



Christmas Carols?!? Already? What is going on?



Some of you may have noticed a few early invaders in our song selection during the month of December. Christmas isn't here yet, doesn't start for several weeks, and goes for precisely 12 days starting on the evening of the 24th. So why are we singing some of the songs of *that* season instead of devoting our full tuneful attention to the delightful and important hymnody of Advent at this time?

Well, have you ever stopped to wonder what makes the difference between a *Christmas* hymn and an *Advent* hymn? It's the label in the upper corner of the hymnal, right? According to the Lutheran Service Book, hymns 331 – 357 are "Advent," and 358 – 393 are "Christmas." Simple enough, right? ...but who decided which hymns went in each section, and how did they make that determination?

To a certain extent, the exact season a hymn "belongs" to can be a little arbitrary. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" is certainly appropriate to sing year-round, not only in Lent, and while "A Mighty Fortress" is particularly appropriate for Reformation Sunday, it also serves well for numerous other occasions. "Silent Night" could be an awkward pick for Pentecost, just as "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" may seem out of place on Transfiguration. But many hymns are "assigned" to a particular season due to the themes they address, as well as any biblical allusions they contain which align with the assigned readings.

Did you know that "Joy to the World" was not, by its author, written for Christmas? For all its talk of the "coming of the King," it never specifies *which* coming of Christ it is referring to! The reason for this is that Isaac Watts actually wrote it as a loose paraphrase of Psalm 98. As this passage is sometimes assigned to particular Christmas services, over the years the hymn began to be associated with the season. However, it is also appropriate to sing on Sundays where celebrate the *second* coming of Christ. In fact, some hymnals actually include it in the *Advent* section of the hymnal, as *rejoicing* is a continually recurring theme of the season, reminding us that we await the promised savior with eager anticipation and excitement, rather than agony and despair, because the comfort of the promise is itself a food for our souls. It is particularly appropriate for the third, "pink" Sunday of Advent, in which "rejoicing" is the main theme of the day.

"Savior of the Nations, Come" is often considered specifically an Advent hymn. It has been sung as the chief hymn for the first Sunday of Advent since the time of Luther! For many, this exact melody signals the beginning of the new church year. This one HAS to be for ADVENT, because we certainly have not been singing it at the wrong time for 500 years!

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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing
you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

Well...Take a closer look at the words. Rather than an emphasis on waiting, rejoicing, and preparing, the hymn is actually a meditation on . . . *the incarnation!* The eight stanzas specifically explore what it means that God became man as the baby Jesus. It would seem we're spoiling the story early singing that four and a half weeks before Christmas! How is this *not* a Christmas carol? Not to mention, the first Sunday of Advent, for hundreds of years, was about the triumphal entry of Christ on Palm Sunday. What is going on with this mixing of messages?

Some of the hymns with ancient associations to particular days of the church year attained their status not for specific correlation with the appointed readings (which have variously changed throughout the centuries), but rather, for their general appropriateness for the season. "Savior of the Nations, Come" however, is not a hymn for just the *Advent* season, but rather, it captures the overarching themes of the entire Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle, all in one song! In other words, it serves as an introduction to the entire extended season of awaiting, and finally celebrating, the birth of Christ. And thus, it is simultaneously a Christmas carol and *not* a Christmas carol!

If you were watching closely, you may have even noticed we began singing several Advent hymns early, in the month of November. Waiting for Christ is waiting for Christ, whether it is the first or second coming! In a certain sense, the seasons of the church year often blend into one another, and thus hymns for one season are often appropriate for other seasons as well. "Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming" is traditional to Christmas Eve, but references passages from Isaiah which are read during Advent!

And thus, there is no specific day, time, or service before which a crime has been committed if the Christmas repertoire commences. We probably will not sing them in July. But whenever you see a hymn being used outside the season to which our hymnal assigns it, take a minute to reflect on its message and ask yourself how it fits with everything else happening in worship that day. After all, 12 days is FAR too short a time to sing some of the most important music the world has ever known! *Now Sing We, Now Rejoice!*



Bible Studies Updates*Board of Education*

Special Holiday Services~

- ~5pm Christmas Eve - Lessons and Carols and Candlelight Service
- ~7pm Christmas Eve - Evening Prayer and Candlelight Service
- ~ There will be **no** New Years Eve Service.

