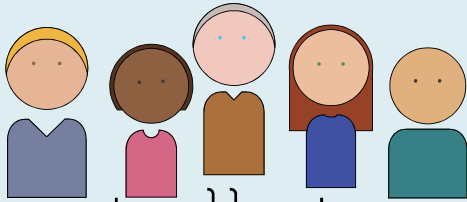


# REFLECTIONS

## What's Inside

- 1 Coming Up
- 2 From the DCM
- 3 Elder
- 4 Birthdays/Anniversaries  
Missional Outreach
- 5 From the Pew
- 7 From Stewardship
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## Installation of Officers

### Board of Directors

The Rite of Installation of Officers will be held on Sunday, January 12, at both morning services. These officers include Cameron Lee, John Hartwig, Dan Gehring, Joanne Hilst, Rick Hilst, Marsha Carden, Susan Bridges, Robby Gehring, Phil Bridges, Linda Hirschbuehler, Bobbie Scroggins, Kathy Linden.

## A Publication of Ascension Lutheran Church

### Worship Opportunity Schedule

#### Sundays

8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship with Communion  
9:30 AM - Bible Classes & Sunday School  
9:45 AM - Regency Missional Outreach

#### Mondays

6:00 PM - Worship with Communion

#### Tuesdays

10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study

#### 4th Saturdays

8:30 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast

### Missional Outreach Schedule

January 2	Regency	10:45 AM (4th Floor)
January 8	HHR	10:15 AM
January 16	Regency	10:45 AM
January 22	HHR	10:15 AM
January 30	Regency	10:45 AM

January 5, 12, 19, 26      Regency      9:45 AM

### Board of Elders

Rick Hilst, Todd Ballentine, Jimmy Damron,  
Ed Myszk, Tim Yopek, Robert Smith,  
Mike Peebles, Burneal A. Fick, Burneal W. Fick,  
Brian Levenhagen, Brian Osterndorf



## From the DCM

Carla Jo Peebles

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 programs are well underway. Costumes are soon to be gotten out of storage for our angels, shepherds, sheep, Mary and Joseph.

The CDC Christmas program will be included within the Advent service on Wednesday, December 11th. It is entitled "The littlest Christmas Tree." I ask that the congregation please join in at this service. It is a worship service, and it is a perfect time to meet some of the families of the CDC: Great mission opportunity!! The ladies of the LWML are graciously providing refreshments after the program to allow time for the congregation to visit with the CDC families.

Thank you to everyone who took angels from the angel tree. They have all been spoken for! They will be distributed by "Santa Rob" the week of December 16, so please have all presents back to the church by Sunday, December 15. The CDC staff Christmas party will be the evening of Friday, December 20 in the church Fellowship Hall.

The Children's Christmas Service will be on December 15. The young people of our congregation will lead us in worship that morning with a service entitled "Hark the Herald Angels Sing". 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.

Youth are busy too, besides participating in the Christmas program! On Sunday, Dec. 1 they are going to Stars and Strikes - compliments of the Thodes! Thank you very much for your generosity! On Friday, Dec., 6 they have a game night scheduled, and on Friday, Dec. 20, following the CDC staff Christmas dinner they will have their Lock-In.

We are looking for staff either part-time or full-time. If you, or anyone you know would be interested please let Carla Jo know.



Faith comes from hearing  
**THE MESSAGE,**  
 and the message  
 is heard through the  
**WORD OF CHRIST.**  
Romans 10:17, NIV



## Readings

January 5 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas)

- 1 Kings 3:4-15
- Ephesians 1:3-14
- Luke 2:40-52

January 12 (The Baptism of Our Lord)

- Isaiah 43:1-7
- Romans 6:1-11
- Luke 3:15-22

January 19 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany)

- Isaiah 62:1-5
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- John 2:1-11

January 26 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany)

- Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-31<sup>a</sup>
- Luke 4:16-30

## SONS OF GOD

From the Elder

Rick Hilst

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."*

1 John 3:1-3

I recently watched a video by Pastors Bryan Wolfmuehler and Andrew Packer in which they were discussing that the spot where Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River was the same spot where Joshua had previously led the Israelites across the river into the promised land of Canaan. They pointed out all the symbolism (typology) that correlated the passage into the promised land with Jesus' baptism, with our own baptism and even with crossing from this life into eternal life with our Lord and Savior. The way they tied everything together was quite beautiful and, at least as best I can remember, was a correlation of all these events that I had not previously heard (some I'd heard, but not all).



