

Ascension Lutheran Church
3801 Oakwood Avenue
Huntsville, AL 35810

December, 2023



Reflections

WORSHIP SERVICES

SUNDAY

8:00 & 10:45 AM

10:45 AM-ZOOM

MONDAY

6:00 PM

BIBLE STUDY/CLASSES

SUNDAY

9:30 AM

TUESDAY

10:00 AM-WOMEN

4TH SATURDAY

8:30 AM-MEN (NOT THIS
MONTH)

CHOIR

WEDNESDAY

AFTER MIDWEEK SERVICE
(THIS MONTH)

OUTREACH

SUNDAY

9:45 AM

WEDNESDAY - HHR - 10:15 AM

12/13 & 12/27

THURSDAY - REGENCY - 12:30

12/7 & 12/21



Coming Up

Advent Worship Services

Wednesday 12/6, 12/13, 12/20 6:00 PM

Special Sunday School Program

Sunday 12/17 10:00 AM

Choir Candlelight Cantata

Monday 12/18 6:00 PM

Christmas Eve Day

Sunday 12/24 9:30 AM

Lessons & Carols 12/24 7:00 PM

Christmas Day

Monday 12/25 10:00 AM

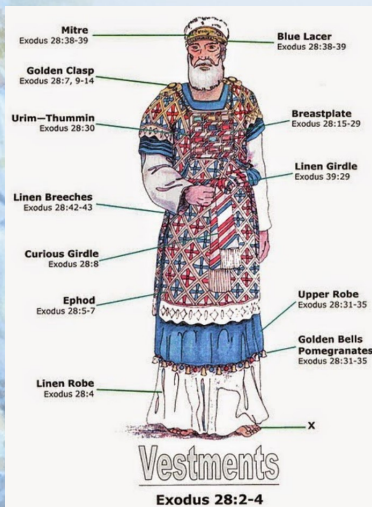




(IT'S ALL ABOUT) WHAT'S INSIDE THE WRAPPING

When you receive Christmas presents later this month, there is a good chance they will be wrapped up. And much like that, the gifts we receive from God in our worship come with some wrapping paper. There is a great deal of tradition and symbolism in our Lutheran form of worship; much of it, inherited from past generations and centuries of Christian worship, finds its roots in the first few centuries of the Church. One example of that are the vestments, the articles of clothing the pastor wears during the service. Now, none of these are required. Our Lutheran Confessions clearly state that they fall into the category called “adiaphora,” meaning things which are neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture, but can be used by churches if beneficial.

In the first several centuries following Pentecost, church leaders wore clothing that was no different from the rest of the congregation, and there is nothing theologically or Scripturally wrong with a pastor presiding in worship today in the same attire as everyone else. In fact, the vestments we often use today are descended from Roman civil garments, not anything uniquely Biblical.



Nevertheless, some of these traditions that have developed do have value. Old Testament priests were prescribed special garments to wear while they served in the tabernacle that set them apart and visually marked them as serving the holy God in all His beauty and glory. When the Church uses similar such things today, it

From the Pastor

Rev. Derek Waffel

helps visually show that what happens in our worship is different and set apart from the rest of our daily lives and activities. If they serve as they should, to point us back to Christ and teach us about our faith, they are useful.

So here are some of the basic vestments that you might see in our worship services. The plain white robe is called an alb. In Revelation, each saint is said to be given a white robe, and Galatians 3:27 speaks of baptism as being clothed with Christ. The white alb therefore mirrors that white robe of the saints, the new and clean self we are given in baptism into Christ, washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Any baptized Christian who serves during worship may wear an alb; it is not unique to the pastor. For example, our acolytes wear one, and in some congregations the elders assisting at communion may too, as well as the robes a choir may wear.

Over that, the pastor wears a stole, the band of cloth over his shoulders in the color of the church season. This is the basic indicator of an ordained servant in ministry, taken from the Roman practice of a cord worn around the neck to mark a holder of civil office. It is not a statement about the individual man, but about the office of pastoral ministry he holds on behalf of the whole Church. The stole may also have roots in the Jewish prayer shawl and fringed garment described in Numbers 15, or that Jesus is wearing in Matthew 9:20 or 14:36. It reminds us that the pastor is under the authority of and acts in obedience to Christ, taking the yoke of Christ in His service, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls,” Matthew 11:29. The pastor is, in obedience to Christ’s command and imitating Christ’s example, a servant to the people of the congregation and bearing the yoke of Christ is a mark of that.



