

The Peace Post

Peace Lutheran Church ~ Alma, MI

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Peace Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We believe, teach, and confess the doctrine of the evangelical, catholic faith as it is taught by Holy Scripture and faithfully confessed in the Book of Concord of 1580. We are committed to the pure preaching of God's Word and the right administration of the Holy Sacraments, catechesis of all people in the Christian faith, and liturgical worship consistent with our Reformation heritage. We are an evangelical, orthodox, and catholic congregation, proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and reigning for the salvation of the world!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

"Wait and Pray . . ."	1-2
Installation of New Officers	2
Advent/Christmas Schedule	3
"Divine Humility & Love"	4-5
Christmas Test	6
Homily at Midnight Mass	7
Christmas Prayer	8
Adopt a Family	9
Merry Xmas	9
Peace News & Notes	10-12
New Liturgical Items	12
Ladies' Guild Info	13
Christian Education	14
Parochial Report	14
December Calendar	15
Serving in December	16



From the Desk of Pastor Messer

"Wait and Pray: 'Come, Lord Jesus'"

"Come, Lord Jesus." That's the prayer the Christian Church has been praying now for nearly two thousand years. That's the prayer that brings Holy Scripture to a close: *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus be with all. Amen"* (Rev. 22:20-21).

Actually, come to think of it, that's the prayer the Church has been praying since Adam and Eve received the first Gospel promise in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15), after their Fall into sin. The LORD God promised to send the Seed of the woman to crush the serpent's head and save them. So, they prayed for the Seed of the woman to come, which is the same as praying, "Come, Lord Jesus," since Jesus is the promised Seed of the woman.

Over the years, God's children continued to utter this prayer in various ways: "Come, Holy Messiah"; "Come, O Suffering Servant"; "Come, O Holy One of Israel"; "Come, Son of David," and so forth. Many different titles have been used by God's people throughout history, as God's revelation of this Coming Savior unfolded, but they all resulted in the same prayer we Christians still pray today: "Come, Lord Jesus."

What this means is that God's people have always lived in the hope and expectation of His Coming. The Old Testament saints looked forward to the Coming Messiah promised them, even as we continue to look forward to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Last Day. In other words, God's people have always been a people waiting in hope and expectation for God to fulfill His promises.

That's the hard part, isn't it? Waiting. No one likes to wait, especially in our day of high-speed technology and instant communication. We send an email or text message or post something on Facebook, and we expect people to respond right now. When they don't, we may even begin to entertain fantasies as to why they haven't. Did we offend them? Are they ignoring us? Why haven't they responded yet?!

But, with or without high-speed technology and instant communication, waiting is just plain hard. It's always been so. That's because the Old Adam in us wants what he wants, and he wants it now. Patiently waiting is just not his thing. Never has been. Never will be.

That's precisely why the season of Advent is a true gift and blessing to us. We don't really like it, precisely because it calls upon us to be patient and wait, but that's good for us



nonetheless. Advent is a season given to us for prayer and self-reflection and examination. It's a penitential season, much like the season of Lent, which is why the liturgical color of violet is used—the color of repentance. That's a hard pill to swallow, especially since the rest of the world is engaged in a month-long (or two-month long) "holiday season." But, Advent is good for us. It says to us, "You are Christians, who are in the world, but not of the world. Wait. Be patient. The joy will come, but not yet. Now is the time to prepare. Now is the time to pray. Now is the time to examine yourselves, so that you might recognize your sinfulness and desperate need of a Savior, for only then does your prayer, 'Come, Lord Jesus,' have meaning; only then can you truly utter that prayer in sincere anticipation and expectation, just as the faithful have been uttering it since the beginning."

It is hard to wait. But, your Lord knows that, which is why He provides His people with the strength and stamina to do so. He is not an absentee Landlord. He is not a God far off. He is ever-Present among His people to feed and comfort and sustain them during the long wait. He was with His people in the Old Testament, feeding and comforting and sustaining them by His precious means of grace, even as He remains among us to do the same. They had Circumcision; we have Baptism. They had the Sacrificial System; we have the Lord's Supper. They had prophets and priests sent to preach the Law and Gospel to them; we have called and ordained servants of the Word to do the same. They received these means of grace in anticipation of the Coming Messiah; we receive them from the Messiah who Came, and in anticipation of His Coming again. The Holy Word and Sacraments our ever-Present Lord delivers in His Church provide us with the strength and stamina we need as we journey through the wilderness of this sinful world, waiting for the Consummation of all things when He returns in great glory. We wait. But, we are not alone. We wait with all the saints who have gone before us, and with all the holy angels, and even with our Lord Himself.

