



# THE PEACE POST

December, 2005

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting.*

## FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR MESSER

### “Keeping ‘Christ’ in Christmas”

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Is it me, or do stores begin putting out their Christmas displays earlier and earlier each year? I was in one store that already had three aisles dedicated to Christmas decorations at the end of October this year. The end of October!? And, remember the good old days when the day after Thanksgiving officially began the Christmas shopping season? It is still the biggest shopping day of the year, but by the time that day comes now, stores have already been advertising “Christmas” sales for weeks. And, what’s with these

radio stations that begin playing Christmas music as early as November 1? Now, I’m no Scrooge, and I love listening and singing along to Christmas carols, but that’s way too early. What’s going on? The question we need to ask ourselves is, “Why?” Why does the world want to begin the Christmas season so early?

It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out the answer to that question. It’s all about the “mighty dollar.” The longer the world can convince us to be “in the holiday spirit,” the better the chances of secular businesses to increase their profits. It’s really that simple. The earlier they begin the “holiday season,” the more money we’ll spend. And, guess what? They’re right. Their marketing plan works. Christmas sales continue to rise annually, no matter how bad the economy is.

But, what is this “holiday season” the world advertises? Where does Christ fit in?

Sadly, at best, Christ has become a mere symbol attached to the mysterious “holiday season” the world has created. Far from being “the reason for the season,” Christ has become just a name associated with the season. And, truth be told, His name is rather unimportant when compared to the other names of the season, like Santa Claus, Rudolph, Frosty, and so on.

What’s worse, there are many people in the world who would like to remove Christ completely from their mythical, new-founded “holiday season.” There are actually groups that have been

formed for this purpose. They want the sentimentality, the family get-togethers, the gift exchanging, and overall warm, fuzzy feeling of the “season,” but they want nothing to do with Christ. They want a “Christ-less holiday season.” They want the “season” without the “reason.” And, guess what? They’re getting what they desire. They’ve succeeded in convincing the world to promote their “Christ-less” Christmas. You don’t believe me? The next time you’re in a store, check out the greeting cards. You’ll see that the majority of them have little to do with the celebration of Christ’s birth. Most of them promote the mythical “holiday season” created by the world. A lot of them don’t even have “Christmas” in their greetings. Instead, you’ll see “Season’s Greetings” and “Happy Holidays.”

If that’s still not enough to convince you, just listen to the words of many of the popular Christmas songs that have become a part of our annual “holiday” celebration. What’s missing? Christ! You won’t hear anything about the birth of the Savior in many of the songs. Instead, you’ll hear about chestnuts, reindeer, snow, mistletoe, Santa, and so

*Continued on page 6*

### Merry Christmas



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# PEACE LUTHERAN LIBRARY



## New books in our library:

- *Blessings and Prayers for Women: A Devotional Companion.*
- *God's Tender Promises for Mothers.*
- *Lord of Life, Lord of Me.* Bill Ameiss & Jane Graver.
- *God's Word to the Nations: Proverbs Review.*
- *Proceedings & Bylaws* of Peace Lutheran Church.

We would like to encourage people to use our Church Library more often. We will be encouraging people to read books and share a book review with the congregation via the monthly newsletter. If you have read a book from our library that you enjoyed, or that inspired you, and you would like to share it, please contact Beth Brostrom or Coaline Luplow.

## THIS MONTH'S REVIEW:

By Pastor Messer

Dr. Paul Maier's *A Skeleton in God's Closet* is a must read for anyone who enjoys a suspense-filled, action-packed work of fiction.

Dr. Maier is a professor of history at Western Michigan University, a world-renowned historian, a member of the LCMS, and a prolific author. I strongly recommend anything written by him. He is a master of the historical-fiction genre, which he proves in his books *Pontius Pilate* and *The Flames of Rome*. He's also written stellar reference works including *In the Fullness of Time* and a new, fresh, and readable translation of *Eusebius'*

*Church History*. He has appeared in numerous documentaries and is the author of numerous theological and historical articles. He is a true gift to the universal Christian church and we are extremely blessed to have his expertise and talents within our own beloved Synod.

