

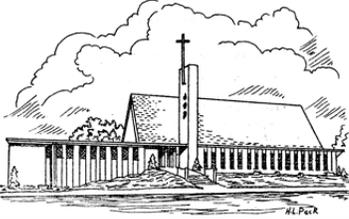
Volume 26, Issue 12

December 2019

“Christ in Every Home,
Every Day.”

Life Together

A Publication of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Humboldt, KS



Special points of interest:

- Christmas Dinner
- Advent Soup Suppers
- Advent Series
- New Year's Eve Party
- 2020 Communion Prep
- Women's Bible Study Info
- CARE Teams
- Life Conference

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Office: (620) 473-2343
Cell: (314) 650-1745
www.stpetershumboldt.org
office@stpetershumboldt.org
pastor@stpetershumboldt.org

Facebook
[@StPetersHumboldt](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersHumboldt)
[@PastorTimothyRoth](https://www.facebook.com/PastorTimothyRoth)

Instagram
[@StPetersHumboldt](https://www.instagram.com/StPetersHumboldt)
[@Pastor_Roth](https://www.instagram.com/Pastor_Roth)

Grace and peace to you,

In his book, *Built on the Rock: The Healthy Congregation*, Ted Kober uses his experience as the Senior Ambassador for Ambassadors of Reconciliation and a Certified Christians Conciliator to offer church leaders and members an effective prescription for building and sustaining healthy congregations. A congregation's health is not determined by their friendliness, growth in numbers, financial stability, motivational ability, or success in ministries. Instead, Kober insists that a congregation's health depends entirely on their familiarity with God's Word *and* being "normed and formed" by it.

"The healthy churches I encounter benefit from larger percentages of people in regular Bible study. Their leaders demonstrate scriptural knowledge and trust in Christ as they practice repentance through confession and forgiveness. Unhealthy congregations have small numbers of people who know God's Word or apply it to their own lives. Leaders of these churches are skilled in justifying their actions, judging and accusing one another, and employing sinful means for dealing with their disputes."

"One would think these basic truths—that Christ must be the foundation and that leaders and members must abide in God's Word—would be so obvious that people wouldn't need to be reminded of them. But the reality is that members and leaders alike often depend more on worldly wisdom to deal with the challenges of congregational life than what they confess by faith."

A church may appear extremely healthy and thriving by all external means, but this apparent health can be deceiving. Like a 'surprise' heart attack exposing inherited vulnerabilities, hypertension, high cholesterol, built-up plaque, or other risk factors in an outwardly healthy person, a conflict in a church can expose a congregation's hidden spiritual heart disease of worshiping idols. If left untreated, a congregation is left vulnerable and in serious danger for a major heart attack.

So, how healthy do you believe our congregation is? How familiar with God's Word do you believe our leadership, and entire congregation, is? So familiar that our daily lives are being formed constantly by God's Word? So familiar that we can't go a day without it? Or do you think we might be leaving ourselves open vulnerable to a major crisis?

The book also has a Church Leader Pack with studies, sample constitutions and bylaws, policy manuals, etc. to help congregations restructure themselves to be more healthy. My goal is to take the Strategic Planning committee through this program in the coming months as we continue the process.

In Christian love,

Pastor Timothy Roth

Catechetical Corner

Lessons for the Life-Long Lutheran

The Augsburg Confession: Article II: Original Sin

What is sin? It's a word that we commonly use, but do we understand its meaning and all the implications involved? Sin is much more than what we do, think or say. These are just the "fruits" of sin; the "root" goes much deeper. Scripture says we were *conceived* in sin. That doesn't mean our parents sinned in conceiving us; it means that our very nature is corrupt with sin. Once corrupt, Adam could no longer produce righteous offspring. You cannot make a "pure" copy from something that has been corrupted. No matter how hard we work to improve ourselves we will never be free of sin. Only God can remove this corruption of sin from us.



Our churches teach that since the fall of Adam [Romans 5:12], all who are naturally born are born with sin [Psalm 51:5], that is, without fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin, called concupiscence. Concupiscence is a disease and original vice that is truly sin. It damns and brings eternal death on those who are not born anew through Baptism and the Holy Spirit [John 3:5].

Our churches condemn the Pelagians and others who would deny that original depravity is sin, thus obscuring the glory of Christ's merit and benefits. Pelagians argue that a person can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

This is the second article of our confession. Sin is defined by Scripture as anything contrary to God's will. He created Adam and Eve in His own image. They were good and holy because they were perfectly in sync with God. They wholly knew Him and enacted His will without thought or effort. They simply did what they were created to do. This righteousness was part of who they were. They were truly without sin.

That all changed that day in the garden. Satan came and tempted them to distrust God, to not do God's will for them, but to follow their own will. The fateful moment was not in the actual taking and eating of the fruit...that was just the "fruit" of the fall. The fateful moment came when Satan tempted them to question God's goodness and Word. As soon as they fell out of step with God they became utterly corrupt and filled with sin. This *original sin* led to all kinds of *actual sin*, our sins of thought, word, and deed. Yet it is not the *actual sin* that condemns us, but the *original sin* that we inherit. Thus, we confess with Scripture that we are sinful even from the moment we are conceived.

On account of that corruption we are *made* enemies of God, even while He knits us in our mother's womb. Mercy of mercies! It's a wonder God continues to create enemies for Himself! We are conceived in death and spiritually blind, with our hearts set against God. This is why we bring our children to baptism as soon as possible! They are in just as much spiritual distress and need as anyone else, and baptism delivers to them Christ and His salvation. We'll talk about baptism in Article IX, but it underscores the fallen state of all humanity. Baptism imparts in us the Holy Spirit, who begins our regeneration but will not bring it to completion until the Day of Christ's return.

