

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 12/20/2021

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, December 21 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for the peace which passes all understanding. This is not just a time away from war or violence, though these are important to pray for also. The peace that passes all understanding come when we turn to God in gratitude and humility, and one another in acceptance and inclusion.*

We've all seen or heard the phrase, "Merry Xmas." Maybe you dislike or have reacted negatively to the expression. Where did this phrase come from? Is it disrespectful of Christmas?

In the Greek, "X" is the letter "chi," pronounced "kee" in biblical Greek or "ki" in modern Greek. The letter "chi" represents the sound of "ch." In Greek, chi is the first letter of the word "Christ," which means "Messiah" in the Hebrew, or "Savior" in English. So, "Christ," "Messiah," and "Savior" all translate to the same thing. And, by the way, Christ is not Jesus' last name. It refers to His role as He comes into our world. He is the Savior, the Christ.

The second Greek letter of "Christ" is "P" or "rho." It is the Greek equivalent of our letter "r." Perhaps you've seen the symbol of chi-rho in church, combining the chi and rho:



This was an early Christian symbol to represent Christ, especially during times of persecution when speaking or showing the name of Christ could lead to arrest.

A "mass," of course, is worship service, especially when it includes Holy Communion. The term is used more by Roman Catholics than by Protestants who usually just say "worship." A very special service each year for hundreds of years has been the "Mass for the Birth of Christ" or "Christ's Mass." This term was sort of run together over the centuries to become "Christmas."

Thus, when you hear "Xmas," it is actually an appropriate way of referring to Christ's Mass or Christmas. Personally, I think, since most people don't use these Greek letters and often don't understand their historic meaning, the term "Xmas" is lost and it has become just as quick way of writing Christmas. There is value in naming it as "Christmas" since it contains the identifier

of “Christ,” and uplifts the title of our Savior, Jesus the Christ. And I hope I see many of you at our “Mass for the Birth of Christ” on Friday evening at 6:00pm at St. Andrew Lutheran Church.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey