

Village
Voice



December
2025



The Prize

by Carolyn Karlstrom



"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25 (NIV)

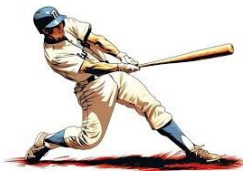


Baseball's 2025 World Series recently concluded, and it was quite an extravaganza. It was a series for the ages, some are saying. As many of you are aware, the last two teams remaining after a several-week build-up were the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Toronto Blue Jays. Both teams proved worthy of their first-in-division positions.



It was instructive to watch, read, and listen to the pundits, fans, news clips, games, interviews with players and coaches, etc. And it was all a very serious business, clearly.

The players showed some amazing skills. They could run, jump, slide, and reach; they showed physical strength and displayed phenomenal coordination; they had tremendous focus power. None of this happened by accident. It has involved practice, experience, running exercises, endless games of catch through the years, weight training, the development of agility skills, mind work, and time. Lots and lots of time.



All of these qualities were on display in Game Seven, the final game. There were heroic performances, emotions showing clearly on faces, body language and gestures easily read.

There was an eventual winner, of course—the Dodgers. The excitement that winning out caused among the Dodgers and the Dodgers faithful was something to behold. And it made me think. Are we as Christians as invested in and excited about our faith as the Dodgers and their fans are about baseball? I have never seen that level of enthusiasm displayed in a religious setting. And, to be fair, I suppose that the jumping and shouting, the high-fiving and whistling, the partying and fireworks and parades wouldn't be appropriate in church or during our personal devotional time.



But I think you know what I mean. Our relationship with Jesus, redemption from our sins, the prospect of eternal life—these are things that should engender in us the most spectacular passion, the greatest joy.

Baseball is a game, fun to watch and great theater, a nice way to while away a few hours. We love to be joined with others in a common cause, a shared interest. But Jesus provides all that and much more. In Jesus we find true purpose, the greatest hope, the most pleasure.

Let's consider spending more time and effort on spiritual things, and to thinking, talking about, and sharing things of a spiritual nature. Let's spend more time with Jesus. There's no trophy in this for us—no, there's something much bigger and much better. There's Jesus now and at the end. And then there's Jesus forever. That's a prize worth gaining.



Carolyn K.



“Jesus stands between divinity and humanity, and He is fully able to save you. He was manifested to take away our sins, to relieve our hearts of their sorrows and burdens, to put a new song into our mouth, even praise unto our God.”

—Bible Echo, July 1, 1892

Christmas Concert 2025: *The Song Heard 'Round the World*

by Luba Brunton



Saturday, December 6, 2025, 4 p.m.

SDA Village Church

715 SE 12th St., College Place, Washington

We warmly invite you to a joyful celebration of the Christmas season through music and praise. Our 2025 Christmas concert, *The Song Heard 'Round the World*, features the combined talents of the **Village Church Choir, Orchestra, Handbell Choir, Children's Choir and Chimes Ensemble**, and many gifted **soloists and instrumentalists**.

Preparations for this inspiring program began on September 10, with musicians of all ages dedicating their time and gifts to make this event a truly uplifting experience.

- The **Church Choir** rehearses every Wednesday at 6 p.m. and Sabbath mornings at 8:30 a.m.
- The **Orchestra** meets on Fridays at 7 p.m.
- The **Bell Choir** practices each Wednesday at 5 p.m.
- The **Children's Chimes Ensemble** rehearses Wednesdays at 3:40 p.m. followed by their **vocal practice** at 4:15 p.m.
- Additional rehearsals are also held with our **mandolin ensemble, percussion section, marimba player, accordionist, string, brass, and woodwind** players, as well as featured **soloists**.

This year's cantata, *The Song Heard 'Round the World*, is composed by **Joseph Martin**, who writes: "Let all the world in every corner sing! This is a season for music and celebration! Every culture in the world has its own Christmas legacy of song. Wherever there is Christmas worship, the eternal story of the holy



family is decorated with a lavish diversity of tuneful praise. From intimate lullabies to angelic acclamations, the music of Christmas covers the earth with its message of love and peace...

