



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

Parish Times December 2015

He (Joseph) went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. Luke 2:5-7



When Nahoko and I were expecting our first child, we were told that the first child usually comes late and the second child early. Our children were just the opposite. Our first son, John, came one week *early*, while our second son Andy came about one *month* late. Ha! It seems baby Jesus was no different. He came just as Mary and Joseph were in the midst of traveling. Babies are born when *they* are ready, not necessarily when we are ready!

As I mentioned in the first commentary for December, it seems the world is ready for Christmas well before Halloween. The stores are stocked with Christmas gear, music is blaring, and people are frantically buying. By the time December 25 comes around, they are ready for Christmas to be over, when in fact, it has just begun. The Savior of the world has just been born! Sometimes I wonder if anyone has the time and the energy left over to see the baby. How about you? This year, as your pastor, I want you NOT to hurry the baby. This year, during Advent, take time to prepare your heart for the coming of the Christ child. You do that NOT through harried shopping, but through reading of the Scripture, prayer, and worship. Let Christmas happen at Christmas time. Quiet your mind, prepare your heart, wait in anticipation for the coming joy. The babe will be born on Christmas day. You can't hurry the baby, especially the Son of God! When the baby comes, let us celebrate with the whole world, the joyous fact of Christmas, the birth of our Savior Jesus!

Pr. Dave



Our heartfelt thanks to our Bun Run volunteers for November: Larry Litzkow, Mike Hegdahl, Joan Wilson and Ken McGrew.



December Acolytes:
6 Victor Landenberger
20 Evan Nelson
24 Alek & Victor Landenberger



There will be a brief congregational meeting on Sunday, Dec.13 after worship to vote on the 2015 budget. All are welcome; we need and value your participation.



Ladies Night Out – 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 of where we will be dining in January. If you have suggestions of restaurants please feel free to contact Joyce Bluel.



Loaves and Fishes

115 hungry men, women and children were fed a very delicious meal at St. Michael's Catholic Church on Oct. 26. Workers from St. Luke were Julie Gaarder, Bev Eckstrom, Sandy Berger, Larry Litzkow, Pastor Dave and Roger and Dianne Diestler.



Usher Notes

Many thanks to our ushers for November: Steve and Gwen Brummund, Matt Brummund, Lisa Vandrovec, Mike and Nancy Hegdahl, Linda Funkhouser, Michael Hoffman. Our ushers for December will be: Eva Mac Niven, Jim Kroschel, Doug Nelson, Wanda Mathison, Larry and Carol Vigdal, Pam Ballis, Katy Eggert.



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 20. 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!



Confirmation

We will be volunteering at the Operation Christmas Child warehouse on Tuesday, December 1. We are scheduled for the 3-7pm shift, but can be flexible with that time. We will have class on December 8, 15 and 22. No class on Dec. 29.

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 20 during the worship service. Come, hear the joyous Christmas message as only children can tell it!



Operation Christmas Child Warehouse Volunteer Opportunity

The confirmation students will be volunteering at the Operation Christmas Child warehouse on Tuesday, December 1. Our time slot is 3-7 pm, but that time is flexible (we will probably be starting sometime later than 3 pm). If you would like to attend, but can only start a little later than 3 pm, please let Pr. Dave know. We will be helping to pack shoeboxes into larger boxes to be shipped all over the world. It really is very amazing work and will benefit so many deserving children all over the world. If interested, sign up on the kiosk and ask Pr. Dave about it after he returns from Japan on November 19.

Welcome Rev. Justin Grimm



Pastor Justin Grimm is one of the newer members of our St. Paul Area Synod staff and will be preaching here at St. Luke on December 6 at my (Pr. Dave) request. Disclaimer time: Pastor Grimm is the son-in-law of one of my best friends, so I have known him for many years. I will lead the liturgy that day and he will preach the sermon. Pastor Grimm is the Director for Evangelical Mission and the Assistant to the Bishop for Next Generation Ministries. He helps coordinate congregational development for both new and existing congregations. In this capacity he is able to offer and suggest various resources helpful for the development of congregations. Please give him a warm St. Luke welcome!

Pr. Dave

LET EVERY HEART

Prepare





December Birthdays

- 4 Olivia Peterson
- 5 Helen Bye, Douglas Nelson
- 9 Mark McGough
- 10 Bill Klotz
- 16 Mary Faust
- 18 Holly Schultz
- 22 Sander And Trevor Johnson
- 23 Garrett Faust, Deborah Vigdal
- 30 Roger Diestler



December Anniversaries

- 3 - Dwight And Donna Paulson: 1966
- 17 - Doug And Karen Wasko: 1960
- 29 - Anne And John Fabie: 1984

O Come, All Ye Faithful! Join us for our time-honored Advent Candlelight Service on Sunday, Dec. 6 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.



