



JANUARY 2023 NEWSLETTER

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The other day I was searching for something to share with all of you. I came across a story, a true story, in a commentary about Matthew 2:13-23, our Gospel reading for January. It was compiled by Henry Brinton and Carl Wilton. I have heard events like this before, but I was unaware of this particular one. The important part is what we can learn from it. We must not ignore the tragedy, but we must never allow it to happen again. How can we prevent this type of violence in our world? The people in the story fought with sticks and clubs. It's different in today's world; if you don't like a particular group of people due to the color of their skin, their particular religious affiliation, if they are immigrants, their sexuality, or because they took your parking spot, you just get an AK47 multi-fire rifle and shoot as many people as you can. Thus, I invite you to read and reflect on this story.

Peace, Pastor Rosemary

"FROM BETHLEHEM TO ROSEWOOD"

Sunday, January 1, 2023 | [Matthew 2:13-23](#)

As Christians, we are challenged to see our neighbors as gifts, not threats.

Today is not a happy anniversary. Exactly 100 years ago, on January 1, 1923, the Rosewood massacre began. Like the massacre of children in the gospel of Matthew, Rosewood reminds us of the devastating impact of violence, especially on the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Rosewood was a quiet and mostly African American town in Florida. According to the *History* website, it was originally settled by both black and white people, and the main industry was the production of pencils. But when the cedar tree population declined, most of the white people moved to the nearby town of Sumner. By the 1920s, Rosewood's population was about 200 blacks, plus one white family that ran the general store.

On January 1, 1923, a young white woman in Sumner, Fannie Taylor, was found covered in bruises. She claimed that a black man had assaulted her. Her husband, a foreman at a local mill, gathered a mob of white citizens to hunt down the assailant. He also called for help from neighboring counties, including 500 members of the Ku Klux Klan. The white mobs searched the woods for any black man they could find.

Law enforcement determined that a black prisoner named Jesse Hunter had escaped from a chain gang. They immediately made him a suspect. The mobs focused their searches on Hunter and went after black families that they believed were hiding him. In Rosewood, one mob pulled a black man out of his house, tied him to a car, dragged him to Sumner, and beat him. Another mob tortured a blacksmith until he took them to the spot where Hunter was said to be hiding. When Hunter was not found, they shot the blacksmith and hung him in a tree.

On the night of January 4, a mob of armed white men surrounded a house in which 25 people were hiding, mostly children. Shots were fired, and a black woman and her son were killed. Two white attackers were also killed. The gun battle lasted overnight and ended when the whites broke down the door and the black children escaped into the woods.

Newspapers falsely reported that bands of armed black citizens were going on a rampage. White attackers burned down the churches of Rosewood, and then went after people in houses. Dozens died, both blacks and whites. By January 7, most of the town was burned to the ground, and the fleeing black citizens never returned.

As for Fannie Taylor, the young white woman? Some survivors believe that her bruises were inflicted by a white lover. And Jesse Hunter, the escapee from the chain gang? He was never found.

The Story Remains the Same

The gospel of Matthew speaks of a voice in Ramah, a city in ancient Israel. You can change the location from Ramah to Rosewood, and the verse still makes perfect sense: *A voice is heard in Rosewood, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more (2:18).*

In both ancient Israel and modern America, we know the devastating impact of violence, especially on vulnerable children and adults. Jesus himself faced deadly violence at the very beginning of his life. Right after the wise men left Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him" (v. 13).

King Herod was feeling threatened by the birth of this baby who had been identified as the king of the Jews. He didn't want any competition, even from a child who had no political or military power at his disposal. Feeling frightened and infuriated, Herod ordered a search and destroy mission to be carried out in Bethlehem.

Unfortunately, the feelings that drove Herod to violence are still alive and well. According to *The Guardian*, Rosewood was a prosperous black town in 1923, “with its own baseball team, a masonic temple and a few hundred residents.” A black survivor of the massacre says that whites were disturbed because they looked at Rosewood and saw a bunch of black folks “living better” than white folks. Such resentment can lead to violence, both then and now. From Bethlehem to Rosewood, the bloody story remains the same.

Look around today, and you see resentments that can lead to violence. Many residents of “red” states resent residents of “blue” states, and vice versa. Some citizens feel threatened by immigrants, and immigrants feel anxious in the United States. Fault lines appear between members of different racial and cultural groups. We look at the world and feel threatened, which is exactly what Herod experienced.

But what if we looked at the world and saw the presence of God? Herod had a once-in-a-lifetime chance to welcome the baby Jesus, the one-and-only Son of God. But what he did was send his troops “to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under” (v. 16). He resorted to violence because he did not see Jesus as a gift from God. Instead, he saw him as a threat.