Let's lift up one mighty voice in a new carol! Christ is born! Glory to God in the highest!"

Luba Brunton

With these words as our inspiration, we invite you to join us in lifting your hearts and voices in celebration of the birth of Christ—the song that truly resounds around the world.



Silent Stars

by Terry Koch

One hundred and sixty years ago, Phillips Brooks, a priest in charge of a parish ministry at Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia, had embarked on a trip to the area known as the Holy Land. For him it was an antidote to the emotional and spiritual exhaustion that had overtaken him at the termination of the Civil War conflict and the shock experienced at the death of President Lincoln.



While Brooks was in the renowned city of Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, the stillness and quietude of the city touched him on a deep level as he contemplated the events of the birth of Christ. This prompted him to pen the lyrics to the treasured, well-known carol, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” Brooks then invited the organist at his church, Lewis Redner, to set the words to music.

Redner put off the task of composing this music, but one evening, he awoke with a tune in his mind and hurriedly jotted it down. A few days later, this new song was sung by a children's group in the church, and today, nearly everyone familiar with the music of Christmas has sung this lovely carol.



The beginning lines of “O Little Town of

Bethlehem” are the keystone of the third annual Lessons & Carols service directed by Village Church members Terry and Terri Koch on Sunday, December 21, 3 p.m., at Pioneer Methodist Church, 209 E Birch in Walla Walla.

“O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.”

The phrase “silent stars,” around which the Lessons and Carols framework for music and the spoken words was created, has an intriguing beauty to it.

Poetry containing reference to stars and featuring various events leading up to and including the birth of Jesus will be read by community members of all walks of life. Between the poetic readings there will be music that parallels the poems.

The musicians of the choir and orchestra come from various congregations and families of faith across the Walla Walla Valley, combining a beautiful mixture of talent and abilities with sacred music as their common denominator.



There will also be a children’s choir comprised of young people from Liberty Christian School, Rogers Adventist School, Saint Silouam Russian Orthodox Church, our own Village Church, and Pioneer United Methodist Church, singing together with the adult choir the sweet carol, “There’s A Song

In the Air” as part of an anthem titled “Silent Stars.”

No doubt you know of folks who are hurting. They may be anxious, distraught, uneasy about their own life situations or what is happening in our nation and world. Perhaps you are one such individual. Then this service of Lessons and Carols is a gift for you and others you may know!

The beautiful message of Christmas—that God and Jesus created a way for us to live by faith because of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, presented through timeless and familiar music can restore our





sense of calm and bring peace of mind.

Recently the writer went out on a clear, crisp evening and he was arrested by the brilliant sight of the full moon washing over the atmosphere. As his eyes adjusted, the glowing, scintillating twinkles of the starry host began to appear causing a thought to come to mind: “Who am I amid this vast array in the skies? I am one small, insignificant human on a small planet amid this boundless expanse of space!”

Then an answer formed: I am so precious, even as just one diminutive individual in God’s sight, that He sent His Son on a starlit night to provide the way to live victoriously and to inherit eternal life.

Isaiah 40:26 eloquently presents how intimately God knows even the host of starry lights in the heavens:

“Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars?

He brings them out like an army,
one after another,
calling each by its name.” (NLT)

If God knows the innumerable stars by their individual names, then certainly we can all have the assurance that, no matter the state of circumstances swirling around us, as Robert Browning stated in his poem, “Pippa’s Song”,

“God’s in His heaven—All’s right with the world!”

You are invited to attend this service of worship. It is free and open to the public. There is elevator access on the parking lot level. Arrive early, as parking lot and seating tend to fill up quickly. Music will begin around 2:45 and the actual service will commence at 3 p.m.

Come prepared to be blessed and to join in singing well-known carols such as “The First Noel,” “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “Go Tell It On the Mountain,” and others, all accompanied by a full orchestra.