For most of us, who were baptized as infants, our baptism was the drowning of our sinful flesh (old Adam), our crossing over from simply being sinners,

enemies of God, and spiritually dead citizens of this evil world into forgiven sinners (new man), God's adopted children and spiritually alive citizens of Heaven. Our sinful flesh was drowned in the waters of baptism and a new creature, a child of God, emerged. Earth was no longer our home; Heaven was our new home. Our baptism was the time when God signed the dotted line (in the Book of Life) on our adoption papers and officially declared us as members of His family. As a sign of our adoption, we were given the Holy Spirit, who indwells us.

Unfortunately, our sinful nature survived the drowning at our baptism and we, although new creatures and children of God, continue to sin, continue to disobey God, continue to need to repent and continue to receive His forgiveness. Martin Luther talked about our need for daily repentance, for daily remembering our baptism, for daily drowning our old Adam.

As children of God, our desires should be to please Him, to obey His commandments, to not only love Him but also to love our neighbors. This desire to please God is constantly at battle with our flesh that seeks to follow our own sinful desires. The Latin phrase "simul justus et peccator", simultaneously both saint and sinner, describes this ongoing (and, in this lifetime, never-ending) struggle between doing God's will and pursuing our own desires.

Any sin we commit not only breaks whatever commandment we disobey but is also a sin against the First Commandment. As John Calvin put it, "The human heart is a perpetual idol factory." When we sin, we create an idol, something that, at least temporarily, takes the place in our heart that rightfully belongs to God. While we, in this lifetime, will never be able to completely resist temptation and sin, we need to regularly repent (not just say we're sorry, but genuinely desire to turn away from the temptation and towards God).

When Jesus became man and suffered and died on the cross, He took on the punishment that was rightfully ours for the sins that we, not Him, have committed. He saved us from an eternity of suffering, an eternity of receiving the just punishment for each and every one of our transgressions. This completely undeserved act of love has opened the kingdom of Heaven to all who believe. Instead of an eternity of despair, we, as His adopted children, will receive an eternity of heavenly bliss. This difference between salvation and damnation, between eternal life and eternal separation from God, between eternal joy and eternal agony, makes whether we believe and trust in God (the narrow path that leads to Heaven) or whether we follow our own path (the wide path that leads to Hell) the only thing that really matters in this lifetime.

Just as Jesus loves us, we are to love our neighbors. Just as Jesus desires that all should repent and come to a knowledge of Him as their Lord and Savior, we should share that desire. None of us likes to think of our enemies, yet alone our best friends and loved ones, suffering for eternity. Yet, all of us know people that don't believe, that are on the wide path that leads to eternal damnation. Therefore, we are all called to the Great Commission, to share what we believe with those around us, to teach all nations (which includes our family, friends, and neighbors) about Jesus and His salvation.







### Missional Outreach Schedule

January 2	Regency	10:45 AM
January 8	HHR	10:15 AM
January 16	Regency	10:45 AM
January 22	HHR	10:15 AM
January 30	Regency	10:45 AM

The worship agenda includes:

Welcome

Song 1  
Song 2

OT Reading

Song 3  
Song 4

NT Reading

Song 5  
Song 6

Gospel

Song 7  
Message

Song 8  
Song 9



## JANUARY birthdays

Jessica Juron	01/02	AnQuenette Gehring	01/16
Quintin Thies	01/05	Bob Smith	01/18
John Ogles	01/06	Carolyn Charnock	01/21
Roberta Willenberg	01/06	Joanne Hildreth	01/22
Glen Charnock	01/10	Gloria Masters	01/25
Betty Fischer	01/15	Al Ogles	01/26