*A Skeleton in God's Closet* is one of his books of pure fiction and has already earned the right to be called a classic. In it, Dr. Maier explores the possibility of an archaeological discovery that would change the Church, and the world, for that matter, forever. The main character in the book, Dr. Jonathan Weber, is a leading historian/archaeologist who is sent to Israel to authenticate an archaeological discovery that could possibly be linked to Joseph of Arimathea, the man in whose tomb Jesus was buried. That discovery would be very exciting, but, while there, Dr. Weber and his team discover something that could shake the very foundations of Christianity. What that "something" is, I can't reveal. You'll have to read it for yourself. Believe me, you won't be sorry. This book is one of those that you can't put down once you start. It takes you on an exciting "roller coaster ride" filled with many twists and turns and forces you to ask the question, "What if?" The book is exciting right up to the end, which is unexpected and brilliantly written. Read it. You'll enjoy it. I promise!

(Next month a review from another member of our church)

**Want something included in "The Peace Post" next month? Email Beth or Pastor Messer (addresses on back page) by December 15 with your item. Also, call or email them anytime with your feedback and/or ideas!**

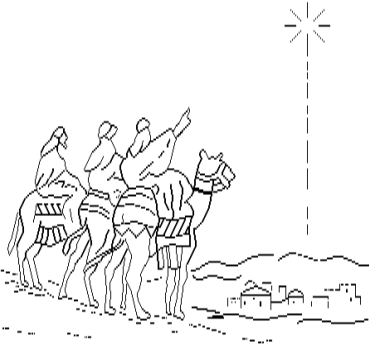
## JOIN US FOR TABLE TALK!



*Table Talk* is a time for members of Peace to get together with Pastor Messer for an informal discussion on whatever topics (as long as they are somehow related to the faith) are brought up. This is NOT a time to register your complaints about anything to the pastor. In-

stead, it is a time for you to "pick his brain" on whatever topics interest you and to discuss those things with him and with your brothers and sisters in Christ who attend. Our next *Table Talk* will take place on **Thursday, December 8 at 8:00 p.m.** We will continue to

have *Table Talk* every second Thursday of each month at the same time as long as there is interest in doing so. We hope to see more of you at our next *Table Talk*. If you have any questions about *Table Talk*, please contact Pastor Messer.



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT PEACE

The star over Bethlehem shone brightly in the sky to mark the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The magi from the East were wise to follow that star, for they believed that the star signified the birth of a new king, and they wanted to find this infant king, bear witness to his birth, and pay him homage. They were wise because what they believed was, in fact, true. The star did signify the birth of a king - the King of kings and Lord of lords. By following that star, the wise magi were led to the Savior of the world!

We, too, have a sign from God that leads to the Savior. It is the Bible, God's Holy Word, and it has shone brightly throughout the centuries, leading men and women to the revelation of the Savior. What a tremendous blessing it is for us to possess the very revelation of God in Holy Scripture. Unlike the magi, we do not have to travel a great distance over rough terrain to find the King. Instead, the King comes to us in His Word. He comes to us to give us His gifts in the Divine Service, and He comes to us to teach us that which He would have us learn as we study His Word. Let us be wise and take advantage of every opportunity the Lord gives us to learn from Him. Listed below are the opportunities we have at Peace to study God's Word.

### Sunday School and Adult Bible Class

- Sunday School is offered every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. for all children from Kindergarten through 12th Grade.
- Adult Bible Class is offered every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. for adults. On **November 27**, we began a new study titled ***The Truth About the End Times***, which will lead into a detailed study of the book of ***Revelation***. See page 4 for more details on this exciting study!

### Youth Confirmation Class

- Youth Confirmation Class is taught every Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

### Adult Confirmation/Information Class

- Our Adult Confirmation/Information Class which began in October will conclude this month. A new class will begin after the first of the year. More details will be forthcoming. Membership at Peace will be offered to those who complete this class.

### Women in the Word

- Our *Women in the Word* Bible Study takes place every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. All women of Peace who are available at that time are encouraged to join us. Female guests are always welcome, too. We are currently engaged in a detailed study of the ***Gospel of John***. Please plan on joining us soon.