Need to pick up a special gift for a teacher, co-worker or favorite aunt? You will find just the right things among the wide variety of one-of-a-kind, handcrafted treasures in the classroom across the hall from the library...check it out soon!



Christmas Worship Services and "Blue" Christmas

Christmas Eve worship begins at 6:05 pm (after the chimes finish ringing) on Thursday, December 24. 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 in the water. 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.

On Sunday, December 27 we will have a service of readings and carols. Through all three worship services, we hope to sing all of your favorite Christmas carols. If we didn't sing your favorite on Christmas Eve, come to the other worship services to sing and worship our Lord!

Pr. Dave

*Good news from heaven
the angels bring,
Glad tidings to
the earth they sing:
To us this day
a child is given,
To crown us with
the joy of heaven.
- Martin Luther*





2015 Fall Bazaar

Fall Bazaar – Preliminary Report
Joyce Bluel – Co-chair

We still have many lovely craft items available for your holiday shopping located in the Sunday school room across from the library. We will continue to sell items until after the candlelight service, December 6th. As of October 31st, we have sales totaling \$4,718.10 and after expenses we have made \$3,472.68.

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 Youth Work Camp, the Airport Ministry, Highland Leisure Age, and purchased a flat screen TV for the youth camp spaghetti dinner raffle. We also used these funds to finance a portion of the restroom renovations that took place this past summer.

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.

Additional Altar Guild volunteers are needed! These people help set up communion and clean up afterward. They also ensure hymn numbers are posted and the proper colors are displayed at the front of the church for the season. Two of our current volunteers have been doing these tasks for over 50 years each, and could use a break :-)
Training will be provided. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Pam Ballis at pmbalice@gmail.com
Thank you.



**O COME
LET US ADORE HIM!**
*Join us as we celebrate
Advent and Christmas!*

Candlelight Service
Sunday, December 6, 7:00 p.m.

**Sunday School
Christmas Program**
Sunday, December 20, 9:00 a.m.
(As part of our Sunday service)

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

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



DECEMBER WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

Readers:

Dec. 6, 9am: Barb Jensen

Dec. 6, 7pm: Barb Jensen, Beth Peterson, Christine Olson, David Schnell, Wendy Bjorklund, Roger Diestler.

Dec. 13: Beth Peterson

Dec. 20: Wendy Bjorklund

Dec. 24: Dan Vigdal

Dec. 25: Pastor Dave

Dec. 27: Katy Eggert

Communion:

Dec. 6: Jennifer Fredrickson

Dec. 20: Wendy Bjorklund

Dec. 25: Bill Klotz

Commentaries for December

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 Luke's Gospel by Richard Jensen, and my own notes.

December 6: Luke 3:1-6 Second Sunday in Advent

Here we are in Advent, a time of preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus born in Bethlehem. We are living in a world of constant rush. No one likes to wait. We begin seeing Christmas presents, gear, decorations and everything else in stores even before Halloween arrives. People don't want to wait for Christmas, like everything else, they want it RIGHT NOW! They want it on their own terms. But our Lord calls on us to wait, to contemplate this miraculous birth, to prepare ourselves in heart and mind to receive with gratitude. Please don't rush Christmas; you'll miss it if you do. Just like the people of Jesus' time walked right by the manger occupied by a lowly man and woman, and a baby wrapped in rags. It is easy to rush by. Let Christmas come, like a baby, in its own time. Our reading for today begins by naming all of the important people of that time (like Luke did when he wrote about the birth of Jesus). In so doing, Luke places this event squarely in history. It happened when all of these people were ruling. It was at that point of history when the word of God came to John the Baptist, son of Zechariah (See Luke 1:5-24, 57-80). It is interesting to note that John and baby Jesus are set in history against the backdrop of all these major historical figures of that time, all of the shakers and movers. Yet, it is these two seemingly insignificant people (John and Jesus), who, rather than the "shakers and movers" stand out in history. As one pastor put it, "Here in our gospel lesson we see Luke's outrageous claim that the "word of the Lord" comes to this nobody named John in that no-place called the wilderness and that that small and insignificant thing is more important than all the important people and events of the day." John calls all to a baptism of repentance. One meaning of repent is to turn around, quit concentrating on yourself and look to God instead. It is to quit making yourself number one and make God number one. In the end, we only see death in ourselves. It is in God that we see life and hope. We then see a quote from Isaiah 40:3-5. Isaiah was telling the people who were held in captivity in Babylon for over 40 years that they would be set free, the gates of captivity opened, so they could return home to Jerusalem. He was preparing the way for that good news to come to fruition (and it did...it is a historical fact). In the same way, John prepared the way for Jesus, getting hearts ready to hear the good news that Jesus would set us free from sin and open the gates to heaven for us to enter. Verse 6 says, "and all flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord." Compare this to Luke 2:29-32 when Simeon holds the baby Jesus and sings, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have *seen your salvation*, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Here in Advent, a time of waiting and preparation, prepare your hearts to receive this glorious gift found in the baby Jesus.