We hope to see you there!

Terry Koch



Family Matters—by Bev Donahey

The Best Gift Was Jesus!

Christmas is coming! That brings thoughts of Jesus' birth, gifts, parties, decorations, and programs.

We can use Christmastime as an opportunity to help children become thoughtful, generous and grateful. They need to learn to focus not only on what they will get but also on what they can do for others. When children are quite young, they can learn that Jesus came to help people. They can be led to consider how they can help someone. Money management skills can be taught as they prepare their gift list. And they must be taught how to receive a gift graciously (whether it is what they wanted or not).



Meaningful traditions are important. Some families worship with a parent reading the Christmas story from the Bible or a Bible Story book and then they sing Away in a Manger. Others do a skit, acting out the story. Children can help make Christmas cookies or food baskets and deliver them to neighbors or needy families. The best gifts for family are eye contact and smiles, all year long! Help people in need by donating to ADRA and visit local people who are lonely.

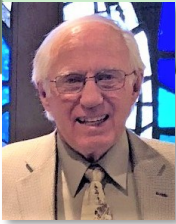


If someone “just wants to spend time together” do it! Plan a fun, relaxing or exciting time, delicious food, maybe a special place to go to be together and to see something interesting like a museum or park or fancy restaurant, or drive to a scenic area. Children may not say they just want to spend time together, but they will certainly benefit from these happy experiences. You can do that in addition to giving something else. I hope you have a merry Christmas!

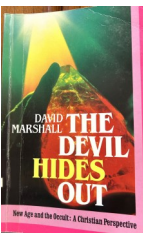
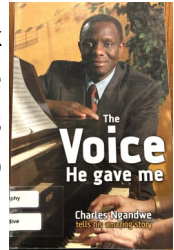


Bev Donahey has degrees in psychology and Applied Behavioral Science and shares tips she picks up from her experiences, friends and research.

From the Library—by Marcel Grondahl



“The Voice He Gave Me” Charles Ngandwe tells his amazing story. This is the inspirational story of a man who was beaten down by circumstances but with God’s help got up, dusted himself off, and used his voice to glorify God. He started out simply singing at village funerals in Zambia and then took voice training at Helderberg College after which he shone in the spotlights of Pretoria’s opera houses and won national acclaim. His voice is easy to identify—a beautiful basso profundo, well known throughout Africa. Read and be encouraged.



“The Devil Hides Out” is an expose by David Marshall of the methodology used by the devil to gain followers. He cites research into the evidence for demonic activity that is becoming more and more commonplace. Yes, he relates stories but turns to research from reputable scholars to document his conclusions. And his conclusions? The devil is alive and prospering. In fact, Marshall’s research has led him to the conclusion that up to 65 million in the US alone are involved in occult practices ranging from tarot cards, ouija boards, and astrology to witchcraft and outright Satan worship. Read and be informed.

“The Tender Touch of Love” by Mike Macintosh, if read and put into practice, will turn your hurts into hope, the author claims. He writes from the perspective of a pastor as well as from his position as chaplain to the San Diego Police Department so, yes, he has seen “hurts” up close. This book is his attempt to provide healing and hope in place of despair and pain. As you read the case studies quoted in his book you will be inspired and



encouraged to apply the tender touch of love to all you come in contact with. Read and be inspired.



“Flying Doctor of the Philippines” is the book by Raymond Woolsey that tells the story of Dr. William C. Richi who gave his life in service to the people of the Philippines. Dr. Richi is a unique individual who does not relish the spotlight, rather his actions speak of his commitment to the Lord. There is no other medical person as well known in the islands as this man for the countless people he and his airplane have reached in the far corners of the Philippines. He has no use for formalities and could care less that a photographer make a record his work. But the stories that have come out of cases that he has treated are the stuff of legends. Read and be amazed!