The final one is the chasuble, the “liturgical poncho” that goes over the head. This is specially connected to

the Eucharist, and while some pastors might wear it for the whole service, others will wear it only for the Lord's Supper portion. It comes from a Roman traveling garment or cloak, and in that makes me think of the Eucharist as Christ "traveling" in a way, coming down to meet and be present with His people where they are, and going back out into the world in them. It has also been historically connected with the yoke of Christ, similar to the stole. If there are multiple pastors taking part in a service, only the one presiding over the communion portion of the service wears a chasuble.



Once again, none of this is necessary or commanded in Scripture, but such practices can be helpful and meaningful for us in faith. At this time of year, we especially consider and marvel at the miracle of Christ's Incarnation, God coming into His creation and becoming a part of it, in order to save it. These things that appeal to all our senses; the sights, sounds, and full experience of our worship, are part of how Christ comes to us incarnationally: in ways we see and hear, taste and touch. Our worship is set apart from the ordinary hustle and bustle of daily life, a time of receiving our Lord's blessings in Word and Sacrament, and responding in prayer and praise.



To have a symbolic visual reminder that the Church's worship is a holy time and holy activity helps better confess this truth, as well as appreciating the beauty of artistic handiwork and color in the patterns and symbols of vestments, altar paraments, and so forth. These outward expressions are not central to our worship, but if we use them properly, they direct us to what is central and essential to our worship: our liturgy, our vestments, our traditions are the "wrapping paper" to the true gifts we receive from God in Word and Sacrament. No matter how beautiful the wrapping paper is, the point is the gift on the inside of the package. So when you see these things used in our worship, may they remind you of the gracious and merciful promises of God for you, and the wonder of how He comes to us as our Savior.

Adopt a Table

We invite your family to "adopt a table" to decorate in any manner you wish for our annual Congregational Christmas dinner.

The meal will be following the Children's Christmas service on Dec. 17.

If you are interested, please let Stephanie or Carla Jo know.



It's Here!

The Season of Advent is here! Let us prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of the Savior!

There is so much going on at church and the CDC in preparation for the celebration of Christ. Decorations are going up in both buildings. Christmas program practices are well underway. Costumes have been sorted out and are getting ready to be cleaned and ironed.

The CDC staff party will be the evening of Friday, December 8 in the church fellowship hall. Thank you to everyone who took angels from the angel tree. They have all been spoken for! Please have the presents back by December 10.

The CDC Christmas program will be on the evening of Wednesday, December 13, at 6:00 PM. The title of their program is "Lead the Way to Christmas." Please join us as the children share with us their joy of Jesus' birth! The Ladies of the LWML are graciously providing refreshments after the program to allow time for the congregation to visit with the CDC families. Congregational Christmas presents to the CDC children and staff will be distributed by "Santa Rob" on Thursday, December 14.



The Children's Christmas Service will be on December 17. The Young people of our congregation will lead us in

