

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT: Steadfast in the Word, Bethlehem Lutheran Church shares Christ and serves people with friendship in His love in all God's world.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance, fellow sojourners!

THE BEAUTY OF CHRISTMAS is found in its simplicity and its enormous significance! The angel announces to Joseph: *"He will be called Immanuel, which means 'God-with-us'"* (St. Matthew 1:23).

THIS WONDERFUL CHRISTIAN MESSAGE is a personal one. It is extended to you personally ... to me personally. God could give us no greater assurance than the fact that He is with us!

I AM REMINDED EVERY YEAR that the great God, my Heavenly Father, put Himself into human form to remind me that He is always with me. Immanuel. I can know and experience this truth for a fact when I learn to trust Him in all things, in all circumstances, and at all times. Jesus Christ -- Immanuel -- never fails me!

PEGGY AND I extend to you our most heartfelt Christmas greetings. May God richly bless you in this special season of the year. You are always in our prayers ... especially at this Adventide. By God's grace, we are celebrating another Advent and Christmas with you. It has been and remains a joy, a gift of the Father, to serve you. Please pray for me constantly. Pray also for our Office and Music Staff and our Lay Leadership. Pray for one another. Pray for our mission together in this time and place. There is much work that is unfinished. There is so much for us to do. More of God's Word to study and share ... and to do so with meaningful action. I still believe that we (all of us, together) have much to offer the world's hurts and hopes. We have a WORD of promise, wholeness, and healing to offer people! We have the WORD of a compassionate Christ to proclaim in this community!

Our Worship Schedule for December

Advent Midweek Services — Wednesdays at 7 p.m. "God's Advent Family" - Interviews with Bible Characters from the CHRISTmass Story:

- 12/6 – an interview with Zechariah, father of John the Baptizer
- 12/13 – an interview with Joseph, faithful carpenter
- 12/20 – an interview with Mary, the mother of our Lord

Christmas Eve — Sunday, December 24:

- 7 p.m. – A Service of Carols & Candlelight

Christmas Day – Monday, December 25:

- 10:15 a.m. – Divine Service with Holy Communion



✚ ✚ ✚

I look forward to seeing you at our Advent Services ... Christmas Eve ... Christmas Day ... and each Sunday morning ... worshipping and studying with you ... lifting up and exalting our great God with you! Come with a smile on your face, a bounce in your step, your personal Bible in hand, and that friend you personally and intentionally invited. Also, bring a joyful, eager attitude to be touched by the Christ-Child, together with a hungry heart for spiritual vitality and victorious living that comes each time we encounter God's renewing presence in Word & Sacrament!



The Christmas Tree can be used in association with Christ and His birthday. Martin Luther was one of the first to use the Christmas tree as a home decoration. While on a walk one Christmas Eve, he noticed an evergreen tree shining in the moonlight. He couldn't forget the beautiful picture. He returned home with the evergreen tree and decorated it with shining candles. He told his children that this tree should remind them of the brightness of Christmas and its message of the Savior's birth. The world would have been in eternal darkness without Christ, its light.

THE TREE-In the Bible the tree is both a symbol of man's sin and his Savior from sin. Let your Christmas tree remind you of this. With a tree whose fruit was forbidden, the devil overcame Adam and Eve. They listened to the devil and brought sin and death into the world. It was by a tree, the wooden cross of Calvary, that the Savior Jesus overcame the devil, sin, death, and hell. He suffered and died in our place and for the sins of the whole world. Thus God's first Christmas Gift was hung on the tree of the cross.

ITS LIGHT-Jesus, the Light of the world, came to give light to those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death. He came to guide our feet in the way of peace.

DECORATIONS-These should remind you of the beauty of the crown of everlasting life, received through faith in the Christ Child, our Savior.

EVERGREEN TREES-Evergreen trees are always green. So faith and trust in Jesus should flourish in every condition of life. "He that spared not His own Son . . . shall freely give us all

things" (Romans 8:38,39).

A DEPOSITORY FOR GIFTS-Christmas gifts are proper if they remind the giver and receiver both of God's great Christmas gift. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). Explain this to your family and add to their Christmas joy.

A CHRISTMAS TREE WILL DIE-Cut off from its source of nourishment, your Christmas tree will soon be lifeless. The needles will soon begin to brown and dry. After Christmas the tree will be thrown out and burned. Let this remind you that those whose faith is not regularly nourished with the Word of God and the Sacraments will eventually become spiritually dead. Theirs is a tragic burning which is eternal (Matthew 7:17-19).

THE STAR AT THE TOP-A star, frequently topping a Christmas Tree. Let it remind you that in Christ, God has sent His Light to the world. As the Magi of old were led to the Christ-Child by the Star, remember to follow His Light in your journey heavenward (Matthew 2:1,2).