A Gift, Not a Threat

As followers of Jesus, we are challenged to see our neighbors as gifts, not threats. “When you meet another person,” says author and pastor John Pavlovitz, “you are coming face-to-face with a once-in-history, never-to-be-repeated reflection of the image of God. ... each [is] made of God stuff. ... Every single day you encounter thousands of breathing, animated images of the Divine.”

Every person you meet is God stuff. It doesn’t matter where they were born, whether they’re old or young, red or blue; your neighbors are “images born of the Divine.” They are gifts, not threats. Worthy of respect, not hostility.

What a difference this makes, from Bethlehem to Rosewood. Once we see our neighbors in this way, we are challenged to take action to protect the most vulnerable people around us. They could be special-needs adults, low-income neighbors, recent immigrants, political refugees, members of a minority group, or neighborhood children. Joseph made the decision to protect the vulnerable when he “took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod” (vv. 14-15).

Joseph lived as an immigrant in that foreign land until an angel appeared to him and said it was safe to return to Israel. Then he returned, but made a detour when he learned that the son of Herod was ruling over Judea. Instead of moving to Bethlehem of Judea, he headed north to Galilee, and there “he went and lived in a town called Nazareth” (v. 23).

This story contains so many examples of vulnerability. Jesus and his family were political refugees, immigrants, members of a minority group in Egypt, and finally

Southerners who settled in the North. And just as Joseph cared for his vulnerable child and wife, we are challenged to care for the at-risk people around us.

How Should We Respond?

Some of the heroes of Rosewood were John Wright, the white owner of the general store, who allowed blacks to hide in his home during the massacre. Two wealthy white brothers, John and William Bryce, heard about the violence and sent a train to rescue black women and children. And, of course, many brave black women and men, including Sylvester Carrier, protected their children. A survivor of the massacre, who was a young girl at the time, says, "Cousin Sylvester snatched me and said, 'Come here, let me save you. ...' I squeaked down between his legs."

When we hear "weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children" (v. 18), our challenge is to respond with compassion and care. We cannot cover our eyes and ears, ignoring the violence being done around us. When Jesus grew up and saw vulnerable people around him, he "had compassion on them" (14:14). The word compassion comes from the Latin words *passio* and *com*, which literally mean "suffer" and "with." To have compassion is to "suffer with" people, to take their pain seriously and do whatever we can to alleviate it. Jesus showed us the way when he healed the servant of a Roman centurion (7:5-13) and helped a Canaanite woman from the district of Tyre and Sidon (15:21-28). Since he was familiar with suffering, he was never afraid to show compassion to people in need, even if they were outside of his religious or cultural group. The Letter to the Hebrews says that because Jesus "himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested" (2:18, NRSV).

From Bethlehem to Rosewood, from ancient Israel to 21st-century America, we need to identify with victims of racism, discrimination and violence, and take action to protect the innocent and vulnerable people around us. Joseph did this when he took Jesus and Mary to Egypt. John Wright did this when he took black residents of Rosewood into his home. Sylvester Carrier did this when he defended his home and saved the children in his care. Today is not a happy anniversary. But maybe it is the first day in a new year of care for people in need. —*Henry Brinton and Carl Wilton contributed to this material.*

AN OPPORTUNITY- There are eleven more opportunities to host the Fellowship Time following communion on the 1st Sunday of each month. A list of open Sundays is posted in the fellowship area.

ANNUAL MEETING: Sunday, January 22 immediately following worship.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS:

1/4	March Ganschinietz	1/24	Cheri Schutzenhofer
1/4	Job Ganschinietz	1/27	Shari Hamilton
		1/28	Amy Brink

1/14 Jim Turnbull
1/21 Eileen Gammon
1/22 Kendra Clark

1/28 Trenton Pickens
1/29 Ensley Turnbull

JANUARY USHERS

1/1 – Tom & Jan Miller
1/8 – Sue Williams & Chuck Kistler
1/15 – Ginny Ganschinietz & Sue Ganschinietz
1/ 22 – Judy Schmitt and Eric Moayer
1/ 29 – Eileen Gammon and Carol Bulva



Thank you for all the cards and goodies on Christmas. I must confess the delicious cookies are all gone. It is such a joy to be your pastor. All of you are patient, kind, creative, and especially compassionate to myself, each other, and those in need. I look forward to another

year of serving God and worshipping together. Peace and many blessings, Pastor Rosemary

THE CHURCH COUNCIL NEEDS YOU

It's that time of year again. We need two more people to volunteer to join the Church



Council. The council meets once a month via zoom or telephone. The meetings usually last less than an hour. The term is for two years with the opportunity to volunteer for an additional two years. The council is the eyes and ears of the congregation. The council communicates with the Pastor as to the needs of the congregation. Likewise, the Pastor makes suggestions to the council on issues and needs that come to her attention. The council members will be voted on at the January 22

Congregational Meeting after worship. If you might be interested in joining the council, speak to Ginny Ganschinietz or the Pastor. Thank you for your participation.

