

Shepherd of Peace Lutheran Church

Vol. 27, Issue 12

Shepherd of Peace Lutheran Church

There's always a place for you at SOP!

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DECEMBER

QUESTION: Why does the church year begin at Advent, what is the history of Advent, and what is the history behind the Advent candles and wreath?

ANSWER: The word "advent" is from the Latin word for "coming," and as such, describes the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ into the flesh.

Advent begins the church year because the church year begins where Jesus' earthly life began — in the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation. After Advent comes Christmas, which is about his birth; then Epiphany, about his miracles and ministry; then Lent, about his Calvary-bound mission; then Easter, about his resurrection and the sending of the apostles; and then Ascension (40 days after Easter) and Pentecost, with the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The first half of the church year (approximately December through June) highlights the *life* of Christ. The second half (approximately June through November) highlights the *teachings* of Christ. The parables and miracles play a big part here. That's "the church year in a nutshell," and it should help reveal how Advent fits into "the big picture."

Advent specifically focuses on Christ's "coming," but Christ's coming manifests itself among us in three ways — past, present, and future.

The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the past focus on the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation at Bethlehem. The readings, which highlight Christ's coming in the future, focus on his "second coming" on the Last Day at the end of time. And the readings that highlight Christ's coming in the present focus on his ministry among us through Word and Sacrament today.

The traditional use of Advent candles (sometimes held in a wreath) originated in eastern Germany even prior to the Reformation. As this tradition came down to us by the beginning of this century, it involved three purple candles and one pink candle.

The purple candles matched the purple paraments on the altar (purple for the royalty of the coming King). The pink candle was the third candle to be lit (not the fourth) on Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent. "Gaudete" means "Rejoice!" in Latin, which is taken from Phil. 4:4.

("Rejoice! ... the Lord is near"). Hence a "pink" candle was used to signify "rejoicing." Some also included a white "Christ candle" in the middle to be lit during the 12 days of Christmas (Dec. 25 to Jan. 5).

The concept of giving each candle a name, i.e., Prophecy, Bethlehem, Shepherd and Angel, etc., is a relatively novel phenomenon and probably originates with certain entrepreneurial publishers seeking to sell Advent candles and devotional booklets.

There are many beautiful customs and traditions surrounding Advent as well as a load of history concerning its development. These matters would be better found in books than here.

Here are a few:

- Lee A. Maxwell, *The Altar Guild Manual, Lutheran Worship Edition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996).
- Lee A. Maxwell, *The Altar Guild Manual, Lutheran Service Book Edition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008).
- Fred L. Precht, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992).

LCMS-
<https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/worship-and-congregational-life#advent>



Theological Jargon: Amen

It's a short word—one we don't probably think about much. It usually comes at the end of things in our liturgy. The end of a prayer. The end of a sermon. The end of one of the Creeds. The end of the Confession of Sins. The end of the Absolution. The end of the Votum. When we're dismissed from the Lord's Table at the Lord's Supper. The end of the Benediction. Amen is a word that comes at the end.

But why? What does it mean? Well, Luther's Small Catechism (one of the most useful books in the world, by the way) can help us out a little bit here. After giving meaning to the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, Luther turns his attention to the Amen: "What is meant by the word 'Amen'?" That I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us so to pray, and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen, that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so." Luther's meaning reflects the literal translation of the word. "Amen" is a Hebrew word that literally means "so be it."

Given that meaning, it makes perfect sense that we should conclude our prayers, etc. with an "amen." The "amen" is the congregation's response to what the pastor says. It is the congregation saying "What he just said is ours." or "He speaks for us. We agree with him." And so when the pastor speaks the absolution, we say "amen" because the forgiveness of sins is ours. When the pastor prays, we say "amen" because his prayer is our prayer. When the pastor says "The peace of the Lord be with you always" right before the distribution of the Lord's Supper, we say "amen" because peace is ours in Christ Jesus. You get the idea.

Here at Shepherd of Peace, I've actually noticed that many of you are already accustomed to saying "Amen" when it's not even prompted by the bulletin or the hymnal. When I give the invocation before and after my sermon, for example, many of you say "Amen." But in other places, we've fallen into the practice of *not* saying "amen." Unless it's written on the page for us, we often don't say it. Perhaps we're unsure about when it's appropriate for us to say it. Maybe we don't want to stand out from the crowd. Maybe our pastors have too often said our "amens" for us. I know I'm often guilty of that.