THE ANGEL AT THE TOP-The angel, is another frequently used tree topping, should remind you of the announcement of the angel to the shepherds: "Fear not, for I bring good tidings of great joy . . . for unto you is born . . . a Savior, Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10,11).

REMINDED AGAIN-Again, this Christmas, let the Tree remind you of God's great love for you! Make Jesus your greatest Christmas joy. Believe in Jesus, true God, Who became man so that He might be our Savior.

**"Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel,
Shall come to you, O Israel!"**



DECEMBER 11TH-14TH

We will be assisting at the Palestine Food Pantry TOY STORE at Court Drive Church of Christ. Donate toys, or money for toys (we'll shop for you). We need toys ages 0 – high school (especially girls ages 6-11). You can also help us wrap presents at the Toy Store December 11-14, (the busiest day is the 14th) 6-9 pm.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH -

AFTER THE DIVINE SERVICE

Please join us for our annual Holiday Dinner. Ham and turkey will be provided. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex for sides and desserts. See Megan Taylor for how you can help with food, decorating and clean-up.

*Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Sutton
request the honor of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter*

Kassie Kae

to

James Tyler

son of

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Pike

*Sunday, December 31, 2017
at Seven O'clock in the evening*

at

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Reception to follow Ceremony

**SUNDAY SCHOOL
CHRISTMAS PROGRAM
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH**

Reflecting the joy within his family, Martin Luther wrote a hymn for his children's Christmas Eve celebration. Come worship with the children as they present his hymn, "From Heaven Above." Practice will be after Divine Service December 10th. Dress rehearsal is Saturday, December 16th at 10 AM.



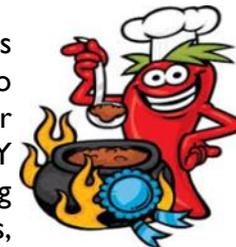
CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

We have ordered 20 red poinsettias to decorate our chancel for Christmas. A sign-up sheet is posted in the narthex and you also have the opportunity to place these flowers "in memory of." a loved one. The cost is \$10 each. Your



**CHILI FRIDAY
JANUARY 26TH 2018**

Mark your calendars ... Chili Friday is January 26th. This is a great time to invite the community to come eat our chili. More to come!! CHILI FRIDAY Silent Auction items are being collected. If you have any craft items, appliances, artwork or anything that



trimmings.

Thanks to the congregation for attending, the helpers who set up Luther Hall, those who assisted visitors during the sale, prepared and served lunch, everyone who pitched in to do whatever was needed, those who were there to help take down and pack up – all worked hard (and had fun) making the Bazaar a successful fundraiser.

Some of the sales were made on Sunday following the Bazaar, including pounds of barbecue meat, and desserts. At last count we have proceeds of over \$1,500.00, and still have a couple of checks to deposit. As you know, we use our proceeds to benefit our church and the community at large.



Our national **LWML** has declared November 28, 2017, as “Giving Tuesday” when funds will be collected for MITES and, thanks to matching funds, will be tripled, under the title of “From One Generation to the Next.” Our society will be donating \$50.00 toward this effort.

Operation Christmas Child – The youth of our church are putting together special shoe boxes of items. Our LWML is donating \$50.00 toward the shipment of the boxes to children in need. Thanks to Yanneth Harris and the youth.

Our LWML is donating \$50.00 to the ministry of Rev. Karim Baidaoui, **Disciples of the Way**, who was the speaker at the Circuit #14 Pastor/Lay Retreat at Bethlehem on Saturday, November 11. Then on Sunday, November 12, he taught our Bible Class and was our guest Preacher.

TOY DRIVE – Court Drive Church of Christ is collecting toys which will be wrapped on Dec. 11 – 14. Our LWML is contributing \$50.00 toward this effort. Contact Donna Hughes for more details.

As we are celebrating the 500-Year anniversary of the Reformation, an article of note from the *Lutheran Women’s Quarterly* (Fall 2017) is entitled, “**A Day in the Life of Katie Luther.**” Please check the Narthex for a copy of this publication.

Kroger Community Rewards: Please continue to use your Kroger card to support LWML’s efforts to benefit the community in various ways.

CARD FRONTS -- We are continuing to gather more card fronts to send to the children of St. Jude Ranch for their fundraising efforts. With Christmas coming up, you may find you won’t be using some of your cards – we’ll take them! As you are rearranging your house for the holidays, please look around for more cards for all occasions. (Please note: Because of copyright laws, Hallmark, Disney or American Greetings cards will NOT be accepted.) Only the card front is required; please trim to 7” by 5” or smaller and place them into the collection box in Garber Hall. Thank you for participating in this activity.

CALENDAR NOTES:

- Advent Meal, Wednesday, December 6, at 6:00 p.m. to be provided by LWML Willing Workers
- Next LWML Meeting: Sunday after church, December 10, 2017.