### Men's Bible Breakfast

- Our first *Men's Bible Breakfast* will take place at Peace on **Saturday, January 21, 2006 at 9:30 a.m.** All men of Peace are invited and encouraged to attend. For more details, see the article on page 7.

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).*

*"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).*

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## PEACE SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

### "The Christmas Story and *Quempas* Carol"

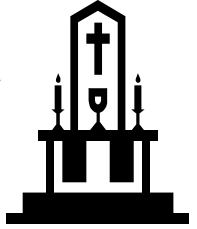
Wednesday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m.

(dinner hosted by Cheryl Henry at 6:00 p.m.)

*Come and support the children of Peace as they lead us in a celebration of the glorious birth of Christ, our Lord!*

## *LADIES & ALTAR GUILD INFO*

- **LADIES GUILD MEETING:** The December meeting of the Guild will take place on **Monday, December 5** at 7:00 p.m. Cheryl Henry and Carol Durst will serve as hostesses. All ladies of the congregation are invited to attend our guild meetings; if you are a female member of Peace, you can be a member of the guild. We would sincerely encourage you to participate and be an active member of the guild. **NOTE: The December meeting will be the Christmas celebration for our Guild. Please bring a gift valued at about \$5.00 to exchange. We hope to see you there!**



- **COOKIE WALK AND CRAFT SALE:** Thank you to all who participated in our Cookie Walk/Craft Show this year. Your help was greatly appreciated!

- **LADIES GUILD PRAYER CHAIN:** The Ladies Guild has a prayer chain in place. If you wish to be included in the prayer chain as a caller, see Marlene Wiltshire. If you wish to add yourself or someone else to the prayers, the chain starts with either Georgia Spindler (466-4352) or Marlene Wiltshire (463-4101).



- **ALTAR GUILD DUTY:** December - Carol Zeile; January, 2006 - Lois Ramsey.

- **ALTAR FLOWERS:** There is a flower calendar for 2006 posted on the fellowship bulletin board. If you wish to place flowers on the altar some time during the year, fill in your name and/or contact Marilyn Oswald. A bouquet usually lasts about one (1) month and the cost is about \$25.

### UPCOMING COFFEE HOSTESSES:

<p>DECEMBER    4 - Jo Wendt                            11 - Darlene Palmer                            18 - Coaline Luplow                            25 - Carol Zeile</p>	<p>JANUARY     1 - Marilyn Oswald                            8 - Beth Brostrom                            15 - Youth Group                            22 - Andrea Elliott                            29 - Marlene Wiltshire</p>
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### **EUCHRE NIGHT!**

The next euchre night has been scheduled for **Friday, December 16 at 7:30 pm.** We had 12 people attend in November and a great time was had by all. Roger Mackie was the big winner and has won the opportunity to host in December. Everyone is welcome to come and have fun playing the great game of euchre. Please bring a dish to pass. See you there!

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT THE END TIMES**

On **Sunday, November 27**, we began a new study during Adult Bible Class which is titled, "The Truth About the End Times." This study will focus on the Second Coming of Christ and the events surrounding that great and glorious event. We will analyze the various End Times views in light of what God's Word reveals to us to determine which view is Scriptural. This study will lead into a detailed study of the book of Revelation. In light of the plethora of errors surrounding us today regarding the End Times, it is paramount that we Christians know the truth. We need to know what the Bible teaches about the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Antichrist, and so on. If you have ever wondered about these things, and I know you have, you will not want to miss this study! Also, this study will provide you with an excellent opportunity to invite those among your family and friends who may be interested in the topic to attend church and Bible Class with you. So, come and learn the Truth about the End Times, and bring your family and friends with you!

