



St. Luke Lutheran Church
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Open doors, open hearts, open minds.

Parish Times December 2017

But the angel said to them (shepherds), "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 2:10-11

This is our first Christmas with our first grandson, James. There is something wonderful about Christmas and children. It is so beautiful to watch the wonder in their eyes. They see everything anew and fresh. I pray that our eyes (yours and mine) may be renewed also. We are preparing for the birth of the *Son of God!* It is a fantastic thought. It is a thought and a reality which should stop us in our tracks so that we exclaim, "What did you say?! The Son of God!!?? " It should cause us to stop and contemplate anew what it all means. I pray that you will take time this Advent season to think and pray about that. I pray that you will come to worship on Advent Sundays and the Advent Candle Lighting service (at 7:00 pm on Dec. 10) to marvel at the wonder of it all. I pray you will come on Sunday, December 17 as the children present the story of Jesus' birth, as only children can do it. I pray that the joy and peace of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day worships will fill you so that you will know the gift of God beyond compare. I pray that your eyes will be the wondrous eyes of a child as you contemplate this extraordinary event one more time. The Savior of the World, the Son of God is born into this world for you, for *you*, blessed child of God.

Pr. Dave




December Acolytes
 3 Evan Nelson
 17 Alek Landenberger
 24 Alek/Victor Landenberger

A big thank you to our Bun Run volunteers for December: Julie Ellingson, Mike Hegdahl, Sandy and Dave Grzywinski, Ken McGrew and Doug and Jo Klein.




Usher Notes
 Many thanks to our ushers for December: Jill Burchill, Doug Nelson, David NedreLOW, Larry and Carol Vigdal, Pam Ballis, Katy Eggert.



140 hungry men, women and children enjoyed a delicious meal at Loaves and Fishes on October 23rd at St. Matthew's Catholic Church. Workers from St. Luke were Pastor Dave Person, Joyce Bluel, Larry Litzkow, Jesse Vasquez and Roger and Dianne Diestler.



Christmas Baskets
 As is the St. Luke tradition, we will be collecting donations for Christmas Baskets, which will be distributed to members of our community. Donations will be accepted through Sunday, December 17. If you would like to make a monetary contribution to filling these baskets, please indicate "Christmas Basket" on the memo line of your check. Thank you!



Christmas Poinsettia/Greens Fundraiser

Orders will be available for pick-up on Dec. 3. You may bring your flowers/greens home that day, or choose to loan them to St. Luke to adorn our sanctuary for the holiday season. All proceeds will benefit St. Luke retreats at Camp Onomia. Thank you for your generosity!



Ladies Night Out will go on hiatus for November and December. We will resume Ladies Night Out again in January. Watch the December newsletter for details on the date and location of the January Ladies Night Out.

Christmas Worship Services and Blue Christmas

Christmas Eve falls on Sunday this year. We will have our usual worship at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 24, with guest preacher Pastor Lynn Seep. I will be there also, leading the liturgy. This morning worship is considered as the fourth Sunday in Advent worship. Come, hear the Word through our guest preacher Pr. Seep. That evening we will celebrate Christmas Eve at 6:05 pm (after the chimes finish ringing). Just prior to the worship service, from 5:30-6:00 pm we will once again offer a time of silent meditation, reflection and prayer, which we call "Blue Christmas." It is for those who, for whatever reason, may have difficulty celebrating the joy of Christmas because of a loss, a death, a sickness, or whatever reason. Like last year, this will take place in the library. We will have a large bowl of water along with blue markers and transparent sheets of plastic. You may write a prayer to God, if you so wish, then place it in the water. The water will turn blue as the words of the prayer dissolve. We will then set the bowl on the altar as we offer those prayers to God during our Christmas Eve worship.

Christmas Day worship will take place at 9:00 a.m. As with past years, we will use a delightful special Christmas liturgy and receive Holy Communion. This is a beautiful, reflective worship on the day of our Lord's birth. It is a quieter, restful worship. I highly recommend people come. I always look forward to it.



December WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

READERS:

- Dec. 3:** Dee Plagens
- Dec. 10, AM:** Beth Peterson
- Dec. 10, PM:** Jill Burchill, Barb Jensen, Ken McGrew, Sue McNeill, Christine Olson, Kay Reich
- Dec. 17:** Laurie Herrmann
- Dec. 24, AM:** Jennifer Fredrickson
- Dec. 24, PM:** Wendy Bjorklund
- Dec. 25:** Sue McNeill
- Dec. 31:** Jennifer Fredrickson

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS:

- Dec. 3:** Wendy Bjorklund
- Dec. 17:** Dee Plagens

O Come, All Ye Faithful! Join us for our time-honored Advent Candlelight Service on Sunday, Dec. 10 at 7:00 p.m., in which we celebrate the Advent season with many beloved hymns. Please bring 2 dozen cookies to share, if possible, for the fellowship time following the service.



Mitten and Hat Tree

During Advent there will be a Christmas tree placed by the pulpit where we will be collecting hats, mittens, and scarves. We will watch the tree become colorfully decorated each Sunday as items are placed on the tree, and we ask that you bring your donations to hang on the tree during the offering. Once the tree is decorated, we will donate all the hats, mittens and scarves to our local Ronald McDonald House.



December Birthdays

- 4 Olivia Peterson
- Stacy Alcenot
- 5 Helen Bye
- Douglas Nelson
- 7 Alina Alcenot
- 16 Mary Faust
- 18 Holly Schultz
- 23 Deborah Vigdal
- 30 Roger Diestler
- 31 Al Fredrickson



December Anniversaries

- 17 - Doug & Karen Wasko: 1960
- 29 - Anne & John Fabie: 1984

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

As the holiday season approaches, the Sunday School students would like to extend an invitation to everyone to attend our Christmas Program on Sunday, December 17 during the worship service. Come, hear the joyous Christmas message as only children can tell it!



**O COME
LET US ADORE HIM!**

*Join us as we celebrate
Advent and Christmas!*

Candlelight Service
Sunday, December 10 at 7:00 p.m.

**Sunday School
Christmas Program**
Sunday, December 17 at 9:00 a.m.
(As part of our Sunday service)

Christmas Eve Worship
Saturday, December 24
Blue Christmas Meditation at 5:30 p.m.
Worship at 6:05 p.m.

Christmas Day Worship
Sunday, December 25 at 9:00 a.m.



2017 Fall Bazaar

St. Luke hosted its 33rd Fall Bazaar on Saturday, October 28th. This year we experimented with a new format as well as changing the date of the event. The weather was cool but attendance was very good and steady throughout the day.

We would like to thank the vendors that rented tables and brought us such a variety of products, as well as the food truck that provided alternative choices for lunch.

A big thank you to our members, whether you donated a raffle prize, a craft item, rummage sale items, made something for our popular bake sale, prepared and brought soup to be sold in our kitchen, cashiered or came to participate. This event could not be held without the dedication and hard work of **all** of our members.

We still have many lovely craft items available for your holiday shopping. We will continue to sell items until after the candlelight service, December 10th. As of October 31st, we have sales totaling \$4,440.50 and after expenses we have made \$3,658.82.

The money raised from the Bazaar is used to carry out the ministries of St. Luke as well as providing a great fellowship opportunity for our church and community. In the next month or so we will meet to decide how to spend these proceeds.

Last year we gave our benevolences to Camp Onomia, the Airport Ministry, and Highland Leisure Age. If you have ideas of how you think we should spend these proceeds, feel free to contact any committee chair, Judy Salaba or myself. You are also welcome to come to our meeting, just watch the bulletin for date and time.

Thanks again for your support!

2017 Fall Bazaar Chairs
Joyce Bluel and Judy Salaba

SAVE THE DATE!

Come one, come all to our ever-popular **ALL MEMBER WINTER CHURCH RETREAT** at Camp Onomia, Feb. 16-18. Young and old, parents or singles, all are welcome! Want to get away from your busy life, and just relax and have fun? Or do you want to have some great family time with your kids? There is something of everyone! To RSVP, please sign up on the kiosk asap. For further info, talk to Pastor Dave.



Announcing a Fantastic Dinner Show, Part 2!