Each woman who is a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church is invited to attend our meetings, usually held after church on the second Sunday of the month. No need to be a member in order to participate in any of our activities. There are no dues, but we collect donations for MITES and for our general fund. Our major fundraising event is the Annual Bazaar



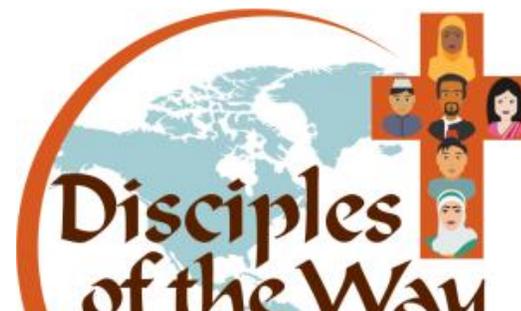
The youth packed 60 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child

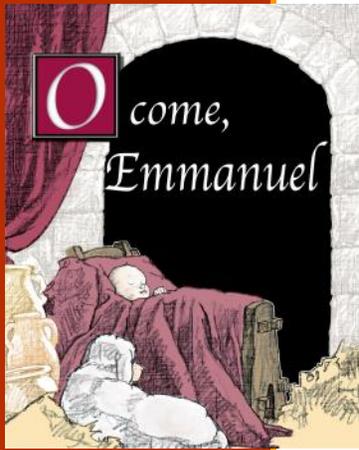


Bethlehem watches "Luther" to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation



THANK YOU: To Megan Taylor for a fun "Luther" movie night, to those who helped with the LWML Bazaar, to all who helped with the Circuit 14 retreat and making Pastor Baidaoui and Timothy feel welcome, those who brought items to fill the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes (the youth packed and shipped 60 boxes!!), to those who sponsor the American Flags that fly in front of our church during special times of the year, to those unsung heroes who make sure the lights work, the a/c and heat is on, fix leaks and other things that we take for granted and most importantly, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, without Him coming to us as a babe and paying the ultimate sacrifice we so deserve, we would not have the eternal hope that as believers we have!





The Christian Church Calendar begins a new year in the season called Advent.

The Christian Church Calendar began a new year in the season called Advent on Sunday, December 3.

“Advent” means “coming” and is the name of a 4 week season of the Church Year which focuses on the coming of Jesus. 1) He came as a baby to be our Savior; 2) He comes to us now in Word and the Sacraments; and 3) He will come again on the Last Day. Advent is a season of preparation and repentance ... a time to get ready.

Throughout the season of Advent and Christmas, the Advent Wreath displayed in the Sanctuary reminds us of the passing of time as we move toward that great Festival when we celebrate the birthday of our Savior and King! The 4 Candles of the Advent Wreath remind us that we, in the Christian Church, are setting aside four Sundays before Christmas for preparation of God’s gift to us in His Son, the Babe in the Manger and this Season of Preparation is called “Advent”.

The Advent Wreath is a circle, without beginning or end, and symbolizes

consecutive lighting of the 4 candles is to remind us of the unfolding of His plan, step-by-step through the centuries, to bring Christ into the world. The light of the candles reminds us that Jesus is The Light of the World! The candles are named:

- The Prophecy Candle*
- The Bethlehem Candle*
- The Shepherds’ Candle*
- The Angels’ Candle*

SO REJOICE with us this Advent Season in the knowledge that the promises signified in the entire Old Testament have been fulfilled in the Christ of Bethlehem’s Manger.

Three To Get Ready

MIDWEEK ADVENT EVENING PRAYER

SERVICES

7:00 P.M.
Wednesdays

Theme:

“Our Advent Family”

Interviews with these Bible Characters from the CHRISTmass Story:

December 6

Zechariah (father of

December 13

“Joseph (faithful carpenter)”

December 20

“Mary (the mother of our Lord)”

What a meaningful preparation for a Christmas that celebrates Jesus as the ONLY reason for the Season. Join us each Wednesday for our Evening Prayer services.

Let’s get the right Spirit of CHRISTMASS, and make proper preparations for the Birthday of our King!

**“REDEEMER, COME!
I OPEN WIDE MY
HEART TO THEE;
HERE, LORD
ABIDE!”**



WISDOM

You are invited to join us for our "**Candlelight and Carol Festival**" on **Christmas Eve**, December 24 at 7:00 P.M.

Come and share in the beautiful moment at the end of these services when we light our candles to symbolize the Light of Life and Salvation coming into our world in Jesus!

All of our candles, together with the light of the Christmas Trees and Advent Wreath, turns our Sanctuary into a warm glowing reminder of God's love and Peace ... what a "Silent Night, Holy Night" wonder!

Why not invite your friends and neighbors to experience this most glorious of nights?