In Christ,  
*Pastor Messer*

# NOTES ON THE GOOD SHEPHERD INSTITUTE

BY MARY JAKOLAT

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Peace,

On November 6-8, Beth Brostrom and I attended **THE GOOD SHEPHERD INSTITUTE AT CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY** in Fort Wayne, IN. The Institute is an annual event that focuses on equipping pastors in preaching; teaching pastors about music in the church; and equipping musicians. The Good Shepherd Institute started out as a small conference several years ago, but it has grown each year. There are now journals available of all the institutes of the past years, which are being used for studies in the seminary. A second liturgy class will be added to seminary studies next year. It was a very uplifting and Spirit-filled experience, both in lectures and in the Divine Services in Kramer Chapel. Below are a few one-liners I noted from the lectures.

- Luther's theology focused on the perspective of the God who comes in the flesh – Christ centered.
- God is the giver of all good gifts.
- His Gift is Christ—believing persons are recipients.
- We receive from Him what He offers. We come to Church to receive—our response is praise.
- God gives us the faith to worship.
- Our liturgy is handed down in our beliefs and catechism in music.
- Luther realized the importance of putting tunes to the psalms for singing so that God may be known and live among the people.
- Understanding of music with historic faith.
- Music is second only to theology.
- Music is God created, God given.
- No other art can be put on the same level as music (not geometry, astronomy, etc.)
- Music is used in the liturgy for the praise and proclamation of the Gospel.
- Luther's hymns convey a message, not a mood.
- Hymnody as confession—A true Christian hymn is a “sung confession of faith.”
- Music - free grace that might be kept fresh in memory through music.

- Today, musicians serve in their station.
- Music skills are always work in progress; striving to be the best musicians we can be.
- Bring distinctive theological perspective—we are not simply musicians, but church musicians.
- Knowledge of church worship in Christian life.
- Praise of God and proclamation of Gospel reflects how we employ music in our services.
- Need to use theological judgment in selection of music.
- Theology of the pastor and music of hymns and liturgy need to be the same in Divine Service.

- Modern trend in composing new music is saying that the past is irrelevant, that there is nothing it can teach us.
- In acceptance of new music, we must look at it to see if it is in variance with and contrary to the basic teachings of the Lutheran church. Is it useful? Does it proclaim God's Word? As confession?
- To praise God is to speak of God's mighty acts, not “about” his wondrous acts.
  - ♦ For example, the hymn “I Love to Tell the Story” never actually tells the story!
  - ♦ The hymn “In the Garden” has little structure of liturgy, and erodes the gospel it purports to claim.

- Love responds to God's gifts. How do we respond?
  - ♦ In our service to Him through our neighbor.
  - ♦ To love our neighbor and obey the Lord is worship.
  - ♦ Christians live not in themselves, but in Christ and in their neighbors, otherwise they're not Christians.
- Heaven is on earth in Christ—during the Divine Service, heaven and earth come together.
- The forgiveness we receive in Communion joins us to Christ eternal and rescues us from our foes.
- So personalized are we that all we see are our own needs and not of the others at the Table of the Lord. We need to realize that all the saints are at the table, connected in love—all sufferings become common property. We share a mutual love (fellowship, communion) and love our neighbors as ourselves, bearing each other's burdens.
- Proclaiming God and what He has done, and continues to do, for us in Christ, we all join in the one, true faith.
- With Christ's presence in us, we show the world what Christ meant it to be—we love our neighbors because He first loved us.

- Old Testament teaches us how music is to be used in Divine Service
- The Psalms (the hymnal of the Bible) contain everything there is in the entire Bible.
- In the Psalms, ancient Israel proclaims and sings about what God did for His people. In the Divine Service today, our hymns need to do the same thing, which is why we avoid using “contemporary songs” which speak about a “generic god” and tell us nothing about what the True God of the universe did to bring us salvation through Jesus Christ.
  - ♦ Example: Miriam sings about what God did for Israel in the Exodus and crossing of the Red Sea.
  - ♦ Example: See Psalm 136—all praise and thanksgiving in response to God's wondrous deeds, not just for the sake of praise.

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## “Keeping ‘Christ’ in Christmas”

Continued from page 1

on. The same is true of the many television specials and movies which are aired during the “holiday season.” They have a heart-felt, sentimental message, but make little or no mention of Christ.