So, as hard as it is, embrace this season of Advent, beloved. It truly is a gift and blessing to you. Learn to wait. Learn to examine yourselves. Learn to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus." Christmas is coming. Soon, we will celebrate the Divine Mystery of the Holy Incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We will marvel at the manger and the shepherds in the fields and the song of the angels. But, not yet. Now is the time to prepare our hearts to receive Him when He comes at Christmas. As the world busies itself with all the hustle and bustle of its "holiday season," let the Church busy herself with self-examination, prayer, anticipation, and expectation. Let us allow the season of Advent to have its way with us, that we may be led to pray with the faithful of all time:

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

God grant you a holy and blessed Advent, beloved!

In Christ,

Pastor Messer

Installation of Newly Elected Officers

The following members were elected (or reelected) to serve as officers in our congregation at the Voters' Assembly in October, and will begin their terms on January 1, 2014:

President	Dave Zeile
Financial Secretary	Marlene Miller
Board of Elders	Terry Luplow
Board of Trustees	Jon Penzien
Bd. of Christian Ed.	Sharyn Greening

Congratulations to all of you and thank you for volunteering to serve our congregation!

*Installation of New Officers will take place during Divine Service on **Sunday, December 29.***
Please be there to be installed into office if at all possible!

✠ Advent Schedule at Peace ✠

Wednesdays in Advent will be full days of prayer, study, and worship. Please disregard the calendar in November's newsletter; we had thought about changing the schedule in the evening to have Evening Prayer first, then soup and salad dinner after, but we decided to keep the schedule as it has been in the past. Also, please note the different time for Divine Service on December 4, which will be 11:30 a.m., instead of Noon, so as to not interfere with the Ladies' Guild meeting that day.

Wednesdays in Advent (December 4, 11, 18)

9:30 a.m.	Matins
10:00 a.m.	Bible Study (<i>Lamentations; Ezra</i>)
12:00 p.m.*	Divine Service (<i>see Feasts below</i>)
4:30 p.m.	Vespers
5:00 p.m.	Bible Study (<i>Isaiah</i>)
6:00 p.m.	Soup and Salad Supper
7:00 p.m.	Evening Prayer (<i>Dec. 18—Children's Program</i>)

Feast Services during Advent

Wednesday, December 4	*11:30 a.m.	Divine Service (Feast of St. Nicholas)
Wednesday, December 11	Noon	Divine Service (Feast of St. Lucy)
Wednesday, December 18	Noon	Divine Service (Feast of St. Thomas)

✠ Christmas Services at Peace ✠

Children's Christmas Program

Our Sunday School children will share the story of our Lord's Nativity with us through drama and song on Wednesday, December 18 at 7:00 p.m. Please make plans to come out and support our children, who are working hard to prepare!

Service of Lessons and Carols

Our Service of Lessons and Carols will take place on Christmas Eve at 7:00 p.m. This is a beautiful and popular Service which puts before us the account of our Lord's Holy Birth through Holy Scripture and Hymnody (including many beloved Christmas Carols), and the preaching of the Holy Gospel. This Service also includes the lighting of the Christ Candle, with the singing of Silent Night and the Christmas Prayer by candlelight.

