



Holy Cross Lutheran Church

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Making peace by the blood of his cross – Colossians 1:15-20

Grace, peace, and mercy to you from Emmanuel, Christ, our Lord!

Christmas traditions can be finely tailored to one family, and yet we also seem to move in flocks. What do I mean? When I grew up, there was no Elf on a Shelf, but now it seems established practice for so many. Another church I know slowly walks their nativity's Magi to the manger through the Advent season, confident that this is the way things ought to be done. Plenty of other churches are happy to set the scene up knowing full well the Magi (described in the Gospel of Mathew) appeared at a different time than the shepherds (described in the Gospel of Luke). Debates about whether or not Die Hard is a Christmas movie didn't start until twenty years after the film debuted; now they are as traditional as wassailing.

Normally, traditions don't start top down. No president or bishop or CEO told us to hide a pickle ornament on a Christmas tree, but once we heard about that tradition, it sounded fun, and we added it to the Yuletide merriment. We don't know the author of many traditions. The church's lectionaries and the creeds, for example, have no known authors. Rather, churches picked up other churches' traditions because they fit. Feasting at times when herds needed to be thinned for the winter just fits. As traditions move, explanations for why we are feasting adapt and grow.

I remember when my Christmas traditions were first challenged. I was in college, and a Christian of another denomination charged that the evergreen trees were actually pagan idol bushes, which we all knelt before to receive gifts. Christmas lights protested the dying of the sun's light, which we would celebrate resurrecting on the Equinox. Hearing all this for the first time, I waved it away; that's not what these traditions mean to me and mine. But, like a burr in the saddle, the charge sticks and annoys.

A few years later, at seminary, I was in a position to learn a lot more about how church traditions move and flow. For the first three centuries of Christian history, because the faith was illegal, church practices were underground. When Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 312 AD, churches were able to coordinate publicly on all sorts of matters. Traditions about church calendars began to solidify. Church leaders were pressed to pinpoint the dates when Jesus died and when He was born. There was some confidence that March 25 was the Passover date at which Jesus died. Since the ancients believed great men died the same day they were conceived, the math suggested nine months after March 25 would be December 25.

Yes, there were also harvest and flock-thinning festivals already in practice at that time of year. And, yes, Christian preachers in the fourth century regularly encouraged giving up old pagan traditions, as they ministered to the surging numbers of Roman citizens who followed their Emperor into the church. Their strategy was similar to Luther's at the time of the Reformation. When other Protestants wanted to destroy church traditions and art, Luther wrote, "I approached the task of destroying images by first tearing them out of the heart through God's Word and making them worthless and despised... For when they are no longer in the heart, they can do no harm when seen with the eyes. But [the iconoclast], who pays no attention to matters of the heart, has reversed the order by removing them from sight and leaving them in the heart."

The individual's heart defines the resonance of the ivy and the holly, the yule logs, and the flickering lights. For one, evergreen speaks of eternal life, the confection is Jesus' birthday cake, and the lights remind of the star the Magi followed. For another, the resonances are kissing under mistletoe at an office party, the Great British Baking Show, and Clark Griswold falling off a roof. Do we have to fight over what these must mean? No. As Luther insisted when others were set to clash over traditions, Christians ought to root themselves first in God's Word. When our Christmas traditions start with hearing the Word, praying together, and rejoicing in Christ's birth, traditions will find the proper resonances.

Join us in centering around God's Word this Advent. Pick up our daily devotionals. Read them as a family. Sing Christmas and Advent hymns in your home. Pray "Thy kingdom come" each day. Gather with your church family for Wednesday vespers at 5 PM or 7 PM. All of these practices gather us around God's Word and sets our hearts in the right place so that we no longer need bristle if someone says, "Happy holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas." We no longer need to puncture someone else's traditions. We are free to rejoice, for in Christ, we really do have the peace which surpasses all understanding. He has proven Himself, age after age, to be the "desire of all nations" (Haggai 2:7), the Savior of the world. All praise to Him, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is one God, now and forever. Amen.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Daniel Guagenti



Celebrations in December

Birthdays

- 7- Braylon Mumphrey
- 7- Corrie Brian
- 8- Shane DeVary
- 9- George Wilson
- 11- Jackie Hilbert Fowler
- 12- Robin O'Neil
- 12- Brian Gehrman
- 13- Jennie Shreve
- 15- Will Chapman
- 17- Melinda Rutledge
- 18- Bitsy Scott
- 18- Shawna Nelson
- 20- Tammy Chesher

Anniversaries

- 2- Joe & Sandy Jager (1972)
- 18- Alan & Kim Whitehouse (2001)
- 21- John & Merrie Feole (1984)

ADULT BIBLE STUDY

The Sunday morning adult class will be studying "God's Favorite Words." Each week, we will look at one of the top 100 words used most often throughout the Bible. How do we translate those words? How does their meaning develop through the Bible? Why is this word used so often?



