



Web: www.messiah-lutheran.us

email: pastor@messiah-lutheran.us

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DCE
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Pre School Director
Gretchen Thigpen

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Living Nativity & Gift Boutique

December 12th
3:00pm - 7:30pm
Nativity Story 6:00 pm

Gift Boutique

Sunday, December 13th, 20th 11:30



Midweek Advent Services, 12:00 Noon

Wednesday, December 2
Wednesday, December 9
Wednesday, December 16



Christmas Eve Worship Services

December 24th
Candlelight Service 7:00 pm
Pre-Service Music 10:40 pm
Candles and Carols Service - 11:00 pm

Christmas Day Worship Service

December 25th 10:00 am
With Communion



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Pastor's Ponderings
By Pastor Rice



*On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings of the King of kings!*

LSB 344 Public domain

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus was actively working to prepare the people around him to be ready for the coming of Jesus into their lives. Our Advent preparations are about the same purpose as John the Baptist.

We gather for worship and reflection during these weeks leading up to Christmas with this purpose. John called for his listeners to live lives of repentance. That is actually something we practice on a daily basis. Every worship service we open with an Invocation (reminding us of our Baptism) and Confession and Forgiveness. We realize that in this world full of sin, we do need to pause and reflect on what we have done to add to it in our actions and inactions.

Yet, the repentance is urged for us, not out of fear, but out of reverence for a Savior that is coming to be the King of kings. A savior who would not be coming to punish us. Rather, out of His great love for us, comes to take our punishment for us and to grant us merciful forgiveness.

What a great message for us to be sharing as we exchange our holiday greetings! God loves us! God sent His Son to forgive us! What greater Christmas gift can be given? Only the love of God that is found in Jesus Christ our King of kings. And there is nothing that can separate us from that love! Glad tidings of the King of kings.





Insights from Inese, DCE

Who Are You?

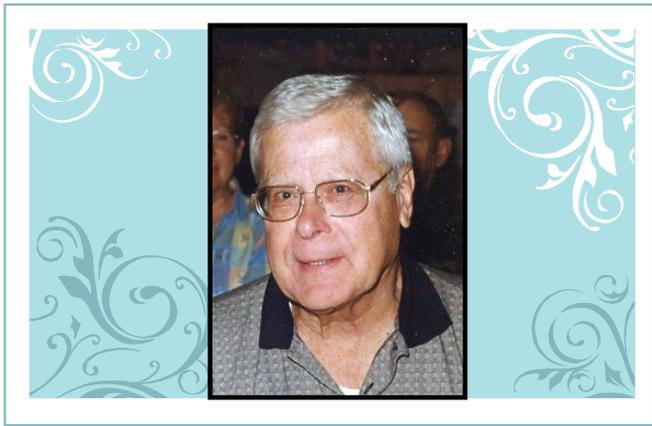
December is the month when we encounter, remember and experience the first Christmas story and events, and, at least for me, it never gets old. Every year Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherds and, of course, the birth of Jesus, touch and speak to me in new and deep ways.

Still, as sweet and beautiful as these events are, they only really matter if we allow them to meet us in our lives and in who we are as people. This year, I would like to encourage you to look at the Nativity – read it multiple times, come to the Living Nativity at church, sing and listen to Christmas carols, set up a Nativity set in your home and ask yourself, Where am I in these events? Who am I in these events and how is Jesus touching me and speaking to me at this time of my life?

Maybe you feel like Mary – invited into a new adventure, new life, new task. Full of faith, yet not knowing how it will all play out. Maybe you are Joseph – someone who doubts, yet trusts, probably is not certain of why God would choose to fulfill His plan in such a strange and backwards way. Maybe you are a shepherd – someone who has gone from pushed aside to being invited, from darkness to seeing the light of angels, from feeling like you did not bring much to the table to being assured by God that your gifts, your offering, your worship matters. Or, maybe an angel (start working on your wings ☺)? Someone who is being sent to bear the Good News especially to the people who often go unnoticed.

