

**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. “The Songs of Advent” ... Three Biblical Canticles that have been incorporated into the liturgy and worship life of the church:

- 12/5 – The Song of Zechariah—The Benedictus
- 12/12 – The Song of Mary—The Magnificat
- 12/19 – The Song of Simeon—The Nunc Dimittis

**Christmas Eve** — Monday, December 24:

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

**Christmas Day** – Tuesday, 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 ... worshiping 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!"**



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 \$11 each. Your help in providing this decoration is appreciated.



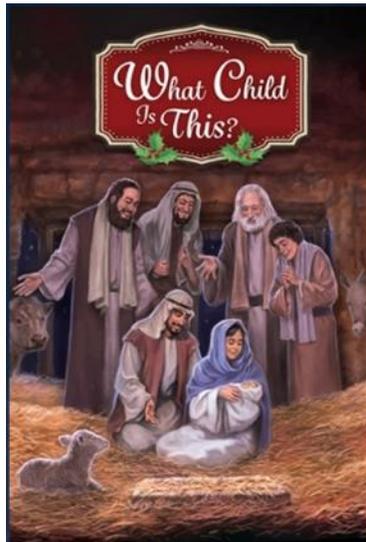
### **BETHLEHEM'S HOLIDAY DINNER**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER - 16TH  
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.

### **TOY DRIVE AND WRAPPING DECEMBER 10TH**

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), gift wrap or gift boxes. We need toys ages 0 – high school (especially girls ages 6-11). You can also help us wrap presents at the Toy Store December 10th 6-9 pm.



### **SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM "WHAT CHILD IS THIS" SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16TH**

What Child Is This? The angel answers the question this way in the presence of the shepherds: "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (St. Luke 2:11). The hymnwriter answers it this way: "This, this is Christ the king" (LSB 370:1). They both want to leave us with no doubt regarding the identity of this Child.

Every component reflects on the Scriptures and the beloved hymn to proclaim the story of the little human Child who is also fully God, who took on human flesh so that "Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you" (st. 2). He is the Lord in human flesh, our Savior, the joyous answer to the question What Child Is This?

Practice will be December 9th after Divine Service and Saturday, December 15th at 10 am. See Melanie Jackson if you have any questions.

### **CHILI FRIDAY JANUARY 26, 2019**

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

**THANK YOU** to all who sent birthday cards to Lela Sands to help her celebrate her 100TH birthday!!



tors.) We hosted vendors who rented booths to sell their wares (quilts/potholders, aprons, gift items, wood items, etc.), and we hope they will plan to participate next year. There were several items from an estate sale which drew in several visitors. Our LWML had tables offering many handmade crafts, delicious baked goods, and provided a tasty lunch with all the trimmings.

We appreciate our congregation for your support by attending, the helpers who set up Luther Hall, those who assisted our guests 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 \$1,800.00, and still have a couple of checks to deposit. As you know, we use our proceeds to benefit our church and the community.

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Our society received a “Thank You” note from Sharon Mills, newly elected President of East Texas LWML Zone, for our hosting the recent Fall Rally held here at Bethlehem on October 6, 2018.

One of our society members suggested we donate to a Lutheran organization regarding using Labrador Retrievers as comfort dogs. We set aside \$100 to send in support of this effort.

On another note, our national **LWML** has declared November 27, 2018, as “**Giving Tuesday**” when funds will be collected for MITES. This day is designated for the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, taking the focus off the commercialism of Black Friday and Cyber Monday – and instead, celebrates giving back – supporting and praying for the LWML Mission Goal. Our society will be donating \$100.00 toward this effort.

**TOY DRIVE** – Court Drive Church of Christ is again collecting toys which will be wrapped in early December. Our LWML is contributing \$100.00 toward this effort. Watch the church bulletin for more details.

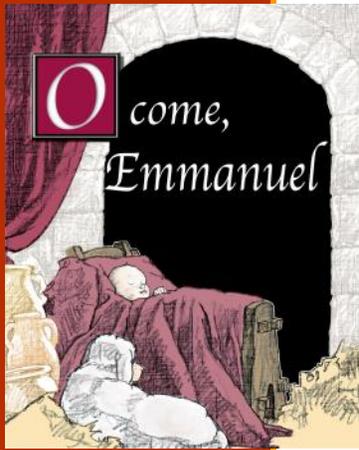
**Kroger Community Rewards:** Please continue to use your Kroger card to support LWML’s efforts to benefit the community in various ways.

LWML Texas District website: The newly designed website has a new look and some new features. Online go to <http://www.lwmltxdist.org>, where you will find links to our YouTube channel, easier access to information, and a new search feature that allows you to find what you need.

### **CALENDAR NOTES:**

- ✦ LWML will provide Advent Meal, Wednesday, December 5, at 6:00 p.m.
- ✦ Next LWML Meeting: Sunday after church, December 9, 2018.
- ✦ LWML 2019 Convention, June 20-23, in Mobile, Alabama. *Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations (1 Chron 16:23-24a).*

*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*



*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 2.