Top 25 Christmas Songs!

by Gary Heagy

Tune in to KLRF 88.5 FM for the Top 25 Christmas Songs, as voted by our listeners, to celebrate KLRF’s 25th anniversary in December! Pastors Steve Reasor, James Ash, and Lloyd Perrin will introduce the songs in a countdown from #25 to #1. This countdown covers half of the songs the first day and the last half on the second day. It will be played each week during December on various days and at a different time of day each week to make it possible for everyone to have a chance to tune in. Below is the schedule for the times the Top 25 Christmas songs will be aired:

WEEK 1 - Wednesday, Dec. 3, and Thursday, Dec. 4, at 6:30 am

WEEK 2 - Monday, Dec. 8, and Tuesday, Dec. 9, at 11:00 am

WEEK 3 - Tuesday, Dec. 16, and Wednesday, Dec. 17, at 3:00 pm

WEEK 4 - Wednesday, Dec. 24, and Thursday, Dec. 25, at 5:00 pm

Cast Your Bread Upon the Waters

by Luba Brunton

Before I share my story, let me tell you a little about the land where it took place—Tajikistan, a small but breathtakingly beautiful country in Central Asia.

During my childhood, Tajikistan was part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which included sixteen republics such as Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and others. Tajikistan bordered Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China, surrounded by majestic mountains and clear, rushing rivers.



More than ninety percent of the country is covered by mountains—among them the mighty Pamir Mountains, known as “The Roof of the World.” The Ismoil Somoni Peak rises to more than 7,400 meters (over 24,000 feet), making it one of the highest in all Asia. The Nurek Dam, located in Southern Tajikistan, is one of the tallest dams in the world, standing 300 meters high (984 feet), and providing hydroelectric power to much of the region.



Tajikistan is famous for its cotton fields, called “white gold” by the locals, and for its vast markets filled with color, sound, and the fragrance of ripe fruit. In every city and town, the bazaar is the beating

heart of life—a place where people sell and trade grapes, pomegranates, melons, figs, peaches, apricots, persimmons, and many other treasures. It truly feels like a paradise on earth.

In our garden we had many varieties of grapes, very sweet, and many types of trees.



A couple years ago my husband and I planted the same type of fruit trees in our garden in College Place.

A bread called lepeška was the main food in the family. It was prepared in a special way, using a traditional clay oven called a tandoor.



Traditional Tajik costumes are bright and beautiful, with men often wearing long robes called chapans and women adorning themselves with colorful dresses, scarves, and jewelry. From the General Conference Exhibits we bought their costumes for my husband and me.

This land is where my childhood unfolded—a place of beauty, faith, and unforgettable memories.

Today I want to share a true story from my childhood in this country. I was seven years old at the time. Our family lived in a small town in this Muslim country, and our closest neighbors were a Muslim family with seven children. We had eight children in our family, so together we filled the street with laughter and games every day.

Today I want to share a true story from my childhood in this country. I was



One day, tragedy struck our neighbors. Their father was a fuel truck driver, and while he was traveling through the high mountain roads to deliver gasoline, bandits attacked him, stole the truck, and killed him. The family was left without a husband and father—seven children and a widow, alone and grieving.

My father could not remain indifferent. He brought them food and all the supplies they would need for winter—coal, firewood, potatoes, and onions. My mother cooked and baked as if for two families, sharing everything she made. We children continued to play together, and somehow, life still carried moments of joy, music, and faith. I remember a song that we sang from the Bible

verse, “Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.”

Our neighbor listened to the Gospel with great interest and began to believe in Jesus Christ with her whole heart. I will never forget the day my father received a New Testament from our conference in the Tajik language. He brought it to her right away. But before opening it, she took a shower, put on clean clothes, spread her prayer rug on the floor, and knelt down to read it. Her reverence for the Holy Scriptures became an example for our whole family—she treated the Bible as something sacred and precious.

She couldn’t come to church with us. The laws in that region were harsh; if anyone found out she had accepted Christ, she could have been killed. Yet God had already planted His seeds of truth deep in her heart. Our family preached not only with words but through the way we lived.