But, the saddest thing about the world’s promotion of a “Christ-less holiday season” is that it has even successfully infiltrated the Church. Over the past several decades, more and more churches, especially here in America, have stopped holding Church Services on Christmas Day. Why? Because, sadly, very few Christians attend. That boggles my mind! Christmas Day is one of the High Feast Days in the Church Year. Where are the Christians? Why don’t they come? I don’t get it! What could possibly be more important than coming to Church on Christmas Day to hear about the birth of our Savior and to receive the gifts He desires to give us? I know that Christmas morning for most is a time to spend with the family and open up presents. Great! I’m all for it! I love Christmas morning. I love to spend time with my family and see my children open their presents. But, can’t we do that either before or after Church? Can’t we make it a priority to be in the Lord’s House on one of the most sacred days of the year? After all, it is there, and not under the Christmas tree, that we receive the greatest gifts of all - forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Some of you are old enough to remember the days when not having Church on Christmas Day was unheard of. It was simply unthinkable. It should still be unthinkable! As your pastor, I can promise you that it will be unthinkable at Peace for as long as I serve here. We will have Church on Christmas morning and not just when it falls on a Sunday, as it does this year. Low attendance or not, there will be Divine Service at Peace every Christmas Day.

As I said above, I’m no Scrooge. I love Christmas and the festive season that leads up to it. I love the decorations, the songs, and the television shows and movies that always accompany this time of the year. I love the glow in my children’s faces as they open their presents. I love gathering together with family and friends. Christmas wouldn’t be the same without these things. But, this festive season should accompany and support the real “reason for the season,” not take over in such a way as to eliminate it.

I’m no Scrooge, I’m just a concerned pastor - a concerned Christian. I see the increasing commercialization of Christmas and the growing trend to promote a “Christ-less holiday season” as danger signs. As Christians who are “in the world, but not of the world,” we need to be aware of what is happening in the world around us. We need to examine ourselves to see if our own traditions and Christmas celebrations support our declaration that “Jesus is the reason for the season.” We need to make sure that we are keeping the “Christ” in Christmas, and

not buying into the world’s version of a commercialized, drawn-out, mythical, “Christ-less holiday season.”

Christmas is not about family reunions and warm, fuzzy sentimentality. It’s not about frantic shopping and exchanging gifts. It’s not about a jolly old elf and his reindeer. It’s not about a magical snowman who comes to life when a hat is placed on his head. It’s not about eggnog, decorations, or joyous carols. It’s about Christ. Period! It’s about the Almighty God of the universe taking on human flesh in order to live the perfect life on our behalf and suffer and die on a cross for our sins. Christmas is about our salvation.

God so loved you—so loved the world—that He sent His only-begotten Son to be born in a lowly manger for the sole purpose that His Son could have flesh and blood to give on your behalf. Christ was born so that He could die—for you! That’s what Christmas is all about. That’s what it must remain all about for us Christians.

Dear friends in Christ, keep the “Christ” in your Christmas this year. Don’t let the world convince you to allow Christ to become just one of many symbols or names associated with the “holiday season.” Jesus truly is the “reason for the season.” Don’t just say that, but believe it, and live it. Keep Him in your Christmas. Let Him take center stage in your traditions and celebrations. Then, and only then, can all of the worldly traditions that have become part and parcel of the “holiday season” take on true meaning and become a valid part of your celebration.

And, finally, come to the Lord’s House this Christmas to receive the gifts He so desires to give you. Come on Christmas Eve for our Service of Lessons and Carols, where you’ll hear how God’s promise to send a Savior was fulfilled in the birth of Christ and have the joyous opportunity to respond to God’s Word by singing many of the Christmas carols you have come to know and love. Then, come again on Christmas Day to celebrate the birth of your Savior and receive the gifts He wants to give you through His Holy Word and Sacrament. Let these opportunities to come into the Lord’s House and be in His very presence be the focal point of your Christmas this year.

I pray the Lord’s richest blessings upon all of you this Christmas. This is my first Christmas here at Peace and I’m truly looking forward to celebrating the birth of our Savior with all of you. My prayer for you this Christmas, and always, is that the Lord who was born to die for you will keep you steadfast in true faith until He comes again in great glory.