On Wednesday, December 13 at 6:00 pm, we will have a fantastic dinner show featuring delicious food and excellent entertainment. Judy Salaba and Joyce Bluel have kindly offered to prepare the meal; the cost of the delectable dinner will be \$5.00. Enjoy a night off from cooking! The show is a one-hour special by Rick Steves, famous Lutheran Travel Host, entitled, "European Christmas." Dinner will begin at 6:00 sharp, with the one-hour video beginning at 6:15 (and ending at 7:15 in time for choir members to practice!). We will enjoy our delicious food while watching the video. It will take place in our social hall using our GIANT screen. Come, eat good food, watch a fantastic show, chat with friends and enjoy! Sign up on the kiosk so we know how much food to prepare.

Commentaries for the December Gospel Readings

In preparation for worship, please read the Bible text for the day as well as the commentaries found below. Prepare your heart and mind for worship and you will find yourself enriched. Sources for these studies include Working Preacher, Preaching Mark's Gospel and Preaching Luke's Gospel by Richard Jensen, Mark by Eduard Schweizer, Luke by David Tiede, Texts for Preaching, and my own notes.

December 3, Mark 13:24-37 First Sunday of Advent

Advent! Christmas is just a few weeks away!! But before we go there, we need to make preparations. I am not talking about buying presents, preparing delicious dishes or decorating. I am talking about spiritual preparation for the birth of our Lord Jesus. Too often we become so preoccupied with all of the other preparations that we forget the heart of Christmas, the birth of Jesus. Advent is a time when we both look back with thanksgiving at the birth of Jesus, while looking forward to the second coming, the second Advent of Jesus. It is also a time when we pray for this broken world of ours. It is a time when we fully realize that we cannot fix this world on our own. We need our Savior and so we pray that Jesus will come again in the second coming (Advent means "come") to rule with justice, love and power over this world. It is a time to hope for a new future. As one writer puts it, "Thus, Advent both anticipates God's fresh beginnings with creation in the person of Jesus Christ and, at the same time, celebrates the promise that that same Jesus Christ will return to consummate all history under his gracious rule." Our gospel for today begins with Jesus talking about the second coming or second Advent. The disciples asked Jesus what it would be like. In verses 24 and 25 Jesus refers to passages from the books of Daniel and other Old Testament passages prophesying the end times. When these things happen, Jesus said, the "Son of Man" (Jesus), will come in the clouds with great power. This is the second Advent or coming of Jesus. Check out Daniel 7:13 for his prophecy concerning the Son of Man. Jesus uses "Son of Man" often in reference to himself, with a variety of meanings, from human being, to Son of God. Jesus and his angels will then gather up the elect from the ends of the earth and the ends of heaven. It will be complete. Jesus then refers to a fig tree about to sprout leaves. When this happens, we know summer is near. In the same way, when these things take place, we will know the end is near. Verse 21 can be taken to mean that each generation needs to realize that the Lord will meet them in their everyday lives...as well as afterwards. It is not something that will only happen to future generations. Your time to come face to face with the Lord will indeed come. But concerning the timing of the end days, when it will come, the day or hour, no one knows, except God the Father. And so when you hear people say that they have it figured out and it will occur on such and such a day, it is a lie. There are plenty of people who would love to mislead others for whatever reason. Remember, ONLY God the Father knows the times. Look to God and no one else. Jesus tells us, in fact, to keep awake. Stay alert. The master will indeed return. Keep your eyes on God and no one else. Advent is a time when we emphasize this watching, waiting, and preparing for the first Advent, as well as the second. As one person wrote, "Only God knows what time approaches. As the people of God wait even now, they can anticipate only that the times are in God's hands and not their own. They know that God will not leave them alone, that God will not leave them without hope." (Both quotes from "Texts for Preaching")