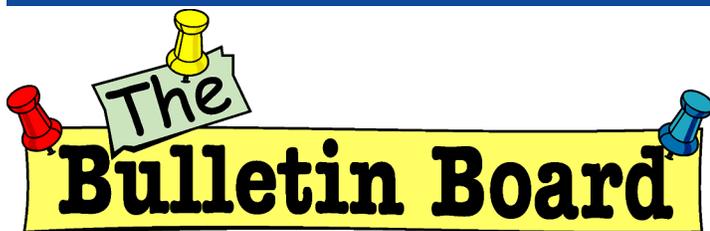
In other words, the Spirit's working in baptism does not destroy original sin. Though we are washed clean of its guilt, our flesh is still corrupt until we die or Christ comes again. Even after we are saved we need the Spirit to continually bring us the forgiveness of sins in Christ and to strengthen us to flee temptation and do good works. None of this we can do by our own reason or strength. None of this we can do by an act of our own will, but by the will of God alone.

This is not a popular doctrine; it never has been. The church has always combated the idea that people are essentially good, or at least can choose good by their own will. Pelagius lived from the mid 300s to the early 400s and taught that humanity was not corrupted in the fall but persists in a state of moral indifference. Pelagius and his followers depend on the individual person's will to choose good and develop morality to be saved. For them, free will is king and Christ is the moral example; grace and salvation from Christ are not necessary.

Although condemned as heresy by the church in the 400s, Pelagianism is wide spread today, though more often in the form of Semipelagianism, a compromise between Pelagianism and the teaching of the Church Fathers, who taught that people cannot come to God without the grace of God first extending to the person and itself being the driving force instead of a person's will. Semipelagians, then, teach that it is an act of the individual free will that establishes faith, and then the increase of faith is a work of God. In other words, you must first "choose Jesus" before He will "choose you."

This too was condemned as heresy in the 500s, yet still *many* teach that it is an act of our own will that brings us to faith and not an act of God. This is most often expressed in decision theology. In this theology a person must make a conscious decision to accept Jesus before they are considered saved. This decision is marked by an action such as walking down an aisle, praying a "sinner's prayer," signing a decision card or a statement in a Bible, or some other similar activity.

A necessary result, decision theology rejects Word and Sacrament as the Spirit's operative means of grace and the bringing to and keeping in faith as the primary activity of the Holy Spirit. The means of grace



The Bulletin Board

The Month At A Glance

Wed, Dec 4th, Advent @ 12:15 PM & 6:00 PM
 Thurs, Dec 5th, P Roth in Topeka; Elders @ 7:00 PM
 Sat, Dec 7th, Christmas Store @ 9:00 AM
 Sun, Dec 8th, Christmas Dinner after Church
 Wed, Dec 11th, Advent @ 12:15 PM & 6:00 PM
 Thurs, Dec 12th, LWML Party @ 6:30 PM
 Sun, Dec 15th, Arrowood @ 1:45 PM
 Tues, Dec 17th, P Roth & Copley in Pittsburg
 Wed, Dec 18th, Advent @ 12:15 PM & 6:00 PM
 Tues, Dec 24th, Christmas Eve @ 6:00 PM
 Tues, Dec 24th, Lessons and Carols @ 11:00 PM
 Wed, Dec 25th, Christmas Morning @ 10:00 AM
 Thurs, Dec 26th, Pastor Roth Out of Office
 Tues, Dec 31st, Party @ 4:30 PM; Service @ 6:00 PM



Christmas Dinner

On Sunday, Dec 8th we will be having our Christmas Dinner after late service. Look for the sign up sheet in the Narthex to volunteer to bring food.

Advent Soup Suppers

Dec 4, 11, 18 @ 5:15 PM. Please sign up if you plan to attend so we have an idea how much soup we need to make. We also need help to provide soup, crackers, and ice cream. Thank you!



Mitten Tree Donations

Our Mitten Tree is up! Help us decorate with mittens, scarves, hats, socks, sweatshirts, pajamas, underwear, etc. For more info contact Wanda Davidson.



New Year's Eve Party

The whole congregation is invited to ring in the new decade. There will be party food, games, & fellowship! Join us at 4:30 PM to celebrate, closing with church at 6:00 PM! If you'd like to help, please tell Pastor Roth!



2020 Communion Preparation

Next year we'll have the Lord's Supper in both services! Please consider serving by preparing the elements. No experience required, and training is easy! Sign-up in the Narthex or contact the church office.



Catechetical Corner—Continued from Page 2

are thus reduced to “acts of obedience” and the Holy Spirit becomes simply a miracle worker and showman because conversion and perseverance in the faith is all my work and not a gift of God. For this reason infant baptism is rejected by decision theologians because a baby cannot decide to accept Jesus and therefore a baby cannot have faith.

However, it is not just Pelagians and Semipelagians who do not understand the desperate state that we are in. Roman Catholicism teaches that Baptism actually destroys original sin, and so after we are baptized all our good works are products of our own will, not of the work of Christ in and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore every good work earns a deposit of merit in your account and every evil work earns a withdraw. Your balance, therefore, when you die determines how much suffering (“purifying”) you must endure in purgatory before you finally get to be with Jesus.