CHURCH TITHING

Our church is currently behind in planned giving, so to try to encourage members to increase giving before the end of the year, an anonymous source has promised to match up to \$3000 of extra giving. Original match was \$2000 and has been raised to \$3000.

For funds to be matched any fundraiser can count or if members note how much is being given ABOVE their normal amount, this will also be matched.

Please note on your normal envelope or use specially designated envelopes, located on the credenza, how much of your giving is above normal.

Thank you from the Stewardship Committee and Church Council.

DAY-TIMERS: DECEMBER 7

Day-Timers will meet Wednesday, December 7 at 9:30am.

HANGING OF THE GREENS: DECEMBER 4

Hanging of the Greens will take place on Sunday, December 4 following the Divine Service. All help is greatly appreciated.

Sunday School Christmas Program

This year's Sunday School Christmas program will take place during the 11:00 service on December 11. "Joy to the World" presents the Christmas story with scripture and song! Rehearsals will take place during the Sunday School hour, beginning on November 13, and continuing through the day of the performance.

HOLY CROSS BUDGET

The 2023 budget as proposed by the church council to the voters of Holy Cross Lutheran Church is posted at

<https://holycross.360unite.com/treasurer> (you will need to log in to view this page). Please review this budget before the December 18 voter's meeting. Please contact Charlie Adams if you have any questions.

LUTHERANISM AND ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

Lutheranism 101 and the Tuesday night Zoom Bible Study will be suspended until after Advent. For more information please see Pastor Guagenti.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

This year there will also be four Advent evening services since Christmas falls on a Sunday. We will continue the practice started this past Lent having two evening Advent services (5 PM and 7 PM) surrounding an Advent meal served from 5:45-6:00PM. With Christmas on a Sunday, we will have Christmas Eve service as usual at 7pm. Christmas Day will be a Sunday service at 11 AM. There will be no Sunday School. There will be communion on that day.



CELEBRATE BIRTH INGATHERING

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, I propose we also celebrate the birth of other babies, specifically those helped by Shelbyville's ALC(A Loving Choice) Pregnancy Support Center and the mothers who choose to have their babies rather than abort. I will provide an ingathering box where we can collect baby items for ALC to give the mothers as needed. Ideas would include, but are not limited to: receiving blankets, onesies, bath items, board books, baby toys, pacifiers, crib sheets, sleepers, wipes, outfits, etc. They are in particular need of larger size diapers (size 4,5,6) as they do not stop support at the newborn stage. I think it will be fun to shop for a baby as we remember that Jesus came to us as a babe in Bethlehem. **ALC especially needs clothing for newborn boys and girls, diapers size newborn and size 6, and baby bath products.**

This year we were able to get a Thrivent action grant for our ALC gathering. This included a gift card allowing purchase of items. **If you donate, please sign your name on the sheet that is on the table.** This will be used in the follow up report to Thrivent. They want to know the number of participants. Also, if you would like a Thrivent T-shirt please take one off the table. The last date for donations will be Sunday, December 18. If you have any questions, please contact me. Kathy Adams



2022 KENTUCKIANA ZONE LWML STOCKING STUFFER PROJECT



STUFFING STOCKINGS- Please Join Us

DATE: Tuesday December 06, 10:00-Noon

AT: Grace Lutheran Church

1787 Klerner Ln,

New Albany

Lunch will be provided

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THE STOCKINGS

Small toys (includes McDonalds), Coloring Books, Christian items, Small Stuffed Animals, Mittens/Gloves, Hats, Children's personal care items, Hair decorations, Card games, Baseball Cards, Crafts/Art, Games, Stickers, Small cars/trucks, small school supplies, Dolls, Jewelry, Playdough, Small Books. Anything that will fit in a Christmas stocking. Please no gum, play guns, or anything that would encourage violence.