December 10, Mark 1:1-8 Second Sunday in Advent

One of Mark's favorite words in the Gospel of Mark is "immediately." You will find it often in the Gospel of Mark. Mark begins his gospel on that note by not wasting any time declaring who Jesus is. He says it in the very first sentence, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." There it is. No genealogies (like Matthew), no birth stories (like Matthew and Luke), Mark, the shortest of all the gospel accounts makes sure you know what he is declaring: Jesus Christ is the Son of God! Jesus "Christ." Christ is Greek for the Hebrew word "Messiah." Jesus, the Son of God is the Messiah, the Savior of the world! The Hebrew people had been waiting centuries for the Messiah, promised to the world by the prophet Nathan speaking to King David (2 Samuel 7:4-17) about 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus. Mark is saying, from the very beginning of his gospel account that Jesus is the one! Mark then refers to the prophet Isaiah, who wrote about 580 years before the birth of Jesus. Mark quotes from Isaiah 40:3. This is referring to the messenger sent ahead of the Messiah to prepare his way. That voice is John the Baptist preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mark states that the "whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going to him." It

seems like a bit of an overstatement, but needless to say, people were flocking to hear John's message and be baptized by John in the river Jordan. Then in verse 6 it states that John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. Why describe him in this particular way? The reasons are found in 2 Kings 1:8 and Malachi 4:5-6. This is the description of the prophet Elijah. Remember, Elijah didn't die; he was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11). The expectation was that Elijah would come again to prepare the way of the Messiah. Jesus himself equated John with Elijah (Matthew 11:12-15). Jesus is the one who is to come! John declares this stating that he (John) baptizes with water, but the one who is to come is more powerful, for he will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The one who can do this is indeed the Son of God! ...We hear this message as we prepare to receive the one who is coming, Jesus: Messiah, Son of God, born among us! Prepare your heart.

December 17, John 1:6-8, 19-28 Third Sunday in Advent

We jump into the Gospel of John this week. Like Mark, John does not include a birth story about Jesus. Unlike any of the other gospels, John begins his gospel at the very beginning, THE beginning: creation, equating Jesus with the creating Word of God, the very being of God! Nestled into John's creation account are these words about John the Baptist. People of that time wondered if John the Baptist was the Messiah. Could John the Baptist be the one?! The Gospel of John makes it very clear that that is not the case. John is a witness who testifies to the light (Jesus). He is not the light, but the one who came to testify to the light. Jesus, the true light, was coming into the world. Today's gospel reading then skips several verses about Jesus (10-18) to once again give John the Baptist's testimony. Here we see the religious authorities asking John, "Who are you?" John emphasized, "I am not the Messiah." Why the special emphasis that John is not the Messiah? Remember that John baptized Jesus. Upon seeing this, some, especially John's disciples, might have thought that John was greater than Jesus. In fact, there may have been a bit of a rivalry between John and Jesus' disciples. This is one reason that we see it emphasized over and over in the Gospel of John (and other gospel accounts) that John is not the Messiah, but rather POINTS to the Messiah, Jesus. John is the one who comes to prepare the way for the Messiah. That is why John quotes the prophet Isaiah 40:3 as the voice crying out in the wilderness to make straight the way of the Lord." John is not the Messiah; he is the one who prepares the way for the Messiah. The religious authorities asked John if he was Elijah (no) or the prophet (no). Remember, the Jewish people believed that Elijah would come again to announce the Messiah (see the above commentary). The prophet also was thought of as a Messianic forerunner. John said he was neither, but as was prophesized in Isaiah, he is the one preparing the way for the Lord. John said he baptized with water, but the one who is coming, who is standing among them, is so great John is unworthy to even untie his sandal (the work of a slave). John is not the Messiah. John is the one who points to the coming one who stands unknown among them! In the same way, Jesus often stands among us...as he said in Matthew 25, as the least of us. Do we see him?

December 24: Luke 1:26-38, Advent 4

Our reading begins, "In the sixth month..." The sixth month of what? The answer is found in context. We see the answer in verse 24 which says that Elizabeth conceived and remained in seclusion for five months. The "sixth month" refers to her pregnancy with John. At that time God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth. Gabriel is mentioned in Daniel 8:16 as well as in Luke 1:19. Gabriel is the angel who stands in the presence of God. He interpreted Daniel's dream and told Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth would have a baby. Zechariah didn't believe him so Gabriel struck Zechariah mute until John was born! Gabriel means business. This same angel of God, visited Mary in Nazareth. Nazareth was a nothing of a town; totally insignificant at the time (Thus Nathanael's satirical question when Philip told him they had found the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote about, Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" - John 1:46). Mary was an unknown commoner. She had no social rank that we know of... She was engaged to Joseph, who was a descendent of King David. Remember, it was promised that the Messiah would come through the Davidic line (2 Samuel 7:12-14). Gabriel appeared to Mary and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." Needless to say, Mary was perplexed by this greeting. Remember that in the original Greek language, "angel" can mean both the kind of angel we envision (wings and all of that), as well as "messenger." Mary didn't seem awed so much by Gabriel's appearance as by his greeting. Maybe he appeared as an everyday person. We don't know. Gabriel reassures her, telling her not to be afraid. When we are afraid, it can make the possible seem impossible. Fear can do that