Wherever you are at this time of your life, wherever I am – Jesus, Immanuel, God With Us, is with you, is with me. There is nothing more important, nothing more powerful, nothing more beautiful in this world. That's what Christmas, all our life and eternity is about. Merry Christmas, God is with you. Celebrate and be full of joy.





President's Message

I want to thank all the members of Messiah Lutheran Church who took time to attend our semi-annual voters meeting. These are the meetings where the Board of

Directors, Ministry and Mission staff, and task teams explain the mechanisms and moving parts for the future of Messiah. This is the time when congregants ask questions and participate in any subject before the membership. If you were not able to attend, we have two meetings per year and the next one will be scheduled for May of 2016. I urge you to attend the next voters meeting to obtain information you need to stay an active participant of Messiah Lutheran Church.

We covered a number of subjects affecting our church. An explanation of the methodology in the new policy based governance we have adapted was presented. All of the Board of Directors, staff and task teams are working many hours to focus on the changes we need to make our church more inviting and stimulating. It is not an easy task, and it will take time because of the complete change in operation of the many working parts, but with efforts and labors of all, including congregants, I am confident we will succeed.

Pastor Rice reported the many activities in our church including new members and, sadly, those who have been called to their heavenly home. Attendance numbers declined slightly, but not as much as expected.

A discussion regarding our financial report took some minutes and the members expressed questions and concerns regarding our debt. Our bank line of credit and personal loans are at the limit. The board of directors is concerned as well. We will be having concentrated meetings to discuss solutions to the financial status of Messiah. The board of directors is committed to develop solutions.

Shirley Busch announced the available of Thrivent dollars to Thrivent members to support any activity of their choice. This includes any activity or event of our church. If you are a Thrivent member, be sure to talk to Shirley to pursue this generous offer.

Jonathan Mueller reported a net profit of \$6,061.68 for our Oktoberfest in 2015. What an event! Not only was it a fun day, but great revenue.

The Advent season is upon us and let us give thanks and praise for the birth of the Christ child. I look forward to sharing the joy of this Christmas season with you. A Blessed and Merry Christmas to you and your family.

God Bless†
Jim



Children and Youth Ministry

LIVING NATIVITY PLAY PRACTICE

This year, as a part of the Living Nativity, we would like to present a simple and beautiful retelling of the events of Jesus' birth. We would like to have people of various ages play the characters and children are invited to participate in this event in place of our traditional children's Christmas program. Please contact DCE Inese if you would like to play Joseph, Mary, shepherds, kings or angels.



There is only ONE practice on Sunday, December 6 and a quick go-through the play on the day of the event. The Nativity is on Dec.12 with the play starting at 5.30pm and practice at 5.

Youth Get-togethers Baking for Louisiana Purchase Bake Club Friday, December 5 from 6 to 9pm Messiah Lutheran Church



Young adults and youth baking 28 pies in one night! Part of these pies were served to the homeless as part of Eating with Jesus ministry and part of them were received by people who signed up for Louisiana Purchase Bake Club to support out youth going to the National Youth Gathering



UCSC CAMPUS AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

December 6-8 from noon to 9pm

Finals Study Hall at Messiah Lutheran Church. Snacks, free wi-fi and a quiet place to study.



Pre-thanksgiving Progressive Dinner with young adults and UCSC students. Special Thank you to Connie Creel, Julie Young, Reuben and Lorna Helick, Tracy Christenson, Debby Guidinger, Kevin Dahl and Shirley Busch for all your help in making this event as special as it was!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

If you enjoy a hobby or craft please consider sharing it with Good Shepherd. Their annual Boutique will be the second Saturday and Sunday in December (Dec 12, 13) in conjunction with the Living Nativity. All items sold must be handmade and all proceeds go to the spiritual needs of the developmentally disabled residents of Bethesda Homes. We would appreciate your donation of any handmade item including a bake sale specialty. We know we have many talented members in our church family. This is a wonderful opportunity to meaningfully share your talents.

Contact Gloria Settle, Darlene Stumpf or Sue Reeves if you would like to be a part of this year's event.