The "amen" belongs to the people. Don't know when to say it? Don't just wait for it to be printed in black and white! Here's a short primer to help out:

- When the pastor speaks the Invocation, you can make the sign of the cross (That's a different article, I guess!) and say "Amen" at the end.
- Prayers typically end pretty much the same way every time. Listen for it. "...through Jesus Christ, our Lord" or "...through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever" or "... in Jesus' name" are probably the most common. When the pastor finishes the prayer, even if it's not printed in your bulletin, say "Amen."
- When the pastor speaks the *Votum* (Latin for "vow," by the way.) at the end of the sermon, even though it's not printed in the bulletin, you say "Amen" after he says "The peace that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting."
- After the Absolution, when the pastor forgives you your sins in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, say "Amen."

So don't let your pastor (me included) steal your "Amens!" If I do, do your best to drown me out! My hope is that by listening for the "amen" moments of the service it will heighten your awareness of the gifts being given and received in the service.

In Christ,
Pastor Vandercook



LOCAL HOLIDAY LIGHT SHOWS

Sherwood's Enchanted Forest Trail of Lights: December 1-30 from 6-9:30 Free.
1111 W. Maryland Ave., Sherwood, AR 72120

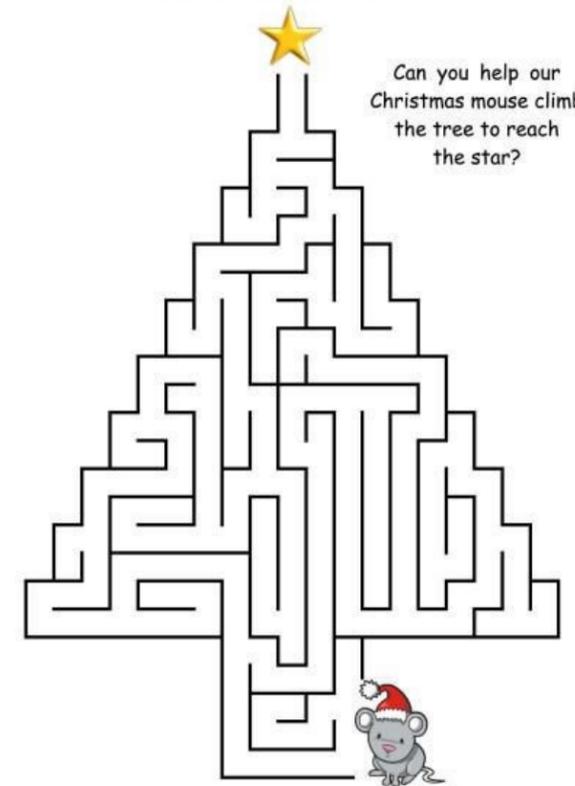
21st Annual Enchanted Land of Lights & Legends: November 21-December 31 from 6-9pm, Monday-Saturday. Free.
1400 Black Dog Drive, Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Garvan Woodland Gardens Holiday Lights: November 18-December 21 from 5-9pm. \$15 adults/\$5 4-12yrs.
550 Arkridge Road, Hot Springs National Park, AR 71913