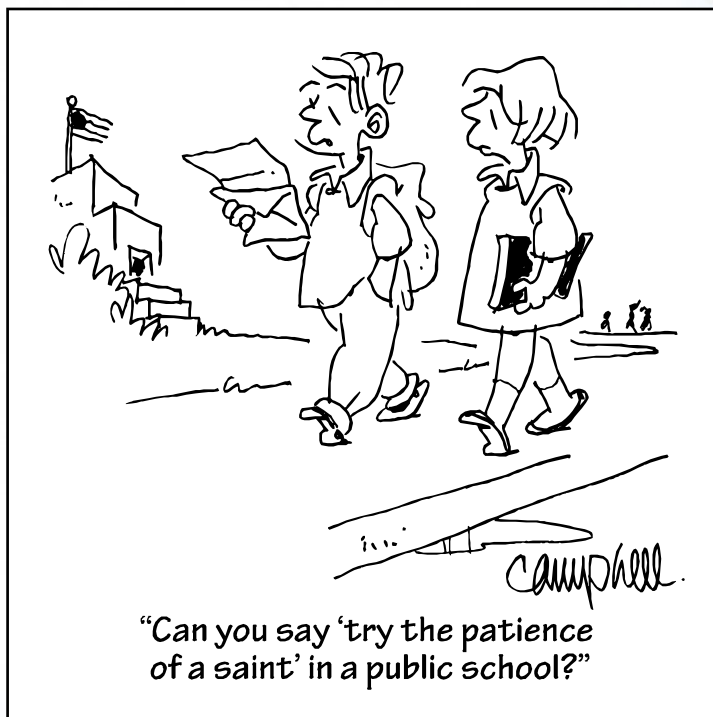
From the DCM

Carla Jo Peebles

worship that morning with a service entitled "Peace Came to Earth." There will be one service, beginning at 10:00. At 9:30, we will have time for individuals/groups to provide musical praise before the worship service. Following the service, a catered meal will be provided for the congregation.



Something to note: Jennifer Hartwig is leaving her full-time position here at the CDC, to move to a part-time position closer to home to allow for more time to work with her family who is being home schooled. She will still serve us as a substitute and during the summer. We will miss seeing her on a daily basis and wish her well as she moves on. **So that leaves us looking for a staff member. It was nice to be fully staffed – even for that short time. If you know of anyone who would be interested in working either full or part time, please let us know.**



HIS STORY

O come, Emmanuel, Jesus, our Lord. Be our constant source of hope. As this Advent begins a new Church year, we humbly pray for those around the globe who are hostile to Christianity, who do not know You, yet, as Savior and Lord, or who have erred from faith in You. Shine the light of Your love into their hearts, as well as ours. By Your Word, grace us all with Your presence. Amen.

Luke 2:8-15, 20: *“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

WE CAN’T STOP TELLING

After hearing the angelic announcement, the shepherds left their flocks and hurried off to find the promised Messiah. The Son of God, who had been promised so many years ago, had arrived. These unexpected men would be the first witnesses to Christ’s birth. What they saw was exactly what the angels had described to them.

THE BACK STORY FROM THE FUTURE

These priests 30+ years later may have been chief priests who had special influence and were often called relatives of the high priests. The captain of the temple guard was the leader of the guards who sat around the temple to ensure order. The Sadducees were members of a small but powerful Jewish religious sect that did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They were the religious

Stewardship

Bobbie Seroggins



leaders who stood to gain financially by cooperating with the Romans. Most of these who planned and carried out Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion were from these three groups.

Peter and John spoke to the people during the afternoon prayer time. The Sadducees moved in quickly to investigate. Because they did not believe in the resurrection, they were understandably distrustful with what the apostles were saying. Peter and John were refuting one of their fundamental beliefs and thus threatening their authority as religious teachers. Even though the nation was under Roman rule, the Sadducees had almost unlimited power over the temple grounds. Thus, they were able to arrest Peter and John for no other reason than teaching something that contradicted their beliefs.

Seldom will sharing the gospel send us to jail as it did Peter and John. Still, we run risks in trying to win others to Christ. We might be willing to face one night in jail if it brings 5,000 people to Christ, but shouldn’t we also be willing to suffer for the sake of even one? What do you risk in witnessing – rejection, persecution? Whatever the risks, realize that nothing done for God is ever wasted.





Acts 4:5-7: *“The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?”*”

The rulers, elders and teachers of the law made up the Jewish council – the same council that had condemned Jesus to death.

Acts 4:12-13: *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”*

Many people react negatively to the fact there is no other name than that of Jesus to call on for salvation. Yet, this is not something the church decided - it is the specific teaching of Jesus Himself. If God designated Jesus to be the Savior of the world, no one else can be His equal. Christians are to be open-minded on many issues, but not on how we are saved from sin. No other religious teacher could die for our sins; no other religious teacher came to earth as God’s only Son; no other religious teacher rose from the dead. Our focus should be on Jesus whom God offered as the way to have an eternal relationship with Himself. There is no other name or way!

Knowing that Peter and John were untrained, the council was amazed at what being with Jesus had done for them. A changed life convinces people of Christ’s power. One of our greatest testimonies is the difference others see in our lives and our attitudes since we have believed in Christ.

HIS STORY WOVEN THROUGHOUT HIS WORD

David wrote Psalm 145 centuries before the angels spoke to the shepherds. Yet, the verbs he used described exactly what the shepherds did next: Extol. Bless. Praise. Commend. Declare. Meditate. Speak. Pour forth. Sing aloud.