SHOPPERS This is a great chance to purchase something special for that special someone



*Poinsettia Sign-Up sheet is in Narthex.
\$10.00 each*

**Once again this year, we are adopting families from
WALNUT AVENUE WOMEN'S CENTER**

(Serving families that have suffered from domestic abuse)

GIVE A GIFT AND MAKE SOMEONE'S CHRISTMAS MORE JOY-FILLED!

- Pick an ornament from the tree in the Narthex starting middle of November
- Buy a gift or appropriate gift card
- Attach the ornament to the gift
- Return an un-wrapped gift to the church or pre-school by December 13. If possible, include a gift receipt.
- **OR** Write a check to Messiah Lutheran with memo, Walnut Ave. Center, and put it in the offering plate.



Help host a UCSC Finals Study Hall

December 6-8

Donate snacks: Snack bars, Chips and salsa, Starbucks mocha drinks, yogurts, dried fruit (individual packages) from Costco, homemade cookies, brownies, etc., fresh fruit, bagels and cream cheese, drinks – water, iced tea, etc.

Provide Dinner for one of the nights

Sign up for 2-3 hour time slots to help with hosting: Be present, fill up snacks.

Please sign up in the Narthex or by contacting DCE Inese at inese@messiah-lutheran.us

Announcements



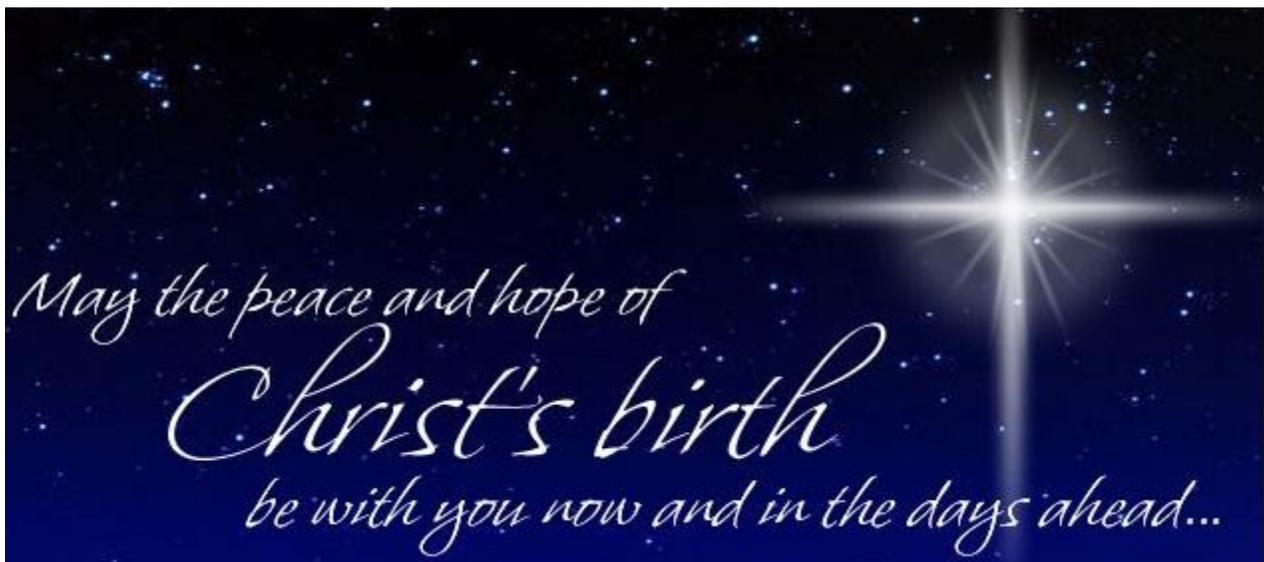
Teacher Gretchen's Preschool Kinder Korner

It was with mixed emotion that we said good bye to our PreK teacher, Karen Barnett, last month. She taught at MLP for 21 years and will be greatly missed. We wish her the best as she makes big changes in her life.

