of Charles Dicken's well-known *A Christmas Carol*. You may be a part of the cast or the audience, or both by turns. This is an activity for all ages.



### **Memorial Service for Homeless Persons December 19**

5:30 p.m.

First Lutheran Church

181 Western Avenue

This is a brief but meaningful time of worship in which we celebrate the lives of homeless persons who died in the past year. It provides both for mourning and for gratitude. All are welcome here. This is a FOCUS Churches event.

*The following article was taken from the Fall 2013 Samaritan Counseling Center newsletter.*

## **Fighting for Your Family** by David Olsen, PhD, LCSW, LMFT

Did you know fighting may be good for your relationship? Could you believe that the absence of conflict may be the cause of decreased intimacy? While no one (well, almost no one) likes to fight, burying a conflict can create significant distance as resentments build up and fester under the surface. A relationship like this stays polite, but there is usually little or no intimacy.

Couples who are conflict-avoidant begin to live a "parallel track" life. They parent well together, are active in their kids' lives, work well financially, but when they are alone together they are emotionally and sexually distant. They often live as roommates or business partners.

What is the problem? It may be that they are not fighting enough!! While I am not encouraging couples to fight, I am suggesting that if they are not facing conflicts or disappointments head on, they will become increasingly distant. Conflict is not the bad guy, but the avoidance of conflict is. In the end, it will create significant problems.

Anger does not go away; it always goes somewhere. So when one partner is angry at the other and pushes it down, it is always going to leak. It may leak into "forgetting" to do something you promised you would do. It may leak into depression, or it may leak into passive-aggressive behavior. But in the end it goes somewhere and often morphs into something irreparable, namely contempt.

Couples become so stuck on conflicts that have never been aired or resolved that they begin to hate each other or see each other in the most negative light.

Psychologist John Gottman studied the predictors of divorce and suggested that it is not conflict itself that leads to the decay of marriage, but types of conflict involving what he called The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: defensiveness, stonewalling, criticism and contempt. He also noted that once couples reach the stage of contempt, they are probably on the verge of doing damage that can't be repaired.

For relationship intimacy to flourish conflicts, and even anger, must be handled creatively. Remember, anger is not a negative emotion. It is simply an emotion that turns negative depending on how it is used.

So how can couples learn healthier conflict? Several principles may help:

First, know what you are really feeling. Often anger is not the primary emotion. It is often a cover for hurt or even frustration. So start by checking in with yourself to clarify what the real feeling is. If it is hurt, you will gain more understanding by expressing the hurt, rather than attacking or burying the feeling.

Second, start soft. Easier said than done. If you let the anger build over time in order to keep the peace, when you finally do let it out, it will be like dumping a huge load of resentments and your partner will not know what hit them.

So you must try to express the anger or resentment before it builds and becomes too intense for your partner to handle. And remember, if you start the discussion, it is realistic to expect your partner to be defensive, so take responsibility to keep yourselves on track and avoid amping things up by becoming defensive yourself.

Third, follow some basic ground rules. In boxing there are places you hit, and places you don't. There are time limits, there is a referee, and it is contained in a boxing ring. By contrast, a street fight has no rules and no limits and is therefore much more dangerous.

Couples must practice "fighting fair." Stay on track on one topic rather than generalizing to five other problem areas. Be careful of language and name calling. Cultivate the ability to rate how hot your anger is on a scale of 1-10 and if it is in the "red zone" (7-10) it is probably better to walk away and wait until you are cooler to resume the discussion.

Fourth, know your pattern. What is your habitual conflict style? Do you rapidly escalate, or become defensive, or counterattack without listening to your partner? Do you shut down and punish your partner with silence? Focus on understanding your conflict style, and practice making changes.

Know what your "hooks" are - triggers that get you emotionally reactive. Listen to your body. When you feel extremely agitated or anxious, be careful of how you move into conflict. It is probably not going to go well.