Our **Christmas Day Service** (with Holy Communion) is at our regular Sunday Worship time: 10:15 AM

May this Christmas be a time for you to rejoice in the gift of our Savior, Jesus Christ!



EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

Wyatt Steele update: he is out of the hospital and with his parents in Dallas!

Just a reminder; please don't forget to continue handing out the small **Gospels of John** and also our **hospitality bags** for those you see asking for help along the roads.

We have received instructions for how to obtain **Red Cross training** relative to using our facility as a storage/respite center. It is computer based and Randy and Sandy Teets have already completed it. We will need your help. Please see Sandy Teets for pertinent instructions.

On November 11 and 12, 2017 Bethlehem hosted **Pastor Karim Baidaoui**, a former Muslim. Pastor Baidaoui is a LCMS pastor. He is the Mission Director of "**Disciples of the Way**" ministry in Dallas. He spoke on Saturday, November 11 at the church on "Islam and the Cross" and talked about his organization. Then on Sunday, Pastor Baidaoui taught Adult Bible Class (with youth also invited) and was our Guest Preacher in the Divine Service.

Adopt-A-Highway is scheduled for December 9, 2017, 9:00 a.m. We only had 10 picker-uppers in September and as a result we could not finish even though we worked for 4 hours. Please help. The more volunteers we have, the faster we finish!

This December 11-14 we will be **assisting at the Palestine Food Pantry TOY STORE** at Court Drive Church of Christ. You may remember that we give financial support to the Palestine Food Bank located there. Each December they also have a Toy Store for needy families. They will serve 300 families, with a waiting list of another 200 families. We need your help in two ways:

1. **Donate toys** ... or money for toys (we'll shop for you). We need toys ages 0 – high school (especially girls ages 6-11)
2. Help us **wrap presents** at the Toy Store ... December 11-14, (the busiest day is the 14th) 6-9 pm. While you wrap, Pastor Adler (and others) will pray with the parents.

God has truly blessed our committee, with an enthusiastic group, please continue to pray for his guidance and that He would get the glory!

is it necessary to be quiet in church:

One bright little girl replied, "Because people are sleeping."

~~~~~

The pastor was wired for sound with a lapel mike, and as he preached, he moved briskly about, jerking the mike cord as he went. Then he moved to one side, getting wound up in the cord and nearly tripping before jerking it again. After several circles and jerks, a little girl in the third pew leaned toward her mother and whispered, "If he gets loose, will he hurt us?"

~~~~~

Six-year old Angie and her four-year old brother Joel were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang and talked out loud. Finally, his big sister had had enough. "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church."

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joel asked.

Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two men standing by the door? They're hushers."

~~~~~

A ten-year old, under the tutelage of her grandmother, was becoming quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Then one day she floored her grandmother by asking, "Which Virgin was the mother of Jesus? The Virgin Mary or the King James Virgin?"

~~~~~

A Sunday school class was studying the Ten Commandments. They were ready to discuss the last two. The teacher asked if anyone could tell her what the Ninth was. Susie raised her hand, stood tall, and quoted, "Thou shall not take the covers off the neighbor's wife."

~~~~~

A little boy was in a relative's wedding. As he was coming down the aisle, he would take two steps, stop, and turn to the crowd. While facing the crowd, he would put his hands up like claws and roar. So it went, step, step, ROAR, step, step, ROAR, all the way down the aisle. As you can imagine the crowd was near tears by the time he reached the pulpit.

The little boy, however, was getting more and more distressed from all the laughing, and was also near tears by the time he reached the pulpit. When asked what he was doing, the child sniffed and said, "I was being the Ring Bear."

~~~~~

One Sunday in a Midwest city, a young child was "acting up" during the morning worship hour. The parents did their best to maintain some sense of order in the pew but were losing the battle. Finally, the father picked the little fellow up and sternly walked up the aisle on his way out.