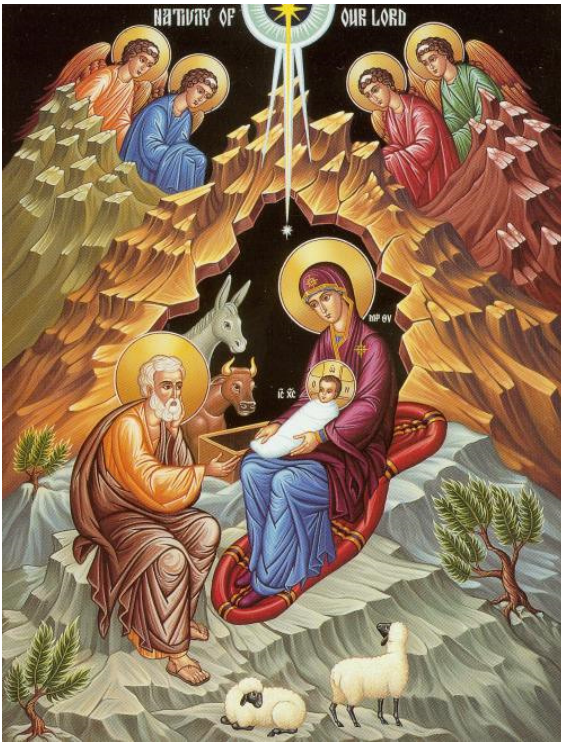
Midnight Mass



Midnight Mass will be celebrated at 11:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve/Day again this year at Peace. This is one of the most beautiful Services held throughout the year. The Mass begins by candlelight, with the reading of the ancient Christmas Martyrology and Procession of the Christ Candle, and there is just something special and unique about being in the Lord's House to celebrate His Nativity and to receive the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood right around when the clock strikes Midnight. We hope that many of you will be able to attend this most solemn and blessed Mass with us this year!

The Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Morning

The Divine Service on Christmas morning will be held on Christmas Morning at 9:30 a.m. The Holy Gospel for this Divine Service is the glorious Prologue to the Gospel According to St. John, where we are blessed to hear and meditate upon the fact that the Eternal Word of the Father became Flesh and Tabernacled among us. It is a different Divine Service than Midnight Mass, so those who would like to attend both are certainly welcomed and encouraged to do so.



“Divine Humility and Love”

Not a palace, but a stable (or cave). Not a cushioned crib, but a feeding trough for animals (a manger). Not in a rich powerful city, but in lowly Bethlehem. Not to rich, powerful, royal, and influential parents, but to a simple carpenter and lowly maiden. Not with great fanfare, pomp, and circumstance, but while the world slept unaware—the only announcement made by the angels to shepherds in the fields. This is how the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity made His entrance into our flesh in order to bear our sins and be our Savior. It is nothing short of amazing! Hearing the remarkable details of our Lord’s birth never gets old, which is why the Church continues to sing, “Marvel now, O heav’n and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth” (“Savior of the Nations, Come” - LSB 332, st. 1).

Marvel, indeed! God is born a baby! The Eternal Word of the Father, the very Creator of all things, the One who spoke creation into existence, descends from heaven to be born into His creation.

In Mary’s arms, nursing from her breasts, is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. He humbles Himself to assume our human flesh and become dependent upon the milk of His mother and the care of his earthly father, even while He continues to hold the entire universe in His tiny little hands. If this does not cause you to marvel, nothing will!

The Divine Humility of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, is truly a marvelous thing to behold. The holy angels are amazed by it and long to delve into what they perceive to be the mystery of mysteries. They have seen the One who lies seemingly helpless in a manger in all His glory. They know Who this Baby named Jesus really is, and it amazes them to see Him in this manner. Not only that, but they know the reason God takes on human flesh and is born into this dead and dying world, namely to save sinful humanity, and they cannot help but sing His praises. As they gaze upon Almighty God, their Lord and Master, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a dirty, feeding trough, they marvel not only at His Divine Humility, but at His Divine Love for sinful mankind, for it is that Divine Love which moved Him to subject Himself to such humility.

The Divine Humility and Love we see on display in Bethlehem on that Holy Night long ago continued to be exemplified in our Lord Jesus throughout His salvific pilgrimage to our sinful world. He did not come seeking honor and fame, but to serve and love God and neighbor completely and perfectly in our place. He did not come to conquer the world and establish a mighty earthly empire, but to do battle with, and defeat, sin, death, and the devil on our behalf. He did not come to be served, but to serve. The One who chose to be born in such low estate lived in poverty throughout His time here, relying upon His Father to provide for His every need. He had no place to lay His head. He had no accumulation of material possessions. There was nothing about His appearance that would draw people to Him. In short, the Divine Humility we witness at His birth continued throughout His earthly life.