to a person. All throughout the Bible we see the Lord God and Jesus telling people over and over again not to be afraid. This is also a very valuable word for us as we travel through life. Don't be afraid. The God of all possibilities is with you! Gabriel tells Mary that she has found favor with God. God extends favor to her! Gabriel then shares the fantastic news that Mary will conceive and give birth to the Son of the Most High – the Son of God! We are reminded of Isaiah 9:6-7, written about 700 years before the birth of Jesus, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore." Unbelievable! If Mary lived in our era, she might have wondered if this were some kind of scam or fake news! Talk about news that is too good to be true! Mary is trying to take all this in and asks how it can be since she is a virgin?! Gabriel explains that she will be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. It is like Genesis 1:2 in which the Spirit of God hovers over the chaos and from it creates all that is. What will happen with Mary is that God will bring forth a new creation, new hope. Gabriel then shares what has happened with Elizabeth, Mary's relative. Elizabeth, who was thought to be barren, is now six months pregnant! Nothing is impossible with God! Mary then spoke her famous words of faith to all this fantastic news, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Mary consented, but if you pay attention, you will see that she continues to ponder all that was said as she tries to take in the enormity of the words and events. The blessings are almost beyond belief....yet they are all true.

December 31: Luke 2:21-40 First Sunday of Christmas

We begin with Joseph and Mary taking baby Jesus to the temple to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, as was commanded by the law of Moses. They offered a sacrifice according to the Law of the Lord (a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons). Mary and Joseph were good Jews who followed the Jewish law in regards to their firstborn Jesus (Leviticus 12:2-8; Exodus 13:2). Jesus too, grew up as a good Jew, following the law of the Lord. It is important to remember that Jesus was a Jew, as were Joseph, Mary, and all of the disciples. Jesus wasn't a "Christian." There was no such thing at the time. Jesus was a faithful member of the Jewish faith. When Mary and Joseph arrived at the temple in Jerusalem, they were met by Simeon, a man who had been guided to them by the Holy Spirit, with the promise he would see the Messiah, the Savior of the world! Simeon is described as a righteous man, just as Zechariah and Elizabeth were described in Luke 1:6; where "righteous" is described as "living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord." Simeon was looking forward to the "consolation of Israel." To begin to get a feeling of all this means, read Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and Zechariah's oracle concerning God's visitation and redemption of God's people (Luke 1:68-79). It is revolutionary. It is the in breaking of the Kingdom of God into this world! Can you imagine Mary and Joseph, eight days after their son is born, exhausted from giving birth and traveling to Jerusalem, met by this stranger Simeon, who lovingly takes Jesus in his arms and utters these words fantastic inspired by the Holy Spirit! They were probably speechless! Simeon praises God, saying that now he (Simeon) can die in peace, for Simeon has now seen the salvation of the world! Jesus is not only the glory of the Jewish people, but also the light of ALL peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles. It reminds one of the words written by Isaiah over 500 years before the birth of Jesus. Concerning the servant of the Lord, Isaiah writes in 49:6, "It is too light of a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Mary and Joseph stood amazed, then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too." The in breaking of the Kingdom of God reveals much and will come at a cost! Mary will not be an impartial observer as she walks with her beloved son and witnesses all, including his crucifixion and resurrection. We not only hear God's Word from Simeon, but also Anna who is described as a prophet. She has never left the temple, fasting and praying there. She too had been led by the Holy Spirit to share God's Word concerning Jesus, praising God and speaking about Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (note again Mary and Zechariah's words above). This is no ordinary child. He is the Son of God!

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. -Numbers 6:24