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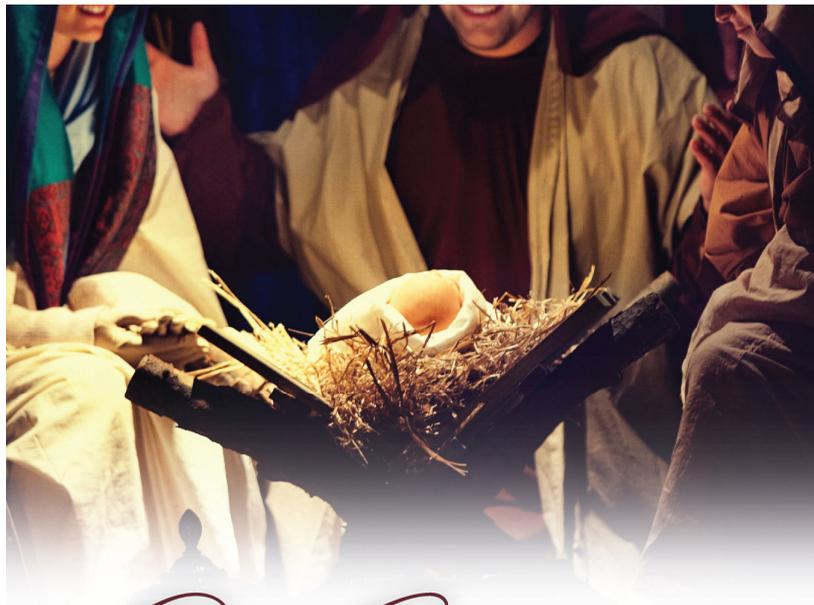
December 2015



# Messenger

MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH

7301 North 28 Avenue Omaha, Nebraska, 68112 402-455-8700 [www.mountoliveomaha.com](http://www.mountoliveomaha.com)



## O Come Let Us Adore Him

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### **Sunday School Christmas Service**

Sunday, December 20th at 4:00 P.M.

### **Christmas Eve Service**

Thursday, December 24th at 7:30 P.M.

### **Christmas Day Service**

Friday, December 25th at 10:00 A.M.

Here is a sure-fire Advent season test to determine how old you are: Is time now rushing past you faster than you can imagine? Or is time creeping and crawling along, torturing you with its puny progress? If you're a child, Advent is an eternity. Advent is a seemingly endless stretch of December days and waiting for Christmas. If you're an adult, especially a normal, hurried, harried adult, the four short weeks of Advent leave you breathless—not with anticipation, but with exhaustion.

Time is relative. If you don't believe me, believe Albert Einstein. He once said to a reporter: "An hour sitting with a pretty girl on a park bench passes like a minute." Then Einstein quipped, "But a minute sitting on a hot stove seems like an hour." Christmas proves time is relative; the more relatives coming for Christmas, the faster it speeds by.

Or here is another proof of relativity: Black Friday. As retailers keep trying to pump up profits, Black Friday, the kick-off shopping day for the official Christmas buying-frenzy, has been turned into the longest day of the year. A few years ago just a couple of big chain stores began opening early. They offered special sales between the hours of 7AM and their usual opening time of 10AM. Then doors began opening at 6AM. Then 5, then 4. Now it's even intruding on Thanksgiving Day. And recently I heard about a huge mall outside Seattle that opens at 12:01 AM on Friday and stays open until Saturday at 10 PM. Black Friday (so named because merchants hoped a strong showing on that day would put them "in the black" for the year) is now more apt a name than ever. The biggest sales are conducted in the blackness of night.



## PREPARE FOR JESUS

In Ephesians chapter 5, St. Paul had some particularly pertinent things to say about "darkness" and light," about "night" and "day," about preparing for one reality, while still living in the midst of another: ". . . **once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.**" He goes on to say, "**Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.**" The four weeks of Advent are about self-examination to find and expose what must be removed to greet our King properly when He comes. It is a continuing process for us, as Christ comes not once, but three times:

The First Advent is the coming of Christ to earth as the Baby of Bethlehem.

The Second Advent is the coming of Christ in the Word and Sacrament.

The Third Advent is the final return of Christ to earth.