Psalm 145:1-9:

*I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
They speak of the glorious splendor of your
majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.*

Seeing the Savior themselves was not enough for these men. Now they could not stop telling the Good News. They wanted others to see the Savior, too. As they returned to their flocks, they told everyone they saw that they had been with Jesus. Thirty-some years later, Peter and John told the Jewish Council the same thing - they had been with Jesus, and they could not stop telling the Good News about Him.

OUR PLACE IN THE STORY

We, too, have been with Jesus. Jesus comes to us in worship, prayer, in His Word, and in the Sacraments. We can share the message of Jesus in our lives with those around us so that they, too, may see the Savior.

Jesus Christ, You are the incarnate word of God, who is God and was with God from the beginning. From nothing, You created all things and rule over it all. You are the Light of the world from which nothing is hidden. Renew our joy and gladness of heart as we celebrate Your birth, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



A Light to the Nations

Remember the Gift sent from heaven above,
Wrapped in humanity, destined to love.
Remember the Gift that caused angels to sing,
A true treasure worshipped by shepherds and kings.
Remember that Gift gave His life on a tree,
How He suffered and died to set you and me free.

So as we celebrate this wonderful season
May we give thanks, and remember the reason.



Explore the true meaning of Christmas as you travel through God's Word. Discover God's promises he fulfilled through the birth of His only Son, the **KING OF KINGS.**

1 Isaiah 7:14

2 Isaiah 9:6-7

3 Malachi 3:1

4 Micah 5:2-4

5 Luke 1:5-7

6 Luke 1:10-15

7 Luke 1:18-22

8 Luke 1:24-25

9 Luke 1:26-29

10 Luke 1:30-33

11 Luke 2:1-5

12 Luke 2:6-7

13 Luke 2:8-14

14 Luke 2:15-20

15 Matthew 1:18-21

16 Matthew 1:22-25

17 Matthew 2:1-3

18 Matthew 2:4-6

19 Matthew 2:7-9

20 Matthew 2:10-12

21 Romans 15:13

22 Galatians 4:4-5

23 Philippians 2:8-11

24 James 1:16-18

25 John 3:16

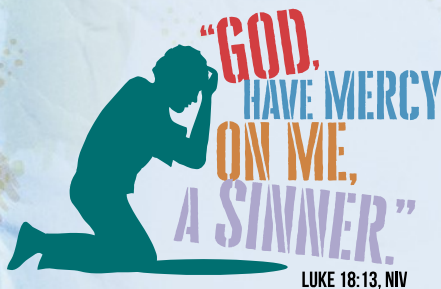


PLEADING GUILTY AND BEGGING FOR MERCY

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

Matthew 7:21-23

I recently heard a preacher who stated that the passage above was perhaps the scariest and saddest in the Bible. People who believe they are Christians, who believe they are saved, will discover on Judgment Day that they are neither. They will be sentenced at that time to eternal damnation, to an eternity of suffering. They will be dumbfounded to discover that despite having prophesied in Jesus’ name, after having cast out demons in His name, and after having done many wonders in His name, that God never knew them, that they were to be cast into the fiery pit along with all the other lawless, unforgiven sinners.



LUKE 18:13, NIV

Every Sunday we admit our guilt, we plead guilty to the charges that we are poor, miserable sinners, that we have sinned

against God in thought, word, and deed, and we recognize that we deserve God’s wrath, God’s righteous judgment, in this lifetime and eternal damnation in the next. We admit our failures, both in the things we’ve done and the things we’ve left undone. We do not justify our actions, we do not attempt to take credit for any good, we do not boast of our deeds. Just the opposite. We confess that we are guilty, and we beg for mercy from the court. We accept our guilt, and we implore that,

Elder’s Notes

Rick Hilst

because of what Jesus has done for us, because of His innocent sufferings and death, because He took on the punishment that was rightly ours, that almighty God will have mercy on us and not sentence us to the damnation we so deserve.

There is no works-based righteousness in Christianity. We can try our absolute hardest to obey the Ten Commandments, we can devote our lives to doing good works, we can give it our all and it won’t make one iota of difference. We can prophesy in God’s name, we can cast out demons, we can do other wonders, and it won’t matter. Nothing we do can bring us one inch closer to Heaven.