Years passed. The children of both families grew up and moved away, but our parents stayed in that same place. Then came the time when God fulfilled His promise: “Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.”

In 1987, I became a widow. During the summers, my parents helped me care for my children. In 1991, I brought them to stay again with their grandparents for three summer months. When it was time for school, I came to take them home, but my parents asked to keep my youngest son a little longer.



Of course I agreed. It was already cold and rainy in Lipetsk, while Tajikistan was still filled with sunshine and fruit—a small paradise for a little boy.

My parents were planning to move closer to me. The political situation in Tajikistan was becoming unstable, and they had already purchased train tickets for October 10. We comforted ourselves thinking, “Just two more months, and we’ll all be together again.”

By that time, most Russian-speaking families had already fled the country. Only eleven families remained in our church. My father, the head deacon, cared for them faithfully.

But on September 10, everything changed. The railway was destroyed, and civil war broke out.

I wept in despair. I called every major airport, searching desperately for a way to bring them home. The answer was always the same: “Woman, even if you had a bar of gold, no one would fly there. It’s war.”



The leader of the opposition lived on the same street as my parents, and fierce battles raged around them. People were killed. Homes and cars burned. Power lines were destroyed. Yet—by a miracle of God—the telephone line to my parents’ house, running on those same poles, remained intact. It was the only line still working in the entire area.

Through that fragile wire we could still speak and pray together. Every morning and evening I heard the tender voice of my little boy, only four and a half years old. He would recite Bible verses his grandmother had taught him and sing children’s songs about Jesus.

Those words—simple and pure—filled my heart with peace and hope.

That is how they survived the war for a year and a half.

Bread became the greatest need. People waited in line for two or even three days just to buy a single loaf.

My parents had already sold nearly everything they owned. Only a few suitcases remained—and one bucket of honey.

My father later told me that my little son’s presence gave them strength to endure. The child didn’t understand war—he only wanted to eat, play, and laugh. His innocent joy reminded them of God’s goodness even in the darkest times.

Each day they prayed for food and protection. One late evening, there was a knock at the door. Standing there was our old neighbor—the same woman whose husband had died years before. She said, “Now it’s our turn to help your family.”

Her son was serving in the army, driving a military tank that delivered bread to a nearby base. She told my father, “Go! He’s waiting for you.” That night, my father and the young soldier prayed together inside the



tank for God’s protection as they drove to the military bakery. There the young man handed my father a sack filled with twelve loaves of fresh bread.



Early the next morning, my father got on his bicycle and delivered one loaf to each of the eleven



families from our church. This miracle repeated every week for a year and a half—until the war finally ended.

God had kept His promise: “When difficult times come, My people will have _____ bread and water.”

Luba Brunton

Truly, when we cast our bread upon the waters—when we give in faith and love—it always returns to us, multiplied, in our hour of need.



May the Lord bless you richly.

Soup’s On! Cooking Class Report



Around fifty people attended the Soup’s On! cooking class event that took place Monday evening, November 17. Hosted by the lovely nonagenarians of the Health and Wellness Committee, Mary Lou Tillay and Rita Schroeder, Soup’s On! featured five soup recipes. Each cook prepared her contribution at home and brought samples for attendees to taste. These cooks were Barbara Frohne, Betty Roberton, Patty Travis, Terry Forsyth, and her friend Lorie Cummings. As a bonus, Mary Lou included a copy of Marian Reiber’s Gluten Steaks recipe in the booklet shared with those who attended.



Lorie Cummings demonstrating the ingredients she puts in her soup



Mary Lou Tillay speaking from the front



Soup samples being shared with the group



Betty Robertson waiting in the kitchen



Ladies at the front table preparing to distribute the samples

The Village Pantry—hosted by Pattie Reasor

I have a dear friend whose son attends Walla Walla University. He happens to have celiac disease, so when I invited him over for dinner, I called my friend to ask for a fruit crisp topping that was both gluten-free and nut-free, since another guest had a nut allergy. She shared this simple, delicious recipe with me, and I've made it many times since—even for guests without any dietary restrictions. It comes together in just a few minutes!