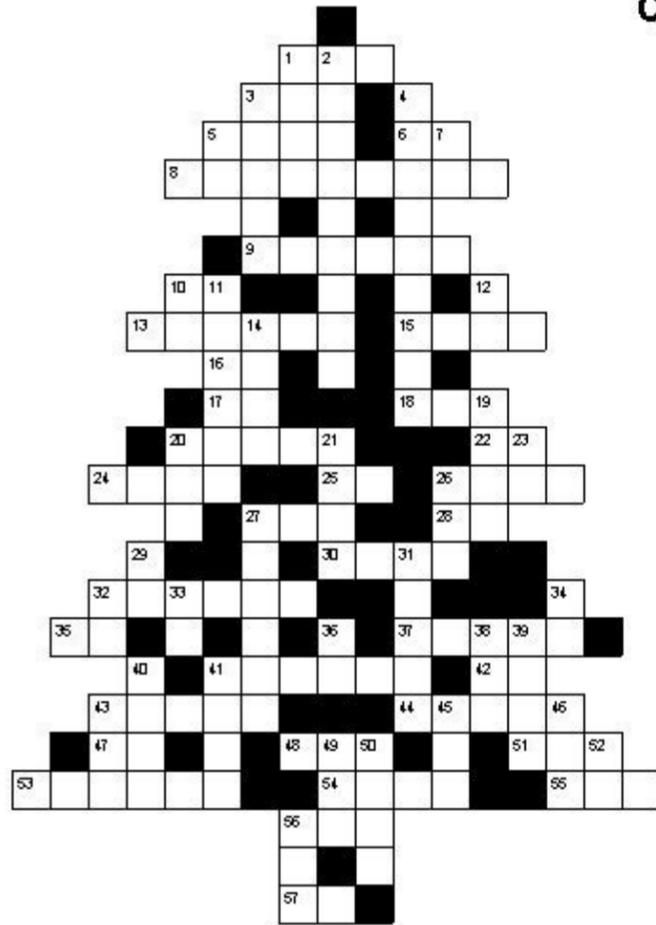
Christmas Tree Maze

Can you help our Christmas mouse climb the tree to reach the star?



Rumors, Maumelle Players first production back at Shepherd of Peace was a success. They had approximately 150 people enjoy their first show. We had great feedback from some of the attendees. We look forward to the next show in the spring and will keep you posted when we have dates and what show they will present next.

Christmas



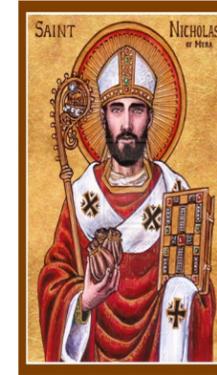
Across

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. President | 28. "...and ___ earth peace, good will towards men." |
| 3. Observe | 30. Wiseman gift |
| 5. Discuss | 32. "And ___ him with all the heart" (two words) |
| 6. "And ___ shall reign over the house of Jacob..." | 35. "...what have we to ___ with thee, thou Jesus..." |
| 8. Flock watchers | 37. What the wisemen brought |
| 9. Satisfy | 41. Stepfather |
| 10. The great I ___ | 42. Either |
| 13. Mary's resting place | 43. More accurate. |
| 15. Mother of Jesus | 44. "And all went to be ____, every one into his own city." |
| 16. Negative | 47. "For unto you ___ born this day" |
| 17. "___ and search diligently for the young child" | 48. No room here |
| 18. Jesus is the ___ of God | 51. Consume |
| 20. The baby | 53. Singing Cherubs |
| 22. "...and shall be called the Son ___ of the Highest." | 54. Present decorations |
| 24. Destitute | 55. "For unto you is born, this ___ in the city..." |
| 25. "...and laid Him ___ a manger" | 56. Pro |
| 26. Bearded nanny | 57. Way to win in boxing |
| 27. "And she brought her first born ___." | |

Down

1. Jump
2. Birth city
3. Shepherds flock
4. The Holiday we observe
5. Brand of suger
7. Mr. McMahon
10. "Hee shall be born of Mary, ___ Jerusalem..."
11. Baby's bed
12. Northwestern state
14. Hisses
19. Mid day
20. Happiness
21. What the angels did
23. "___ la la la la la la la"
26. Jehovah
27. Redeemer
29. "His name was called Jesus, which was ___ named of the angel"
31. Illumination
32. "and it came ___ pass..."
33. "... and ____, the star which they saw in the east..."
34. "When ___ his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph,"
36. "Master what shall ___ do?"
38. Sly canine
39. Decorated pine
40. "...behold, there came ___ men from the east."
41. Not Gentiles
43. Parable of the ___ tree
45. Mary's transportation
46. Father
49. Broadcast TV network
50. Christmas carol
52. Instructor's helper
56. Inquire

Join us on Wednesdays this Advent!



December 6 – The Commemoration of St. Nicolas of Myra, Pastor St. Nicholas is the namesake for the modern-day Santa Claus. While little is known about him historically, he is associated with charitable giving and is portrayed as the rescuer of sailors, the protector of children, and the friend of people in distress or need.



