



If Music be the Food of Love, Play On

By Linda Brown

Shakespeare must have had Margaret Smith (nee Rendell) in mind, when he penned these words over 400 years ago. Beginning as Deseronto United's Sunday School accompanist at the age of 10 (yes, Sunday Schools did SING hymns in those days) Marg graduated over the years to the giddy heights of organist and choir director at Trinity United Church Verona, a position she held for about 25 years. Marg says *"Eventually, Carol Ramer, a wonderful musician found us and decided to whip us into shape, direct the choir and recruit new members."* Cast your minds back a few years to find names like Websters, Kraiss, Friedlis, McDougalls, Ramers and the Kayek brothers., along with Jennifer Bennett, Ralph McInnes and Millie Cuthill *"It was a wonderful choir, truly the envy of the area including some Kingston churches."* Marg adds *"Recently we have been fortunate to attract Stan, to continue with our spiritual contribution to the life of the church."*

To our great relief when Marg retired from her nursing career, she chose not to retire from us too! Besides volunteering as piano accompanist and choir member she has been able to join in other church activities, which was not possible when she and husband Don were raising their six children on their farm property. She has been one of our stalwart and renowned pastry makers year after year, for our apple pie fundraising each fall. As such, she mentions her delight in getting to know others better "in common purpose, planning, fellowship, chit-chat and Noreen's break-time goodies".

In her "spare" time Marg has also served as Chair of Session. And is now sits on M&P.

Marg's father was a traditional farmer, who never worked on Sundays, except to milk the cows. Growing up in the farming community between Napanee and

(Continued on page 5)

Romans 15:13

**MAY THE GOD
OF HOPE FILL
YOU WITH ALL
JOY AND PEACE
IN BELIEVING,
THAT YOU MAY
ABOUND IN
HOPE, IN THE
POWER OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT.**

Inside This Issue:

- Star of Bethlehem
- December Birthdays
- Church Services
- December Bible Lesson
- Sad News
- Offering Envelopes
- Christmas Recipe
- Church Finances
- Foodbank Needs
- A December Prayer
- Velvet Shoes Poem
- Ladies with Typewriters
- In Case You Missed It

The Star of Bethlehem - Can Science Explain It?

By Ron Miller/Astronomy Magazine

On December 21st 2020, Jupiter and Saturn came together in a "**Great Conjunction**" unlike any seen in nearly 800 years. The two planets will appear so close together in Earth's night sky on the winter solstice that they'll almost look like a single object. That prompted some to dub the sight a "Christmas Star," and others to wonder about a similar sounding celestial event that coincided with the biblical first Christmas: the Star of Bethlehem. But did such a cosmic sight ever really exist? And if so, what does astronomical science tell us about what could have caused it? Interestingly, there's some evidence that a pair of planetary conjunctions - not unlike the coming Great Conjunction - happened around the historically accepted time frame for the birth of Christ. That could potentially explain the Star of Bethlehem. But, of course, not everyone agrees with the idea.



The Star of Bethlehem

The story of the Star of Bethlehem appears only in the Book of Matthew. The gospel tells us that a bright star appeared in the eastern sky when Jesus was born, famously seen by a group of wise men. These biblical "Magi," sometimes called kings, now adorn nativity scenes around the world. The Bible describes how these three wise men saw the new star as a sign of the birth of the King of the Jews, so they set out for Jerusalem to worship him. Once they arrive, they inquire about baby Jesus with Herod, the region's ruler appointed by Rome. "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage," Matthew tells us. But Herod is worried by the idea. He and his own wise men supposedly seek to discover Jesus' birthplace. Eventually, they call on the three wise men to ask when the star appeared. And thanks to Micah's prophecy that the messiah would be born in Bethlehem, Herod sends the trio to Bethlehem to search for Jesus. (Supposedly, Herod also ultimately kills the infants of Bethlehem in an attempt to snuff out Jesus.) According to Matthew, "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Evidence for the Star of Bethlehem

For centuries, astronomers have looked to the historical record in search of evidence for what could explain this Star of Bethlehem. Scholars have been discussing potential causes since at least the 13th century. Perhaps it was a supernova, a comet, a solar flare or an alignment of planets. Or, alternatively, maybe it never happened at all. The truth is, science will likely never know the truth. But let's entertain the idea that it was a real celestial event. What are some science-backed explanations that could explain the Star of Bethlehem?