REMEMBER THOSE WHO CAN NOT JOIN US IN WORSHIP:

Terry Kissel
429 South Main Street Room 228
Shiloh, IL 62269

Jeanette Brown
5904 Perrin Road
Fairview Heights, IL 62208



Becky Ballard
1211 Moreland, Apt. 12
Belleville, IL 62223

Yvonne Weber
200 St. Clair Drive
Fairview Heights, IL 62208

Ivy Schneider
213 Merriweather Lane
Fairview Heights, IL 62208

A huge shout out to all those who participated or helped with our Christmas Eve Service. After the Bible Study group read "What is This Jubilee?", Nancy created a wonderful Cantata. She led the choir in songs of joy for all of us to be inspired. Sharon, our excellent pianist/organist, also shared her talents with all of us. Personally, I would enjoy an hour of just listening her play. St. John is so fortunate to have both of these ladies with us. Both of these ladies brought us a beautiful duet as a Prelude to the evening.



Becky Riess organized the poinsettia memorials and Carol Bulva arranged the Altar. Ginny and Eric served as ushers. Nancy Eisenhauer took thread to needle and prepared the lovely banners and paraments. Sue Williams was our Cantata narrator and Jim Eisenhauer ran the technology. Thanks to all of you. I'm sure Baby Jesus was smiling in his manger. I can't wait until next year. Pastor R.

CHOIR

The Choir did a wonderful job on Christmas Eve! They sang three anthems that were part of a cantata, modified for that evening. Our singers were: Adam Reynolds, Oxby Thomasino, Lew Thomasino, Scott and Shannon Banjavcic, Kim Miller, Shara Toennies, and Anne Brown. Sharon conquered some tricky music and perfectly accompanied the choir! Thank you to all who were at our traditional Candlelight Service. It was beautiful.
Nancy Eisenhauer

EVENING CIRCLE

Thanks to everyone who bought presents for our Kindercottage child, Calvin Hammond. Some of the presents for him were; 7 outfits, pants, couple stuffed animals, toy trucks, Farm toys ,push turtle, books, 4 bags of Diapers, baby wipes, etc.

We also sent out Christmas Cards to church members and 50 cards to be given to veterans. After our Dec. meeting we had a Christmas party which included card bingo, a quick craft, and delicious snacks. Also good conversation enjoyed by all.

Our January meeting will be Jan. 8th, 2023 after church in the L-room.
Pray for sunny skies and good health!

We wish everyone in the congregation a "Happy New Year. May the new year, 2023, bring new happy memories! Eileen Gammon, Co-Chair

January

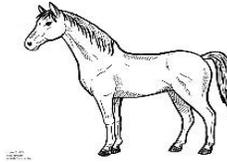
2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Service of Word & Sacrament 10 am Fellowship time after worship	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Service of Word 10 am Evening Circle after worship	9	10	11 Church Council Meeting at 7 pm via Zoom	12 Zoom Bible Study 6:30 pm AA Meeting Hearts & Hands Quilters 10-2	13	14
15 Service of Word 10 am	16	17	18	19 Zoom Bible Study 6:30 pm AA Meeting	20	21
22 Service of Word 10 am ANNUAL MTG AFTER WORSHIP	23	24	25	26 Zoom Bible Study 6:30 pm AA Meeting	27	28
29 Service of Word 10 am	30	31				

OUR PENNIES FOR MISSION this month will go to the horses at Dubois. Here's a list of how we can help them:

COSTS OF CARING FOR HORSES AT DUBOIS

- \$10 Mineral salt block
- \$15 Bag of horse feed
- \$30 Alfalfa cubes
- \$50 Equestrian helmet
- \$65 Feed a horse for a month
- \$80 New halter and reins
- \$500 New saddle



We can also “adopt” a horse by providing feed for a month. We will find out the name of a horse and celebrate her/him with pictures.



PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Dave Seneczyn, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Theo Mally, Becky Ballard, Rosemary Williams, Larry Wagner, Jack O’Day, Ronald Bopp, Floyd Lorenz, Rev. Rosemary Captain, Alister and Garrett Pickens, Rev. Shana Johnson
Our condolences to Melvin Wagner’s family and friends on his passing.