December 13 – The Commemoration of St. Lucia, Martyr St. Lucia was a victim of the great persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Diocletian in AD 304. Lucia remained a virgin until her death as she gave away her dowry. Because her name means "light," festivals of light commemorating her have become popular in Europe—especially in Scandinavian countries.

December 20 – Childrens' Christmas Program

The children of our congregation will present the Christmas Gospel in readings and song.

Dinner will be served at 5:45pm followed by Evening Prayer at 7.



First Sunday in Advent

December 3, bible hour @ 8am
Worship @ 9am
Decorating, lunch, and voters meeting to follow.



2ND SUNDAY @ Advent

December 10, bible hour @ 8am
Worship @ 9am

December 25th, Christmas Day
Trinity @ 10am



December 17, bible hour @ 8am
Worship @ 9am



Fourth Sunday in Advent

December 24, no bible hour
Worship @ 9am
Christmas Eve Service @ 6pm

The Story of Jesus' Birth: A Sermon by Martin Luther

The great theologian's powerful reimagining of the Christmas story.

Read more at <http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/christianity/protestant/2000/01/the-story-of-jesus-birth-a-sermon-by-martin-luther.aspx#T1y7EeYxC7q3wzb.99>

6. ...behold how very ordinary and common things are to us that transpire on earth, and yet how high they are regarded in heaven. On earth it occurs in this wise: Here is a poor young woman, Mary of Nazareth, not highly esteemed, but of the humblest citizens of the village. No one is conscious of the great wonder she bears, she is silent, keeps her own counsel, and regards herself as the lowliest in the town. She starts out with her husband Joseph; very likely they had no servant, and he had to do the work of master and servant, and she that of mistress and maid. They were therefore obliged to leave their home unoccupied, or commend it to the care of others. 7. Now they evidently owned an ass, upon which Mary rode, although the Gospel does not mention it, and it is possible that she went on foot with Joseph. Imagine how she was despised at the inns and stopping places on the way, although worthy to ride in state in a chariot of gold. There were, no doubt, many wives and daughters of prominent men at that time, who lived in fine apartments and great splendor, while the mother of God takes a journey in mid-winter under most trying circumstances. What distinctions there are in the world! It was more than a day's journey from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in the land of Judea. They had to journey either by or through Jerusalem, for Bethlehem is south of Jerusalem while Nazareth is north. 8. The Evangelist shows how, when they arrived at Bethlehem, they were the most insignificant and despised, so that they had to make way for others until they were obliged to take refuge in a stable, to share with the cattle, lodging, table, bedchamber and bed, while many a wicked man sat at the head in the hotels and was honored as lord. No one noticed or was conscious of what God was doing in that stable. He lets the large houses and costly apartments remain empty, lets their inhabitants eat, drink and be merry; but this comfort and treasure are hidden from them. O what a dark night this was for Bethlehem, that was not conscious of that glorious light! See how God shows that he utterly disregards what the world is, has or desires; and furthermore, that the world shows how little it knows or notices what God is, has and does. 9. See, this is the first picture with which Christ puts the world to shame and exposes all it does and knows. It shows that the world's greatest wisdom is foolishness, her best actions are wrong and her greatest treasures are misfortunes. What had Bethlehem when it did not have Christ? What have they now who at that time had enough? What do Joseph and Mary lack now, although at that time they had no room to sleep comfortably?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



QUESTION: Can you shed some light on when Jesus was born? I always thought it was 0 A.D. but apparently there is no 0 A.D. and it was sometime around 4-5 B.C.

ANSWER: The current system of dating by A.D. (anno domini means "in the year of the Lord"), based on the traditional year of the birth of Christ, was devised by a 6th century monk by the name of Dionysius Exiguus.

It is now commonly held, however, that the actual birth was several years earlier, between 7 and 4 B.C., since it has been established that Herod the Great died (Matt. 2:19) in 4 B.C.

LCMS--<https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/the-bible#born>

QA

Saint Nicholas was born in Patara (modern-day Turkey) and went to live with his uncle — a priest — when his parents died at a young age. Raised in the faith, Nicholas was elected bishop of the city of Myra around A.D. 317. As tradition goes, he was part of the first council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, which was convened to address the heresy that Jesus was not equal to God but instead created by God as a subordinate. Because of this, the Nicene Creed — now a part of the Divine Service — was created, stating what we believe as Christians.