Though this article of sin may seem like it should be straight forward, what appears to be a difference of nuance has large implications for the theology that flows from it downstream. If you do not understand the weight of our original sin, then your assurance of salvation comes from what you have done instead of what Christ has done for you and you begin examining your life, not so that you may confess your sin but to see if you are “on track” in your progress. But don't simply take my word for the AC's word on it. Here are some Scripture references for you to begin to let the Scriptures speak. As always, read these verses in their context and in the whole light of Scripture:

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Psalm 51:5

“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.” Rom 8:7

“In their case [of the unbeliever] the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” 2 Cor 4:4

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins...But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—...For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Eph 2:1-10

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, Jn 15:16

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:3

Advent Midweek & Christmas Series

God's own Son is born a child;
God the Father is reconciled.

What peace is found in those words. As the Church draws nigh to the Nativity of Our Lord, many also draw nigh to the harsh reality of broken families and friendships. The sting of estrangement intensifies in this season as many delight in family gatherings—a delight that is glaringly absent for others.

We long for reconciliation—a marriage healed, the return of a prodigal child, the open arms of a formerly harsh parent. Advent is just the season for reconciliation. It is a penitential season, calling us to examine ourselves, acknowledge our sin with contrition, and trust that our sin is forgiven for the sake of Christ. Such self-examination reveals that the fault for our broken relationships is not one-sided. The sin visited upon me by another has driven a wedge between us, but so has my sin. Part of the distance between me and others is due to my sinful actions—my sinful refusal to forgive, my sinful pride that will not admit my fault, my sinful contentment with a cold shoulder.

Advent calls us to repent of our divisions. Advent calls us to rejoice in reconciliation. Though you can forgive another even when he refuses to acknowledge his fault, reconciliation is found when both parties are willing to admit their culpability, seek forgiveness, and amend their ways. That can seem so difficult. It is hard enough for one sinner to confess his sin and trust that the Lord purges it from his life. How much more challenging it is for two sinners to do so. Yet that is exactly what Christ works among and within us. He grants us confidence in His forgiveness so that we forgive one another, receive one another's forgiveness, and are thus reconciled.

Reconciliation with some remains ever elusive. We hunger for it; we pray for it. Yet the distance remains. When a parent apologizes to a child so that they embrace for the first time in decades, we rightly rejoice. When our longing is not realized, sorrow results.

The only consolation amid such sorrow is the certainty of your reconciliation to the Father. It is certain because it is not dependent upon sinners humbling themselves in repentance. It is certain because it is dependent upon the sinless Son of God humbling Himself to take on human flesh and be born of a virgin.

That is the glorious, biblical proclamation found in "The Quempas Carol." We are blessed to hear therein the refrain, "God's own Son is born a child . . . ; God the Father is reconciled." This is not wishful thinking driven by our longings. It is reality driven by Christ.

You are reconciled to the Father. Each stanza of "The Quempas Carol" announces our reconciliation to the Father in Christ. Wednesday of the first week in Advent will greet us with the first stanza, in which the angel of the Lord makes known that reconciliation is had because Christ has come "For You and All the World." The second stanza will serve us on Wednesday of the second week in Advent as we hear that Jesus reconciles us to the Father "To Set You Free from All Your Sorrow." Then, our ears will be filled with the promise that we are reconciled to the Father because Christ comes "For You, to Bear Your Flesh in Weakness." Our joy will find its climax at the Nativity of Our Lord, when we hear the fourth stanza's message that Jesus' birth is the Lord's visitation of "All the World with His Free Grace Supplying."

Behind it all is the Word of God that the Spirit might quicken in us faith to trust these promises.

Advent 1: "For You and All the World"

Luke 2:8-20

Advent 2: "To Set You Free from All Your Sorrow"

Matthew 2:1-12

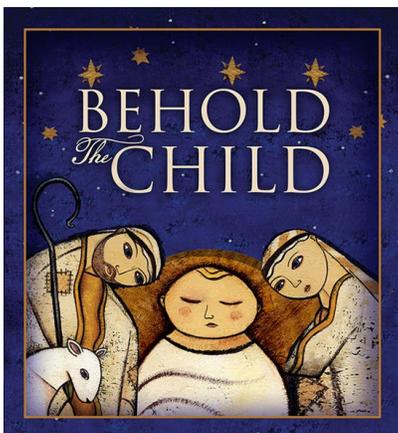
Advent 3: "For You, to Bear Your Flesh in Weakness"

Luke 1:46-55

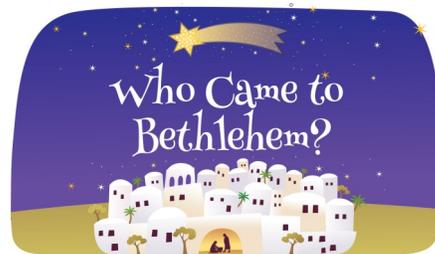
Christmas Eve: Who Came to Bethlehem?

Christmas Day: "All The World with His Free Grace Supplying"

John 1:1-14



Join us for a children's Christmas Eve service in which detectives search for clues to discover **Who Came to Bethlehem?** Mini-dramas, rhyming recitations, Bible readings, meditations, hymns and prayers all serve as evidence to help the detectives, the children and the congregation find out the truth that Jesus was born to save us all from sin and death forever.