## JANUARY Anniversaries

Tim & Leslie Hurst	01/03 (17 Years)
Jerry & Lynne Heape	01/20 (62 Years)



## A FORGOTTEN RITE: INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

*"Whoever conceals his transgressions  
will not prosper, but he who confesses  
and forsakes them will obtain mercy."*

Proverbs 28:13

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a  
grain of wheat falls into the earth and  
dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it  
bears much fruit."*

John 12:24

One of the first goals sin wants to achieve is to isolate a Christian from God and others. An isolated Christian has no help other than their own strength and intellect which leaves them in dire straits when faced with sin. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed, "Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is the more attractive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation." Sin draws a Christian into isolation where they are vulnerable and the grip of sin becomes stronger over them, leading to further isolation and subsequently the grip of sin grows stronger still. It is a downward cycle that drags a Christian into a life of darkness and secrecy.

*Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe:  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.*

The interesting thing about isolation is that a Christian can appear to be cheerful, well-respected, have amiable relationships and still be isolated. A Christian can be married, have children, is active in community

## FROM THE PEW

Cody Moen

and still be completely isolated. It is a double life the Christian lives when what they think and believe internally does not match their external behaviors. Internally, a Christian may be struggling with sin and is so wrapped up in shame and fear of being known that to hide themselves they act the part of the 'good Christian.' This duplicity is not lost upon them since they poignantly understand that their acting of the 'good Christian' is who other people have come to see them as, but it is not truly who they are. In effect, this Christian is isolated and increasingly more so as they build walls around themselves to hide their sin, shame, and fear.

God sees through this double life, however, and is not fooled by outward appearances (1 Samuel 16:7). He intimately knows the thoughts and intentions of each person's heart, whether it is evil or good (Hebrews 4:12-13). One would think this would be convicting for a Christian to end their double life, but it only serves to further highlight sin's inclination towards perversion.

As Bonhoeffer wrote, "Why is it that it is often easier for us to confess our sins to God than to a brother? God is holy and sinless, He is a just judge of evil and the enemy of all disobedience. But a brother is sinful as we are. He knows from his own experience the dark night of secret sin. Why should we not find it easier to go to a brother than to the holy God? But if we do, we must ask ourselves whether we have not often been deceiving ourselves with our confession of sin to God, whether we have not rather been confessing our sins to ourselves and also granting ourselves absolution."

Sin is clever to pervert confession and absolution into means of sustaining a double life. "All I have to do is confess to God." Sure, and that Christian will still be isolated, alone, wrapped up in sin, shame, and fear, and acting the part of the 'good Christian'. It is here where we see that such a person is like the lone grain of wheat Jesus describes. Just as the lone grain of wheat has immense potential to bear fruit if it dies, so too does an isolated Christian struggling with sin have immense potential to bear fruit if they die. This death is a spiritual one. It is the death of the double life through confession to God and their brother or sister in Christ.

From Bonhoeffer, "In confession occurs the breakthrough of the Cross. The root of all sin is pride, superbia. I want to be my own law, I have a right to my 'self', my hatred and my desires, my life and my death. The mind and flesh of man are set on fire by pride; for it is precisely in his wickedness that man wants to be as God. Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride...In the deep mental and physical pain of humiliation before a brother—which means, before God—we experience the Cross of Jesus as our rescue and salvation. The old man dies, but it is God who has conquered him. Now we share in the resurrection of Christ and eternal life."

Yes, God forgives and wants everyone to come to Him in confession. Yet, He also has instructed His people to confess their sins to each other for a specific reason, "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16). God works through our

*Therefore confess your sins  
to one another,  
and pray for one  
another, so that you  
may be healed.*



## FROM THE PEW (Continued)

Cody Moen

brothers and sisters in Christ not just for the pronouncement of forgiveness of our own sins, but for our healing from them as well. It is important to note that this promise of healing is based on faith in God's Word being true, a faith that leads to obedience in confession to God and our brother or sister in Christ.

