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Redeemer's Christian Connection



The month of December has some interesting history. During the month of December many of the people of ancient Rome worshipped a sun god they called Sol Indiges (Latin: the deified sun). The Anglo-Saxons referred to December as *Ġēolamonað* (modern English: "Yule month"). Yule is a festival historically observed by the Germanic peoples. Scholars have connected the original celebrations of Yule to the Wild Hunt, the god Odin, and the pagan Anglo-Saxon *Mōdraniht* ("Mothers' Night"). During Christianisation, Yule was reformulated, whereupon the term Christmastide came to predominate in English instead of Yuletide. December also contains the winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere, the day with the least daylight.

How appropriate, therefore, that much of the Christian church today in the Northern Hemisphere celebrates Jesus Christ's birth in December, for Jesus brings eternal light to this world of growing darkness. *"The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned"* (Matthew 4:16; Isaiah 9:2).

But Jesus' birth isn't the only thing the Christian church commemorates or celebrates during December.

December 4 - John of Damascus, Theologian and Hymnwriter - John of Damascus (ca. AD 675-749) is known as the great compiler and summarized of the orthodox faith and the last great Greek theologian. Born in Damascus, John gave up an influential position in the Islamic court to devote himself to the Christian faith, writing many documents which defended the orthodox faith against contemporary heresies. In addition, he was a gifted hymnwriter ("Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain" 487 LSB, "The Day of Resurrection" 478 LSB)) and contributed to the liturgy of the Byzantine churches. His greatest work was the "Fount of Wisdom," which was a massive compendium of truth from previous Christian theologians, covering practically every conceivable doctrinal topic. John's summary of the orthodox faith left a lasting stamp on both the Eastern and Western Churches.

December 6 - Nicholas of Myra, Pastor - Of the many saints commemorated by the Christian Church, Nicholas (d. AD 342) is one of the best known. Very little is known historically of him, though there was a church of Saint Nicholas in Constantinople as early as the sixth century. Research has affirmed that there was a bishop by the name of Nicholas in the city of Myra in Lycia (part of modern Turkey) in the fourth century. From the coastal location, legends about Nicholas have traveled throughout time and space, resulting in many around the world associating Nicholas with charity, the rescuer of sailors, the protector of children, and the friend of people in distress or need. In commemoration of Sinte Klaas (Dutch for Saint Nicholas,” in English “Santa Claus”), December 6 is a day for giving and receiving gifts in many parts of Europe.

December 7 - Ambrose of Milan, Pastor and Hymnwriter - Born in Trier in AD 340, Ambrose was one of the four great Latin Doctors of the Church (with Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great). He was a prolific author of hymns, the most common which is “Savior of the Nations, Come” (332 LSB). His name is also associated with Ambrosian Chant, a style of chanting the ancient liturgy that took hold in the province of Milan. While serving as civil governor, Ambrose sought to bring peace among Christians in Milan who were divided into quarreling factions. When a new bishop was to be elected in AD 374, Ambrose addressed the crowd, and someone cried out, “Ambrose, bishop!” The entire gathering gave their support. This acclaim of Ambrose, a thirty-four-year-old catechumen, led to his Baptism on December 7, after which he was consecrated bishop of Milan. A strong defender of the faith, Ambrose convinced the Roman emperor Gratian in AD 379 to forbid the Arian heresy (which rejected Jesus’ divine nature by proposing that the Son of God was created). At Ambrose’s urging, Gratian’s successor, Theodosius, also publicly opposed Arianism. Ambrose died on Good Friday, April 4, 397. As a courageous doctor and musician, he upheld the truth of God’s Word.

December 13 - Lucia, Martyr - One of the victims of the great persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor, Diocletian, Lucia met her death at Syracuse on the island of Sicily in AD 304. Known for her charity, “Santa Lucia” (as she is called in Italy) gave away her dowry and remained a virgin until her execution by the sword. The Name Lucia means “light,” and, because of that, festivals of light commemorating her became popular throughout Europe, especially in the Scandinavian countries. There her feast day corresponds with the time of year when there is the least amount of daylight. In artistic expression, Lucia is often portrayed in a white baptismal gown, wearing a wreath of candles on her head.