Women's Bible Study

We wrapped up our study of Song of Solomon in October. We will pick back up in January with a new book. Please choose one of the following and let Marie know before December 20. The best way to let me know is by text or a note in my mailbox, so I don't forget what's told to me on a Sunday morning. The winning study will be announced in January's newsletter. Study options are below:

Mighty and Mysterious by Heidi Goehmann—The new Christians in first-century Colossae were not all that different from us today. They, too, struggled to understand who Jesus is, how Jesus alone reconciles us to God, and why things aren't perfect in the Church. In Paul's letter to these Christians he had never met, he doesn't say they should stop asking hard questions. He doesn't tell them to stop searching God's Word, to stop seeking spiritual wisdom, or to stop striving for unity within the Church. Instead, Paul focuses all of their questions and struggles on the Gospel of the mighty and mysterious God: the same God who created the universe, revealed Himself among us, and reclaimed us as His own through His Son, Jesus.

Walk through God's Word to the Colossians and to you. Though many things will remain mysterious until we see our Savior face-to-face, you will discover that God takes care of you through the mighty and mysterious Body of Christ. That doesn't make life together easy. But it does mean that life together connected to Jesus and one another is good and what we were created for.

Where Love Abides by Donna Pyle—An 8-lesson Bible study based on John 15:1-17. This study takes an in-depth look at what it means to abide in Jesus, the True Vine to bear lasting fruit.

Armor of God by Priscilla Shirer—All day, every day, an invisible war rages around you—unseen, unheard, yet felt throughout every aspect of your life. A devoted, devilish enemy seeks to wreak havoc on everything that matters to you: your heart, your mind, your marriage, your children, your relationships, your resilience, your dreams, your destiny. But his battle plan depends on catching you unaware and unarmed. If you're tired of being pushed around and caught with your guard down, this study is for you. The Enemy always fails miserably when he meets a woman dressed for the occasion. The Armor of God, more than merely a biblical description of the believer's inventory, is an action plan for putting it on and developing a personalized strategy to secure victory.

Bible study will now have two time options: Sunday at 3 p.m. or Thursday at 7:00 p.m. We will meet once a month, usually the third or fourth week, depending on church calendar. The same material will be covered each day so you can pick the day that fits in your schedule the best.



Christmas Store



Christmas Store will be December 7th from 9-10 AM. Preschool and elementary students in Humboldt are invited to shop for their parents/guardians. All gifts will be 25¢. If you would like to donate new or gently-used items, below are a few guidelines and suggestions. We are mostly in need of men's gifts.

1. Keep gifts between \$5 and \$15 each.
2. No clothing except for hats, caps, scarves, and gloves for men and women.
3. Small lap blankets and candy were popular last year.
4. Women's gifts could also include jewelry, candles, Christmas decorations, knick-knacks, purses, wallets, etc.
5. Men's gifts could also include ball caps, insulated gloves, fishing lures, hand tools, games, insulated coffee mugs, flashlights, wallets, etc.
6. Any other ideas that you have are welcome!

We also need gift bags—especially 8" x 10" or 10" x 12" approximately.

We will have a box in the Narthex during November to accept donations. If you would prefer to make a financial contribution, please mark your checks as "Outreach-Christmas Store."

Thank you for your support of this project. If you have any questions, please contact: Carman Huse (620)365-9311 or Alicia Schomaker (620)473-0679.



THE S.E.A. SIDE WOODS

*Rev. Matthew, Kali, Laurel, Elenore, and Caroline Wood
Ministry in Southeast Asia—Based in Medan, Indonesia*

Bahasa Indonesia & Ten Commandments

Posted Nov 3rd, 2019

In mid October the pastors of the Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church (GKLI) gathered in Sihabonghabong, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia for their annual Pastors' Convention. The Lord had blessed Kali and Caroline with health after Caroline's birth in August. Kali and I were also still on a maternity break from Bahasa Indonesia Class. So I was able to travel to Sihabonghabong to attend the convention. The last time I was with all the pastors of the GKLI was in June for the Hymnal Workshop. At that time Kali and I had only taken one month of Bahasa Indonesia classes. I could say good morning, talk about the food I liked, discuss the weather, and have a surface level conversation about family. Now, four months after that initial meeting at the Hymnal Workshop I met with all of them again.



The pastors' conference was a great opportunity to measure how far Kali and I have come since we last met with these pastors. At that time I could not understand much of anything that was being said around me. Unless someone was using the simplest words in response to a direct question, I had no clue what was being said. The pastors convention in October put our Bahasa Indonesia classes and learning to the test. My time in Sihabonghabong showed that we have indeed made progress in learning Bahasa Indonesia. Rather than having no clue, I could track along with the general topic of conversation, but lost almost all of the particulars. For example, I could tell that the pastors were talking

about new members in their congregations and something about Roman Catholics and their need for teaching. We have indeed come along way, but I also realized how much more work is ahead of us!



Still, the Pastors' Convention was a great opportunity to get to know the pastors of the GKLI. They graciously set aside five hours of their convention for me to teach from Luther's Small Catechism. On Thursday, 10 October, I started with the Ten Commandments and spent five hours reading and teaching from Dr. Luther's Small Catechism. The pastors were engaged, had good questions, and good conversation. We made it through the Lord's Prayer before we ran out of time.

The pastors were most interested in the numbering of the Ten Commandments. There are three traditions for numbering the Ten Commandments. Lutherans have historically used the Augustinian tradition which is reflected in the Small Catechism. However, the missionary that brought Christianity to Indonesia, Ludwig Nommensen, used a different tradition. So a different numbering is used in the Small Catechism that is familiar to the GKLI.

As we walked through the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer I focused on the certainty of the work of God in Christ Jesus. We know where we stand before our Father in Heaven because He sent His Son to die and rise again. We know that we stand in the righteousness of Christ because the Holy Spirit has called and gathered us through Word and Sacrament. Certainty in our right relationship with the Heavenly Father is the gift of the Gospel.