From Bonhoeffer again, "Who can give us the certainty that, in the confession and the forgiveness of our sins, we are not dealing with ourselves but with the living God? God gives us this certainty through our brother. Our brother breaks the circle of self-deception. A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person."

God has given us brothers and sisters in Christ for many reasons. There are over 50 exhortations of 'one another' involving encouragement, comfort, and support that we are to do for each other. This includes hearing the confessions of our brothers and sisters in Christ so that we may pray for them to be healed and to pronounce the forgiveness of their sins (John 20:23). As Martin Luther once wrote, "It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbor."

Or as Bonhoeffer put it, "Christ became our Brother in order to help us. Through him our brother has become Christ for us in the power and authority of the commission Christ has given him. Our brother stands before us the sign of the truth and the grace of God. He has been given to us to help us. He hears the confession of our sins in Christ's stead, and he forgives our sins in Christ's name. He keeps the secret of our confession as God keeps it. When I go to my brother to confess, I am going to God."

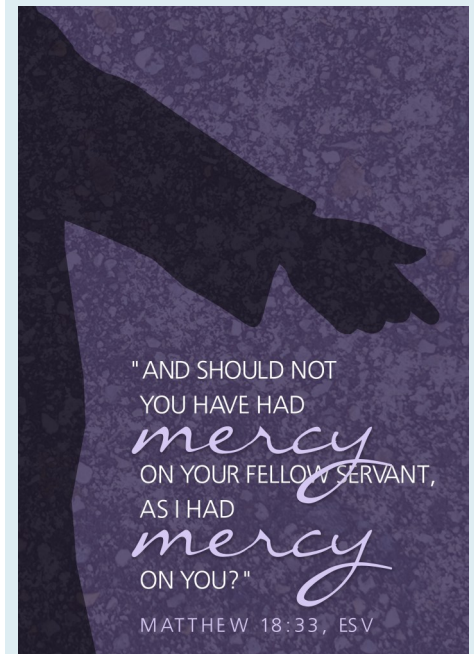
From this confession the person's double life of darkness and secrecy dies and bears the fruit of a new life living in the light. God's promise of healing is fulfilled in confession and absolution as it breaks down the walls of sin, shame, and fear that separated the Christian from knowing the love of God and their brothers and sisters in Christ. For it is then, perhaps for the first time, that this person is truly known by others—warts and all—but still accepted as a dear son or daughter of Christ's family. Why this is is because of what Jesus Christ has done for all of us on the Cross.

As Bonhoeffer eloquently says, "Anybody who lives beneath the Cross and who has discerned in the Cross of Jesus the utter wickedness of all men and of his own heart will find there is no sin that can ever be alien to him. Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the Cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of a brother. Looking at the Cross of Jesus, he knows the human heart. He knows how utterly lost it is in sin and weakness, how it goes astray in the ways of sin, and he also knows that it is accepted in grace and mercy. Only the brother under the Cross can hear a confession. It is not experience of life but experience of the Cross that makes one a worthy hearer of confessions."

I can attest to the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His Word in individual confession and absolution. In my part time work of leading small groups for Christian men who struggle with unwanted sexual behaviors, I have seen the deaths of men leading to mercy and bearing much fruit. In the confessions of adultery, pornography, and other sexual sins to their brothers in Christ their

double life dies as they come to a new life in the light. A life no longer marked by sin, shame, and fear, but truth, hope, and love.

It is a remarkable thing to behold the work of God in another person. Words fail to describe how you can feel the pain and shame of another person as they confess their sins. The pain is seen in their eyes and body, the shame in their demeanor, their self-hatred is heard in their tone, their head hanging low and voice that is just above a whisper as they try not to break down into tears.