Well, the story is relatively vague, but it does give us some clues.

Some things are easily ruled out. For example, the Star of Bethlehem couldn't have been a **meteor** - a chunk of space rock that brightly burns up in Earth's atmosphere - which would've appeared and faded in an instant. There's no way three wise men could have tracked a meteor for *weeks*.

It's also unlikely that a supernova - the explosive death of a star, which drastically increases its brightness for days, weeks or months - could explain the Star of Bethlehem. Supernovae, or "guest stars" have been consistently witnessed and recorded going back thousands of years. So if one had happened, other cultures likely would have taken note.



Wishing everyone who celebrates in **December**
a very happy birthday!

**Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you.
May God's richest blessings fall upon you!**

Inez Dartt

December 2nd

Shirley Ellison

December 17th

Mary Barr

December 24th

Covid Update - Church Services

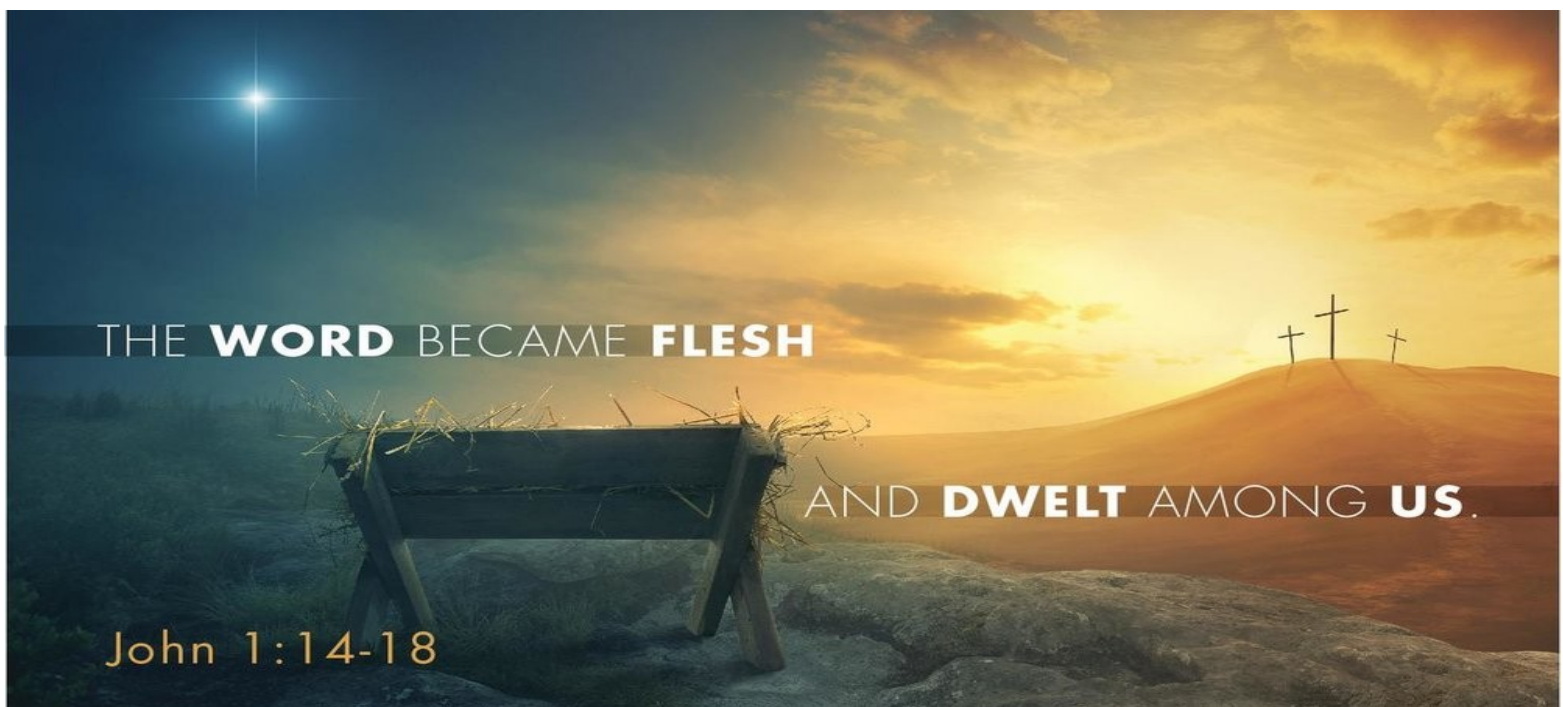
The Ministry Team in consultation with the committees of Session and Stewards has decided as of this Sunday December 19th that all in-church services will be returning to being online only. Please note that online services will not be broadcast via zoom, but will be in video format through our website (www.trinityucverona.com).