For this convention GKLI Pastor Eben Ezer Aruan translated for me. Having such a knowledgeable translator is a great blessing. Pastor Aruan knows his theology and he knows the GKLI. He not only translates, but also helps to point out what needs

Continued on Page 8

The S.E.A. Side Woods — Continued from Page 7

more explaining. Still, using a translator means that everything has to be said twice. Thus 5 hours of instruction becomes 2.5 hours. Kali and I work hard to learn Bahasa Indonesia, and an important goal for me is to be able to teach and present in Bahasa Indonesia. So we are always asking for prayers that the Lord would bless our language learning.

If you'd like to follow their blog, you can do so by going to theseaside.asia.



BELIZE MISSION SOCIETY



You may know we've been blessed with our first property and building in Belize. Numerous short-term teams have been working hard to get it fixed up, functional, furnished, and looking good. Here "Christ Lutheran Church of Seine Bight" was officially dedicated in service to our Lord and His chosen ones.

At the same time our dear friend and mission partner, Mariluz, who has played a vital role particularly in our annual VBS, leading breakout sessions in Spanish for our Spanish speaking



friends, has been working hard studying the catechism with the Lutheran vicar on the ground, Benjamin Flores. On this very special day she confessed her faith, joined our church, and joined us for the first time at our Lord's table.



Praise Him from Whom all blessings flow!

Your Missionary to Belize, Pastor Duane Meissner

For more info, visit www.belizemissionsociety.net.

Mission Trips

The Belize Mission Society is now working on their 2020 short-term mission trip schedule. If you're interested in going and serving in Belize, please let pastor Roth know and keep an eye out for further information!

LCMS Stewardship Ministry Article

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, is teaching those who follow Him that worrying about the necessities of life is idolatry: worshipping a false god. This is because worry and anxiety show what we care about. Our anxiety reveals what we love and to what we're devoted. 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 one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

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 and clothes the lilies, how will He not also feed and clothe you when you are worth more than they are?

For 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. 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 and 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 deserve because of it. He was raised again on the third day to overcome 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 this and find security in it, 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, lives and reigns for all eternity. It is to believe that God – who created you, redeemed you by the death and resurrection of His Son, and sanctifies you by His Spirit – will not keep His promises of sustaining you in this life.

Jesus says this: Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. 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 Jesus taught us.

Your Father in heaven knows what you need – food and clothing, house and home, etc. – 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. Those who seek will find. And all the necessities of life, our Lord says, will be added to you.

Inactive Ministry—CARE Team

With our initial workshops over, the Elders will take the suggested names from the workshop participants and begin forming our congregation's CARE team. CARE stands for Concern, Attention, Re-engagement, Encouragement. This team and their support team will serve on the front lines in our ministry to our inactive members, but the whole congregation is part of this ministry. The hope and prayer is that by reaching out in repentance to our members that we have not sought after with the hope of Christ we can reconcile with them and help bring them back safely into Christ's fold.



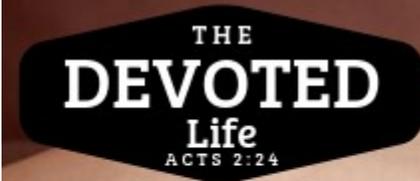
District Life Conference

The 2nd annual Kansas District Life Conference is January 22nd at St. John's in Topeka.

Registration begins at 9:00 AM. Matins at 9:30 AM. Speakers

include the Rev. Timothy Roth of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Humboldt, who will address the political phrase "Right to Life." At 12:45 PM attendees can participate in the March for Life in downtown Topeka. Following the March for Life, participants will gather at St. John's for Vespers and will discuss strategies for speaking the fullness of the Word of God concerning our lives and "Life" itself.

Registration information will be posted soon.



Devoted to Worship: Ordering Our Lives

Who are you? The answer to that question cannot be given as a list of facts. It cannot be understood through equations. It cannot be explained using cold, hard science. Some of those things might help inform the answer, but the answer to, “Who are you?” can only be given in context of your living, breathing person and the life that you live. Each of us has a story to tell that reveals who we are. To lose that story is to lose our identity. Even so, that identity is still not fully understood apart from the telling of a much larger story of which your story is a part. To know the full story, and thus the truth of your identity, we must go to the Creator Himself.

The Divine Services tells the world its story. In it we see God in the beginning, the fall of humanity into sin, the plea of humanity for rescue, the response of God in mercy, and the eternal life given to those who believe. And at the heart of it all, we see Christ in His person and work. More than that, in the Divine Service we see Christ Himself present, continuing to work as the host and story teller through the liturgy, brining us right into the very story that is being told and changing us as He gives us life and salvation.

Since we enter into the Lord’s presence through the Divine Service we actually begin with a *Service of Preparation*. In the Old Testament, the temple had boundaries that kept those who were not worthy or prepared from entering into God’s holy presence. Today, we enter God’s holy presence by confessing our sins in repentance and faith and hearing God’s forgiveness. This Service of Preparation is not actually part of the Divine Service, but gets us ready to enter into Christ’s bodily presence and receive the gifts that He comes to bring.

This service begins with the Invocation of the name of the Triune God: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus tells us that whenever we gather in His name, He is there. The name of Jesus bears His presence among us. Therefore when we gather together we come in the name of God that was placed upon us in our Baptism. It was by this name that we were claimed to be God’s own children, the name through which we can expect to receive His good gifts.

