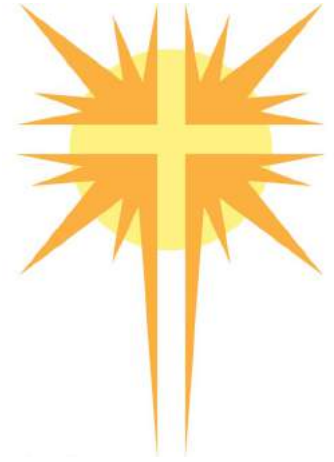


# News & Views

*First Lutheran Church*

*December, 2020*



## *Advent Anticipation*

We understand Advent as a time leading up to Christmas, but originally it was created as a midwinter 40 Days of repentance, similar to Lent in the spring, leading to Epiphany. As it has shifted to anticipation for Christmas, the experience we await is a similar joy. On Epiphany, we celebrate the surprising arrival of the three magi bearing gifts for the Christ child. At Christmas, we celebrate the arrival of the Christ child himself, which while it is predicted in Scripture, is also an event full of surprise.

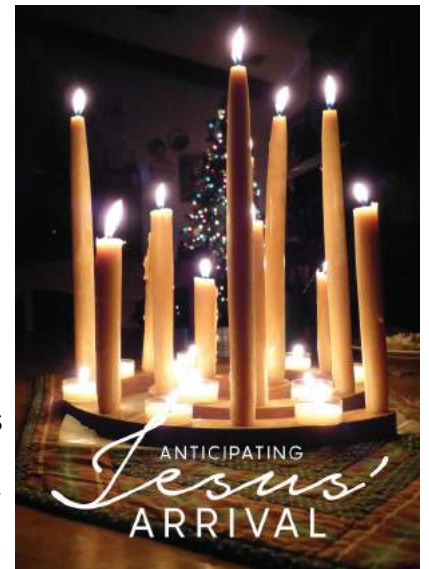
Like many things in the Christian faith, this first season of the church year is a bit of a paradox, as we are invited to wait and plan for a surprise! We wait and the waiting makes us appreciate more and more each day, the joy that will come as the Gift of Christ arrives. We have rituals like getting and decorating a Christmas Tree, lighting an advent wreath, and opening up the windows of an advent calendar to mark the days as we wait, and grow the anticipation.

Our rituals and the company we keep may have changed this year, as will the celebrations we get to experience, but perhaps that will allow some of the original meaning of this journey of Advent to be experienced, personally and by each of us, as we look for and appreciate the signs of God's presence in our life. As we look at the world with eyes of faith and anticipate, knowing we may be surprised!

Jesus is the reason for the season and the gift of God for all humanity, but often he is overshadowed by the rush of this season, at the end of each year: the desire for presents, the work of getting presents, year-end financial planning, and waiting for other experiences, family gatherings, food and treats, vacations and just the general busy-ness of the season. Jesus can get lost in the bustle.

But Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us, a God who surprises us at every turn, and at the very start of Jesus' life there is also surprise, so we need to pay attention! Jesus is born not in a palace or a mansion as the magi imagine but in a humble stable where animals and shepherds are the only people that have heard the good news that this child will be the king of the Jews, but also a savior, not just of his people, but for the whole world. And the world shows up in the form of the magi, who do not have Scripture to foretell the arrival, but watch creation and the stars and see a sign that takes them on a journey of anticipation and surprise. We are also surprised as we remember that God is at work in the world in ways we don't know.

*Continued next page....*





Continued from p. 1

And we are invited into the wonder revealed. That all of this hope is born in a little vulnerable baby, guarded by livestock not an armed battalion. We relish the surprise and appreciation that God cares for this little vulnerable baby and also remember that God cares for each of us as well. Isn't that an amazing gift?

We may feel a bit more isolated this season, as Jesus and his family likely did, but the Spirit is at work in the world around us and can surprise us with a word of encouragement and wake us with joy as we remember the reason for the season, appreciate the love we receive and share, and await God's wonderful surprises.

Christmas blessings, Pastor Josh



### DECEMBER SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School is in session! We're meeting bi-monthly on-line and enjoying still being able to do crafts and science experiments which will focus on Christmas this month. If you have children or grandkids that would be interested in joining the class, contact the church office. Pickles helped Pastor Josh with a lesson on the Trinity in November.



## FAMILY CRAFTS TO MAKE

### LET IT SNOW!

Create a winter wonderland with this fun craft.



#### What you need:

- Glass jar with lid but no label
- Laminated photo (that will fit in the jar)
- Small plastic Christmas trinkets
- Hot or waterproof glue
- Container with spout
- 1 cup distilled water
- 3 tsp. glycerin
- Glitter



#### What you do:

1. Unscrew lid and flip jar upside down. Glue the photo and trinkets to the inside of the lid, standing upright.
2. In a container, mix water and glycerin. Pour the mixture into the jar, leaving space at the top.
3. Spoon in some glitter.
4. When glue is dry, attach the decorated lid tightly. Shake the jar to see "snow" swirl and settle.