In Jesus’ Holy and Precious Name. Amen.

Your Servant in Christ,

*Pastor Messer*

# PYG NEWS

The Peace Youth Group will hold its next meeting on **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11** at **NOON**. We will be going Christmas caroling on **Saturday, December 17**. We had discussed the possibility of caroling for the disabled, but it turns out that that would have required more advanced planning. So, instead, we will **“Bring Peace to Alma”** by caroling downtown and throughout a couple of residential areas. We will use this opportunity to reach out to our community and let people know about our church by passing out informational flyers to those we meet. All members of Peace will be invited to join PYG in this venture. Look for info to be posted at the church. We’ll discuss the details at our December meeting. Please make it a point to be there!

# KATRINA RELIEF

Continue to keep **Trinity Lutheran Church of Meridian, MS, Bethel Lutheran Church of Point Clear, AL, and Trinity Lutheran School of Mobile, AL** in your thoughts and prayers. These are the congregations and school that have been assigned to our Region in the Michigan District for our support. **Elder Bill Hendrick** is our Congregational Liaison and has been in contact with these congregations through our Regional Director. He is aware of their needs and has already sent some initial support to them. If you would like to participate in the support effort, please see Bill and he will let you know what they need. Thank you!

## MEN’S BIBLE BREAKFAST

We will have our first *Men’s Bible Breakfast* on **Saturday, January 21, 2006 at 9:30 am**. All the men of Peace are invited and encouraged to attend if at all possible. You are more than welcome to bring any male guests as well. We will have our first Bible Breakfast at Peace and we’ll discuss future locations, dates, and frequency of meetings at that time. Breakfast will be served at 9:30 and our Bible study will begin at 10:00. Pastor Messer will be leading us in a detailed study of the *Gospel of John*. Come and satisfy your physical appetites with a good, hearty breakfast, and your spiritual appetites through the study of God’s Holy Word. Hope to see you there!

## DINNERS FOR 6-7-8

*Dinners for 6-7-8* are casual get-togethers for 6-8 people so that we can become better acquainted. They are potluck as planned by the host or hostess (usually host or hostess provides the meat dish and guests provide side dishes and dessert). We began these at Peace last year and they were a big hit for those who participated. They’re just fun-filled evenings with good eats and fun games. If you are interested in participating in these dinners, or hosting one, please sign up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall. We will meet early in January to set up times, dates, and hostesses, and to answer all your questions. If you have questions now, please see Jo Wendt.



Have you checked out our website lately? Be sure to visit often - many exciting additions are on the way!

## PAROCHIAL REPORT

(As of November 27)

### Membership at Peace

Baptized - 166

Confirmed - 127

No Official Acts

Membership gains: 3

(Jenny Baughman and children Tyrel & Paige Harwager by transfer)

Membership losses: 2

(George & Joanne Facaros - moved out of state; removed by request)

### Financial Report

YTD Receipts (1/1/05 - 11/27/05): \$80,693.08

Budgeted YTD (1/1/05 - 11/27/05): \$82,156.00

# ASK THE PASTOR

The questions for this month's "Ask the Pastor" did not originate from any of our members, but I thought that you might enjoy learning some facts about some of our Christmas symbols and traditions! I hope you find this information educational and enjoyable.

## XMAS

Q: Is Xmas an attempt to remove the "Christ" from Christmas?

A: No. This abbreviation for Christmas is of Greek origin. The word for Christ in Greek is *Χριστος* (Christos). During the 16th century, Europeans began using the first initial of Christ's name, "X," in place of the word Christ in Christmas as a shorthand form of the word. Although the early Christians understood that X stood for Christ's name, later Christians who did not understand the Greek language mistook "Xmas" as a sign of disrespect.

## CANDY CANE

Q: What is the Christian symbolism in a candy cane?