Nicholas was known throughout the region for his generosity and kindness to the poor. He is most known for helping a father who was unable to give a dowry for his three daughters. (Dowries were required for a daughter to get married; without one, girls could be sold into slavery.) Nicholas is said to have taken bags of money and secretly deposited them at the girls' house. When they awoke, they found the money, enough for food and to be married.

Throughout his entire life, Nicholas continued to show great care to others, especially children. He was a pious example and role model who lived out his faith, showing compassion for others. The stories of his kindnesses soon spread throughout the region and beyond.

SANT NICHOLAS WAS A REAL PERSON AND A MAN OF GREAT FAITH.

by Eric Ruble

The stories of Saint Nicholas were probably the inspiration for the poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas* by Clement Moore, better known today as *'Twas the Night before Christmas*. The poem does use Saint Nicholas's name, although it differs from history. Instead the poem morphed him into a caricature of himself, with children waiting for toys and hearing reindeer, eventually creating Santa Claus from Saint Nicholas. Unfortunately, this Santa Claus changed the culture's understanding of Christmas, making it more about the gifts than the birth of a Savior.

Saint Nicholas was a real person and a man of deep faith, who, in Christian love, gave money and gifts to help people. He lived out his Christian faith by showing kindness and compassion to others. At Christmas, we Christians remember the real Saint Nicholas, his mercy, and the greatest gift ever given, our Savior Jesus Christ. **LW**

The Rev. Eric Ruble (trinitylcms@atlanticbn.net) is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Cumberland, Md.

