

St John Church of Christ

December 13, 2020

Now meeting Online Only

The 14 Pointed Star

ONLINE



Our online Adult Bible Study continues this morning at 10:30. It's based on John McKee's recent book, *Peter the Friend of Jesus Speaks*. Our programs are available over the internet starting Sundays at 10:30 for Adult Class and 11:00 for Worship. Just visit

www.StJohnChurchOfChrist.org

and select "Sermons" from the menubar at the top, or click this link to visit our page on YouTube:

[St. John Church of Christ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



It may be one of the two ugliest churches in the world, but the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is a special place. It is a U.N. World Heritage Site - the first in Palestine and Israel. Constantine the Great's mother, Helen, was responsible for building it in 339 A.D. Since then, it has been rebuilt, survived destruction by the Persians (614), a mad caliph (1009), earthquake (1834) fire (1869), and an Israeli army siege against suspected Palestinian militants who had taken refuge there (2002). The Church of the Nativity was constructed over the traditional site of the birthplace of Jesus, a cave below the church.

If we were to climb down into the cave by the circular staircases on either side of the altar, we wouldn't recognize the grotto be-

low the church as a cave. Today it is hung with tapestries and lit with lamps. There is a simple altar, and there on the floor, supposedly over the very spot of his birth, is a fourteen-pointed Silver Star. While it is likely that Jesus was born in a cave (they were used as stables in those days), it is doubtful anyone would remember exactly which cave, much less precisely which place in the cave was the exact location of the birth of a carpenter's son almost 400 years earlier!

That Silver Star itself became one of the reasons for the Crimean War (1853-1856, famous for the charge of the light brigade and Florence Nightingale). There have been hostilities between the Roman Catholic Church (West) and Greek Orthodox Church (East) for

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centuries. Different churches control various parts of the shrines of Christendom in Israel. For example, the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian, Coptic, and Ethiopic churches control the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. These groups have often fought with each other (literally - imagine a brawl of monks using crucifixes and candlesticks as bludgeons). Today the keeper of the keys to that church is a Moslem!

In 1845 the Roman Catholic Silver Star, which supposedly marks the very place where Mary gave birth to Jesus, was stolen. Napoleon III of France proclaimed himself the protector of Catholics and insisted that he was the protector of the holy sites in Israel as well. The Russians had already claimed to be the protector of the holy sites in Israel and the Orthodox Church through the Turks. Napoleon demanded the keys to the front door of the Church of the Nativity be given to the Romans who were having to use a side door to get in, and he also demanded the silver star be returned. This became one of the causes of the Crimean War. The irony breaks my heart: people fighting over the right to protect the birthplace of the Prince of Peace!

Perhaps now, more than ever, we need the “peace that passes all understanding” to take control! With thousands of warring factions each claiming to be the true church, I want nothing to do with “religiosity.” I am neither Protestant, nor Catholic, nor Jew. I am just a Christian.



News & Prayer Requests

It has been a very difficult week for many of our families in St. John. We mourn the passing of Gladys Hornbaker as we also celebrate her life. In these difficult times, even funerals have been effected. Confined to Kenwood, Don was unable to attend, although their four children were. It was a simple graveside service at Peace Creek. A videotape of the service will be available online soon. Don says “Gladys is the woman Solomon was writing about in Proverbs 31.” She was very special.

Lifewise, Susan Rosenbaum, passed this week in Florida. Dennis and the family were at her side.

Covid-19 is striking many friends and family members. We’ve been praying for Curtis, and now we understand both he and his wife have been wrestling with the virus.

Paul, John’s friend from high school in Washington, continues to deal with his cancer. Please pray for Paul and his lovely wife Bernice.

Please pray especially for:

- The Turner family in Great Bend as they continue to heal.
- Stan as the doctors continue to minister to him.
- But above all else, let’s give thanks for the many blessings God continually gives us – even in these hard times!