These videos will be made available to view on Mondays (due to recording times). The Christmas Eve service will be available to view on our website on Christmas Eve throughout the day.

Decisions will be made at a later date when in person services can and will resume.

We wish all of you to stay safe and Merry Christmas.



Bible Lesson for December

By Rev. Catherine Oxenford-Grant

2 *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting."*

3 *Therefore He shall give them up,
Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth;
Then the remnant of His brethren
Shall return to the children of Israel.*

4 *And He shall stand and feed His flock
In the strength of the Lord,
In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God;
And they shall abide,
For now He shall be great
To the ends of the earth;*

5 *And this One shall be peace.*



Great people sometimes come from the smallest of places. Their origins keep them connected to the common folk and turn their stories into legend. Bill Gates had common beginnings; so did Oprah, J.K. Rowling, Celine Dion, and one of our past Governors' General, Michaelle Jean, who grew up in poverty in Haiti. What they did not share with other people was an uncommon vision and a burning desire to make their vision a reality.

Micah wrote the passages about Bethlehem in the midst of foreign invasion. The Assyrians, who destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel, now threatened Jerusalem itself. As a prophet, Micah condemned the city for its sins, but promised a time of renewed glory. And the restoration would begin in most insignificant of places, just as David, Israel's greatest king, came from the shepherding fields around a small village.

Such would be the case for the coming Messiah, Israel's leader at the end of time. He would seem to come from nowhere, yet, his lineage would be from ancient times. He would be something new to get excited about. Until his time, Israel would be scattered among the nations. But his birth would be the sign of Israel's return to its homeland.

Continuing the theme of David, the coming Messiah would rule (like a shepherd) in God's strength and in God's name. His reign would extend to the ends of the earth. Notice though, his rule was peaceful, just like the pastoral image of being a shepherd.

Jesus was born in the smallest of places, never traveled more than 50 miles from his home in his life, left no personal writing, and died a humiliating death. Yet, Jesus' vision of God's kingdom and his burning desire to see it fulfilled has changed the world.

May that vision come to you and burn in your heart this Christmas. Be safe and well.

Blessings of the Season to you and yours, In one peace, Rev. Catherine

If Music be the Food of Love, Play On

(Continued from page 1)

Deseronto Marg spent her Sunday afternoons at family events. Sometimes she got to do cool things like *“going to the Salmon River to swim with my brother.”* And always the church and music was there. She wrote that her *“most vivid memories are of the beautiful stained glass windows in (Deseronto United), the wonderful choir of 15 or so, and the annual candlelight choir concerts on the last Sunday evening before Christmas.”*