—Rev. Roland A. Jank, Jr



## Special Advent Service

### Service of Advent Carols and Readings

Thursday, December 3rd, 7:00 P.M.

### Soup and Sandwich Supper

Before the Service, beginning at 5:30 P.M.

Make your Advent season memorable this year and bring your family.

# T

o help everyone attend the *Advent Carols and Readings* service on Thursday, December 3rd, we are serving supper at Mount Olive from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. that evening. What a great way to begin the Advent season - sharing a meal with your Mount Olive family and friends! We plan to have a smorgasbord of hearty soups and sandwiches as well as desserts to polish off the meal.

## Children's Christmas Service Rehearsal

We are very excited to announce that practices for the Sunday School Christmas Service, "The King Is Coming", began Sunday, November 29th, at 10:30 A.M. and continue every Sunday through December 20th. Parents, please make every effort to have your children at every practice to learn songs, practice speaking parts, and prepare for the program. All Mount Olive Sunday School children are encouraged to participate in this Christmas tradition!

## Don't miss the Children's Christmas Service, "The King is Coming"

Sunday, December 20th, at 4:00 p.m.



*Refreshments served afterwards.*

The Mount Olive Book Club will meet Tuesday, December 8, at 6:30 at the home of **Laverne Middendorf**. Please bring six dozen cookies to exchange for our annual cookie exchange. The book we will discuss is The Christmas Train by David Baldacci.



Disillusioned journalist Tom Langdon must get from Washington D.C. to Los Angeles in time for Christmas. Forced to travel by train, he begins a journey of rude awakenings, thrilling adventures and holiday magic. He has no idea that the locomotives pulling him across America will actually take him into the rugged terrain of his own heart, as he rediscovers people's essential goodness and someone very special he believed he had lost. The Christmas Train is filled with memorable characters who have packed their bags with as much wisdom as mischief ... and shows how we do get second chances to fulfill our deepest hopes and dreams, especially during this season of miracles.

Our January meeting will be Tuesday, January 12th, at 7:00 p.m. at the home of **Liz Matson. Carol Childers** will provide dessert. Our January selection will be Eleanor & Park by local author Rainbow Rowell.



**December** is a good time to remember with a card some of our congregational members who have limited mobility.

**Myrene Abels**  
3127 Fillmore St  
Omaha, NE 68112-1728

**Elvira Frazer**  
4656 Willit St  
Omaha, NE 68152-1955

**Gloria Lee HighHawk**  
C/O St. Joseph Villa  
2305 S 10 St  
Omaha, NE 68108

**Neena Kraemer-Solberg**  
2521 N 60 St  
Omaha, NE 68104-4112

**Doyle Peterson**  
C/O Florence Home  
7915 N 30 St #212  
Omaha, NE 68112

**Harry Sorensen**  
12008 N 40 St  
Omaha, NE 68112



Join us for a fun family evening of Caroling, Cookies and Cocoa. All ages and singing abilities are welcome! We will meet at the home of **Paul and Jill Clausen** (5476 Clay Street) at

6:00 p.m. on Sunday December 13th. We will spend about an hour caroling in the Raven Oaks neighborhood and then head back to the **Clausen's** for refreshments. Any questions please contact **Jill** at 402-650-5962 or paulandjill@cox.net.



## Attention Mount Olive Holiday Bakers

It's that time of year to get out those mixing bowls and cookie sheets!

Find your candy thermometer and measuring cups!

Track down your rolling pin and dig out that cookie press!

Mount Olive will once again host a **Cookie Swap** on Sunday, December 6, at 11:30 A.M. To participate, bring three to four dozen cookies, bars, snacks or candies. Be sure to bring a container to take home your Christmas goodies (plan for around three dozen). If you would like to share your recipe, bring it and we will make copies as needed. We will set up in the old preschool area (room next to Luther Hall) and the swap will take place following the Adult Bible Class Hour/Sunday School Class. Bring an old family favorite or try something new. Each participant will have plenty of delicious treats to serve family and friends during the holidays!

Questions...Comments...Concerns...Contact **Anne Wegner** at (402) 980-6953!