Just before reaching the safety of the foyer, the little one called loudly to the congregation, "Pray for me! Pray for me!"

~~~~~

And one particular four-year old prayed, "And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

to those helping with communion rail. \*\*Motion by Jerry, 2nd by Jim to accept. Motion carried.

## **REPORTS**

**VP** - absent

**Financial Secretary** - Lea reported October income \$16,665, expenses \$12,647. Loan balance \$53,064 & CEF report.

**Treasurer** - Mary Lou gave income report & account balances; budget report for October and year-to-date. Two CEF accounts come up for renewal in December. \*\*Motion by Jerry, 2nd by Melanie to accept financial reports. Motion carried.

**Elders** - James reported average income for October was 68. Released 13 who live out of town after no response from letters encouraging them to attend church that is closer.

**Christian Education** - Melanie ordered new Sunday School material for 2nd quarter; working on Children's Christmas Service. One more Mid Week, then will resume in January.

**Evangelism** - Jerry reported Adopt-A-Highway December 9th, 9am. Will help with Toy Drive in December at Court Drive Church of Christ, wrap gifts and fellowship with families. Need toys and wrappers, Pastor will get more information.

**Stewardship** - Steve reported all going well.

**Social Concerns** - Megan reported lunch on November 11th very good; 32 attended Luther Movie night, everyone enjoyed. Acoustics not good in Luther Hall, will check sound system. Holiday Dinner will be December 17th, ham & turkey, sign up sheet for sides & desserts. Advent meals- LWML December 6th, Evangelism on 13th, need someone to provide dinner on 20th.

**Property** - Jim replaced/repared lights.

**Youth** - Yanneth reported \$228 from football parking, filled 60 boxes for Operation Christmas Child, received extra \$150 for expenses. Matching funds from Thrivent only if individual donation. Send \$2,500 to 3 Lutheran Schools in Houston area that received damage. Youth teaching youth working out, encouraging older ones to assist. Garage Sale on November 18th, will need help this week and on Saturday. Proceeds may support ministries such as Toy Drive, also for Pastor Karim's ministry. Will visit nursing homes around Thanksgiving.

**Pastor** - reported Midweek Advent theme "God's Advent Family," interview Bible Characters to tell Christmas story.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Carpet ordered for altar area, will be installed.

Waiting for information on organ from Methodist Church; another organ may be available from Presbyterian Church, will get more information

\*\*Motion by Steve, 2nd by Jim to renew CD's with CEF for one year. Motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS:** none

Motion by Lea, 2nd by Jerry to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned and Pastor closed with the benediction.

Present; Gil Daughtrey, Jim Broad, Jerry Hartenberger, Yanneth Harris, Megan Taylor, Steve Unk, Lea Rosier, Mary

Christmas is coming. It is a joyous time of feasting. The Church feasts upon the Word of God in sermon, song, and sacrament.

We hear the proclamation of the message of the angels: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

We mingle our voices with theirs as we sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" (Luke 2:14)!

We receive the proclaimed Savior, Christ the Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in manger, but wrapped in bread and wine placed into our mouths for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

We feast in great joy indeed because of this great blessing from our Lord and God.

God's people in ancient Israel also feasted with great joy. The Lord showered His abundant blessing on His people. And He commanded them to feast upon it (Deut. 16). The people were to go to the place appointed, where the Lord would make His name dwell, and give offerings, each man as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord that He had given them

(Deut. 16:10, 15, 17).

And there the Lord would bless them with joy as they feasted upon what the Lord had provided. They ate of the choice parts of their offerings. They enjoyed the company of all the people of God as they together heard His promises of blessing, sang of His bountiful goodness, and partook of what He gave.

We feast on the Word who became flesh to dwell among us, not just during Christmas, but throughout all the year.

We feast not just on the salvation He has wrought for us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but we feast also on all the temporal blessings that God gives out of His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us.

We enjoy the rich bounty that God provides, not only in Word and Sacrament, but also in house and home, property and income, family and friends.

Let us then, as did our brothers in the faith from ancient Israel, give as we are able, according to the blessing of the Lord our God that He has given us.

Let us, like them, give generously of the first fruits of our income, which He gives, so that all may know and enjoy the salvation He gives and the joy we have in the Savior born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.



## God's Share First

Bethlehem congregation encourages God's people to consider percentage giving. A percentage giver is one who:

Covenants with God to give a set percentage of all that is received to Kingdom causes;

By study of God's Word and by daily life with the Risen Lord, keeps the heart open to increasing the percentage as Christ leads to further commitments.

God bless your consideration of percentage giving. If you're not yet doing



"Store up for yourselves treasures  
in heaven, where moth & rust do  
not destroy, & where thieves do not

