



Saint Luke Lutheran Church

1807 Field Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55116 | 651-698-9443 | saintlukechurch.org

December 2023 Newsletter



The Pastor's Perspective

Pr. Bristol Reading

Good News!

Each year at Christmas, we read Luke's account of Jesus' birth. It is full of familiar scenes, like this one of the shepherds out in the fields around Bethlehem:

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:8-10)

Although the shepherds near Bethlehem are terrified, the angel tells them this is an announcement of "good news of great joy." The Greek verb for this act of proclamation is *euangelizo*. In the world of ancient Greece, this word was used to describe a kind of public news bulletin letting people know of a happy occurrence, such as a military victory of their king or the coronation of a new ruler.

So in this passage from Luke, the angel appears like a royal messenger, bringing news of the birth of a new king: Jesus. Although he is born in humble circumstances ("no room in the inn" and all that), he is a mighty king who will usher in a new kingdom, the Kingdom of God as Jesus calls it. That is, indeed, good news of great joy!

December Worship Volunteers

Thanks for your participation!

IN PERSON USHERS

First and Second Sundays:

Ava and Laurie Herrmann

Third and Fourth Sundays:

Mary Jo Brandt, Carol Vigdal

ONLINE USHERS

1st Sunday: David Tews

2nd Sunday: Sue McNeill

3rd Sunday: Raulie Ruiz

4th Sunday: David NedreLOW

OFFERING COUNTERS

3 Katy Eggert

10 Julie Gaarder

17 Carol Hornung

24 Joyce Bluel

31 Julie Gaarder

READERS

3 Joyce Bluel

10 Wendy Bjorklund

17 Charlotte Sivanich

24AM

24PM Emily Elfritz

25

31 Christine Olson

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

3 Joyce Bluel

10 Wendy Bjorklund

17 Casey Ulrich

24AM

25

31 Christine Olson

It was only later that the term *euangelizo* became more specifically religious. You can see the roots of English words like “evangelize” and “evangelical” in this word. Another word that comes from this Greek root, although it doesn’t look quite as similar, is “gospel.” The gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ. To share the gospel with others is to become an evangelist, to proclaim good news of great joy just as the angel did at Bethlehem.

This becomes the task of everyone who hears about Jesus’ birth. Once the angel tells the shepherds about Jesus, they rush to the manger-side to find him. Then, they are sent right away to go out and share the good news with others. Luke 2:20: “The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” As soon as they meet the newborn Jesus, they are transformed into evangelists. They are now meant to carry the good news that has been brought to them.

As we celebrate the Nativity these holy days, we are following in the shepherds’ footsteps. We hear the proclamation of Jesus’ birth, and we come to the manger-side for a moment of worship. Here is the new king, born in a stable under the stars. But although this is the “silent night” when “all is calm, all is bright,” we know we will not be able to stay silent for long. We will be sent out, just as the shepherds are, to proclaim this good news of Jesus’ arrival. The kingdom of God has come near! Don’t be afraid; this is news of great joy! Tell everyone you know!



December brings the season of Advent followed by Christmas. It’s one of the highlights of the church year as we celebrate the fulfillment of God’s promise to send the Messiah to humankind. The holiday season is a great time to get together with family and friends to share some good food and show our appreciation for each other.

Thank You All!

St. Luke is blessed to have so many dedicated members who make our church life go smoothly. Jo and Doug Klein do so much to keep the everyday business of the church humming along. Members of the church council have been great to work with and a valuable resource. Thank you, Jo, Doug, Volker, Joyce, Kay, Carol, Doug, and Mike.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

READERS, DEC. 10

Wendy Bjorklund

Christine Olson

Joyce Bluel

Kay Reich

Sandy Pilgrim

Barb Jensen

ALTAR GUILD

Kay Reich



Bun Run

Many thanks to our Bun Run volunteers for December: Julie Ellingson, Mike and Nancy Hegdahl, Volker Landenberger, and Doug Klein.

December Birthdays

4 Olivia Peterson

5 Douglas Nelson

7 Raul Ruiz

18 Holly Schultz

23 Deborah Vigdal

30 Roger Diestler

December Anniversaries

17 Doug and Karen Wasko:
1960



All are invited to Game Day at St. Luke, the first and third Fridays of the month, December 1 and 15, at 12:30pm. Bring a snack to share and your favorite game and settle down to an afternoon of fun...join us!

I am also thankful to Pastor Bristol, Michael, and Magnolia. They anchor our faith community with strength, joy, and vitality. I also appreciate Becca's wide-ranging musical knowledge and priceless enrichment of our worship through music. Thank you, Pastor Bristol, Becca, members of our choir and bell choir, ushers, and altar guide. You make our worship services welcoming and vibrant.

For helping those in our community and beyond, I want to thank Wendy Bjorklund, Laurie Herrmann, and the other people who made the farmers' market possible; Ken McGrew and the Bun Run crew; Julie Gaarder and the Kiva/Microlending group; the volunteers who helped with Loaves & Fishes this year; and Sue Grzywinski, Nancy and Mike Hegdahl, and all of people who made the Fall Bazaar a success.

There were so many fun events this year, including the talent show, Twins game, National Night Out, the retreat, and more. Thanks to everyone who participated and helped make them happen.

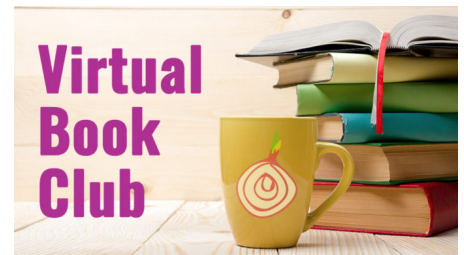
Another thing to celebrate is the generosity of St. Luke's members. You've contributed your time and talent to get things done and have given financial support to St. Luke and many worthy causes. Know that I appreciate your contributions and involvement. You all make St. Luke a special place.