December 13: Luke 3:7-18 Third Sunday in Advent

This is a continuation of the reading from last week in which we are introduced to the ministry of John the Baptist as he preaches to the people. We don't know the context for his preaching, but we see John starting off with "all guns blazing" when he says, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come! Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor....'" Obviously John sees a need for repentance amongst the people. As mentioned last week, one meaning of "repent" is to turn; turn from the self to God. They need to center their lives on the Lord (as do we). They can't go about life simply counting on the promise found in their ancestor Abraham. Abraham received the promise in faith. The promise is indeed there for them also, but to see it, they need to keep their eyes on God in faith, like Abraham did. They cannot simply claim the promise without faith and the life of faith found in God. An essential part of that is to live in a right relationship with God as well as with other people. These go hand in hand (as Jesus said, loving God and loving your neighbor covers all the commandments). The people ask, "What should we do?" John tells them that if they see their neighbor lacking in something (without a coat or food), that they should provide it. The tax collectors ask him the same, and he tells them to be fair in their tax collecting. Soldiers also asked him the same question and he tells them not to bully the people with their power and to treat people fairly. All these things are "fruits worthy of repentance" (3:8). They are part of living out our faith in everyday life. We are called to do the same. This is a living, active faith. As John continued preaching to them, the people began to wonder if he was the Messiah. He denied it saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." This reminds us of Pentecost. Read Acts 2:1-4. In this way, John was preparing the way for Jesus, the Messiah (Luke 3:4).

December 20: Luke 1:39-55 Fourth Sunday in Advent

Our gospel begins with “in those days.” These are the days referred to in 1:26-38 (important to read as you prepare for Sunday). They were the days when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would give birth to the Son of God! Gabriel also appeared to John the Baptist’s father Zechariah (Luke 1:5-25). “In those days” also refers to Mary’s relative (1:36) Elizabeth being about six months pregnant (1:26) with John when Mary hurries to see her in the Judean hill country. Mary enters Zechariah and Elizabeth’s house and greets them. Immediately the baby (John) leaps in Elizabeth’s womb at the sound of Mary’s voice. The Holy Spirit is at work here. In fact, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and says to Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” I believe we all know who the “fruit of her womb” is: Jesus. Elizabeth goes on with this blessing speaking of John leaping in her womb at the sound of Mary’s voice and the blessing found in Mary believing the word of the Lord given through Gabriel. There is blessing found in believing (trusting) in the Word of the Lord, then and now, for both Mary and us. After this, it is Mary’s turn to speak and she begins singing what we now call the Magnificat. Echoes of this song/poem can be found in Hannah’s song of praise, when Hannah learned she was pregnant with Samuel (I Samuel 2:1-10). Take some time to compare them. As one pastor wrote, Mary sings of the God of reversals, the one who regularly shows up where we least expect God to be -- manger, cross, vulnerability, suffering -- in order to scatter the proud, exalt the lowly, satisfy the hungry, and send the rich away empty.” We are talking about reversals here and if you pay attention (slow down) as you read Luke, you will see this theme throughout the book. This is the God who chooses this lowly woman (girl... She was probably about 12-14 years old) from nowhere to be the mother of the Son of God! Can it be that the Lord God, Creator of the Universe can be found in the ordinary....even right here and right now in our lives? Yes, it is best to slow down and pay attention, even to that which seems least important and ordinary, for the God of reversals is also working right here and now in our world.

December 27: First Sunday of Christmas:

This will be a worship of lessons and carols, so there will not be a main gospel lesson on which to comment. Please come, sing your favorite carols and hear once again as the Word of God speaks to the coming of our Savior.



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