cal technology can make them seem like recent developments—and advances in understanding physiology and pharmaceuticals have made abortion and euthanasia more efficient and available of late. But these circumstances have been causing society's difficulties—and providing opportunities to proclaim the Gospel—since ancient times. The Hippocratic Oath explicitly forbade both aborting and assisting suicide. This famous physician's pledge stated, centuries before Jesus, "Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course. Similarly I will not give to a woman a pessary to cause abortion." The Didache, a Christian text attributed to the apostles and as old as the New Testament, likewise declares, "Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten." Martin Luther also applied his voice to life issues. As we celebrate the Reformation's quinqucentennial, listening to him can still enlighten us. His view of family matters proved revolutionary in its time. Luther promoted marriage, encouraged childbearing, and praised parenting. He concluded even unborn babies qualified as full-fledged human beings.

Look at your infancy, and give thought to whether you remember that you were in your mother's womb, that you lay in a cradle, that you sucked your mother's breasts, cried, ate pap, grew, etc. Yet we are certainly alive even during the first year, when the fetus is carried in the mother's womb. (LW 5:75) For no one of those who are alive today knows where he was during the first two years, when he lived either in the womb ... Yet he lived at that time, and he was a body joined to a soul—a body adapted to all natural functions. (LW 8:316)

Luther derived this truth directly from God's Word. He observed how Holy Scripture testified about the prenatal humanity of Jesus and John the Baptist. "Moreover, when Christ, the Son of God, was to be conceived in his mother's womb and become incarnate, he certainly had to be already present in essence and in person in the Virgin's womb, and had to assume humanity there" (LW 37:62). "And St. John was a child in his mother's womb [Luke 1:41] but, as I believe, could have faith" (LW 40:242). So Luther called abortion a sinful offense against the tiniest neighbors. "For those who pay no attention to pregnant women and do not spare the tender fetus become murderers" (LW 5:382). "How great, therefore, the wickedness of human nature is! How many girls there are who prevent conception and kill and expel tender fetuses, although procreation is the work of God!" (LW 4:304). In fact, he labels such acts the devil's



spirits do wrong by scourging and beating themselves or by killing themselves and trying in this way to take heaven by storm" (LW 30:109).

Christ Himself explains and sums it up. He says that we must not kill, neither with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help, nor counsel ... So also, if you see anyone innocently sentenced to death or in similar distress, and do not save him, although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him. It will not work for you to make the excuse that you did not provide any help, counsel, or aid to harm him. For you have withheld your love from him and deprived him of the benefit by which his life would have been saved (McCain, Paul Timothy, ed. Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, 2nd ed. [St. Louis: Concordia, 2006], 379-80).

God's limitless grace convinced Luther to regard life with such respect. Both Bible and experience led him to behold human beings and their bodies as gifts and privileges of infinite preciousness imparted by the Lord Himself. Neither ability nor disobedience, whether one's own or a neighbor's, could improve upon or invalidate the worth the Almighty instilled.

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them... He richly and daily provides me with all

that I need to support this body and life ... All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me (Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation [St. Louis: Concordia, 2005], 15-16).

Finally, Luther found this grace great enough to forgive even evils against life. Jesus Christ died and rose to save sinners from just such guilt. "That is why all those should be absolved whose sins are hidden, whether they are sins of the flesh, or of every kind of lust, abortion, and the like" (LW 39:42).

When the devil throws our sins up to us and declares that we deserve death and hell, we ought to speak thus: "I admit that I deserve death and hell. What of it? Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation? By no means. For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction in my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Where he is, there I shall be also" (Tappert, Theodore G, trans. and ed. Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel [Vancouver: Regent College, 2003], 86-87).

**HEALTH NEEDS—MEMBERS:**

- George Nelson - recovering from a stroke
- Marjorie Smith - recovering from a broken hip at TruCare, Palestine
- Matthew Jackson - kidney stones

**HEALTH NEEDS—FRIENDS:**

- Cheryl Bailes [Mary Unk’s daughter] - infection in foot
- Sharon Bigott [JoAnn Tugwell’s nephew’s wife] - health concerns
- Lois Creighton [Mary Unk’s sister] - brain tumor
- Yvette Durbin [Palestine Police officer] - assaulted while on duty
- Steve Goen [friends of Jackson’s]
- Luke Grumbles [son of co worker of Devin Jackson] - leukemia
- Gene Hewitt [cousin of Marcy Hogan] - cancer
- Carlie Hutton [Hutton’s daughter in law] - problem pregnancy
- Ruth Lawson [Mary Unk’s sister] - recovery from fall
- Steve & Katie Lund [former members] - ongoing health concerns
- Debbie Noonan [friend of Marcy Hogan] - back problem
- Lorie Owens [Julie Schoppe sister & Ken Koehler’s daughter] - recovery from surgery
- Bonita Randall [Neva Shugart Broad’s niece] - ongoing health concerns
- Phyllis Shafferkoetter [Mary Unk’s sister] - lupus