Annual Meeting

At the congregational meeting on Nov. 5, St. Luke approved last year's meeting minutes as well as the treasurer's report, 2024 budget, and amendments to the constitution.

Members also elected four people to the 2024 church council—me as president, Volker Landenberger as vice president, Joyce Bluel as treasurer, and Mike Hegdahl as commissioner. (Doug Nelson and Carol Hornung will be serving the second year of their 2-year terms as commissioners.) Unfortunately, no one was chosen as secretary, so if anyone is interested in the position, let me know. Otherwise, the other council members will likely take turns taking minutes for meetings.

There was also a discussion of our withdrawal from the Loaves & Fishes program. For many years, members of St. Luke and St. Mark volunteered to prepare and serve a monthly meal for those in need at St. Matthew's on the West Side of St. Paul. What used to be a great opportunity for fellowship and community outreach changed after COVID. We used to serve a chili dinner cafeteria style, but with COVID we had to serve take-out only, which is understandable, but even this year, we were required to continue a "hybrid model" and serve everything in take-out containers with no limit on how many meals each person could take. It was a more expensive and less gratifying experience, so we chose not to continue. St. Luke and St. Mark hope to give back to the



Join us for St. Luke Book Club, Sunday Jan. 7, 6:30pm, via Zoom, to discuss "Big Little Lies", a mystery by Liane Moriarty. "A novel about secrets burrowed in a seemingly placid small town. Moriarty is a fantastically nimble writer, so sure-footed that the book leaps between dark and light seamlessly; even the big reveal in the final pages feels earned and genuinely shocking."—*Entertainment Weekly*. The Zoom invite will be emailed to you shortly before the meeting. All are welcome!



Notes from the Music Director

With Advent and Christmas, there are so many opportunities to enjoy music at this time of year! A few extra highlights beyond our usual special services:

- the choirs are working hard on fun pieces for Advent and Christmas
- December 17th we'll have special solos from congregation members and debut a Christmas song written with the help of our Faith Formation kiddos
- We will enjoy music

community through other joint activities next year.

Merry Christmas!

The Christmas season can be a beautiful and blessed time of year. Celebrate with the people you care about, including the good people of St. Luke.

Yours in Christ,
David Tews



A Quick Guide to Liturgical Festivals at St. Luke

This is a holy time in the liturgical year when we celebrate a lot of special days! They come fast, so here's a quick guide to the upcoming festivals:

Advent: The four weeks leading up to Christmas are a time of preparation as we await the coming of Emmanuel, "God-with-us." This year, Advent begins on Sunday, December 3. On Sunday, December 10, we'll have our traditional candlelight service at 7:00 pm, followed by cookie sharing.

Christmas Eve: Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, so on December 24 we will offer both our regular 9:30 am worship service and a 6:00 pm evening service. They will be different services, so you can attend one or both.

Christmas Day: On Monday morning, we'll hold a 9:30 am worship service to celebrate Christmas. On Christmas Eve, we hear the familiar nativity story from Luke's Gospel. On Christmas day, we'll read from John 1, "In the beginning was the Word..." Christmas is actually its own mini-season in the church year, 12 days long. So be sure to keep the celebration going with lots of singing and treats!

December 31: The first Sunday of Christmas is on December 31. Our 9:30 am worship service that day will be a simple lessons and carols service with our friends from St. Mark (held in our building).

Epiphany: The 12 days of Christmas conclude on Saturday, January 6, with Epiphany, when we celebrate God's glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Join us for a 6:00 pm service when we'll read scripture about the divine light come into the world and bless our church building for a new year.

selections in the Blue Christmas video

- And of course, all the favorites will be sung between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services (no repeats!).

Keep your eyes on the announcements for a couple surprises coming later this month too. Thank you to all the people sharing their talents at this time - and it's not too late if you have a piece you'd like to share, just send me a note or catch me after service!

Rebecca Ruiz



Youth Holiday Gifts

Your Council has voted to "go local" again this year and support homeless youth in the Twin Cities over the holidays. Lutheran Social Services sponsors a program for homeless youth called "Youth Holiday Gifts." This is a gift program of LSS Metro Homeless Youth Services. **We will be collecting gifts on Sundays, 11/5, 11/12, 11/19, 11/26 and 12/3.** The gifts will be delivered in early December. Gifts must be unwrapped. A list of desired holiday gifts is available in the Social Hall or click [here](#) for details. You are a warm, giving congregation; I'm confident we can offer gifts to these young people who are in need. Please contact me with any questions or concerns! Wendy Bjorklund 651-357-5742, wlbjorklund@stcloudstate.edu

All of these festivals are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate and worship, either at church or at home. I'd love to hear about the traditions that are special to you during these holy days. In our home, we love making an Advent wreath and paper Advent calendar each year. If you're looking for some new rituals for this time of year, one of my favorite resources is *To Dance With God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration* by Gertrud Mueller Nelson.



Hat and Mitten Tree

During the Advent/Christmas season there will be a Christmas tree placed in the sanctuary where we will be collecting hats, mittens, and scarves. We will collect items through Jan. 7. At the end of this drive, we will donate all the hats, mittens and scarves to Naomi Family Residence, a local homeless shelter for women and children. Thank you for participating in this worthy cause!



Thanks to our youngest worshippers for sharing the gift of music with us on November 19!

***Connect,
Grow and Serve.***