New Pastor's Class ~ This class will begin January 14th and will be held Thursdays from 6-8pm.

Men's Breakfast Bible Study~. Saturday, December 19th and each 1st and 3rd Saturday of the Month.

JOY group ~ There will be **no** Joy Group Meetings on December 15th, 22nd and 29th. We will resume on January 5th.

Confirmation 2~There will be no Confirmation 2 on the 22nd and 29th and will resume on January 5, 2020.



STEWARDS UNDER THE CROSS

December 2020

Christmas is coming. It is a joyous time of feasting. The Church feasts upon the Word of God in sermon, song, and sacrament.

We hear the proclamation of the message of the angels: “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). We mingle our voices with theirs as we sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2:14)! We receive the proclaimed Savior, Christ the Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in manger but wrapped in bread and wine placed into our mouths for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We feast in great joy indeed because of this great blessing from our Lord and God.

God’s people in ancient Israel also feasted with great joy. The Lord showered His abundant blessing on His people. And He commanded them to feast upon it (Deuteronomy 16). The people were to go to the place appointed, where the Lord would make His name dwell, and give offerings, each man as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord that He had given them (Deut. 16:10, 15, 17).

And there the Lord would bless them with joy as they feasted upon what the Lord had provided. They ate of the choice parts of their offerings. They enjoyed the company of all the people of God as they together heard His promises of blessing, sang of His bountiful goodness, and partook of what He gave.

We feast on the Word who became flesh to dwell among us, not just during Christmas but throughout all the year. We feast not just on the salvation He has wrought for us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but we feast also on all the temporal blessings that God gives out of His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. We enjoy the rich bounty that God provides, not only in Word and Sacrament, but also in house and home, property and income, family and friends.

Let us then, as did our brothers in the faith from ancient Israel, give as we are able, according to the blessing of the Lord our God that He has given us. Let us, like them, give generously of the first fruits of our income, which He gives, so that all may know and enjoy the salvation He gives and the joy we have in the Savior born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.

A letter from the Seminarian Mark Peters & Family



Greetings in Christ from the Peters Family!

We hope and pray that this message finds you all doing well.

Another quarter of seminary has ended and soon the next will begin. I learned a lot this quarter in each class. I already miss reading through the *Gospel of John* with Dr. Weinrich and reading *The Bondage of the Will* with Dr. Ziegler. Of course, like much of life right now, Covid-19 continues to offer some challenges in our daily lives. The family spent two weeks this last quarter in quarantine. So the kids and I had to take some of our school work online during that time. It sure becomes obvious how much the use of a library is a blessing when all of a sudden you can't leave your home to read and write. Fortunately, both the Seminary and the kids' school worked hard to deal with this eventuality and made recordings and materials available for continuing the course work. It was not seamless but it was helpful.

This upcoming quarter will allow me to take Major Prophets, Homiletics III, Lutheran Confessions III, Pastoral Theology II, and Walther and His Times. It promises to be another busy but beneficial quarter. I hope to make good use of the break around Christmas time. While this is my last year of classes, I do not have any formal field work duties. And new seminarians come in and start to serve in ways that I used to. Still, I get the occasional opportunity and look forward to more as they come about. However, some of those have been sidelined because of the pandemic. Honestly, there are days I feel a bit restless for vicarage.

In addition to the Winter quarter starting soon, the season of winter is definitely making itself known at home. We have weatherized as much as we can in this old farmhouse and our landlord has generously cut and stacked piles of firewood for us to heat the house this fall and winter. We go out at least 4 times a day to keep the fire going and keep the house warm.

We recently celebrated three birthdays in the family: Frederick, Benjamin, and myself. During this short break, we went to Dayton, OH, and visited the National Air Force Museum. It is quite a place to visit. The kids especially enjoyed seeing the great variety of planes and space shuttle related exhibits!

Thankfully school continues to be in-person for Martha and the boys (quarantine time notwithstanding). Basketball has just started for Paul and Frederick. Band and Strings continue for Paul, Frederick, and Russell, with some accommodations made for the coronavirus. We are grateful that so many places around continue to find ways to stay open and provide opportunities even through these difficult times. Regrettably, we know that is not the case everywhere right now.