Then over the days, weeks, and months the same person whose heart was so wrought with shame changes into someone almost entirely different. A new creation you could say. Rather than pain in their body there is resolution. Rather than shame in their demeanor there is action. Rather than self-hatred in their tone there is compassion. Rather than a hanging head and



**FROM THE PEW** (Continued)  
whispery voice there is a man sitting upright and looking around the room with a smile.

There are many lone grains of wheat out there with such potential to bear much fruit if they die. The dying is hard, yes, I know; I am not a stranger to it. I know the double life of wearing a tight smile while feeling torn apart inside. I know what it is like to be in the pew, at a social function, or in a group and feel completely alone. I know the voice of shame and how it berates and yells at you in the quiet of the night for every single thing you did wrong.

But I also know that God is faithful to His Word. I can attest that in the dying of confession before a brother or sister in Christ there is abundant fruit, life, and healing that comes forth in absolution. To all who believe God's Word belongs not only salvation and forgiveness of sins but healing as well. A new life awaits those who trust God's Word to die to self and be raised by His might.

**HAVE MERCY  
UPON US,  
O LORD,  
HAVE MERCY  
UPON US,  
FOR WE HAVE  
HAD MORE  
THAN ENOUGH  
OF CONTEMPT.**

PSALM 123:3, ESV

## FROM STEWARDSHIP

BOBBIE SCROGGINS

### SELF-SACRIFICING

It seems silly to ask, "Is God self-sacrificing?" The answer is a clear "yes!" The Son of God gave up His own life to save us from the deadly consequences of sin. This is love!

**Ephesians 5:18-33:** *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*



*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."*

Paul contrasts drunk with wine, which produces a temporary "high" to being filled with the Spirit, which produces lasting joy. Getting drunk with wine is associated with the old way of life and its selfish desires in Christ. We have a better joy, higher and longer lasting, to cure our depression, monotony or tension. We should not be concerned with how much of the Holy Spirit we have, but how much of us the Holy Spirit has. Submit yourself daily to His leading and draw constantly on His power.

**Genesis 22:2:** *"He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

**1 Samuel 15:22:** *"And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams."*

**Psalms 40:6:** *"In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required."*

## From Stewardship (Continued)

Bobbie Scroggins

**Psalm 107:22:** *"And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!"*

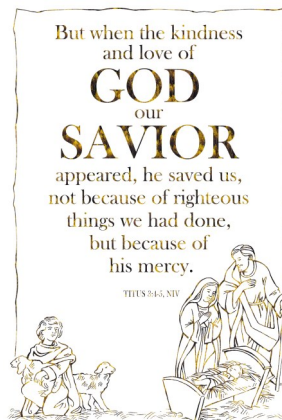
**Deuteronomy 12:11:** *"Then to the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the Lord."*

It wasn't a reckless sacrifice. The Lamb of God did not allow Himself to be slain impulsively or because it was worth a try. It was premeditated. God planted the seeds of this sacrifice right after the Fall by promising a Savior. He prepared for it throughout history by preserving the family line through which Christ would be born. Jesus' choice to suffer and die when there was a 100% chance He'd never suffer or die otherwise wasn't a simple gift. It was a sacrifice of the highest order.

**Psalm 51:** *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in I iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar."*

This Psalm expresses one of the clearest examples of repentance in all Scripture. Countless broken sinners have found in these words an exquisite expression of their deeply-felt need for God's mercy and forgiveness. David's words also demonstrate the place of hope within confession and repentance.

In Ephesians 5, Christians are told to submit to sacrifice their pride and wants for the good of others. While wives specifically are to submit to their husbands, the words to husbands are even stronger. *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her."*



In big and small ways, a husband must sacrifice himself for his wife, loving her that fully. Self-sacrifice isn't easy, but it's what Christ did for His Bride, what He did for us.

Mighty God, You exceed the bounds of time and see all things past, present and future. Thank You for bringing us safely through this past year and forgiving us when we did wrong. Show us the opportunities right now to encourage people around us and to spread Your Word. Help us embrace the future and graciously receive the blessings You have in store for us this year. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.