- Marissa Williams [Marcy Hogan niece] - baby born premature
- Gene & Patsy Worsham [Tim’s parents] - ongoing health concerns

**Please  
help  
us  
keep  
this  
list  
updated.  
Thanks**

**HOMEBOUND:**

- Benjamin Garcia [Robert Garcia’s brother], Dorothy Jackson, Martha Kaudelka, Ardelle Samford, Johnnie Weaver

**THOSE PREPARING FOR CHURCH WORK:** Aaron Jackson— attending Concordia University, Seward, NE

**THOSE SERVING IN OUR NATION’S ARMED FORCES:**

- Members Kyle Lawson and Kyle Shepherd, as well as Robert Garcia [Juanita’s son], and Jeremy Stafford [Marcy Hogan’s nephew]

Please inform the Pastor and the Church Office regarding the status of submitted prayers so we may be timely and up-to-date in petitions to our gracious God.





**Brookshire's Food Store**

and

**Palestine Kiwanis Club**

**Spirit of Christmas Food Drive**

Help us Provide Christmas Dinner

For Needy Families in our Community

Purchase a Food Bag and Drop it in the Bin

Donate Canned Goods and Contribute Money

To Help us Take care of our Own



Our Club's Focus is Improving the Lives of



6:30 AM on 91.9 FM KAVX Lufkin, TX  
Sunday at 10:30 AM on 97.5 FM KTTB Tyler, TX  
Sunday at 12:30 PM on 91.5 FM KHCB Madisonville, TX

Online at [www.lutheranhour.org](http://www.lutheranhour.org)

DATE: December 3, 2017  
TITLE: "Advent Adventure"  
TEXT: St. Mark 13:24-37  
GUEST SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer

Sometimes our faith gets weaker, sometimes it grows stronger. Let's take this Advent to heart, and "live by faith, and not by sight."

DATE: December 10, 2017  
TITLE: "Prep Time"  
TEXT: St. Mark 1:1-3  
SPEAKER: Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour: Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus

Preparing for Christmas is quite different than preparing for Christ. Today's Lutheran Hour message explores those differences.

DATE: December 17, 2017  
TITLE: "Life Narrows Down"  
TEXT: St. John 1:6-8, 19-28 (John testifies to Christ)  
GUEST SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer

John the Baptist had a passion for the Lamb of God. What's your passion in life? How far into the future will it take you?

DATE: December 24, 2017  
TITLE: "The Greatest Story Ever Told"  
TEXT: St. Luke 1: 30-32a  
SPEAKER: Emeritus of The Lutheran Hour: Rev. Dr. Ken Klaus

What is your favorite story? This Christmas Eve Day, The Lutheran Hour speaks about God's greatest story.

DATE: December 31, 2017  
TITLE: "Children of Promise"  
TEXT: Galatians 4:4-7  
SPEAKER:

Our identity as God's children encourages us to live in His grace, to embrace the freedom Jesus won, and to resist the

**December 4 - John of Damascus** - John (ca. 675–749) is known as the great compiler and summarizer of the orthodox faith and the last great Greek theologian. Born in Damascus, John gave up an influential position in the Islamic court to devote himself to the Christian faith. Around 716 he entered a monastery outside of Jerusalem and was ordained a priest. When the Byzantine emperor Leo the Isaurian in 726 issued a decree forbidding images (icons), John forcefully resisted. In his Apostolic Discourses he argued for the legitimacy of the veneration of images, which earned him the condemnation of the Iconoclast Council in 754. John also wrote defenses of the orthodox faith against contemporary heresies. In addition, he was a gifted hymn-writer (“Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain”) and contributed to the liturgy of the Byzantine churches. His greatest work was the *Fount of Wisdom* which was a massive compendium of truth from previous Christian theologians, covering practically every conceivable doctrinal topic. John’s summary of the orthodox faith left a lasting stamp on both the Eastern and Western churches.

**December 6 - Nicholas of Myra, Pastor** - Of the many saints commemorated by the Christian Church, Nicholas (d. A.D. 342) is one of the best known. Very little is known historically of him, although there was a church of Saint Nicholas in Constantinople as early as the sixth century. Research has affirmed that there was a bishop by the name of Nicholas in the city of Myra in Lycia (part of Turkey today) in the fourth century. From that coastal location, legends about Nicholas have traveled throughout time and space. He is associated with charitable giving in many countries around the world and is portrayed as the rescuer of sailors, the protector of children, and the friend of people in distress or need. In commemoration of “Sinte Klaas” (Dutch for Saint Nicholas, in English “Santa Claus”), December 6 is a day for giving and receiving gifts in many parts of Europe.

**December 7 - Ambrose of Milan, Pastor and Hymn-writer** - Born in Trier in A.D. 340, Ambrose was one of the four great Latin Doctors of the Church (with Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great). He was a prolific author of hymns, the most common of which is *Veni, Redemptor gentium* (“Savior of the Nations, Come”). His name is also associated with Ambrosian Chant, the style of chanting the ancient liturgy that took hold in the province of Milan. While serving as a civil governor, Ambrose sought to bring peace among Christians in Milan who were divided into quarreling factions. When a new bishop was to be elected in 374, Ambrose addressed the crowd, and someone cried out, “Ambrose, bishop!” The entire gathering gave their support. This acclaim of Ambrose, a 34-year-old catechumen, led to his baptism on December 7, after which he was consecrated bishop of Milan. A strong defender of the faith, Ambrose convinced the Roman emperor Gratian in 379 to forbid the Arian heresy in the West. At Ambrose’s urging, Gratian’s successor, Theodosius, also publicly opposed Arianism. Ambrose died on Good Friday, April 4, 397. As a courageous doctor and musician he upheld the truth of God’s Word.