Salvation is 100% the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, almighty God, creator and preserver of the universe and everything in it, became man, humbled Himself to be born into a poor family and laid as a newborn baby in a manger surrounded by farm animals, a very lowly estate to begin life. As a child, His parents fled to Egypt to escape Herod’s wrath and, upon returning, lived in Nazareth, a nothing town atop a small hill. He grew up with the limitations of a human man, lived a perfect sinless life, performed numerous miracles, and preached throughout Israel and Samaria, only to be falsely accused of crimes He didn’t commit and hung on a cross to die. For our sins. For everything we have done wrong. For everyone except Himself. By His atoning death on the cross, Jesus took on our punishment and exchanged His righteousness, His perfection, for our filth, for our unrighteousness.



He sent **REDEMPTION**
TO HIS people.

Psalms 111:9

Before God came to us, before He graced us with faith, we were spiritually dead. Only by God’s grace are we not still in that state. Our faith is a gift from God. It is not something we have somehow earned. It is a gift, something for which we can take no credit. And it is the only thing that saves us from eternal damnation. Not our works. Not our best efforts to do what God has commanded us. Just our faith. And that is a gift from God.

Thanks be to God that He has not left us in our miserable, wicked state. Thanks be to God that He sent His Son to be our Savior, the propitiation for our sins. Thanks be to God that He has graced us with faith, that He has adopted us as His sons and daughters, that He has given us an inheritance of eternal life with Him, with the Heavenly host, with all our fellow believers. We are so blessed that God has done this for us. We certainly don't deserve it.

I half agree with the statement the preacher made regarding those who thought they were saved by their actions. This is perhaps the saddest passage in the Bible. It's terribly sad that many people will believe that they are saved by their actions only to discover too late that they were wrong. But scary? No. We know we are not saved by what we do. We know we are saved by Christ's atoning death. We know we are saved by the gift of faith.

We are saved, not because of anything we have done or will do, but purely because of what God has done for us! We are saved because God loves us so much that He gave up everything for us, that He died for us, that He has given us the gift of faith!



HE
BORE

THE
SIN OF
MANY,

AND MAKES
INTERCESSION
FOR THE
TRANSGRESSORS.

ISAIAH 53:12, ESV



DECEMBER

Anniversaries

Nicholas & Oana Burhans	12/15	(18 years)
John & Chrissy Holmes	12/19	(13 years)
Todd & Stella Orf	12/28	(48 years)



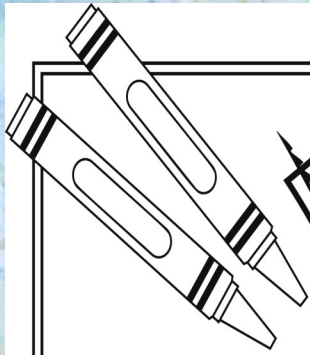
Missional Outreach happens every week for our group of witnesses. Regency visits will be December 7 & 21 at 12:30 PM; HHR visits will be December 13 & 27 at 10:15 AM. In all services, some of the residents do the readings. They (the residents) are amazing!

Welcome
 Song 1
 Song 2
 Old Testament Reading
 Song 3
 Song 4
 New Testament Reading
 Song 5
 Song 6
 Gospel
 Song 7
 Message
 Song 8
 Song 9

DECEMBER

Birthdays

Nancy Rostollan	12/2
Zachary Burhans	12/4
David Glenn	12/5
Chris Linden	12/5
Amanda Moen	12/8
Kristen King	12/8
Sloan Holladay	12/9
Sarah Heritage	12/10
Rob Rosson	12/12
Brian Patterson	12/12
Christian Tate	12/12
Shelby Schmidt	12/13
Rowan Abello	12/14
Ariel Burhans	12/16
Dave Linden	12/17
Meredith Phillips	12/18
Rachel King	12/21
Marion King	12/23
Barbara Hurst	12/23
Martin Watts	12/24
Sandy Williams	12/26
Domina Mwakabumbila	12/26
Livia Linden	12/28
Grace Engel	12/28
Stella Orf	12/29
Melinda Heine	12/29
Adeline Mwakabumbila	12/29
Paula Reyer	12/30



PUZZLE

Symbols of the season

Many traditional decorations convey the meaning of Christmas.

