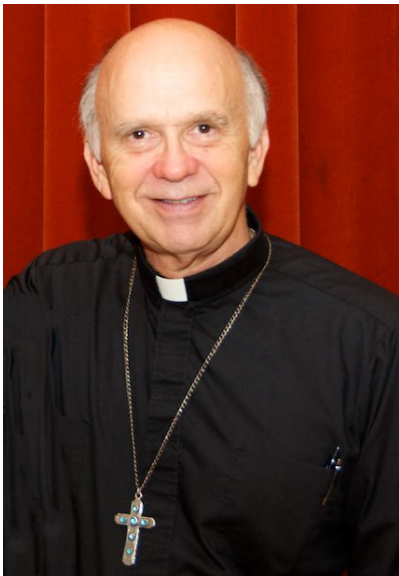


# Clifton Lutheran News

December 2011 thru January 2012



## From Pastor David Franks

What do we want  
for Christmas?

As I look back over my life I find that I can recall only a few gifts that I received for Christmas – a pair of cowboy chaps and six shooter when I was a child,

a small portable transistor radio when I was a teenager (that era's iPod), a sweater from a girlfriend when I was in college.

And now I am at that point in life when I have most of the material things I need and, even if I need something, it is much easier for me to just go out and get what I want. So the material gift aspect of Christmas, which used to be so important, is no longer of much significance.

As we age perhaps we hopefully come to take pleasure in the relational dimension of Christmas. It is, after all, a time when most of us have increased contact with each other, and a time when we at least try to be extra charitable and open. Some of this occurs at parties or at special events such as plays, programs, concerts, performances, etc. and much of it, of course, occurs at church.

The heart of the Christmas story is of the power of the infant Jesus to create community – a community that around Bethlehem two thousand years ago included the divine and human, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak. Around this baby the Gospels say the angels sang, the shepherds gathered, the wise men bowed and the animals rested.

The true gift of Christmas is the power of Christ to create a richness and diversity of community found nowhere else. I pray that this gift, this richness of community, may infuse our Advent and Christmas observances as people of all ages, from all walks of life, of different political and social views gather around the age-old story that still has incredible power to connect us to God and to each other.

This is a gift that time cannot destroy, something we can't lose or misplace and something we can't go out and get for ourselves. It is a gift that comes from pure grace and will warm us in the New Year and for years to come.