The Invocation may be spoken by the pastor as he faces the altar, making the sign of the cross over himself as he stands as one of the gathered baptized who speak back to God the name given us in Baptism, or he proclaims these words facing the congregation, announcing the reality of Christ’s presence among us and traces the cross over the congregation. If you pay close attention, I personally proclaim the words and make the sign of the cross over the congregation, but then I include myself as one of the baptized by signing myself personally.

The significance of the sign of the cross being done over the whole congregation, just as is done during the Absolution and Benediction, is that these are performative acts of proclamation that do what they say. In the Invocation, our Triune God *is* among us as we call upon Him. This is His promise.

Next in the Service of Preparation is The Confession of Sins and Absolution. This corporate confession and absolution is a new innovation in the liturgy. So new, in fact, that many of you still remember having to go to the pastor privately the day before you communed. In the Early Church, there was no such public practice and confession and absolution was done privately. Our confessions speak of confession and absolution in this manner as well. Even so, corporate confession and absolution has become a beneficial way for us to enter into Christ’s holy presence. However, corporate confession and absolution was never meant to *replace* private confession and absolution.

Reflected in our practice is the implementation of the Office of the Keys, which was instituted by Christ after His resurrection. Luther summarizes in the Small Catechism, “Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.”

Our confession leads to a pure word of release. There is no one form that must be followed. We have a variety of forms in our own hymnal. Each, however, should speak the truth about our sin and about God’s forgiveness. We should also hear often the absolution in the “indicative-operative” form, which proclaims the reality that the pastor operates “in the stead and by the command of Christ” to forgive sin.

Advent – What Is It?

Our Church calendar begins with Advent, from the Latin meaning “coming.” During Advent, Christians throughout the world prepare for the coming of Christ. It begins four Sundays before Christmas Day.

Advent seems to have been established by 550 AD, though practices varied widely across Europe for centuries thereafter. Likely originating in Gaul, it was a six-week period (Pope Gregory the Great later made it four-weeks) of joyful celebration. Only a century or so later, however, the theological emphasis shifted to an anticipation of Christ's second coming to judge on the Last Day, and the theme of preparation began to dominate the Church's thinking. Soon the penitential nature of the season became central to its observance.

Despite the penitential tone, Advent is a time for holy joy and preparation that emphasizes four advents or comings: the prophetic coming that pointed to Christ's birth, the incarnate coming of Christ in Bethlehem, the sacramental coming of Christ in Word and Sacraments, and the eschatological coming of Christ at the end of the world.

As part of the preparation, many congregations offer extra worship services that help prepare us for the celebration of Christmas.

Twelve Days of Christmas

Everyone is so eager to begin the joyful celebration of Christmas that often the preparation of Advent is skipped right over. Those office parties, family get-togethers, children's programs, and caroling outings are all crammed right in there from the end of November right up until December 25th. There is just too much joy to be contained in that single day.

And you know what? The Church calendar agrees! The mystery of Christ's incarnation *is* way too much to contain in a single day. “Twelve Days of Christmas” isn't just a song, but reflected in our actual calendar! The celebration of Christmas lasts from December 25 to January 5. It turns out we *can* have our Advent and our Christmas too! (Okay, yes...corny joke.)

Another thing that comes up about Christmas is why we celebrate Christmas on December 25. There are a whole host of reasons that out there, many of them trying to discredit Christianity as legitimate, but the truth is that the date is based on the narrative of Elizabeth and Mary in Luke's telling of the Gospel.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her that she would conceive and bear a son named Jesus. This date is important as Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple to tell of Elizabeth's conception. The service of the temple only happened on one day of the year, and that year six months to the day of Zechariah's service was March 25th. Reason follows that if Gabriel appeared to Mary on March 25th, nine months later is December 25th!

Ultimately, what matters is not *when* Jesus was born but *that* He was born!

The Holy Innocents, *Martyrs*

Contemplating the three festivals after Christmas, the Church has long noted a curious fact: St. Stephen was a martyr for Christ in both will and deed. St. John was His martyr in will, but not in deed. The Holy Innocents were His martyrs not in will, but in deed.

Matthew related how after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Magi arrived from the East in the capital city of the Jews, Jerusalem. They were searching for the newborn King of the Jews. A star had announced the birth of this King to them, and now they had come to worship Him.

Herod the Great, vicious and jealous, suffered no rivals. He had already murdered members of his own family whom he believed to be conspiring against him. He sought the counsel of the scribes, the Jewish experts in the sacred writings, to discover exactly where the promised Christ was to be born. He then sent the Magi to find him, asking only that when they did, they bring him back word so that he could offer his homage as well.

Not suspecting the king's malicious intent, the Magi began the trip to Bethlehem. The star that had appeared in the East reappeared and shone over the place where the child was. Entering that house, the Magi beheld the child in the arms of Mary, His mother. They fell down and worshiped Him, offering Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. After being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, the left for their own country by a different route.

Then, Joseph was warned in a dream to leave quickly because Herod was seeking to kill the child. The holy family fled to the relative safety of Egypt. Upon realizing the Magi had deceived him, Herod took a shotgun approach. He ordered his soldiers to go into Bethlehem and kill every male child they found there, two years old and under. So much, he thought for this so-called newborn king.