“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:

**“The Songs of Advent”**

Three Biblical Canticles that have been incorporated into the liturgy and worship life of the church:

December 5

**“The Benedictus**

December 12

**“Magnificat (Mary’s Song)”**

December 19

**“Nunc Dimittis (Simeon’s Song)”**

*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!”**



**MIDWEEK ADVENT**

Shawn Daughtrey. After service, all enjoyed a potluck luncheon.



Ike and Valinda have lived in Washington for 30 years and are full time RVers and KOA camp workers for about 6 years. Ike served in the Navy for 31 years [THANK YOU for your service!!] and civil service for 14. Valinda has worked in preschool for 27 years. Their daughter, Summer, husband Jason and their 6 children and daughter Jennifer, husband Andy and their 3 children live in Washington. They have 2 other daughters who live in Texas; Jessica, husband Michael with their 4 children and Cheryl, husband Augie and their 4 children. If you are counting, that's 17 grandchildren!!

The Saville's like seeing historical sites, gardening, NASCAR, football, leather and beadwork projects. They have also purchased a home in Palestine at 2204 Melissa Dr., Palestine, 75803.

Welcome to the Bethlehem family!



giving and thankfulness nearly 50 times. Whether vertically toward God, or horizontally toward the neighbor, thanksgiving is a major theme within St. Paul's body of work.

What does this mean? It means thankfulness is intrinsic to the life of those baptized into Christ. In other words, giving thanks is what Christians do as they live out their lives in this world.

The problem is that we often forget this. Consider your average, run-of-the-mill, normal day. When you get home, and your parents, your spouse or your children ask about your day, what first comes to your mind? After 99 percent of things went right, went exactly as planned, were enjoyable and blessings, we tend to focus on and remember the 1 percent of things that went poorly, that didn't go as planned, and that were nuisances.

We remember the bad things. We focus on discontent. And we fail to give thanks in all circumstances for everything (Eph. 5:20) and to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4).

Thankfulness and contentment go together. We are content with things for which we are thankful. St. Paul could be content with having plenty or when in need because He gave thanks to the Lord for all things. He thanked the Lord for those who had prayed for him and listened to his proclamation

Christ Jesus and found that God's grace was sufficient for him.

So, give thanks for all things and in all circumstances dear brothers and sisters in Christ. For you have been saved from sin, death, and hell by the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. You have been added to the very family of God in an adoption of grace through Holy Baptism. God is your Father. Our Lord, Jesus Christ is your brother.

But He not only provides for your spiritual well-being, He cares also for this body and life. Your Father in heaven provides food and clothes, house and home, husband, wife, and children. He gives you reason and all your senses. He has given you the raw talents that you have developed into careers. Everything you are and everything that you have is a gift from His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in you.

Give thanks for these things. Make a list – every morning if you must. Say them out loud.

Sing about them within the congregation of the saints. And remember this: God has given you these things so that you may be of service to those around you – your family, your neighbors, your brothers and sisters in Christ. For to whom much is given; much shall be required (St. Luke 12:48).



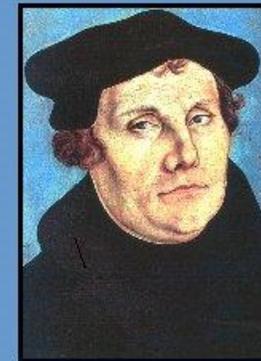
## God's Share First

**QUESTION:** What do scholars of Christian truth have to say about tithing?

**ANSWER:** T. A. Kantonen in "A Theology for Christian Stewardship" says, "I am convinced that the Tithers in our churches are, by and large, not Pharisees, but humble and sincere Christians who have been led to use this ancient device as a helpful means for steady expression of their gratitude and faithfulness to their Lord. But I am also convinced that the true beginning of Christian Stewardship is in a clean break with the false god Mammon through com-

We urge our members to use percentage giving as a special symbol whereby we demonstrate that Christ is the Lord of all our living.

We believe that regular systematic giving is called for in the New Testament living. We urge its members to use percentage giving as a special symbol whereby we demonstrate that Christ is the Lord of all our living. We also urge our members to set aside a definite percent of their income to covenant with the Lord for this and to ask God to lead us on to total commitment



Those who would be Christians are under obligation in the sight Of God to esteem them worthy of double honor who minister to their souls, that they deal well with them and provide for them. And he who despises and casts

## **REPORTS:**

**VP** - Burl no report.

**Financial Secretary** - Lea reported October income \$11,913, expenses \$9,385 (will double-check those numbers.) Loan balance \$31,437 & CEF report.

**Treasurer** - Gil gave account balances & income report. Budget report for October and year-to-date. Consider putting some money from checking into savings. \*\*Motion by James, 2nd by Melanie to accept financial reports. Motion carried.

**Elders** - James reported average attendance for October was 61, average communed 61. Added Shawn Daughtrey, profession of faith; Dwight & Valinda Saville transfer.

**Christian Education** - Melanie reported last Mid Week November 14th, will resume January 9th. Working on Children's Christmas Service, will be December 16th.

**Evangelism** - Jerry reported enter Festival of Lights Parade December 1st; Adopt-A-Highway December 8th; next Bible Jamboree April 27th.