December 17 - Daniel the Prophet and the Three Young Men - Daniel the prophet and the three young men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were among the leaders of the people of Judah who were taken into captivity in Babylon. Even in that foreign land, they remained faithful to the one true God in their piety, prayer, and life. On account of such steadfast faithfulness in the face of pagan idolatry, the three young men were thrown into a fiery furnace, from which they were saved by the Lord and emerged unharmed (Daniel 3). Similarly, Daniel was thrown into a pit of lions, from which he also was saved (Daniel 6). Blessed in all their endeavors by the Lord—and despite the hostility of some—Daniel and the three young men were promoted to positions of leadership among the Babylonians (Daniel 2:48-49; 3:30; 6:28). To Daniel in particular the Lord revealed the interpretation of dreams and signs that were given to King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar (Daniel 2, 4, 5). To Daniel himself, the Lord gave visions of the end times.

December 19 - Adam and Eve - Adam was the first man, made in the image of God and given dominion over all the earth (Genesis 1:26). Eve was the first woman, formed from one of Adam’s ribs to be his companion and helper (Genesis 2:18-24). God placed them in the Garden of Eden to take care of creation as His representatives. But they forsook God’s Word and plunged the world into sin (Genesis 3:1-7). For this disobedience, God drove them from the garden. Eve would suffer pain in childbirth and would chafe at her subjection to Adam; Adam would toil amid thorns and thistles and return to the

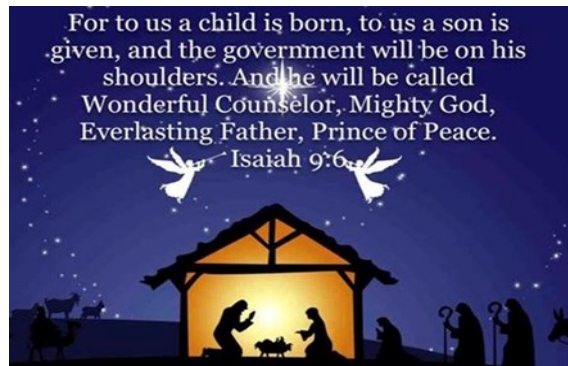
dust of the ground. Yet God promised that the woman's Seed would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:8-24). Sin had entered God's perfect creation and changed it until God would restore it again through Christ. Eve is the mother of the human race, while Adam is representative of all humanity and the fall, as the apostle Paul writes, *"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive"* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

December 20 - Katharina von Bora Luther - Katharina von Bora (1499-1552) was placed in a convent while still a child and became a nun in 1515. In April 1523, she and eight other nuns were rescued from the convent and brought to Wittenberg, Germany. There Martin Luther helped return some of the women to their former homes and placed the rest in good families. Katharina and Martin were married on June 13, 1525. Their marriage was a happy one and was blessed with six children. Katharina skillfully managed the Luther household, which always seemed to grow because of the reformer's generous hospitality. After Luther's death in 1546, Katharina remained in Wittenberg but lived much of the time in poverty. She died as the result of injuries she received in an accident while traveling with her children to Torgau in order to escape the plague.

December 21 - St. Thomas, Apostle - All four Gospels mention St. Thomas as one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, John's Gospel, which names him "the Twin," uses Thomas' questions to reveal truths about Jesus. It is Thomas who says, *"Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?"* To this question Jesus replies, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:5-6). John's Gospel also tells how Thomas, on the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection, disbelieves the report of the disciples that they had seen Jesus. Later, "doubting" or "disbelieving Thomas" becomes "believing Thomas" when he confesses Jesus as *"my Lord and my God"* (John 20:24-29). According to tradition, Thomas traveled eastward after Pentecost, eventually reaching India, where still today a group of people call themselves "Christians of St. Thomas." Thomas was martyred for the faith by being speared to death.

December 24 - The Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Eve - The exact date of the birth of Jesus is not known, and during the earliest centuries of the Church it seemed to have little significance. This followed the Early Church's tradition of honoring and celebrating a Christian's death as his or her birth date into eternity and the ongoing presence of Jesus. Likewise the life, work, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ was of much greater importance to early Christians than the earthly details of His life. The earliest nativity feast, Epiphany (January 6), celebrated both the birth and Baptism of Christ. However, in the fourth century great Christological controversies that questioned Christ's divinity and humanity raged throughout Christianity. By AD 336, December 25 had been established in Rome as the celebration of Christ's birth, a festival welcomed particularly by orthodox Christians in the West. From Rome, Christ's natal festival spread throughout the Western Church. In Eastern traditions of the Church, Epiphany remains the principal celebration of the birth of Jesus.