The soldiers ruthlessly carried out their orders. The evangelist in Matthew proclaimed in the infant blood spilled in Bethlehem a fulfillment of the words of Jeremiah 31. The prophet had foretold that Rachel (whose tomb was near Bethlehem) would weep for her children, refusing to be consoled, because they were no more. In the face of such sad slaughter, and the rivers of blood mad men have spilled ever since, the Church finds comfort in the words of the newborn king grown to manhood: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they might have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Almighty God, the martyred innocents of Bethlehem showed forth Your praise not by speaking but by dying. Put to death in us all that is in conflict with Your will that our lives may bear witness to the faith we profess with our lips; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

From *Celebrating the Saints* by William Weedon

LSB 348 The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns [\(audio\)](#)



1 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns And light tri - um-phant breaks,
 2 Not as of old a lit - tle child, To bear and fight and die,
 3 Oh, bright-er than the ris - ing morn When Christ, vic - to-rious, rose
 4 Oh, bright-er than that glo - rious morn Shall dawn up - on our race
 5 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns And light and beau - ty brings.



When beau - ty gilds the east - ern hills And life to joy a-wakes.
 But crowned with glo - ry like the sun That lights the morn-ing sky.
 And left the lone-some place of death De - spite the rage of foes.
 The day when Christ in splen-dor comes And we shall see His face.
 Hail, Christ the Lord! Your peo - ple pray: Come quick-ly, King of kings!

Text and tune: Public domain

Exploring the Scriptures

Matt 25:31—Jesus speaks the day that “the Son of Man comes in his glory.” What a day that will be. We will never face darkness again. He will raise the dead to life and heal every ill and wipe away every tear from our eye and we will hunger no more neither thirst anymore, but Jesus will be our light and our life forever. And there He will sit on His glorious throne ruling and reigning in His love and mercy forever.

Rev 22:20—Jesus Himself promises that He will not abandon us to this darkness, but that He will indeed come again. Though it may seem like a long time for us who wait He promises He will come again soon. And so we pray, “Yes, yes! Come soon, Lord!”

Dan 7:13-14—In His visions Daniel was given a glimpse of that Day when Christ would return from the clouds. Christ’s kingdom of light will last forever. When He returns, nothing else will stand and His mercy will endure.

Exploring the Hymn

Verse 1—There are many biblical allusions to the sun rising in the east, referring to Christ’s return. Just as the sun breaks over the horizon to break the darkness of night and lighten our life with day, Jesus will break the spiritual darkness of sin, Satan, and death that has sway over us, and the dawning of that day that will not end, that brings life and joy to all who have waited on Him, will begin.

Verse 2—In looking toward His second coming we are reminded of His first, and when we remember His first coming we are pointed to His second. It is all one act to redeem us. He was born in the flesh to fulfill all righteousness in our flesh; He died in our flesh to redeem our flesh; He rose in our flesh to bring immortality to our flesh; He ascended in our flesh that we could gain entrance to the kingdom of God in our flesh; He will come again that we may dwell with Him in His kingdom forever in our flesh.

Verse 3 & 4—Great and glorious was that day when Jesus broke the bonds of death and shattered the gates of hell! Even so, a greater Day remains, when the Lord casts off death forever that we too might rise with Him and live in new life, without sin, without sickness, without sorrow, without death forever! Then we shall see our Savior face to face, with our own eyes and not another. We shall walk before Him in the land of the living!

Verse 5—Our flesh and all creation groans inwardly as we eagerly await that Day of Christ’s return, for all will be made new. What was lost will be restored. We will live not only as God’s creatures but as God’s own sons and daughters. For now we wait, enduring hardship and suffering, knowing that the glory of that Day will surpass even our wildest imaginations. As we endure, and look at the lost and broken world full of darkness, we cry out in hope and expectation as His people: Come quickly, King of kings!

Prayers for Our Church — Advent

Collect for Advent 1

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for Advent 2

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for Advent 3

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for Advent 4

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



Prayers for Our Church

Collect for Christmas Eve

O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son,

Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Christmas Midnight

O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Christmas Dawn

Most merciful God, You gave Your eternal Word to become incarnate of the pure Virgin. Grant Your people grace to put away fleshly lusts, that they may be ready for Your visitation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for Christmas Day

Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect for Christmas 1

O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Before travel

Lord God our Father, You kept Abraham and Sarah in safety throughout the days of their pilgrimage, You led the children of Israel through the midst of the sea, and by a star You led the Wise Men to the infant Jesus. Protect and guide us now in this time as we set out to travel. Make our ways safe and our homecomings joyful, and bring us at last to our heavenly home, where You dwell in glory with Your Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

PRAYING FOR CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS OF THE KANSAS DISTRICT: CIRCUIT 8

St. John Lutheran Church, Alma; Rev. Robert Grimm

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Alta Vista; Rev. Christian Schultz

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Duluth; Rev. Rick Twenhafel

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Junction City; Rev. George (Tim) McCall

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Junction City; Rev. David Meier

Christ Lutheran Church, Manhattan; Rev. King Crawford

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Manhattan; Rev. Michael Schmidt

Trinity Lutheran Church, McFarland; Rev. Christopher Vossler

Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Wamego; Rev. James Price

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Weaton; Terry De Giovanni

Candidate and Emeritus: Rev. Lawrence Boye, Rev. Alan Estby, Rev. Richard Lovick, Rev. James Mayes

Upcoming Sunday Readings

First Sunday in Advent (12/1)

Is 2:1-5; Ps 122; Rom 13:8-14; Matt 24:36-44

Second Sunday in Advent (12/8)

Is 11:1-10; Ps 72:1-7; Rom 15:4-13; Matt 3:1-12

Third Sunday in Advent (12/15)

Is 35; Ps 146; Jms 5:7-11; Matt 11:2-15

St. Thomas, Apostle (12/21)*

Jds 6:36-40; Ps 136:1-4; Eph 4:7, 11-16; Jn 20:24-29

Fourth Sunday in Advent (12/22)