As an adult, during Marg's five years of post-secondary education she met her husband Don on a blind date. Marg confided, *“I wasn't too impressed with him at the time, but he persisted, and the rest is history.”* And thank goodness for that, because our good fortune is to have several of Don and Marg's offspring and their children, in attendance all these years later. Marg laughingly recalls her six youngsters *“perched in the front row by the organ with Rachael as the oldest trying to keep order while the boys crawled under the seats.”*



Marg affirms that her association with Trinity church, has *“enriched the lives of our family. They all attend with their own families when they can and often the whole crowd (which takes up a few pews) joins us on Christmas Eve.”* When asked about what future direction the church should take, Marg stated the obvious need that we must find more ways to accomplish outreach and engage families in activities that bring us together. *“I wish we had some sort of children's/youth choir that meets locally and is convenient and accessible to everyone. I'm not in a position to lead such a program, but could certainly help”.*

And we can help Marg, by concentrating our energies on finding a way to make a youth choir happen. When Covid allows us, we can put our heads together to find 3 or 4 musically interested people to co-lead/run such a group. Who wants to step up to the plate and brainstorm ideas on how to get started? Should our premiere brunch when “normalcy” returns, be a general discussion on first steps? In fact we already have a beginning with the integration of youngsters with the adult choir for Sunday anthems now. Let's build on it!

BUT, we are not yet finished with Marg. We're now on to the next generation.

Rachel, who was 4 years old when she appeared at Trinity Sunday School, and continued to help out with the little ones when she was old enough to start to give back. There were some years in between when she moved away for school but was excited to return to her Trinity family when *“Shawn and her got married. It was incredibly special to be married in the church that I love dearly. It was the beginning of Shawn's connection to Trinity and we haven't looked back.”*

“I love the way the congregation has reached out and formed special friendships with Shawn and our girls, the kind smiles and thoughtful comments when one of us was unwell or the girls ran around the isles. I will be forever grateful to everyone for their love and support of our family as we have all grown.... Both in age and in faith.”

I love that we have a thriving Sunday School that our girls look forward to, I love that we include music for the children and I love that our church community surrounds our family with kindness, compassion and support.

Some of my fondest memories are Christmas concerts led by Midge Caird for many years, Sunday School outings to the Lions Hall park, Christmas Choir Concerts.... And my all time favourite memories of Trinity will always be watching mom lovingly sharing one her most previous gifts.... Her musical talents (choir, piano,

(Continued on page 8)

The Star of Bethlehem - Can Science Explain It?

(Continued from page 2)

And even if it somehow escaped the written historical record, astronomers have observed remnants of many other ancient supernovae. And by estimating their peak brightness, researchers have even tied some remnants to events seen on Earth in the past. Yet telescopes haven't found any evidence for a supernova remnant that sync up with the timing of the Star of Bethlehem. In fact, the only **supernova that was visible from Earth** around the time of Christ's birth actually happened in the year 185 A.D. and was recorded by Chinese astronomers

A Christmas Comet?

In the past, some interested astronomers have also suggested the Star of Bethlehem was a comet passing near Earth. These icy bodies from the distant solar system often shine quite brightly when they venture into the inner solar system and are heated by the Sun. They're also known for sometimes visibly lingering in the sky for weeks or months at a time. And like supernovae, we also have historical records from other cultures regarding comets.

Sure enough, in the year 5 B.C., Chinese astronomers noted the appearance of a "Broom Star" that many researchers have **interpreted as a comet**. Like supernovae, Chinese scholars noted many historic comets, and even recorded a number of times that **meteor impacts killed people**.

In the 1970s, researchers caught onto the timing coincidence of this Chinese "Broom Star," and a string of papers started popping up in scientific journals **debating the idea**, among other inspirations. All the back and forth culminated in a 1977 story in *The New York Times* written by legendary science journalist Walter Sullivan that suggested it could have been a comet, conjunction, nova or simply myth. Clearly, no consensus opinion has emerged in the decades since.