Thank you again for all of your prayers and support! It can be overwhelming sometimes to know how much others have sacrificed and shared to give me this opportunity to prepare for being a pastor. It is greatly appreciated and I look forward to serving when and where God places me to serve in His Church.

Blessings,

Seminarian Mark Peters and Family

Upcoming Events



PICTORIAL DIRECTORY ~ Messiah has begun the process of updating our outdated pictorial directory. It's been over ten years and our members have changed considerably! In your Messiah mailbox, you will find an order form for updating your information. If your family photo or directory information needs updating, please fill out the form and return it to Deaconess Buhler by Christmas. Send pictures to deaconess.buhler@gmail.com. We'd like to have an up-to-date pictorial directory printed and ready to hand out to our members by the end of January. Thank you in advance for your timely response. .

CHRISTMAS CAROLING ~ Would you like to bless people with the true meaning of Christmas through song? Join us on Saturday, December 19th at 11am for caroling. We will travel to a nearby neighborhood and carol from house to house. Dress warm! If you would like to sing outside additional homes of our members, Deaconess Buhler can direct you to a few families that could use a little cheering up this advent season. All singing must be done outside while socially distancing. For Questions, contact deaconess.buhler@gmail.com



CHESS TOURNAMENT ~ Saturday, January 9th—an all-day event here on MCLA campus, starting at 8am. There will be a max of 64 chess players entered. For more information, please contact . For more information and to sign up for this event—contact Pastor Chryst.



Upcoming Events continued....



ANGEL TREE ~ Angel Tree is not necessarily a program to give gifts to materially deprived children. It is a program connecting an incarcerated parent to their child in the name of Jesus through a small gift at Christmastime. At Christmas we connect with the ones we love. But what if you are a child with a parent in prison—feeling lonely, abandoned, and hurt? Through Angel Tree, you can connect a child with their parent behind bars and offer joy and hope to a prisoner's family. It's simple. Choose an Angel to love or an entire family!

All our Angels have been adopted for this year! Thank you for loving your neighbor! Here is what now needs to be done:



- **Return** wrapped gift under tree by Dec 16th
- **DELIVER: Want to hand out presents?** Show up at Messiah between 9-10:30am, December 19th and we will give you as many gifts as you want to deliver! We currently have about 22 deliveries to make - all within a 20 minute or so range of Messiah. For Questions, contact Pamela Buhler at deaconess.buhler@gmail.com or Bruce Dana at Bruce.Dana23@gmail.com



PRISON MINISTRY ~ When Christmas is over, you still have opportunities to minister to our Angel Tree families. You can write to the incarcerated parent all year long. Discover the joy of writing to a prisoner or serving a prisoner's family. Ask Deaconess Buhler how you can help. Love starts with a gift in the name of Jesus, and can help lead to families restored and lives transformed. Optional: Volunteer to write Words of Hope to the inmates we have adopted; addressed Christmas cards are available by our Angel Tree. Envelopes are labeled with Messiah's return address for when they reply. Contact Pamela Buhler for more information on how you can volunteer for this great need at deaconess.buhler@gmail.com.

A Note from the Church Council

Brothers and Sisters in Christ at Messiah Lutheran Church,

The Church Council met last month on November 18th. All normal board reports were received. We are working on transparency. I have posted all the Council Meeting Minutes for this year at the Messiah Website. <https://www.messiahkeller.org/home> Sign in. (Contact ChurchOffice@MessiahKeller.org to obtain a sign-in.) Go to "Documents" on the top bar. Select "Council Meeting Documents", and then Select the Year/Month desired. If anyone wants a specific Board Report, please email me at wpbd77@yahoo.com.

I hope to have the Voter's Meeting Minutes Posted in a similar manner soon.

Anticipating the joyous Advent of our Lord,

Bill Brandt

The Board of Trustees would like to say thank you ~



- *Thank you* to our cleaning crew, Mr. Randolph for keeping our church safe and clean through this Covid virus. We appreciate you!
- *Thank you* to John and Vera Sweet for the flowers they purchased to plant around the church.
- *Thank you* to Michael's Keys and their superior service, your key card should work again. If you have any problems with your key card or any locks, please call the church office and leave a message at 817-431-2345 or email churchoffice@messiahkeller.org. Thank you!!