December can be such a busy high energy month in the preschool. With all the excitement the season brings plus added family events and traditions it can be a full month. From my perspective it really is a month of joy. For many of the children we serve this is the first December they will experience the season and for many of the children we serve this will be the first time they hear and learn the Christmas story. So if you happen to come into the preschool this month you will notice our "nativity table" where children can play with three different nativity scenes. Also in the classroom you will see the advent wreath, the advent calendar and the flannel board nativity scenes. And then the best part is the children (and their families) can participate in the Living Nativity and be part of the Christmas story.

I hope you will join me on Saturday, December 12 from 5:30-7:30pm to see the MLP Christmas angels!

Have a Blessed Christmas



Announcements

During Advent, Larry and Julie Juell will have their house open on Tuesday evenings, December 8, 15 and 22 at 7:00 pm. Sometimes this time of year can be lonely and we need escapes from that loneliness. We'd love to get together with you. Don't expect a party, do expect some fun, maybe an Advent reading, maybe some singing (bring your instrument and voice) and talking about our faith together. Stop by for 10 minutes, stop by for an hour. 475-2880.



If you signed up for the Louisiana Bake Sale:

Please pick up your baked goods for the month of December on Sunday, December 13 and check your name off the list. Thank you for supporting our youth in going to the National Youth Gathering!

Each Sunday during Advent, two **Chrismons** will be featured. Look for the new poster and the featured Chrismons in the Narthex each week!



Many **thanks** to our **Christmas in July** team who helped make and/or remake our Chrismon Poster, Chrismons, Stable, and Costumes!

Blue Christmas Service

On Sunday evening, December 20th, at 7:00 p.m., St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, 2500 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz, is offering a Blue Christmas Service -- a time when solace, comfort, and hope are provided for those who experience "blue" feelings during the holiday season.

This is not a joyous season for everyone. Greetings of Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays, non-stop caroling, parties, and other traditional ways of celebrating the holidays often contrast sharply with the feelings of people for whom it's not "the most wonderful time of the year." For individuals and families suffering the recent or impending death of loved ones, those in crisis due to illness, unemployment, separation, family estrangement, or other experiences of loss, seasonal affective disorder (S.A.D.), depression, or other mental illness, it can be a very isolated and lonely time.

In this Blue Christmas Service, all those who are not having a very Merry Christmas for whatever reason, and the friends who support them, are invited to come and be with one another in a liturgy that speaks of the compassionate love of God for His hurting people. Together we will offer up our pain, sorrow, and loneliness to the One whose birth we commemorate -- our Lord Jesus Christ.

For further info, contact Vi Olly at 454-6395.



A good day in the Kingdom of God! On the last Sunday of the church year, MLC welcomed new members and received one in baptism!

Seeking new volunteers for a labor of love with
EATING WITH JESUS (EWJ) mission.

Our mission feeds the homeless residences of Santa Cruz Homeless Center (HSC) on weekends due to recent budget cutbacks. Together with other local churches we provide 100 meals for each Saturday Breakfast and Dinner meals.

Messiah Lutheran needs volunteers for preparation, cooking, serving and cleanup of 100 meals for each meal at HSC. Excess from each meals is covered and served the following days (Sunday, etc).

Two hours labor can:

- Cut and cook potatoes Thursday night (6-8 pm) at Messiah's Johnson Hall Kitchen for Saturday Breakfast.
- Prepare Saturday Breakfast (6-8 am) and/or Dinner (3-5 pm) meals.
- Serve Saturday Breakfast (7-9 am) and/or Dinner (4-6 pm) meals.
- Cleanup Saturday Breakfast (8-10 am) and /or Dinner (5-7 pm) meals.

SEE JULIE OR DEAN OKINS FOR INFORMATION.

Phone: (831) 423-2512

Email: okinsjulie@sbcglobal.net



Community Christmas Celebration



With: Living Nativity

Saturday, December 12



- *Boutique & Bake Sale! *Tree Lighting!*
- *Music! *Live Animals! *Hot cider!*
- *Children's crafts!*
- *Caroling by Candlelight*

- *Boutique & Bake Sale, 3:00pm - 7:30pm*
- *Live animals, crafts, music 5:30 pm*
- *Living Nativity, 6:00 pm*
including children's play

*Accepting Cash Donations
for
Walnut Avenue Women's Center*