Kerry's Fruit Crisp



For this particular crisp, I peeled and sliced fresh pears, which only takes a little time, but I've also used a mixed bag of frozen fruit with great results. I just toss the fruit with a bit of sugar and a squeeze of lemon, sprinkle on the topping, and in less than 10 minutes my dessert is ready for the oven.

Fruit Filling

- 8-10 pears peeled, cores removed, and sliced
- ¼ cup of brown sugar
- 2 tsp. of pumpkin pie spice
- ¼ tsp. ginger spice

Crisp Topping

- 2 cups of Crispix, crushed
- 1 ½ cups of 1 for 1 gluten free flour (I used Bob's Red Mill)
- ¾ cup white sugar
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 cup of margarine or butter (I used Earth Balance)



Grease a 9x12 pan and fill with the fruit filling then in another bowl mix the crushed Crispix, flour sugar, cinnamon and melted butter. Spread over the top of the fruit and bake at 375° F for 40 min.

Pattie Reasor with her good friend and amazing gluten-free cook Kerry Sackett at the NAD teachers convention in Chicago.



Who's Coming to Dinner?

by Daphne Duncan

On January 31, 2026, you will find out who is coming to dinner. However, you get to decide... are you the host or the guest?

Who's Coming to Dinner is an opportunity for Village Church members to get better acquainted by eating a meal together. During the next month, you will have the opportunity to sign up as a host or a guest.

When you sign up to host a Sabbath lunch, you will tell us how many you are willing to invite to your home, whether you want to have kids attend or just adults, and whether you will serve vegetarian or vegan food. If you sign up as a guest, you will let us know how many are in your family, specifying the number of children and any food preferences or allergies.

Hosts and guests will then be matched up for Sabbath lunch on January 31. At church on the 31st, guests will pick up directions to their host's home. Hosts will discover who their guests are when they show up at the door.

So, who is coming to dinner? Watch for signups so that you can find out on January 31!



“Jesus had come to the world, bringing the light of Heaven. He came as the Redeemer of mankind, to limit the power of Satan and set the captive free. . . The greatest gift of Heaven had been given to the world. Joy to the poor, for Christ had come to make them heirs of His kingdom! Joy to the rich, for He will teach them how to apply their earthly treasure that it may secure for them eternal riches in Heaven! Joy to the ignorant, for He has come to give them wisdom unto salvation! Joy to the learned, for He will open to their understanding deeper mysteries than they have ever before fathomed!”

—Spirit of Prophecy Vol. 2, p. 191

Christmas Cantata, December 6, 4 p.m.
Village Church Sanctuary

Pathfinder Fundraiser Cookie Walk
December 14, 2-5 p.m., Youth Center

Candlelight Communion, December 19
6:30 p.m. Village Church Sanctuary

Christmas Carol Service, December 20
10:50 a.m. Village Church Sanctuary

Lessons and Carols, December 21
3 p.m., Pioneer Methodist Church

Dear Village Voice readers,

It is the last month of 2025 and we're still here! Some might go to thoughts of failed mission. We've heard Jesus will come after the whole world has been warned and it's up to us to do the telling, hence the failed-mission conclusion. However, this train of thought is not going to that station.

The prophet Jeremiah had a difficult life by many standards. He served the Lord during a tumultuous and horrible time in Israel's history. Still, he trusted that in God's beautiful time and way, the Messiah would eventually arrive. God's purpose would triumph.

He knew his own daily life was in God's hands when he wrote the familiar and beautiful passage in Lamentations 3:22, 23, "Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."

And there is our destination station. His faithfulness. It's the reason we're still here, still alive and well, still loved beyond measure.

God bless you!

Karen Ekkens, editor

Karen Ekkens



Village Voice

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