So, could a comet have been the Star of Bethlehem? There's no way to rule it out, but there is one obvious reason to doubt it. Keep in mind that people in the ancient world typically saw comets as symbols of pending doom - an evil omen of bad things about to happen. So, if a comet suddenly started shining brightly in the night sky, it's hard to imagine three wise men would interpret it as a sign that their saviour had finally been born.

Ancient great conjunction

What about a mash-up of planets? Could that explain the Star of Bethlehem? When you rewind the motion of the planets - something that's easy to do with observing software these days - you can see that several interesting conjunctions played out in the years around the life of Jesus (A planetary conjunction happens when two planets make a close approach to each other in Earth's night sky. The two objects aren't actually near each other, though, they just look that way from our vantage point).

In the year 7 B.C., Jupiter and Saturn had three conjunctions in the same constellation, Pisces. Because the planets move in their orbits at different speeds, and are located at different distances, sometimes they appear to pass one another in the night sky. They can also appear to hold still or move backward in the sky, which astronomers call retrograde motion. This trick is like passing a slower car on the highway. As you get close to the other vehicle, it seems to hold still beside you. Then, as you pull away, it drops backward. The same thing happens as Earth zips around the Sun much faster than the outer planets. However, Jupiter is closer to the Sun than Saturn, so it also appears to move faster in our night sky.

So, if Jupiter and Saturn had three close conjunctions in a relatively brief period of time, it's easy to imagine that ancient astronomers - really, astrologers - would have taken note. And they also likely would have

(Continued on page 12)

Sad News

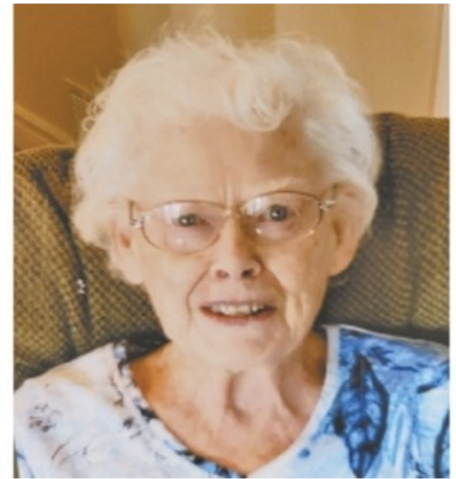
Submitted by Don Coleman

(Sadly this was received after the printing of the last newsletter)

Carolyn Duke Brown

March 21, 1934 - November 10, 2021

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Carolyn Duke Brown at Rideaucrest in Kingston. Predeceased by her husband, Fergus Brown, mother, Lillian Doris, father, Duke Thornton, sisters, Mary Nell Currie, and Lorene Cain. She is survived by her sister Lillian Landry, and brother in law, Bruce Currie as well as many beloved nieces, nephews, her Bell family and cherished friends.



She was born in Jackson, Mississippi, living most of her childhood in Philadelphia, Mississippi and later settling in Harrowsmith with her beloved husband. She was an accomplished pianist, organist, piano teacher, rug hooker, photographer, author, farmer, and Bed & Breakfast owner. She was a member and organist of St. Paul's United Church in Harrowsmith for many years. She was an inspiration, loved by all who knew her and will be very missed.

"She touched the lives of so many people, and left us with an abundance of happy memories - quite a legacy." - *Nancy Moore-Carr*

"I will choose to remember happier times at St. Paul's with Carolyn and Fergus. They were a lovely couple and indeed, we were blessed for our time with them." - *Sheila Anthony*

"When Marni and I organized the first Street Fair we held a little meeting for anyone wanting to give their input shortly before the big day. Carolyn showed up; she was the only one. She listened, gave us feedback and then talked about various events that she and Fergus had organized for the church over the years. Mainly concerts I believe. She spoke with such enthusiasm. She loved St. Paul's and worked hard there. Then at the end of the meeting she said to Marni and me, 'Good luck. You'll need it. This is a big undertaking.' I loved her for her honesty. She said what others thought and I respected her and loved her for that. And each year, Marni and I could count on her to faithfully volunteer at the Street Fair. I think she may have manned the book table with Eileen, but I could be wrong. This is just one great memory of a great lady that I will cherish forever. I believe that she is now reunited with her beloved Fergus. What a happy reunion that must be! - *Suzanne Hoag*

Church Offering Envelopes for 2022

At the last meeting of the Committee of Stewards, it was decided that we would not order offering envelopes for the 2022 calendar year.