## In Ministry With God's People

We remember in prayer

...**Mary Hahn, Lorraine Irwin, Neena Kraemer-Solberg, Rod and Karen Lorang, Mike McGrath, Dawn Payne, Don Weihe, and Janet Zulfer.**

...**Lorraine Irwin**, who mourns the death of her husband, **Jack.**

...**Kaylee Fly and Ethan Smith**, who were married on November 14.

...**Emad and Shireen Tawadrous** in their work as POBLO missionaries in metro Omaha and the Peace International Center at 44th and Grover.

...the English Language Learning (ELL) classes at Mount Olive and the teachers, greeters, and coordinator, **Marsha Behr.**

*(Continued on page 14)*



Mt. Olive Prayer  
Chain

If you have a prayer request, please call **Kristi Townsend** at 402-457-9611 or by email at [townsend.kristi@gmail.com](mailto:townsend.kristi@gmail.com)

Thank You

Poinsettia

Thank you to **Sharon McDonald, Barb Stacy,** and **Bonnie White** for helping with the November Messenger.

POBLO

Thank you to **Barb Stacy** and **Bonnie White** for taking the finished newsletter to the downtown post office.

We continue to assemble a few bags of groceries for our POBLO work with families who are in need. Items that can be used are: sugar, salt, tea, rice, flour, cooking oil, dried beans, jam, sugar-free peanut-butter, cookies, juice. Please no canned vegetables or macaroni and cheese. A receptacle for such foodstuffs is in the north hallway.

A special thank you to **Rich Wismont** who takes care of all of the church's recyclables.

Thank you to **Rosalie Soodsma** and **Pearl Wiley** for weekly lending a hand in the church office.

Would you like to help decorate the church with a poinsettia this year? The cost is \$11.50. Use the sheet on the table in the narthex to sign up by December 13. Please indicate whether you would like to leave the poinsettia or take it with you.



- Teresa Kuti

Many Thanks

Thank you to everyone who sent cards after **Jack's** death.

Sincerely,  
**Lorraine Irwin**

Baby Shower

Help us celebrate the birth of Mary's baby boy Jesus by providing much needed diapers for *Project Hope*. They are always in need of diapers (size newborn to adult), but especially at this time of year when budgets get tight. We will be collecting diapers throughout the month of December in the back of the church or you may make a monetary donation by marking it "Diaper Drive" and placing it in the offering plate. If you have any questions, please talk to one of the ladies in our LWML group, COSMO. They are **Jill Clausen, Annette Hurt, Suzan Jank, Marcia Steckelberg, and Jody Wells-Padron.**

# Stewardship



## REPORT

The Board of Stewardship thanks God for your generous response during this year's stewardship emphasis. Not only did the amount pledged increase substantially, but 20 new givers stepped forward in faith to make a financial pledge for 2016. Nearly half of our givers are now pledging.

Over 100 people enjoyed a delicious Thanksgiving celebration meal in Luther Hall on November 15th. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the Board of Parish Fellowship/Public Relations: **Marilyn Beig** and **Joan Johnson** for arranging the meal and **Sarah Jank** for the Thrivent Action Team grant of \$250 to help pay for the meal. Special thanks to **Arnie Jacobson** for the slide show depicting the many opportunities for community service we have been blessed with since our congregational renewal process in 2010.

We raised over \$200 for Project Hope at the meal and received a whole table full of items needed by Project Hope for its ministry. May God bless everyone who pledged, assisted, and/or attended.

- **Max Williams**  
Director, Board of Stewardship

Parents, if you need to get away from the kids to do some shopping, house work or just need a break, the Youth Group is planning a second babysitting day on Sunday, December 6th. The



Youth Group will provide lunch, snacks and activities from 11:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. so you can get away for a few hours. Parents may drop off their children at Mt. Olive for an hour, two hours, or for the whole time. There will be an adult present to help with any difficulties, but the youth will play and watch the children. There is not a set fee for this service but rather a free-will donation is requested. Registration is encouraged but walk-ins are welcome! Please R.S.V.P. on the sign up sheet or by contacting Kristi Townsend at [townsend.kristi@gmail.com](mailto:townsend.kristi@gmail.com), (402) 457-9611 or by joining the Facebook event and leave a comment with the number of kids attending.