December 25 - The Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Day - Advent prepared us for the coming of the Savior, the fulfillment of the promise first made in the Garden of Eden in response to the sin of Adam and Eve. Christmas is the day we celebrate that hope fulfilled. Jesus is the only hope of the world, because Jesus is the only one who could set us free from our sins. The commemoration of the Nativity of Our Lord puts before us once again the story of the long-awaited King who left His heavenly throne to enter time and become human like one of us. When God wanted to save you from your sins, He did not send a prophet or even an angel: He sent His own Son into human flesh just like ours.

December 26 - St. Stephen, Martyr - St. Stephen, *“a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 6:5), was one of the Church’s first seven deacons. He was appointed by the leaders of the Church to distribute food and other necessities to the poor in the growing Christian community in Jerusalem, thereby giving the apostles more time for their public ministry of proclamation (Acts 6:2-5). He and the other deacons not only waited on tables but also shared God’s word. When some of his colleagues became jealous of him, they brought Stephen to the Sanhedrin and falsely charged him with blaspheming against Moses (Acts 6:9-14). Stephen’s confession of faith, along with his rebuke of the members of the Sanhedrin for rejecting their Messiah and being responsible for His death, so infuriated them that they dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death. Stephen is honored as the Church’s first martyr and for his words of commendation and forgiveness as he lay dying: *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”* and *“Lord, do not hold this sin against them”* (Acts 7:59-60).

December 27 - St. John, Apostle and Evangelist - St. John was a son of Zebedee and brother of James the Elder (whose festival day is July 25). John was among the first disciples to be called by Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22) and became known as *“the disciple whom Jesus loved,”* (John 21:20; being, perhaps, the youngest of the Apostles, and therefore “taken under the wing” by Jesus). Of the Twelve, John alone did not forsake Jesus in the hours of His suffering and death. With the faithful women, he stood at the cross, where our Lord made him the guardian of His mother. After Pentecost, John spent his ministry in Jerusalem and at Ephesus, where tradition says he was bishop. He wrote the fourth Gospel, the three Epistles that bear his name, and the Book of Revelation. Especially memorable in his Gospel are the account of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12), the “Gospel in a nutshell” (John 3:16), Jesus’ sayings about the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-16), the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11), and Jesus’ encounter with Mary Magdalene on Easter morning (John 20:11-18). According to tradition, John was banished to the island of Patmos (off the coast of Asia Minor) by the Roman emperor Domitian. John lived to a very old age, surviving all the apostles, and died at Ephesus around AD 100.

December 28 - The Holy Innocents, Martyrs - Matthew’s Gospel tells of King Herod’s vicious plot against the infant Jesus after being “tricked” by the Wise Men. Threatened by the one “born King of the Jews,” Herod murdered all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or younger (Matthew 2:16-18). These “innocents,” commemorated just three days after the celebration of Jesus’ birth, reminds us not only of the terrible brutality of which human beings are capable but more significantly of the persecution Jesus endured from the beginning of His earthly life. Although Jesus’ life was providentially spared at this time, many years later, another ruler, Pontius Pilate, would sentence the innocent Jesus to death.

December 29 - David - David, the greatest of Israel's kings, ruled from about 1010 to 970 BC. The events of his life are found in 1 Samuel 16 through 1 Kings 2 and 1 Chronicles 10-29. David was also gifted musically. He was skilled in playing the lyre and the author of no fewer than seventy-three psalms, including the beloved Psalm 23. His public and private life displayed a mixture of good (for example, his defeat of the giant Goliath [1 Samuel 17]) and evil (as in his adultery with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, followed by his murder of Uriah [2 Samuel 11]). David's greatness lay in his fierce loyalty to God as Israel's military and political leader, coupled with his willingness to acknowledge and repent of his sins and ask for God's forgiveness (2 Samuel 12; see also Psalm 51). It was under David's leadership that the people of Israel were united into a single nation with Jerusalem as its capital city.