Deborah Theiss & Mark De Young invite you to their wedding ceremony on January 5, 2025, at 11:00 AM, during the Divine Service at Memorial Lutheran Church, 5800 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77057



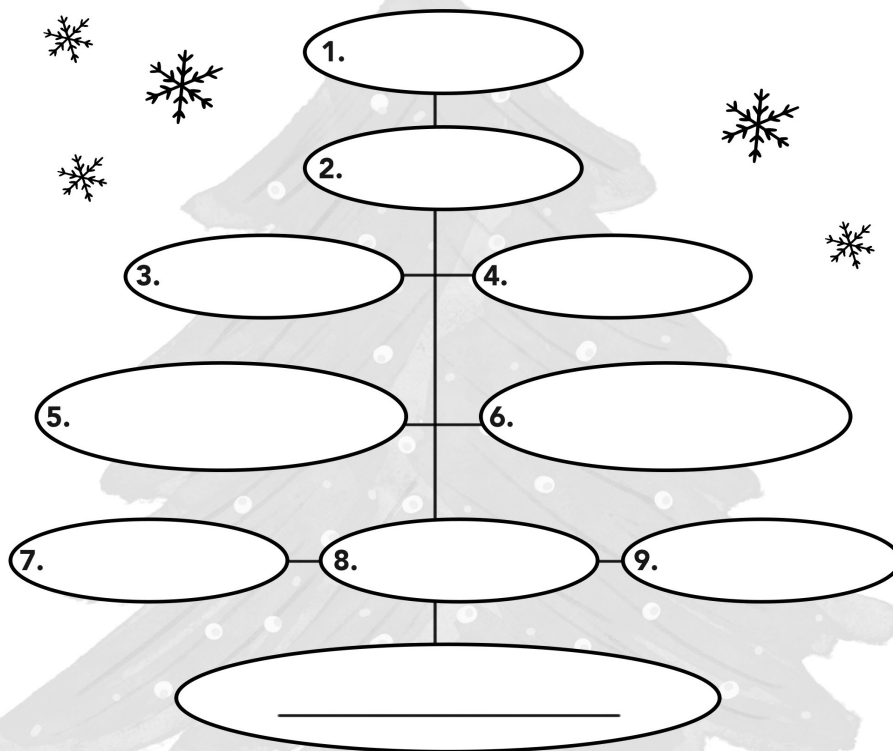
Home address: 1406 Jackson Street  
Bowie, TX 76230



# Puzzle!

Write the answer to each clue in the correct circle.

Then jot down the first letter of each answer and unscramble those letters to form a word about this season. Write that answer at the bottom of the tree.



## CLUES

1. You trim this at Christmas.
2. One who governs
3. The first word of a popular carol, it means "Listen!"
4. You burn this to make the air sweet.
5. "For unto us is born this day a \_\_\_\_\_ ..."
6. She was betrothed to Joseph.
7. Shepherds heard them sing.
8. A Christmas song
9. 'Tis the \_\_\_\_\_ to be jolly!"



## NEW YEAR'S NOISE-MAKERS

Ring in the New Year with these fun noisemakers!



### What you need:

- Wooden craft sticks
- Metallic paint (gold and silver)
- Paint brushes
- Jingle bells (gold and silver)
- Hot glue gun
- Metallic ribbon
- Scissors
- Adult help

### What you do:

1. Paint half the sticks gold and half silver. Let dry.
2. Glue three bells to each stick.
3. Cut a six-inch piece of ribbon for each stick. Tie a bow and glue it to the noisemaker. Celebrate!

Answers: 1. tree, 2. ruler, 3. hark, 4. incense, 5. Savior, 6. Mary, 7. angels, 8. carol, 9. season! Christmas

## FROM THE PASTOR

## THEN &amp; NOW

When you look at the top of the page in our hymnal, you'll see how all the hymns are grouped into various categories. Some are parts of the church year: Advent, Lent, Pentecost, and so forth. Some of themes of the Christian life: baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer, etc. A very few have to do with the worldly calendar, including a handful that are for the New Year.