**Youth Group Outings**

December 13, 6:00 p.m. - Christmas Caroling at the home of Paul and Jill Clausen. Please meet at church to carpool.

Winter break Sky Zone Party - Details TBD

**OUR MISSIONARIES ABROAD**

Mt. Olive is helping to support two missionaries and their families who live abroad. We remember them periodically in our public prayer. We ask that you continue to support them financially with your regular gifts. Information about their work is shared on the north hall bulletin board and in our Sunday worship. May it serve as an encouragement for your continued interest and support. For the year 2015 our missionaries abroad are:

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**Julie Lutz**  
 Box 803  
 Mt. Hagen,  
 Western Highlands Province  
 Papua New Guinea  
[lutz.travel@gmail.com](mailto:lutz.travel@gmail.com)

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Concordia English Center  
**Sharon Owens**  
 174 Rud de Pequim  
 Com. Bldg. Kong Fat 6 A-B  
 Macau, SAR China  
[smomacau@yahoo.com](mailto:smomacau@yahoo.com)

Simply Giving is a way to make your Sunday morning offerings convenient and consistent through preauthorized withdrawal from your checking account at no extra cost to you. It is safe and secure. Your giving continues even if you are out of town or aren't able to be at a worship service. Pick up a Simply Giving form from **Max Williams** or from the Church Office. Each year more members are using this plan.



**M**atthew 25 tells the story of a man who, going on a journey, entrusts his three servants with his wealth while he is gone: “To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his



### The Parable of the Talents

journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.”

The first two servants invested their master’s money, and received praise in return: “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” However, when the master learns the third servant buried his portion out of fear, he receives a rebuke.

Which servant do you identify with most? Do you tend to recognize your blessings and seek ways to multiply them? Or are you inclined to be more cautious, holding tightly to what you have been given so you don’t risk losing it?

This simple parable models how to wisely care for what has been entrusted to us. Through this parable we are challenged to:

- **Acknowledge God’s generosity.** Everything the three servants had was from the master. We also need to recognize that all we have is a gift from God.

- **Reflect on God’s heart.** What seems to have inhibited the third servant was his fear. But when we reflect on the heart of God we encounter love and are empowered to cast out fear.
- **Act according to God’s grace.** What distinguishes the first two servants is that they took action to multiply what they received. What is one action we can take to grow what God has given us?
- **Trust God’s provision.** Although each servant was given a different amount, they were given what they needed. Although each of us has received different gifts from God, we can multiply them and make a difference in the world.

This article provided compliments of Thrivent Financial and **Sarah Jank**, Financial Associate, 402.905.4229, [sarah.jank@thrivent.com](mailto:sarah.jank@thrivent.com)

Our Lord Jesus Christ healed the man with dropsy by His Word on the Sabbath (*Luke 14:1–6*). He is the great physician of both body and soul. The paradoxical symptom of dropsy was an unquenchable craving for drink even though the body was over inflated with fluid, a craving that when indulged served not to ease but to feed the disease. And so if a man drinks a great deal, but is never filled, he sees a doctor to inquire about what ails him, what is wrong with his body and how to remedy it. For that is not thirst but a disease (Seneca, *Consolation to His Mother Helvia*, 11.3).

But if the owner of five couches goes looking for ten, or the owner of ten tables buys up as many again, and even though he has plenty of land and money, he remains unsatisfied and desires yet more, losing sleep and always in discontent, does he not also require a physician to diagnose the cause of this distress? For this is not want or lack, but a disease (Aristippus, quoted in Plutarch, *Love of Wealth*, 524b). As St. Augustine of Hippo wrote, “we may rightly compare the dropsical man to a covetous rich man: For the more the one is swollen with excess of water, the more he thirsts; so also the other: The more he abounds in riches . . . the more eagerly he desires them” (*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 4, 135). Both require physicians. Both require diagnosis and medicine applied from the outside to the inward being. For these are not desires to be fulfilled but diseases to be cured.

This is why our Lord instructs us on taking care not to be overmuch consumed by money. “No one can serve two masters . . . You cannot serve God and money” (*Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13*).