[Much of the above is quoted or adapted from *TREASURY of DAILY PRAYER*, 2008 Concordia Publishing House (CPH)]



"O Lord, How Shall I Meet You?"
(LSB 334)



Advent is derived from the Latin word "advenio," which means "to come to; to arrive." Paul Gerhardt's great hymn assumes the Lord is coming. Our preparation does not cause him to come. That was true in Jesus' time, is true in our time, and will be true at the end of time. This hymn isn't about our preparation at all, but rather is about God's coming. God **came** incarnate in the past, God **comes** to us now in Word and Sacrament, and God **will come** again at the end of time.

The only question is, "O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?" Gerhardt's hymn describes Christ's work—kindling a lamp within us, giving us a crown, embracing us in love, and guiding us safely home. Advent focuses not on our preparation, but on God's work for us, coming to us repeatedly to give, kindle, embrace, and guide.



Women's Bible Study

Women's Bible Study will begin a study on 1st Peter starting January 3rd. We meet on Tuesday mornings from 10:15 – 11:30. There are still two study books available.

Birthdays

Carol Rustebakke—December 3rd
Devona Henderson—December 4th
Sarah Tunget—December 10th
Herb Kruger—December 10th
Michael Althaus—December 19th
Aaron Clubb—December 20th
Austin Althaus—December 21st
Ruby Weber—December 23rd
Kathy Kadlec—December 25th
Sarah Fischer—December 25th
Cody Weber—December 30th

Wedding Anniversaries

Bruce & Jeanne Nelson—December 10th
Dave & Linda Wacker—December 28th
Cody & Ruby Weber—December 31st



Baptismal Birthdays

Cornelia Reynolds—December 3rd
Audrey Kruger—December 6th
Michael Guerra—December 7th
Marguerite Wingfield—December 15th
Samuel Bachman—December 15th
Kathy Bieth—December 18th
LeeAnn Sinner—December 21st
Madyson Scarbrough—December 23rd
Sue Morris—December 24th
Mark Thiebaud—December 24th
Pastor VanFossan—December 30th
Ayla Kruger—December 30th
Sandy Oeltjenbruns—December 31st

THE LORD'S MINISTRY

Redeemer Lutherans attendance figures and financial blessings that were given for the month of November to further maintain the Lord's ministry.

Date	Attendance	Communicants	Offerings Received	Needed Operating
			Gen./Designated Funds	Budget
11-6- 2022	100	82	\$5,741.00/\$185.00	\$4,455.06
11-13-2022	87	84	\$3,265.00/\$4, 092.00	\$4,455.06
11-20-2022	92		\$2,105.00/\$99.69	\$4,455.06
11-23-2022	13	13		
11-25-2022			\$3,000.00/\$118.00	\$4,455.06



Life Thoughts in the Church Year

December 4 – Advent II – Our sinfulness once left us lifeless as stones, but God has taken us for His own beloved children (Matthew 3:9) by becoming a little one among us Himself (Isaiah 11:6). Now we get to welcome others as Christ has welcomed us. We proclaim the sanctity of every human life to defend the cause of the poor, and we put it into practice to give deliverance to the children of the needy (Psalm 72:4).

December 11 – Advent III – Abortion and assisted suicide attempt to acquire one's salvation by violence (Matthew 11:12). But God's kingdom comes as He mercifully preserves at our weakest (Matthew 11:5-6). We need not seize happiness at the expense of others. Rather, we advocate endurance in sufferings such as surprise pregnancy and terminal diagnosis (James 5:11), and with our support for them we strengthen instead of extinguish (Isaiah 35:3).

December 18 – Advent IV – Surprise pregnancy once redeemed the whole world. Joseph would have aborted the undertaking, but the Lord explicitly forbid it (Matthew 1:19-21). Even human limitations could not prevent the Heavenly Father from keeping His promises (Romans 1:2-3). So, every surprise pregnancy we encounter—along with our lives and everyone else's (Psalm 24:1)—belongs to Almighty God, and we may rejoice to say so.

December 25 – Nativity of Our Lord – The Lord bared His holy arm (Isaiah 52:10) not just by appearing in the form of a full-grown man. The Word became flesh (John 1:14) first as an embryo and a fetus. The clearest revelation of God's glory (Hebrews 1:2-3) also designates every human life precious, no matter what age, appearance, or ability. We can no more keep quiet about the sanctity of life than we can leave out Christmas or Jesus from the Gospel!



Christmas Caroling - Meet at the church Sunday December 11th at 3pm. Come share in spreading Christmas Joy . We are planning to car pool together, and should be back to the church around 5:30 – 5:45