Finally, Gottman's research suggests that when healthy couples do fight, they make rapid emotional repair. They don't let the conflict go underground; they actively approach and attempt to heal it together.

Check in with your partner, see how they are feeling and see if there is any unresolved issue left. Too often couples are afraid to do this for fear that it will stir up the problem again. In reality, these repairs do a lot to restore the relationship.

In the end, constructive conflict has several benefits. A study in the 2009 Journal of Child Psychology found that "constructive" marital conflict was associated with an increase in children's emotional security.

This sounds unbelievable, but as we have suggested here, couples who face their conflicts honestly and openly create more intimacy in their relationship. They are then more emotionally healthy and their children feel this and know that the family is secure. So go ahead and fight--for your family!

### **Special Guest Scheduled for FOCUS Worship Service**

FOCUS and CRTC are co-sponsors in bringing Sara Miles to Albany. Sara, an author/journalist and activist, will be the preacher at the FOCUS annual worship service at Trinity UMC on February 2. She will also be leading a CRTC event on Saturday, February 1 at Delmar Reformed Church. Come and share Sara's continuing journey of inner city ministry as she reveals her vision of the City of God - as it exists now, and as it is being transformed.

The FOCUS worship service is free, of course. You must register with CRTC for the Saturday event; Call 518 - 462 - 2470 Registration is \$75 if paid by January 3, \$90 thereafter.





**Notice of Meetings...**

**December 3 ~ Coordinating Council**  
**5:30 at church**  
**December 8 ~ Diaconate**

**Dinner to be Delivered**



On December 22, Emmanuel will provide a meal for guests of the Interfaith Shelter. The menu has not yet been determined, but if you would like to help, please contact Karen Kendall. Guests are always sincerely grateful for the dinner.



**Advent Giving**

During Advent we are collecting the following clothing for the Emergency Overflow Shelter: men's sweat clothes (sizes XL and XXL), T-shirts and socks. Your donations can be placed in the designated box in Fellowship Hall. Thank you.

**Remember the Food Pantry**

**December: bar soap**

**Nursing Home Visits Continue**

The Choir will present a musical program at the Beverwyck on Saturday, December 7; rehearsal at 9:30, program at 10:00. This sharing is a special gift to residents and staff alike. If you have questions, you may contact Michael Clement or Pat Hunziker.

**Entertainment Books**

Some Entertainment Books are still available and cost only \$25 each. Profits will be used for "Span the Gap" (to lessen the budget deficit). Deadline for purchasing is December 10. See Marilyn Malone to get your copy.

**Happy Birthday...**

Kathy Moore  
Michele Calvin  
Brian Hughes  
Matthew Lahut  
Dwight Smith  
Tom Lahut  
Jennie DeFlaviis  
Tammy Skinner  
Molly Wilkerson  
Charles Johnson



8<sup>th</sup>  
9<sup>th</sup>  
11<sup>th</sup>  
12<sup>th</sup>  
12<sup>th</sup>  
14<sup>th</sup>  
15<sup>th</sup>  
18<sup>th</sup>  
20<sup>th</sup>  
31<sup>st</sup>

*If your birthday is not published in our monthly listing, please notify Dorothy at 465-5161.*

**Deadline for the January issue of the MOSAIC is December 18.**

**winter begins**  
**December 21**

**Church Office Closed:**  
**December 24 & 25**  
**Merry Christmas!**



The tradition at Emmanuel has been to decorate the sanctuary with poinsettias at Christmas and to deliver them to our homebound and ill members on Christmas Eve. If you wish to purchase a plant, please check the appropriate box(s) below and indicate if the plant is in honor or in memory of a loved one. Cost is \$12 per plant. The poinsettias will be available on Christmas Eve. Please fill out this form and give it to Karen Green along with your payment.

I would like the poinsettia designated in memory/honor (circle one) of

\_\_\_\_\_

I would like the plant donated to a church member.

I would like the plant for myself.

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

Emmanuel Baptist Church  
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Albany, NY 12210