The point is that our desire for money, like the disease dropsy, is never satisfied. We always desire more. We always think, if I just had this much then I would be happy. But even when that much comes, which God gladly gives, that happiness evades us. For the desire for more of these things is never satisfied. It demands our constant energy—either in procuring more or protecting what we already have. When this happens, God, in His mercy, shows us that the money that He has given is no longer serving us, but we it. We have another master.

To overcome this, we need a physician’s diagnosis and a physician’s remedy. And our Lord, Jesus Christ, our great physician of both body and soul, like the man healed of dropsy, applies His Word to us. He shows us how we have put our fear, our love, and our trust in our money and not feared, loved, and trusted in Him above all things. In essence, He says, “Stop it! Stop chasing after these fleeting things. They are vanity. They are the things that moth and rust destroy. For you cannot have two masters. Repent!” And in seeing our

great error, we are sorry that we have not fully feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. And, in the mercy and grace, that He earned for us on the cross, He takes away this sin, restores us to health, and bids us live.

But then what? What do we do with this healing balm and care that our great physician has done? Do we simply go back to our old ways? "By no means!" St. Paul says (*Romans 3:31; 6:2*). We do not just go back to the old ways. That way is dead to us and leads us to death. No, we live a new life, a life filled with the grace, mercy, and love of God toward us. And God's great mercy, grace, and love toward is so abundant that it overflows and pours out onto those around us. So we no longer hoard money and possessions. We no longer scrape and crawl our way to amass more. We give to those around us, as God in Christ has given to us. We press our money and possessions into service for those who need it: our family, our society, and our church. For money is God's gift to us to serve us and others. Not the other way round. It serves us because it is a gift from our Father in heaven.

**-Lutheran Church-  
Missouri Synod**

Many thanks to all who helped out with the Thanksgiving meal that was served to the congregation on Sunday, November 15 especially **Galen Behr, Rosemary Block, Dixie Gerhart, Laura Hogan, Nancy Jacobson, Suzan Jank, Liz Matson, Barb Stacy, Kelly Wegner** and her crew, **Jody Wells-Padron**, and all the of the men who helped carry roasters. We couldn't have done it without you!



-Parish Fellowship/Parish Relations

Looking for that unique gift? Zion Lutheran Church at 144th and Ida is having its annual Christmas Boutique on Saturday, December 5th, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m! Mark your calendars for the perfect opportunity to get your holiday shopping rolling with their handcrafted booths and specialty shops. For sale will be holiday décor and gifts, accessories, jewelry, candles, baked goods, home décor and more! Admission is \$2 and kids are free.

Plan to use an Advent wreath in your home with four candles. This will visually assist you in marking the four weeks of Advent waiting that precedes the celebration of Christ's incarnation. If you haven't already done so, please pick up an Advent devotional book that is available one per family.



# Quit Like A Champion!

*This article is provided by Mount Olive Health Ministry.*

*Each year, the American Cancer Society (ACS) sponsors the national event, the Great American SmokeOut, on the third Thursday of November, encouraging smokers to go the distance and finally give up smoking. About 42 million Americans still smoke cigarettes, and tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the USA. There are also about 12.5 million cigar smokers and 2.3 million who smoke tobacco in pipes. This year's theme is **QUIT LIKE A CHAMPION** .... It's a race for your health, and starts today!*

## **RISKS OF TOBACCO USE/EXPOSURE**

Tobacco (from a plant) contains more than 19 known cancer-causing chemicals (most are called "tar") and is an addictive substance because it contains the chemical nicotine.

Whether smoked or smokeless (e.g., chewing tobacco), when used over a long period, tobacco can increase the risk of many health problems:

- heart and blood vessel problems include blood clots and aneurysms (leading to strokes, heart attacks, blood clots in the lungs, etc.), poor blood supply to the legs, high blood pressure, erectile dysfunction due to decreased blood flow to the penis
- cancer, especially in the lung, mouth, larynx, esophagus, bladder, kidney, pancreas

- and uterine cervix
- poor wound healing, especially after surgery
- lung diseases such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis or asthma that is harder to control
- problems during pregnancy, including low-birth-weight babies, premature labor, miscarriage, stillbirth, cleft lip and/or cleft palate
- decreased ability to taste or smell
- damage to sperm, leading to infertility
- eye diseases, e.g., cataracts or loss of vision due to increased risk of macular degeneration
- gum disease including loss of teeth
- wrinkling of skin due to loss of collagen
- increased risk of type 2 diabetes (30-40% greater in smokers than non-smokers) and difficulty in diabetes control
- generalized inflammation (e.g., contributing to rheumatoid arthritis) and decreased immune system function