**Stewardship** - vacant

**Properties** - Jim has one estimate for new doors, waiting for another estimate. Our Alarm Company not responsive, not providing good service, may check into another alarm service.

**Social Concerns** - Megan reported Advent meals: December 5th LWML, December 12th Evangelism, December 19th Youth. Decorate Christmas Tree on December 8th after AAH. Will get busy on donations & advertising for Chili Friday.

**Youth** - Devin reported that the youth board met, youth had meeting, made plans for Bake Sale Sunday, Taco Bar meal December 19th; date night and silent auction in January, Super Bowl subs February 3rd; prepare casserole dishes for sale.

**Pastor** - reported transfer of Don & Teresa Gibson; Advent theme "The Songs of Advent." Next Circuit Pastors' Meeting November 15th, Our Savior, Centerville. Mid Week Bible class resumes January 9th; will get date for Christmas gift wrapping at Toy Store.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** Still getting Kitchen renovation estimates.

Bible Bunch no longer exists.

**NEW BUSINESS:** With new software Tammy is able to put info on LED sign.

\*\*Motion by Lea, 2nd by James to put shelves in room for evangelism supplies. Motion carried.

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

**HEALTH NEEDS—MEMBERS:**

- Albert Harris - back problems
- George Nelson - recovering from a stroke
- Julie Schoppe - recovering from surgery due to a car accident

**HEALTH NEEDS—FRIENDS:**

- Anna [Sandy Smith’s co-worker’s granddaughter age 3] - chemo & surgery
- Carol [Tugwell’s sister in law] - recovery from heart surgery
- Calvin Gould [Paul Tugwell’s friend] - bone cancer
- Bill Hogan [Milton Hogan’s father] - in Hospice care
- Nicole Jones (age 3) [Sandy Smith’s co-worker’s granddaughter] - tumor, scoliosis
- Rayoma Leuschen [Ken Koehler’s sister in law/Julie Schoppe’s aunt] - lung disease
- Katie Lund [former member] - ongoing health concerns
- Ruth Marston [Ike Saville’s mother] - heart valve replacement
- Phoenix [grandson of West’s friend] - mowing accident
- Kenneth Taylor [James Taylor’s brother] - advanced pancreatic cancer
- Teresa White [Alicia Hutton’s grandmother] - ongoing health concerns
- Gene & Patsy Worsham [Tim’s parents] - ongoing health concerns

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

**HOMEBOUND:**

- Dorothy Jackson, Martha Kaudelka, Johnnie Weaver

**IN PRISON:** William Schatte (LC-MS member @ Faith/Plano, incarcerated at Powledge Unit)

**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], James Reed [Devin Jackson’s co-worker] 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.





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 2, 2018  
TITLE: "Reality Therapy"  
TEXT: Ruth 1-2  
SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

The book of Ruth deals with unimportant people and unimportant matters, but deals with them in such a way as to show that God is active in ordinary lives-like yours and mine. Ruth's story became an important part of the story of Jesus. Listening to God's work in her life can rescue us from dead end delusions and bring us into what is most real-a Jesus-centered reality.

DATE: December 9, 2018  
TITLE: "Redeemer with a Capital R"  
TEXT: Ruth 3-4  
SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

When people use the word "redeem" outside of religious context, they tend to use it in a commercial sense-redeeming points from purchases or casino tokens for cash. In the Bible, the word "redeem" is used in a family setting. In the story of Ruth, Boaz is a "kinsman redeemer," who points to Jesus, our capital-r-Redeemer. Jesus has done more than pay our points. He redeems by bringing us into his clan, his people, his household, that we might be with him forever.

DATE: December 16, 2018  
TITLE: "In Anxious Times - Rejoice!"  
TEXT: Philippians 4:4-7  
GUEST SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Anthony (Tony) Cook

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. With anxiety on the rise, the Apostle Paul's call to "rejoice always" seems all but unobtainable. While there are many helpful ways to cope with society's increasing anxiety, Paul points us to a frequently overlooked source of joy and peace, God's grace in Christ.

DATE: December 23, 2018  
TITLE: "The King's Strength"  
TEXT: St. Luke 1:26-56  
SPEAKER: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

A true king's strength is seen, not in vaults and arsenals, but in the loyalty of his people. We celebrate the birth of the King who won the victory, not by taxing his subjects and killing his enemies, but by serving, loving and dying for them. By his resurrection, He destroyed the power of sin and lends us strength to become His loyal subjects.

DATE: December 30, 2018  
TITLE: "A Long Good-Bye"  
TEXT: St. Luke 2:27-32

gian. Born in Damascus, John gave up an influential position 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—29. David was also gifted musically. He was skilled in playing the lyre and the author of no less than 73 psalms, including the beloved Psalm 23. His public and private character displayed a mixture of good (for example, his defeat of the giant Goliath, 1 Samuel 17) and evil (as in his adultery with Uriah’s wife, followed by his murder of Uriah, 2 Samuel 11). David’s greatness lay in his fierce loyalty to God as Israel’s military and political leader, coupled with

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 relationship 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**

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**DECEMBER 2018**