# Christian Life



We don't yet know what worship in December will look like. The council is looking at many options. We do know for sure that our worship service will always be available on First Lutheran's website.

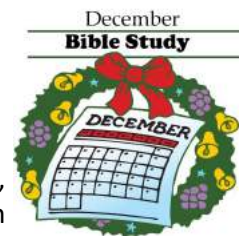
We are working with Mt. Hope and Luther Memorial Churches to hold a 3 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service in Luther Memorial's parking lot. People will be invited to come early and listen to Christmas carols. There will also be a pre-recorded Christmas Eve service for those who cannot make it or in case of bad weather. Please continue to check our website or call the church office for the latest information. We look forward to worshipping with you!



As a community we pray for those with immediate needs of healing and strength:

John Bennethum, Dale Hedman, John Hurst, Brian Hurst, Ly Lam, Heidi Leiser, Jim Ribnek, Rachel Tripi, and Kimberly Zappa

## TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY



Beginning on Dec. 8th, we'll be starting an Advent themed study with texts about waiting and patience. Join us on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. for thought-provoking Bible Studies led by Pastor Josh. We use Zoom for the studies now that it's too cold to meet outside. You can Zoom from your computer or just from your telephone. Contact the office for more information. We'd love to have new members!

### Christmas Music



We'll have a musical countdown to Christmas beginning on Dec. 1. Check the daily emails for a different musical selection each day to help you prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ.

## Meet Our Members...

Welcome to our newest member, Jeanie Stummeier. Jeanie lives in our neighborhood with her dog "Benji" and chose First Lutheran as her church home. She was born in Tigerton, WI during a difficult birth which claimed the life of her mother. Jeanie lived with foster parents, was adopted at 14 months and grew up on a farm outside of Green Bay. She has two siblings, a sister Mary and a brother Don who is now deceased. Over her lifetime she has lived in Colorado Springs, Chama, NM, Belen, NM, St. Robert, MO, Appleton, Rockford and West Allis. She has worked as an assistant manager for Walmart, owned her own horse ranch, was an assistant manager for Road Ranger truck stop and managed a Subway restaurant. During our first Zoom Coffee And ..., Jeanie shared a story about her horse ranch in St Robert. As part of her riding business, she provided therapeutic riding sessions to children with autism. One of her clients was a 5 year old boy who had never spoken a word. After one of the riding lessons he told his mom that he "wanted to take Lightning home with him". Everyone there burst into tears at this amazing breakthrough! Jeanie was married and has three children, Eric Jon, Elka Jean and Elliott James. The children's last name is Trick, so they all have the initials of "EJT". She is the "puzzle queen" and loves doing jigsaw puzzles and adult coloring. During Coffee And... she showed us two huge horse-shaped puzzles that she had mounted on her walls. Jeanie is recovering from a stroke she had about 3 years ago and underwent 6 months of speech therapy. Jeanie says that she visited area churches and chose us because of our location and because we are friendly and made her feel welcome. She wishes to thank Pastor Josh!



## We're doing God's work

**Outdoor worship** took place in Luther Memorial's parking lot on two Sundays in November. It was nice to be able to see familiar faces and have communion together.



Pastor Josh spent time testing the ventilation in the sanctuary with a smoke machine. We're continually looking for ways to worship safely.



### **EL SALVADOR HURRICANE RELIEF** **Central American Hurricanes:** **These are your neighbors.** **They need your help.**

*Two devastating hurricanes in two weeks.  
That is what our neighbors in Central  
America are coping with.*

Less than two weeks after Hurricane Eta ravaged parts of Central America, Hurricane Iota followed, bringing destruction to already poor, vulnerable and devastated communities. Lutheran World relief had a team already on the ground in Honduras when the storm hit, planning our response. They spoke to a few of our neighbors there. They are worried. They are scared. They need your love to see them through this crisis.

If you would like to give a gift to reach families with the emergency help they desperately need, go to [LWR.org](http://LWR.org), or contact the church office for mailing information.

### **OPERATION** **CHRISTMAS STOCKING**

This year, Operation Christmas Stocking is again gifting the 20 men in the recovery program at Serenity Inn, Milwaukee. On their wish list are socks, dental floss and playing cards. If you want to add to Santa's bag, donations can be left in the church office. "The mission of Serenity Inn is to provide structured housing and rehabilitative services in an environment of support and accountability that will give addicted men the opportunity to rebuild their lives." Unfortunately with overdose deaths rising in our greater community, Serenity Inn services and support are needed more than ever.



## And Are Stewards in Many Ways!



Audrey Wiefelspuetz is exhibiting stewardship by working on a quilt for Lutheran World Relief. Sharon and Dale Phillippo are shown stewardship by grandchildren who came to rake leaves and prepare their yard for winter, taking care of God's creation. Sharon spent time baking for others.