Directions: Use the picture clues to the right to complete the words. Then write the boxed letters in order to complete 2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV.



shepherd's staff _ ☐ ☐ _ _ _ _ ☐

tree that keeps its leaves _ _ _ _ ☐ _ _ _ _

shines to lead the way _ _ _ _ ☐

green for eternal life, ☐ _ _ _ _ &
red for Jesus' blood _ _ _ _ ☐ ☐ _ _

sounds to announce ☐ _ _ _ _
good news

has no beginning or end _ _ _ _ ☐ _

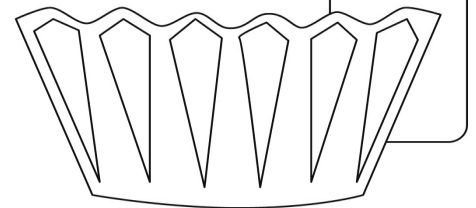
Th ☐ ☐ ks b ☐ to ☐ od fo ☐ ☐ is
indesc ☐ ☐ ba ☐ le gif ☐ !

2 CORINTHIANS 9:15, NIV

Answer: candy cane, evergreen, star, holly & berries, bell, wreath.
Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV

Light the way

Make some Christmas candles to remember Jesus, the Light of the world.



What you need:

- Unlined white notecards
- Hot glue (and adult help)
- Yellow tissue paper
- Mini muffin liners
- Clothespins

What you do:

1. Roll a notecard from side to side into a "candle" tube. Secure with glue.
2. Insert a piece of tissue paper "flame" in one end.
3. Glue the other end to a muffin liner. Then glue the liner to a clothespin.
4. Repeat to make many paper candles. Pin them to the branches of a Christmas tree.



LWML News

Linda Hirschbuehler

Mary Engel made a motion for the LWML to join the Adopt-A-Student program at St. Louis Seminary. Joanne Hildreth seconded the motion. Financial Aid will match us with the student that is in need of help the most. A request will be made for a pastoral student from the local area. A motion was made and seconded to donate \$500 now and \$500 on LWML Sunday using the proceeds from the rummage sale. The congregation can also be notified for possible donations.

LWML will also host the reception after the Children's Program at 6:00 PM on December 13. They will provide cookies and juice.

- * ONE SERVICE ONLY ON:
December 17 (10:00 AM)
December 18 (6:00 PM)
December 24 (9:30 AM)
December 24 (7:00 PM - Lessons and Carols)
December 25 (10:00 AM with Communion)

The calendar on the last written Page 14 has these dates and times, along with Page 2.



TO FULFILL WHAT THE LORD HAD SPOKEN BY THE PROPHET.

Matthew 1:22, ESV

Reminders

- * Angel tree gifts are due back under the trees no later than Sunday, December 10
- * If you want to participate in the 30 minutes before the service on December 17, please call Crissi or Judy and let us know. Vocal, instruments - whatever you would like to do musically - starting at 9:30 AM, share with us!
- * Decorate a table, *your way*, for the meal on December 17 following the youth's Sunday School service. Let Carla Jo or Stephanie know you want to "adopt a table!"
- * Special Christmas Cantata by choir on December 18 at 6:00 PM
- * No Men's Prayer Breakfast this month
- * Choir will practice every Midweek Wednesday immediately after the service

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December 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						19:30 AM - Decorating Sanctuary - Need help to set up Christmas trees, especially
3 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Bible study; SS 9:45 AM - Regency	4 6:00 PM - Worship 6:00 PM - Worship	5 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study	6 6:00 PM - Midweek Advent Service 7:00 PM - Choir	7 12:30 PM - Regency	8	9 10:00 AM - LWML
10 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Bible study; SS 9:45 AM - Regency	11 6:00 PM - Worship	12 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 7:00 PM - Board of Directors (?)	13 10:15 AM - HHR 6:00 PM - Midweek II 7:00 PM - Choir	14	15	16
17 9:30 AM - Music 9:45 AM - Regency 10:00 AM - Sunday School Program Service	18 6:00 PM - Choir Cantata "Behold, a Savior"	19 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 6:00 PM - Board of Elders (?)	20 6:00 PM - Midweek II 7:00 PM - Choir	21 12:30 PM - Regency	22	23
24 9:30 AM - Worship 7:00 PM - Lessons and Carols Service	25 10:00 AM - Worship with Communion (No evening service)	26 No Women's Bible Study	27 No Choir Rehearsal 10:15 AM - HHR	28	29	30
31 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Bible study; SS 9:45 AM - Regency						