Is 7:10-17; Ps 24; Rom 1:1-7; Matt 1:18-25

Christmas Eve (12/24)*

Is 7:10-14; Ps 110:1-4; 1 Jn 4:7-16; Matt 1:18-25

Christmas Midnight (12/24)*

Is 9:2-7; Ps 96; Titus 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14

Christmas Dawn (12/25)*

Is 62:10-12; Ps 98; Titus 3:4-7; Lk 2:15-20

Christmas Day (12/25)

Is 52:7-10; Ps 2; Heb 1:1-12; Jn 1:1-18

St. Stephen, Martyr (12/26)*

2 Ch 24:17-22; Ps 119:137-144; Acts 6:8-7:2a, 51-60; Matt 23:34-39

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist (12/27)*

Rev 1:1-6; Ps 11; 1 John 1:1-2:2; Jn 21:20-25

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs (12/28)*

Jer 31:15-17; Ps 54; Rev 14:1-5; Matt 2:13-18

First Sunday after Christmas (12/29)

Is 63:7-14; Ps 111; Gal 4:4-7; Matt 2:13-23

Christmas Dawn (12/25)*

Is 62:10-12; Ps 98; Titus 3:4-7; Lk 2:15-20

New Year's Eve (12/31)*

Is 30:8-17; Ps 90:1-12; Rom 8:31b-39; Lk 12:35-40

Other days of the Church Year in November:

4—John of Damascus, *Theologian and Hymnwriter*

6—Nicholas of Myra, *Pastor*

7—Ambrose of Milan, *Pastor and Hymnwriter*

13—Lucia, *Martyr*

17—Daniel the Prophet and the Three Young Men

19—Adam and Eve

19—Katharina von Bora Luther

29—David

Connect with the story of Christ through the lives of the saints by learning more about them!



December 2019

Elder: Curt Mueller
 Usher: Keith Beeman
 Communion Preparation:
 08:15 & 10:30 Ryan & Israel Munro

CALENDAR MONTH	DECEMBER
CALENDAR YEAR	2019
1ST DAY OF WEEK	SUNDAY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:15a Service 9:30a Sunday school 10:30a Communion	2	3 6:00p Dialogue & Doctrine	4 12:15p Advent Service 5:15p Advent dinner 6p Advent Service 6:30p Midweek class 6:30p Choir	5 7:30a Men's Bible study 9:00a Mission of Love 7:30p Elder's Meeting	6	7 9a-10a Christmas Store
8 8:15a Communion 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Service Christmas Dinner	9	10 6:00p Dialogue & Doctrine	11 12:15p Advent Service 5:15p Advent dinner 6p Advent Service 6:30p Midweek class 6:30p Choir	12 7:30a Men's Bible study 9:00a Mission of Love 6:30p LWML Christmas-Copley's	13	14
15 8:15a Service 9:30a Sunday school 10:30a Communion 1:45a Arrowood 6:30p Choir Christmas-Copley's	16	17 Pastor gone to Circuit meeting 6:00p Dialogue & Doctrine	18 12:15p Advent Service 5:15p Advent dinner 6p Advent Service 6:30p Midweek class 6:30p Choir	19 7:30a Men's Bible study 9:00a Mission of Love	20	21 DEADLINE FOR CALENDAR & NEWSLETTER
22 8:15a Communion 9:30a Sunday School 10:30a Service	23	24 OFFICE CLOSED 6:00p Christmas Eve Service 11:00p Lessons & Carols Service	25 10:00a Christmas Morning Service OFFICE CLOSED	26	27	28
29 8:15a Communion 9:30a Sunday school 10:30a Communion	30	31 New Years Eve	1 New Years Day OFFICE CLOSED	2	3	4



03 Linda Cavins
 05 Al Capocasa
 06 Marie Roth
 10 Colin Krone
 11 Bob Wulf
 14 Bill Owens*
 17 Mary Lumley
 20 Carl Ranabargar
 23 Audrey Galloway
 25 Charles Downey*
 31 Judy Kaufman

**Special Birthday
 80 years & older*



8:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
 Ryan and Israel Munro



20 Joe & Anita Baker – 69 Years!*

**Special Anniversary
 50 years & over*



SERVICE to the LORD
ELDER

To be announced

USHER

To be announced

GREETERS

05 Ken & Arletta Lott; Alin &
 Cynthia Martin
 12 Max & Mary Jo
 McReynolds; Lori Moran
 19 Curt & Alisha Mueller;
 Mark & Stacy Mueller
 26 Kelly Nordt; Joan Perez



04 Aidan Martin
 08 Ken Lott
 09 Jan Coykendall
 13 Cas Leroy
 17 Carman Huse
 20 Jean Ranabargar
 24 Colin Krone
 25 Don Kubler
 28 Clarie Moran
 28 Debbie Mueller
 30 Karen Bruenger



Acolytes

05 Mary Brown
 12 Ben Leo
 19 Chloe Daniels
 26 Aisley Galloway



SERVICE to the LORD
in December

ELDER

Curt Mueller

USHER

Keith Beeman

GREETERS

01 Bob & Renee Debler;
 Henry & Sandy Eggers
 08 Doris Fugit; Neil Hartwig
 15 Audrey Galloway; Tom & Sandy
 Hildingser
 22 Carman Huse; Jolene Keidel
 29 Darrell Krone; Don & Judy
 Kubler

ACOLYTES

01 Ben Leo
 08 Chloe Daniels
 15 Aisley Galloway
 22 Stephen Leo
 29 James Brown

COMMUNION PREPARATION

8:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
 Ryan and Israel Munro