True... not all cases of these conditions are due to tobacco use; but **if nobody smoked, one of every three cancer deaths in the US would not happen.** Even if a smoker doesn't develop cancer, his/her risk of dying from other lung diseases (COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) is 12 to 13 times greater than a non-smoker's. Additionally, those who are regularly around the smoke of others ("second-hand smoke") have a higher risk of heart disease and heart attacks, lung cancer, sudden and severe reactions involving eyes, nose, throat, and lungs. Infants and children who are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer asthma,

infections like colds, ear infections, sore throats and pneumonia, poor lung function and sudden infant death syndrome (“SIDS”).

### **REDUCED RISKS BY QUITTING**

Quitting smoking cuts cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel) risks: just one year after quitting tobacco use, risk of heart attack drops sharply. Within 2-5 years after quitting, risk for stroke could fall to about the same as a non-smoker’s risk. Risk for cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus and bladder drop by about 50% within 5 years. Ten years after quitting tobacco use, risk for lung cancer drops by 50%.

### **YOU CAN QUIT FOR GOOD!**

The Great American SmokeOut challenges smokers to stop smoking for 24 hours, in the hope their decision will last forever. In 1970, in Randolph, Massachusetts, Arthur P. Mulaney suggested people give up cigarettes for a day and donate the money saved to a local high school. In 1974, a “Don’t Smoke Day” (or “D-Day”) was promoted by Lynn Smith of the *Monticello Times* in Monticello, Minnesota. The California Division of the ACS successfully prompted nearly one million smokers to quit for the day, marking the first SmokeOut!

Why not make this year *your* year to quit? Many people have quit, and you can too! (If you’re not a smoker, commit to encouraging those around you who are making an effort to stop this addictive behavior.)

Experts offer this advice:

- **MAKE A PLAN:** you’ll feel more in con-

trol if you have made a plan for quitting, including strategies for avoiding cigarettes when you feel an urge to smoke. The ACS can tell you about the steps you can take, and about quit-smoking programs, resources and support than can increase your chances of success. To learn about available tools, call 1-800-227-2345 and go to the Great American SmokeOut website. (*listed below*)

- **GET SUPPORT:** having support is one of the most helpful things you can do to succeed: people who have support are more likely to succeed than those who “go it alone”. Talk to your healthcare provider about quitting: he or she may suggest using a quitting aid, such as nicotine patches or gum; they may also consider writing a prescription for cessation medication, or recommend a quitting program offered through your local healthcare system. Check with your employer, too. Some cover the cost of such quitting programs to reduce company healthcare costs and absenteeism due to smoking related illnesses of employees.
- **DON’T GIVE UP!** Once you’ve quit, you may find it difficult at times not to go back to tobacco use. If you slip up, remember it takes most people several attempts before quitting for good. Each time you try, you get closer to your goal!

For more information, talk to your healthcare provider or a trained smoking cessation specialist.

<http://tobaccofreeca.com/quit-smoking/how-to-succeed>  
[www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/greatamericansmokeout](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/greatamericansmokeout)

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/quittingmoking.html>  
[http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/index.htm)

## Warning . . . . Warning: Advent Virus

Be on the alert for symptoms of inner Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. The hearts of a great many have already been exposed to this virus and it is possible that people everywhere could come with it in epidemic proportions. This could pose a serious threat to what has, up to now, been a fairly stable condition of conflict in the world. Some signs and symptoms of The Advent Virus:

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
- An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
- A loss of interest in judging other people.
- A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
- A loss of interest in conflict.
- A loss of the ability to worry. (This is a very serious symptom.)
- Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
- Frequent attacks of smiling.
- An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.
- An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.

This virus can and has affected many systems. Some systems have been completely cleaned out because of it.

*(Continued from page 5)*

...the depressed, the discouraged, the unemployed, and the lonely in our church family and our community.

...our need to march to a different drummer in this season of excess and empty merry-making.

...all the Christians suffering persecution around the globe.