Stockings will be given to children with an incarcerated parent, children in youth shelters, and other children needing help and support.

ITEMS MAY BE DROPPED OFF AT GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH BETWEEN

8:30 & 4 Weekdays (812-944-1267)

Or Call Dolly Jenkins 812-989-3093

Note to Thrivent Members: If your church has a collection or fund raiser for this, it could be a Thrivent Project.

POINSETTIAS

Orders for poinsettias are now being taken to decorate our church for the Christmas holidays. Cost this year is \$10. Please make checks payable to Holy Cross Lutheran. Flowers may be ordered in memory of someone or in honor of someone. Order forms are available. The last day to order is Sunday, Dec. 4th. Poinsettias may be taken home after the Christmas Eve Service.



AWAKE MINISTRIES MEALS NEEDED

The Day-Timers group takes a meal once a month to the Awake Ministries Women's residence on College Street. The ladies are so appreciative of "home-cooked" food. There are 8-10 women in residence. The meal includes an entrée, salad, bread, dessert and drinks. If anyone in the congregation would wish to provide a part of the meal, please see or call Brenda Moody at 747-0142 or text 502-321-5616. Thank you.

HOLY CROSS FOOD BOX

The food box in our driveway is the result of an idea from the Day-Timers group. This is an outreach to the community that all the members of Holy Cross can share and participate in. Several have been very generous in stocking the box but we continue to need help. There is a list of items on the kitchen door that are suggestions for donations.

However, the food box is getting low. We need canned tuna and chicken, beef stew, ravioli, spaghetti o's, soups, fruit cups, jello, pudding cups, mac & cheese, spaghetti, tomato sauce, vegetables, peanut butter and jelly. Money donations, or if those of you who have the Thrivent card would like to share, that too would be appreciated. Thanks to all who are helping and we look forward to future donations. Day-Timers Group

ISSUES, ETC.

EQUIPPING THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS... Issues, Etc. is a radio talk show and podcast produced by Lutheran Public Radio in Collinsville, IL and hosted by LCMS Pastor Todd Wilken. You can listen on-demand at www.issuesetc.org, the LPR mobile app and your favorite podcast provider.

YOU MIGHT BE A LUTHERAN IF...

- The church is on fire, and you rush in to save the coffee pot.
- You know what a "dead spread" is.
- The only open pew is up front, so you volunteer to shovel the sidewalk.

Peace starts with a smile!

MEMBERS OF HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN

There will be a Voters' meeting following the Divine service December 18, 2022. Major agenda items will include FY 2022 budget and council office elections.

The nominating committee of Greg Rutledge (chair), Pastor Guagenti, Charlie Moody, Roxana Pontius, and Jennie Shreve has recruited the following slate of nominees:

Vice President-Active Recruitment continues

Council Secretary- Corrie Brian (re-elect)

Treasurer-Charles Adams (re-elect)

Chair of Stewardship-Suzanne Rutledge (re-elect)

Chair of Evangelism- Jason VanEvera (finishing Don Saltzman's 2022-23 term)

Head Trustee- Jennifer Harrod (re-elect)

LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES

Lutheran Hour Ministries is a Christian outreach ministry supporting churches worldwide in its mission of *Bringing Christ to the Nation—and the Nations to Church*. Lutheran Hour Ministries produces Christian radio and TV programming for broadcast, as well as Internet and print communications, dramas, music, and outreach materials, to reach the unchurched in more than 30 countries. LHM's flagship program **The Lutheran Hour**, is the world's longest-running Christian outreach radio program. It airs Sundays at 9am on 102.7FM. For information, visit www.lhm.org (<http://www.lhm.org>)



LIFE QUOTES

"Christmas is also a time to contemplate the gift of mortal LIFE through the miracle of birth. Christmas is the gift of LOVE that moms and dads shower on their children by saying yes to life—sometimes under very difficult circumstances. Regardless of the challenges, God has a perfect plan for each life that He brings into the world, and His will for them is to out-sparkle and out-shine any ornament."

Bradley Mattes, president of Life Issues Institute –

A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org

Heartfelt
THANKS
TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

KNOW YOUR BIBLE



Mountain of the Law

On what mountain did Moses receive the Ten Commandments from God?