Turkey Trot Walk-a-Thon !!

Thank you to everyone that donated and participated in our Turkey Trot! The kids had so much fun and they all logged many miles.



Afterwards, the top donation winners got to silly string the principal which led into an impromptu dance party!
Thank you all for your support

MLCA Announcements~

Warm Christmas Tree~ MLCA is collecting new hats, gloves/mittens, scarves and socks to decorate our Christmas tree! All items donated will be taken to the Community Storehouse. We appreciate any and all help decorating our tree!

MLCA Reenrollment & Open Enrollment~ MLCA's **priority re-enrollment** will begin *right after our Christmas break (January 5th)*. Open enrollment will start on Monday, February 1st.





Those who read last month's newsletter closely may have noticed a glitch in the "music update." I mentioned I hate three announcements, but I only provided two! Here is the missing update:

You may have noticed some slight differences in the music program at Messiah over the fall. For one, the ensembles have gotten smaller, but on the other hand, we do hear from them more often! Our accommodation to the age of COVID has been to divide up our volunteers into smaller ensembles, which has resulted in us having more of them. Our worship schedule now has a bell quartet or small vocal ensemble scheduled for every worship service for the remainder of the fall! As such, we have been unable to do some of the "larger group" things we have done in the past, but it is my hope to return to that as soon as we can. In the meantime, we have re-scheduled our normal "Lessons and Carols" service. Instead of doing it in the Sunday Morning service, Lessons and Carols will be celebrated on Christmas Eve. The goal is for Christmas Eve to be the day that the services combine the separate smaller ensembles, to sing parts of the services by themselves, and finally do some music with groups combined. This will be a change from how these events were celebrated before, but it is my hope and aim that both the Advent and Christmas services will remain as musical and meaningful as we have long been accustomed to here. Thank you for your patience as we navigate our many new challenges this year, and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns!

Christmas Is Almost Here! Will YOU sing or play?

It will soon be time to celebrate the birth of Christ with some of the most important, and well-attended, services of the year. In previous years, we have often featured an extended period of pre-service music before both Christmas Eve services during which members of the congregation, including those not regularly serving in the music ministry, have prepared a special song or other musical performance to help herald the season. If the Lord has given you a musical gift, and you would like to bless the congregation with part of it this Christmas, please let us know! Send me an email, at miguel.ruiz@messiahkeller.org if you would like to be included in the pre-service music.

Messiah Youth: Don't Throw in the Axe Just Yet!

by Erin McComack



We had such an amazing time at our axe throwing event this summer. Look at all these awesome youth! Our all-parent meeting occurred on November 15th to discuss this year's events. For more information, Contact Erin McComack at erin.mccomack@hotmail.com or 318-372-6820. Here is a list of our upcoming events:

- **Say Goodbye to 2020" New Year's Eve Ball Bash!**
Dress Nice, 6pm-12am
- **Bake Sale Lock-in:** February 12-13th
- **Lent Dinners:** TBD
- **Camping Trip:** TBD
- **Pool Party:** TBD
- **Higher Things Conference:** FORGIVEN



When: July 27th-30th, 2021

Where: Concordia University Austin, TX

Info: In your church mailbox

Theme: John 20:23- "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven"

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR!!



Messiah Lutheran Church & School

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Pastor

www.messiahkeller.org



MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR.....

.....*From your Messiah Lutheran Church Family*

Young Adult/College Age Updates & Events

by Vera Sweet



LAST MONTH'S SINGLE ADULT OUTING

was so much fun! It was hosted by Immanuel Lutheran Church in Fairview. The Young Adults from Holy Shepherd, Messiah and Immanuel enjoyed a sunny fall afternoon at the Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary in McKinney.



~DECEMBER EVENTS FOR THE YOUNG ADULTS/SINGLES ~



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19 from 4 PM- 9PM

- ♦4pm: Caroling and Dinner
- ♦5pm: Board Games (Rummykub and Mexican Train)
- ♦7pm: Evening Prayer Service, .

.....WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU THERE!!