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ:

First, thank you for all the prayers for my recovery from Covid-19 which has taken the better part of this past month. I am feeling much better. I continue to pray for the health, safety and well-being for each of you and your families as we continue to struggle with increasing numbers of illness and death in our country.

I thank the Council for their continued efforts to provide worship opportunities including Zoom, outside under the tent and most recently the partnership with Luther Memorial for shared worship. The willingness to "look outside the box" although not always what "we" want but the opportunities provide worship options. The Holy Spirit is ever present in His loving presence and guidance.

As "we" move forward in uncertain times with Covid, flu season, worship and government issues, etc., the constant and reassurance of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ for His children is our strength. Hold fast to the love of Jesus and our faith to bring us through the rough times.

As we all prepare for the Christmas season, I would like to share the following prayer:

Loving God, help us remember the birth of Jesus that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and worship of the wise men. Amen

On behalf of the entire Council best wishes for a blessed Christmas filled with joy, happiness and love.

Merry Christmas,  
Heidi Leiser-O'Neil, Council President

PS: Covid-19 is on Santa's naughty list. We need to laugh!!!!



## “FAITH BOOK QUIPS”

### My Week’s To Do List

- Count my blessings
- Let go of what I can’t control
- Practice kindness
- Listen to my heart
- Be thankful for what God has given me
- Just breathe

.....Positivity in Life

### *The Four Stages of Life*

You believe in Santa  
 You don’t believe in Santa.  
 You are Santa.  
 You look like Santa.



We’re ordering poinsettias again this year. Plants are in red only, and are \$8 for a beautiful 6 1/2” pot. Deadline to order is Dec. 11. Contact the church office to place order.



### A FRESH LOOK

Just when everything is bearing down on us to such an extent that we can scarcely withstand it, the Christmas message comes to tell us that all our ideas are wrong, and that what we take to be evil and dark is really good and light because it comes from God. Our eyes are at fault, that is all.

God is in the manger, wealth in poverty, light in darkness, succor in abandonment. No evil can befall us; whatever men may do to us, they cannot but serve the God who is secretly revealed as love and rules the world and our lives.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God Is in the Manger*

## Thank You!

*To Stuart Mitchell who provided music for us in November!*

*To General Mitchell Elementary School for all of the great food donated to our Food Pantry.*

*To West Allis Community Improvement Foundation for their generous donations to our food pantry.*

*To Village at Manor Park for the food collected at their “Be a Light Luminary Celebration.*



## Thanks From. .

Kristi Sebald, Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity, for our donation to Faith Build, which was matched by Thrivent and supports their Cost of Home campaign.

Gail Sopa for the continued prayers for her sister who was hospitalized for 60 days and intubated for 50 days due to Covid-19. She has been released from the hospital and is starting rehab. Thanks be to God!

Barb Reed for all of the cards and prayers following the death of her sister, Sue.



Be sure to "Like" First Lutheran on Facebook and share with your friends!

### December Birthdays

- 12/17 Gayle Falk
- 12/17 Crystal Wegener
- 12/18 Kathleen Santos
- 12/27 Mike Temke
- 12/28 Don Moncher
- 12/29 Joy Dowd

### December Anniversaries

12/11 Carrie & Joseph Muffler 10 yrs.



If you're donating cookies for our homebound members, be sure to bring them to the church office by **noon on Tues., Dec. 2nd.**

### KNOCK. KNOCK...

Is God calling you to serve on Council next year? Please consider sharing your talents and gifts with the congregation as we navigate our way through our changing world.



*The simple shepherds heard the voice of an angel and found their Lamb; the wise men saw the light of a star and found their Wisdom.*

—Fulton J. Sheen



Eras Senior Network is working with the community to fill up to 1,100 self-sufficiency gifts for seniors and adults with disabilities living on a fixed income. Please help them give \$50 in gift cards and postage stamps to each of our recipients.

Gifts needed this year:

- Books of Forever Stamps
- \$10 Walgreens Gift Cards
- \$10 Pick 'n Save Gift Cards
- \$10 Walmart Gift Cards

Items and money collected to purchase gifts are due by December 14th. Contact the church office for information where to drop off gifts.

Don't forget you can give online. Contact the church office or Dave Grulke for information.



Which of the four Gospels name(s) Bethlehem as the place of Jesus' birth?

- A. Only Luke
- B. Matthew and Luke
- C. Mark and John
- D. All four



Answer: No hints this time. Read your Bible!

### ARE YOU SOCIAL??

The Pastor Josh and the Evangelism committee are looking to expand our online presence through social media. Who do you know that might be interested in working with Facebook? We are in need of people to help with content, respond to comments and share our posts. Everyone of all ages can participate. We are also investigating a new theme for our webpage. What ideas do you have??

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***Worship With Us Online at:  
[www.firstlutheranelca.org](http://www.firstlutheranelca.org)***

Please check our website for information on  
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