A: The Candy Cane, used during the holidays, stands as an important Christmas symbol. The color white symbolizes the purity and sinless nature of Jesus. Next, three small stripes to symbolize pain inflicted upon Jesus before his death on the cross (and, "three" to symbolize the Trinity) and a bold stripe to represent the blood he shed for mankind. Two other symbols are distinctive on the Candy Cane. When looked at, it looks like a Shepherd's staff because Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Then, if we turn it upside down, we will notice the shape of the letter J symbolizing the first letter in Jesus' name. These five symbols were incorporated into this piece of peppermint stick so that we would remember what we really celebrate during the Christmas season.

## CHRISTMAS TREE

Q: What is the origin of the Christmas tree?

A: The Christmas Tree originated in Germany in the 16th century. It was common for the Germanic people to decorate fir trees, both inside and out, with roses, apples, and colored paper. It is believed that Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, was the first to light a Christmas tree with candles. While coming home one dark winter's night near Christmas, he was struck with the beauty of the starlight shining through the branches of a small fir tree outside his home. He duplicated the starlight by using candles attached to the branches of his indoor Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was not widely used in Britain until the 19th century. It was brought to America by the Pennsylvania Germans in the 1820's.

### *Decorating a Christmas Tree*

While there is no Scriptural mandate for using Christmas trees, let alone how one should decorate them, there is a popular method among Christians which is latent with Christian symbolism. First, a **green** tree is used, since green symbolizes hope, nature, growth, and newness. Christ was born to usher in a new and everlasting covenant of grace. Second, only **white** lights are used, since white symbolizes the purity, holiness, and righteousness of the Christ Child. Third, **red** decorations are added in the form of bulbs, candy canes, ribbons, etc., since red symbolizes the precious blood of the Christ Child who was born to die for the sins of the world. Fourth, **gold** decorations are added (same kinds as red), since gold symbolizes the royalty of the Christ Child who is the newborn King of the universe. Lastly, the tree is topped with either a **star**, symbolizing the star that shone over Bethlehem, or an **angel**, symbolizing

the role of God's holy angels to announce the birth of the Christ Child.

## POINSETTIAS

Q: Why have poinsettias become the traditional Christmas flower?

A: Poinsettias are native to Mexico. They were named after America's first ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett. He brought the plants to America in 1828. The Mexicans in the eighteenth century thought the plants were symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem. Thus the Poinsettia became associated with the Christmas season. The actual flower of the poinsettia is small and yellow. But surrounding the flower are large, bright red leaves, often mistaken for petals.

## MISTLETOE AND HOLLY

Q: Where did the use of mistletoe and holly come from?

A: Two hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Druids used mistletoe to celebrate the coming of winter. They would gather this evergreen plant that is parasitic upon other trees and use it to decorate their homes. They believed the plant had special healing powers for everything from female infertility to poison ingestion. Scandinavians also thought of mistletoe as a plant of peace and harmony. They associated mistletoe with their goddess of love, Frigga. The custom of kissing under the mistletoe probably derived from this belief. The early church banned the use of mistletoe in Christmas celebrations because of its pagan origins. Instead, church fathers suggested the use of holly as an appropriate substitute for Christmas greenery.

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

### Happy Birthday to:

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 5 - Phyllis Hill     | 18 - Kelsey Gensler |
| 6 - Shontelle Hinton | 19 - Jim Sager      |
| 6 - Linda Oswald     | 20 - Sarah Messer   |
| 6 - Heather Palmer   | 26 - Carol Durst    |
| 7 - Marilyn Oswald   | 28 - Tammy Oswald   |
| 12 - Arlene Hale     | 30 - Amber Brown    |
| 16 - Karen Strong    |                     |

### Happy Anniversary to:

- 23 - Tim & Bonnie Gustavison



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# December 2005

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Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