**December 13 - Lucia, Martyr** - One of the victims of the great persecution under the Roman emperor Diocletian, Lucia met her death at Syracuse on the island of Sicily in the year A.D. 304, because of her Christian faith. Known for her charity, “Santa Lucia” (as she is called in Italy) gave away her dowry and remained a virgin until her execution by the sword. The name Lucia means “light,” and, because of that, festivals of light commemorating her became popular throughout Europe, especially in the Scandinavian countries. There her feast day corresponds with the time of year when there is the least amount of daylight. In artistic expression she is often portrayed in a white baptismal gown, wearing a wreath of candles on her head.

**December 17 - Daniel and the Three Young Men** - Daniel the prophet and the Three Young Men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were among the leaders of the people of Judah who were taken into captivity in Babylon. Even in that foreign land they remained faithful to the one true God in their piety, prayer, and life. On account of such steadfast faithfulness in the face of pagan idolatry, the Three Young Men were thrown into a fiery furnace, from which they were saved by the Lord and emerged unharmed (Daniel 3). Similarly, Daniel was thrown into a pit of lions, from which he also was saved (Daniel 6). Blessed in all their endeavors by the Lord—and in spite of the hostility of some—Daniel and the Three Young Men were promoted to positions of leadership among the Babylonians (Dan 2:48–49; 3:30; 6:28). To Daniel in particular the Lord revealed the interpretation of dreams and signs that were given to King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar (Daniel 2, 4, 5). To Daniel himself the Lord gave visions of the end times.

**December 19 - Adam and Eve** - Adam was the first man, made in the image of God and given dominion over all the earth (Gen 1:26). Eve was the first woman, formed from one of Adam’s ribs to be his companion and helper (2:18–24). God placed them in the Garden of Eden to take care of the creation as his representatives. But they forsook God’s Word and plunged the world into sin (3:1–7). For this disobedience God drove them from the Garden. Eve had to suffer the pain of childbirth and be subject to Adam; Adam had to toil amid thorns and thistles and return to the dust of the ground. Yet God promised that the woman’s Seed would crush the serpent’s head (3:8–24). Sin had entered God’s perfect creation and changed it until God would restore it again through Christ. Eve is the mother of the human race, while Adam is representative of all humanity and the Fall, as St. Paul writes, “For in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

**December 20 - Katharina von Bora Luther** - Katharina von Bora (1499–1552) was placed in a convent when still a child and became a nun in 1515. In April 1523 she and eight other nuns were rescued from the convent and brought to Wittenberg. There Martin Luther helped return some to their former homes and placed the rest in good families. Katharina and Martin were married on June 13, 1525. Their marriage was a happy one and blessed with six children. Katharina skillfully managed the Luther household, which always seemed to grow because of his generous hospitality. After Luther’s death in 1546, Katharina remained in Wittenberg but lived much of the time in poverty. She died in an accident while traveling with her children to Torgau in order to escape the plague.

**December 29 - David** - David, the greatest of Israel’s kings, ruled from about 1010 to 970 B.C. The events of his life are found in 1 Samuel 16 through 1 Kings 2 and in 1 Chronicles 10–28. David was also gifted musically. He was skilled in playing the lute and the author of no less

Lutherans place their faith in the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who has made us, redeemed us, and empowers us for Christian living.

We believe Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, who came to earth as a man, suffered and died in our place to win for us forgiveness of sin, and who rose again to life, assuring us that we, too, can live with Him eternally.

We teach that we come to stand in right relation- ship with God not through our own goodness or righteousness, but through our faith in Jesus as Savior. Faith alone receives the full promises of God.

We believe that the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were instituted by Christ and offers forgiveness of sin to all who receive them in faith.

Concerning Baptism, we teach that infants should also be baptized, since they, too, are sinful and need God's grace. God can work faith in them, even though they are too young to intellectually grasp the Gospel.

We believe that the body and blood of Jesus are truly present in the Lord's Supper through miraculous means, and that only Christians who are in full agreement with our all our beliefs should commune with us.

We believe that God speaks to the world through His Word in the Bible.

We believe that God loves every person and intends for all a life of dignity and meaning.

We believe that Marriage is a life-long union of one man and one woman. We reject any other “union” called “marriage” as immoral and contrary to God’s will.

We assert the vital importance of the Christian congregation as the community of believers in which the Gospel is correctly preached and the Sacraments are rightly administered.



**Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod**

**1515 South Loop 256**

**Palestine, Texas 75801-5857**

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, would you be so kind to simply write “Refused” and then place it unopened in your mailbox. That way, we’ll be certain to remove your name from our mailing list, and you will be helping us to use very precious resources most wisely.

Thank You!



**DECEMBER 2017**