SANTA. ST. NICHOLAS. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

10. Some have commented on the word "diversorium", as if it meant an open archway, through which every body could pass, where some asses stood, and that 'Mary could not get to a lodging place. This is not right. The Evangelist desires to show that Joseph and Mary had to occupy a stable, because there was no room for her in the inn, in the place where the pilgrim guests generally lodged. All the guests were cared for in the inn or caravansary, with room, food and bed, except these poor people who had to creep into a stable where it was customary to house cattle. This word "diversorium", which by Luke is called "katalyma" means nothing else than a place for guests, which is proved by the words of Christ, Luke 22,11, where he sent the disciples to prepare the supper, "Go and say unto the master of the house, The Teacher saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?" So also here Joseph and Mary had no room in the katalyma, the inn, but only in the stable belonging to the innkeeper, who would not have been worthy to give shelter to such a guest. They had neither money nor influence to secure a room in the inn, hence they were obliged to lodge in a stable. O world, how stupid! O man, how blind thou art! 11. But the birth itself is still more pitiful. There was no one to take pity on this young wife who was for the first time to give birth to a child; no one to take to heart her condition that she, a stranger, did not have the least thing a mother needs in a birth-night. There she is without any preparation, without either light or fire, alone in the darkness, without any one offering her service as is customary for women to do at such times. Every thing is in commotion in the inn, there is a swarming of guests from all parts of the country, no one thinks of this poor woman. It is also possible that she did not expect the event so soon, else she would probably have remained at Nazareth. 12. Just imagine what kind of swaddling clothes they were in which she wrapped the child. Possibly her veil or some article of her clothing, she could spare. But that she should have wrapped him in Joseph's trousers, which are exhibited at Aix-la-Chapelle appears entirely too false and frivolous. It is a fable, the like of which there are more in the world. Is it not strange that the birth of Christ occurs in cold winter, in a strange land, and in such a poor and despicable manner? 13. Some argue as to how this birth took place, as if Jesus was born while Mary was praying and rejoicing, without any pain, and before she was conscious of it. While I do not altogether discard that pious supposition, it was evidently invented for the sake of simple minded people. But we must abide by the Gospel, that he was born of the virgin Mary. There is no deception here, for the Word clearly states that it was an actual birth. 14. It is well known what is meant by giving birth. Mary's experience was not different from that of other women, so that the birth of Christ was a real natural birth, Mary being his natural mother and he being her natural son. Therefore her body performed its functions of giving birth, which naturally belonged to it, except that she brought forth without sin, without shame, without pain and without injury, just as she had conceived without sin. The curse of Eve did not come on her, where God said: "In pain thou shalt bring forth children," Gen. 3: 16; otherwise it was with her in every particular as with every woman who gives birth to a child. 15. Grace does not interfere with nature and her work, but rather improves and promotes it. Likewise Mary, without doubt, also nourished the child with milk from her breast and not with strange milk, or in a manner different from that which nature provided, as we sing: ubere de coelo pleno, from her breast being filled by heaven, without injury or impurity. I mention this that we may be grounded in the faith and know that Jesus was a natural man in every respect just as we, the only difference being in his relation to sin and grace, he being without a sinful nature. In him and in his mother nature was pure in all the members and in all the operations of those members. No body or member of woman ever performed its natural function without sin, except that of this virgin; here for once God bestowed special honor upon nature and its operations. It is a great comfort to us that Jesus took upon himself our nature and flesh. Therefore we are not to take away from him or his mother any thing that is not in conflict with grace, for the text clearly says that she brought him forth, and the angels said, unto you he is born. 16. How could God have shown his goodness in a more sublime manner than by humbling himself to partake of flesh and blood, that he did not even disdain the natural privacy but honors nature most highly in that part where in Adam and Eve it was most miserably brought to shame? so that henceforth even that can be regarded godly, honest and pure, which in all men is the most ungodly, shameful and impure. These are real miracles of God, for in no way could he have given us stronger, more forcible and purer pictures of chastity than in this birth. When we look at this birth, and reflect upon how the sublime Majesty moves with great earnestness and inexpressible love and goodness upon the flesh and blood of this virgin, we see how here all evil lust and every evil thought is banished. 17. No woman can inspire such pure thoughts in a man as this virgin; nor can any man inspire such pure thought in a woman as this child. If in reflecting on this birth we recognize the work of God that is embodied in it, only chastity and purity spring from it. 18. But what happens in heaven concerning this birth? As much as it is despised on earth, so much and a thousand times more is it honored in heaven. If an angel from heaven came and praised you and your work, would you not regard it of greater value than all the praise and honor the world could give you, and for which you would be willing to bear the greatest humility and reproach? What exalted honor is that when all the angels in heaven can not restrain themselves from breaking out in rejoicing, so that even poor shepherds in the fields hear them preach, praise God, sing and pour out their joy without measure? Were not all joy and honor realized at Bethlehem, yes, all joy and honor experienced by all the kings and nobles on earth, to be regarded as only dross and abomination, of which no one likes to think, when compared with the joy and glory here displayed? 19. Behold how very richly God honors those who are despised of men, and that very gladly. Here you see that his eyes look into the depths of humility, as is written, "He sitteth above the cherubim" and looketh into the depths. Nor could the angels find princes or valiant men to whom to communicate the good news; but only unlearned laymen, the most humble people upon earth. Could they not have addressed the high priests, who it was supposed knew so much concerning God and the angels? No, God chose poor shepherds, who, though they were of low esteem in the sight of men, were in heaven regarded as worthy of such great grace and honor.



Mark your calendars for the Little Rock North-South Circuit Epiphany Service @ Grace Lutheran Church in Little Rock on Saturday January 6, 2018 @ 1pm.



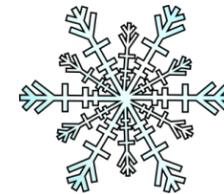
Bunco Babes - Annual Christmas Party

December 12th @ 6:30pm, location TBD

Choir rehearsals after Advent Services on the 6th and 13th.



Special days in December



- 12-02 (B) Connor Smith, 12
- 12-05 (B) Morgan McDonald, 14
- 12-06 (B) Will Creasman
- 12-08 (B) Alec Bishop
- 12 -09 (A) Jim & Carolyn Drane
- 12 - 12 (B) Karen Johnston
- 12 - 14 (B) Elaina Flakoll
- 12 - 14 (B) Patricia Wheat
- 12 - 15 (B) Mark Filter
- 12 - 21 (B) Duanne Markman
- 12 - 22 (A) Mark & Jeanette Filter
- 12 - 28 (B) Jim Drane
- 12 - 28 (A) Marc & JoAnn Higgins



Mark your calendars for the Little Rock North-South Circuit Epiphany Service at Grace Lutheran Church in Little Rock on Saturday, January 6, 2018 at 1pm!