Look for the answer in the January's Newsletter
November's answer: Turning of water into wine (see John 2:1-11)

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

SUNDAY	ACOLYTE	READER	USHER	USHER	CLEAN	NURSERY	ALTAR GUILD
December 4	Nathaniel Semeniuk	David Themer	Cindy Alvano	John Feole	Franke family	Anita Themer	Brenda Moody A. Semeniuk
December 11	Eden Guagenti	Nancy Kovach	Don Saltzman	Greg Rutledge	Sandy Runner	Suzanne Rutledge	No Communion
December 18	Brenyn Botkins	David Franke	Charlie Moody	Rita Whitehouse	T. Tippet J. Harrod	Merrie Feole	J. Harrod A. Semeniuk
December 25	Gabriel Guagenti	Charlie Moody	Alex VanPelt	Charlie Adams	R. Pontius Guagenti's	Danielle Themer	R. Whitehouse A. Semeniuk
January 1	Zachary Semeniuk	David Themer	Corrie Brian	Zoe Shreve	Don Saltzman	Anita Themer	Cindy Alvano

IF YOU CANNOT SERVE ON THE APPOINTED DAY, PLEASE CALL SOMEONE TO SERVE IN YOUR PLACE.

Christmas

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, everyone to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city called Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them at the inn.



And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said to them,

Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born today in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.



And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

Let us go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.

And they came with haste, and found, Mary, Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

The Gospel according to St. Luke Chapter 2 verses 1-20.



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LCMS Stewardship Ministry
Newsletter article – December 2022

Anxiety vs. Trust

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, teaches those who follow Him that worrying about the necessities of life is idolatry: worshipping a false god. Worry and anxiety show what we care about. Our anxiety reveals what we love and what we're devoted to. It reveals what we trust in.

This is why our Lord begins this section with an overarching principle: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24).

But you say: "I must eat and drink. I must have clothing to wear and have a home in which to dwell." Yes, all these things you need. And Jesus says that your Father in heaven will ensure that you have them. He demonstrates this with a simple argument: your Father in heaven feeds the birds of the air, who neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. He clothes the lilies of the field, who neither toil nor spin but are arrayed more luxuriously than Solomon in all his glory. If, then, your Father in heaven feeds the birds, if He clothes the lilies, how will He not also feed and clothe you, when you are worth more than they are? (Matt 6:25–33).

Do you know that you are worth more than them? You are worth infinitely more. You are worth the price of the eternal Son of God. Did the Son of God come down from heaven and become a lily? Did he descend and take on the form of a bird? No! He came down from heaven and became a man: flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone (Gen. 2:23). He is one of us, our brother. And what did He do when He became flesh to dwell among us? He gave His holy, precious blood, through His innocent suffering and death, that you might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom forever.

God became man in Christ Jesus. He lived the life we failed to live, and He died the death we deserved. He was raised again on the third day overcoming sin and death ... for us. He was crucified for our transgressions and raised for our justification. So, if your Father in heaven has given His Son to die for us in order that we might live with Him eternally, how will He not also give us all things to support this body and life?

To be anxious about the necessities of life, to devote yourself to food and clothing, to care about these things and find security in them, is to serve another god. It is to deny that you will live forever because Jesus, the Son of God, is risen from the dead and lives and reigns for all eternity. It is to believe that the God who created you, redeemed you by the death and resurrection of His Son and sanctified you by His Spirit, will not keep His promise to sustain you in this life.

Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). God's kingdom is His rule among us. His rule among us comes when our Father in heaven gives us His Holy

Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. This is what we ask God to do for us in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Your Father in heaven knows what you need — food and clothing, house and home — and He promises to give it to you. Chief of the things you need is His grace and mercy in His Son, Jesus Christ. So, seek after that. And those who seek will find. And all the necessities of life, our Lord says, will be added to you.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship

Holy Cross Lutheran Church Trunk or Treat October 29, 2022

Congratulations to the Semeniuk family for winning the Best Decorated Trunk Award!
Thank you to all who came and decorated trunks and for donating candy for the event!
Thank you to Thrivent for helping sponsor the event!!





SHARING THE POWERFUL GOSPEL!

HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH
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EVERY SUNDAY
BIBLE STUDY AND SUNDAY SCHOOL-9:45AM
DIVINE SERVICE-11:00AM

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2022



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7pm, December 24
Christmas Day Communion Service 11am, December 25