November 27	November 28	November 29	November 30	1	2	3
<b>1st Sunday in Advent</b> 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship 11:00—SS/BC		9:30 am—Women in the Word	9:00 am— <i>WW</i> ADVENT I 6:00—Potluck Dinner 7:00—Advent Service	5:00 pm— <i>WW</i> 6:00 pm—Youth Confirmation Class		9:00 am—5:00 pm— <i>Ladies Guild Cookie Walk &amp; Craft Show</i> 7:00 pm—Adult Confirmation/Info. Class
4 <b>2nd Sunday in Advent</b> 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship 11:00—SS/BC 5:00—Trip to Living Nativity of Frankentrost	5 7:00 pm—Ladies Guild Hostesses: C. Henry/C. Durst (Guild Christmas Party)	6 No <i>Women in the Word</i> 9:00-12:30—Midland Circuit Pastors' Meeting (Winkel)	7 9:00 am— <i>WW</i> ADVENT II 6:00—Potluck Dinner 7:00—Advent Service	8 5:00 pm— <i>WW</i> 6:00 pm—Youth Confirmation Class 8:00 pm—Table Talk w/ Pastor Messer (everyone invited!)	9	10 7:00 pm—Adult Confirmation/Info. Class
11 <b>3rd Sunday in Advent</b> 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship 11:00—SS/BC 12:00—PYG mtg.	12 6:45 pm—Council Meeting	13 9:30 am—Women in the Word	14 9:00 am— <i>WW</i> ADVENT III 6:00—Potluck Dinner 7:00—Advent Service	15 5:00 pm— <i>WW</i> 6:00 pm—Youth Confirmation Class	16 7:30 pm—Euchre Night	17 5:00 pm—"Bringing Peace to Alma" (see PYG News on p. 7) 7:00 pm—Adult Confirmation/Info. Class
18 <b>4th Sunday in Advent</b> 8:00—Elders Mtg. 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship 11:00—SS/BC	19	20 9:30 am—Women in the Word	21 9:00 am— <i>WW</i> 6:00 pm—Dinner served (not potluck) 7:00 pm—Sunday School Christmas Program	22 5:00 pm— <i>WW</i> 6:00 pm—Youth Confirmation Class	23	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> 7:00 pm—Service of Lessons and Carols
25 <i>The Nativity of our Lord</i> 9:30—Divine Service 10:45—Fellowship No SS/BC <b>MERRY CHRISTMAS</b>	26	27 No <i>Women in the Word</i>	28 9:00 am— <i>WW</i>	29 5:00 pm— <i>WW</i> NO Youth Confirmation Class	30	31 7:00 pm—New Year's Eve Service

## SERVING IN DECEMBER

DECEMBER	<u>ACOLYTES</u>	<u>ORGANIST</u>	<u>ELDER</u>	<u>USHERS</u>	<u>GREETERS</u>
4—9:30 am	CJ Oswald Alex Henry	Beth Brostrom	Curt Oswald	Bill Brostrom Don Reithel	Dick & Darlene Palmer
7—7:00 pm (2nd Wed. in Advent)	Lauren Penzien	Beth Brostrom	Curt Oswald	Bill Brostrom Don Reithel	
11—9:30 am	Sarah Messer Jordan Henry	Mary Jakolat	Terry Luplow	Larry Elliott Vern Jakolat	Bob & Jo Wendt
14—7:00 pm (3rd Wed. in Advent)	Kelsey Gensler	Mary Jakolat	Terry Luplow	Larry Elliott Vern Jakolat	
18—9:30 am	Samantha Messer Jessica Oswald	Beth Brostrom	Dave Zeile	Jon Greening Miguel Ortiz	Vern & Mary Jakolat
21—7:00 pm (Sun. School Prog.)	Jared Kuehnlein Kim Penzien	Beth Brostrom	Dave Zeile	Jon Greening Miguel Ortiz	
24—7:00 pm (Christmas Eve)	Melanie Penzien	Mary Jakolat	Bill Hendrick	Leland Oswald Burt Henry	
25—9:30 am (Merry Christmas)	Kelsey Gensler Alex Henry	Beth Brostrom	Bill Hendrick	Leland Oswald Burt Henry	Curt & Tammy Oswald
31—7:00 pm	Sarah Messer	Beth Brostrom	Curt Oswald	Richard Palmer Jon Penzien	

***“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men” (Eph. 6:7)***

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We're on the Web!  
[www.peacealma.org](http://www.peacealma.org)

*The mission of Peace Lutheran Church is to welcome all people into the fellowship of God's love by proclaiming the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and to nurture our members with God's Holy Word and Sacraments.*