The 2021 envelopes were not distributed until our reopening in September, leaving many unused.

For those using the offering envelopes, you are requested to continue using the 2021 envelopes throughout 2022. If you run out, please speak to our treasurer Don Coleman for replacements.



Turkey & Dressing Casserole

Ingredients:

- left over turkey dressing (approx. 6 cups)
- 3 ½ to 4 cups. chopped cooked turkey
- ¾ cup. chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 ½ cup milk
- 1 cup shredded medium cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Spray a 9x13 inch baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. Place half of the turkey dressing in the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Set aside remaining stuffing mixture.
2. Mix together chopped turkey, onion, celery, mayonnaise, and salt.
3. Beat eggs and milk together.
4. Mix the turkey mixture and egg mixture together and pour evenly over turkey dressing in the baking dish. Top with the reserved turkey dressing.
5. Bake at 350F for 45 minutes. Sprinkle top with shredded cheese and bake 10-15 minutes longer until cheese is melted.



If Music be the Food of Love, Play On

(Continued from page 5)

and organ)."

Marg concludes the Smith Newsletter contribution by adding *"through it all, the great music of the Church has been my own spiritual inspiration."* Shakespeare would agree that it's ours too don't you think?

EDITOR'S NOTE

It's your turn now. We invite our readership, present or past to write a sentence or two or three of some musical highlight, event or incident you remember from your days of church attendance. Just print or write it out on a strip of paper, sign your name and deposit it on the collection plate to the attention of Sheila, for inclusion in our January Newsletter.



PS. If you come to church on **January 2nd, be prepared to stay for 5 minutes after the service postlude** for the fun Newsletter Quiz. You just hand in your answers to Linda Brown. If you are the winner, you will be notified the next day (you'll like it).

Church Finances

Our Local Expense givings for the month of November was \$5,416. This is an increase of \$3,671.50 over the givings that we received in November. Our expenses for the same period was \$8,077.01. We also received \$5,418.05 in rental payments in November.



The balance as of November 30 is \$10,311.41. **We are grateful for the tremendous response that we have since our reopening in September.**

Mission and Service givings to the end of November were \$7,489.00.

As of December 12, we received \$3,067.50 in donations for our Christmas food hampers. **We are grateful for the tremendous support we have received for this project.**

We welcome all donations either by cheque or by Etransfer to don@donaldcoleman.com. We express thanks to all who have continued to support us either through PAR and other donations.



And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:6-7

SFCS Foodbank Needs

Food donation items that we are in need of currently include:

- Pasta Sauce
- Canned Pasta (Chef Boyardee, Alpha Ghatti, Zoodles, etc)
- Canned Meats
- Cheese
- Toilet Paper
- Canned Tomatoes
- Dish Soap
- Laundry Detergent
- Jams and Spreads
- Canned Fruit
- Canned Vegetables
- Deodorant (Men's & Ladies)
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Cleaning Supplies



A December Prayer

Submitted by Rev. Catherine Oxenford-Grant

When I awoke this morning, I found you still to be God, presiding over the day and the night with serenity – for dark and light are both alike to you.

At the break of our days we submit to you our best dreams and our worst nightmares, asking that your healing mercy should override threats, that your goodness will make our nightmares less toxic and our dreams more real.

We thank you for visiting us with newness that overrides what is old and deathly among us.

Come among us this day and all days; dream us toward health and peace, we pray in the real name of Jesus – the Light of the World come to Earth.

Amen.



Thanks be to God for his
inexpressible gift!