Yet it is an appropriate thing for a Christian to do, to reflect on the changing of the year. One of those hymns is "Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year," which says "Now greet the swiftly changing year with joy and penitence sincere. Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace another year of grace." The hymn teaches us to reflect on our lives as a whole, using the past year as the specific example, and to find there causes of both joy and repentance: we have failed, for which we are sorry, and we have been forgiven, for which we are joyful. It teaches us to see our entire life through that frame of reference which ends each verse: "another year of grace." Whatever may come in the new year, we can be utterly sure that God's grace will be there for us.

Another hymn is "Across the Sky the Shades of Night," with "We gather up in this brief hour the memory of Your mercies; You wondrous goodness, love, and power our grateful song rehearses; for You have been our strength and stay in many a dark and dreary day of sorrow and reverses."

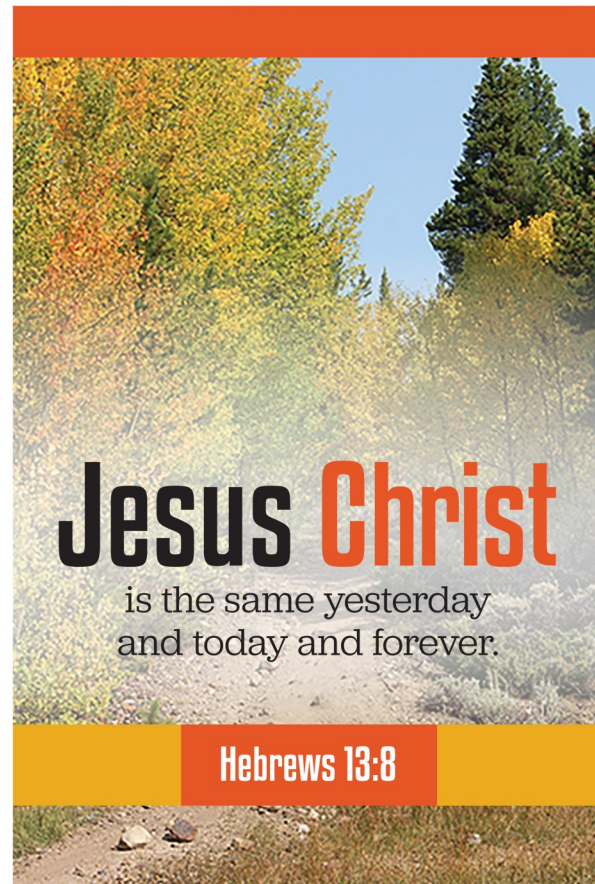


Rev. Derek Waffel

Once again, the new year teaches us to remember how God has acted graciously for us in the past, and to commend everything in the past year (good and bad) into His hands; to put the old year to bed, so to speak.

It teaches us to likewise entrust the new year into God's hands and to be confident in His certain grace and blessing to us in Christ, even in the midst of this world's changes and challenges.

The Psalms tell us over and over that the love of the Lord for His faithful people is "steadfast" – unshakeable and certain. "The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him." The years change, the date on the calendar comes and goes and comes and goes, but the love of the Lord does not change. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. No matter what the calendar says, that is always true, and therefore when we reflect on the passage of time in our lives, we are above all else thankful for the promise of eternity He gives. In the meantime, a new year is another year of God's grace. Happy New Year!



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
				10:45 AM - Regency		10:00 AM - Kindle
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	6:00 PM - Worship	10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study	10:15 AM - HHR			10:00 AM - LWML
				9:30 AM - Take down Christmas Decorations Fellowship Hall      Narthex      Sanctuary Hallway		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency Installation of Officers	3:30 PM - Confirmation 6:00 PM - Worship	10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 7:00 PM - Board of Directors	6:00 PM - Choir	10:45 AM - Regency		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	3:30 PM - Confirmation 6:00 PM - Worship	10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 6:00 PM - Board of Elders	10:15 AM - HHR 6:00 PM - Choir			8:30 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast
26	27	28	29	30	31	
8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Classes 9:45 AM - Regency	3:30 PM - Confirmation 6:00 PM - Worship 7:00 PM - Chinese Eating on Jordan	10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study	6:00 PM - Choir	10:45 AM - Regency		