~ 2 Corinthians 9:15



Velvet Shoes

Unnumbered snows have fallen from these skies
To bless the earth; yet there will always be
The same wide wonder and the glad surprise
Whenever house-bound folk look out and see
The giant sheet spread out to cover all
The frozen ground, the sleeping grass and flowers,
Tucked down between the hills; and falling flakes
Can fascinate and entertain for hours.

Then, when the last pale wing is folded down,
A fairyland is there with trees of pearl,
And crystal streams and diamond-studded roofs.
While down the roads, white velvet rugs unfurl.
Lean winter's cup is scant for beauty's thirst;
We greet each snow as though it were our first.

(M. Kathleen Haley)

Ladies with Typewriters

Submitted by Sharon Sole & John McDougall

They're back!! Those wonderful Church Bulletins! Thank God for church ladies with typewriters. These sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced at church services:

"The Fasting & Prayer Conferences includes meals."

"The sermon this morning: 'Jesus Walks on the Water.' The sermon tonight: 'Searching for Jesus.' "

"Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands."

"Don't let worry kill you off - let the church help!"

Next Thursday there will be try outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get!"

"A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow."

"At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice."

"Please place your donation in the envelopes along with the deceased person you want remembered."

"The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy."

"Weight Watchers will meet at 7pm at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance."

"The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility."

"The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday."

"Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7pm. Please use the back door."

"Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones."

"Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children."

"Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00pm - prayer and medication to follow."



The Star of Bethlehem - Can Science Explain It?

(Continued from page 6)

ascribed some meaning to the event. These same astrologers wouldn't have had to wait long for an even more striking planetary encounter. Four years later, in the summer of 3 B.C., Jupiter and Venus met in an event that would have looked much like the "Christmas Star," also referred to as the Great Conjunction of December 2020.

On the morning of August 12 in 3 B.C., Jupiter and Venus would've sat just 1/10th a degree apart in the dawn sky. That's one-fifth the diameter of the Full Moon (the December 2020 conjunction between Jupiter and Saturn had an identical separation, albeit in the evening sky). That wasn't the end of the show, either. Venus and Jupiter continued their dance over most of the next year before finally appearing to merge into a single star in June.

The idea that a conjunction between bright planets could explain the Star of Bethlehem isn't new. A note in the Annals of the Abbey of Worcester from 1285 A.D. points out an alignment of Jupiter and Saturn that happened at the time of Jesus' birth. And Johannes Kepler himself touched on the idea in the 17th century.

Myth or reality?

Since then, many enthusiastic astronomers - and eager amateurs - have also pointed to other celestial positions playing out around the same time as further evidence that ancient astrologers would've found meaning in these events. Bright stars and planets were moving through important constellations. Still others have suggested that the Star of Bethlehem might not have been one celestial event at all. Instead, taken together, the combined effect of years of these astronomical events may have led the Magi to see signs a new king had been born.

But could any of these things have really caused the Star of Bethlehem?

The truth is, none of these events match up perfectly with the description of how things played out in the Book of Matthew. The context is also off. Ancient people knew their planets well, so it would be weird to call a conjunction of multiple planets a "star."

Furthermore, it's hard to imagine how Herod could be surprised by three wise men telling him about a new star; he surely would've seen any such bright or obvious object himself. According to the Bible, astrology is also heretical, which makes the idea of reading into the meaning of the stars a bit suspect in the first place.

In the end, we'll likely never know what really inspired the biblical story of the Star of Bethlehem. Fortunately for us, we got a chance to see our own "Christmas Star" of sorts last year. We can all decide for ourselves what it means to us. And, heresy aside, we all hope it brought good tidings for peace, joy, and love. Lord knows we need them right now.

In Case You Missed It

If you were unable to attend our regular worship services or you wish to experience the services again, we have recorded our worship services and have placed them online. The recorded services will be placed online for viewing either later that Sunday or the following Monday. If you would like a copy on DVD, please contact the office and one can be sent to you.

To view the services online go to our website, either www.h-vpastoralcharge.org or www.trinityucverona.com and select the service you wish to view.