Of course, the ultimate picture of our Lord’s Divine Humility and Love is seen in Jerusalem thirty-some years after His ignoble birth. We see it when He washes the feet of His disciples. We see it when He sweats blood while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, submitting to His Father’s will. We see it when He submits to being arrested. We see it when He is spit upon, beaten, mocked, and severely flogged. We see it in His silence before Caiaphas and Pilate. We see it when He carries His own cross to Golgotha outside the city gates. We

see it when He allows Simon of Cyrene to assist Him in carrying His cross. We see it when the nails are driven through His hands and feet. We see it when He hangs on that cruel instrument of torture, gasping for air. We hear it in the Words He utters from the cross, and we see it when He takes His last breath and dies.

And it's all amazing; it's all something to most definitely marvel over, for this is God Himself, Incarnate in human flesh, Who is born in such low estate, lives in such poverty, and dies such a heinous death. It becomes all the more amazing (if it's possible to ponder anything more amazing than God living and dying as a Man) when we consider that He did it all for us—for you, for me. He humbled Himself and assumed human flesh to live as your substitute; to hunger and thirst as you hunger and thirst; to be tempted as you are tempted; to experience pain and suffering as you experience pain and suffering; to be mocked and suffer injustice as you are mocked and suffer injustice; to even suffer death as you suffer death. All of it because He loves you with a Divine Love beyond our human comprehension. All of it to rescue you from the eternity you deserve because of your sins. All of it to win for you forgiveness, life, and salvation. All of it because He desires that you spend eternity with Him in perfect peace, comfort, and joy.

Dearly beloved, as we enter the holy season of Advent and make our way to Bethlehem to celebrate our Savior's birth, let us take our cue from the holy angels and ponder the mystery of our Lord's Incarnation. Let us follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and treasure this mystery in our hearts, pondering with great wonder and joy the reason our God humbled Himself to be born into this sinful world in our human flesh. He came to live and die for you, dear friends, each and every one of you. In Divine Humility and Love, He came to save you by living the life you fail to live and by dying the death you deserve to die for your sins. This is the true "reason for the season," the true meaning of Christmas.

But, let us not stop at pondering and treasuring up in our hearts this great mystery, as if this was all just some bygone story to be cherished, remembered, and passed on to others. This is no legend or fairy tale or epic saga to warm our hearts and lift our spirits as we roast chestnuts around the fire. This is no "Hallmark Special" to talk about as we sip our eggnog and open presents. Our Lord lives! His Divine Humility and Love is still on full display and still as active today as it was two millennia ago, for the same God who assumed human flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary, the same God who lived to serve and love God and neighbor, the same God who allowed Himself to be treated shamefully and put to death, continues to come to us in Divine Humility and Love as we gather in His Name for Divine Service. It should not surprise us that He makes no flashy appearance in our midst, but instead comes among us humbly and hiddenly, wrapped in the swaddling cloths of His Holy Word and Sacraments. That's His way. And He comes to us in Divine Humility and Love to deliver the forgiveness, life, and salvation He accomplished for us. This, too, is the meaning of Christmas.

"Marvel now, O heav'n and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth." Yes, marvel away at that! But, marvel, too, that our Lord chooses to continue to meet us in His Church in Divine Humility and Love to deliver to us His Divine Gifts. Marvel and come, at His gracious invitation, to receive His Gifts and to be filled with His Divine Humility and Love!



A Holy, Blessed, and Merry Christmas to you all!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Messer

TEST YOUR CHRISTMAS KNOWLEDGE

1. *Which Gospel(s) speak of the events surrounding Christ's birth?*
a) Mark and John, b) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, c) Luke only, d) Matthew and Luke
2. *What was the name of the King of Judea at the time of Christ's birth?*
a) Caesar Augustus, b) Quirinius, c) Herod, d) Nero
3. *How many magi (wise men) visited Christ after His birth, according to the Bible?*
a) An undisclosed number, b) One, c) Three, d) Five
4. *Where is Christ when the magi (wise men) come to visit Him?*
a) In a house, b) In the temple, c) In the manger, d) In the womb
5. *After the magi inquire of Herod where the Christ is to be born, he summons his priests and scribes, who know the location of the birth because of the prophecy of this prophet.*
a) Jonah, b) Micah, c) Amos, d) Joel
6. *What does "Immanuel" mean?*
a) Jesus saves, b) God is born, c) God in flesh, d) God with us
7. *Herod's slaughter of the male children two years old and under fulfills a prophecy uttered by what prophet?*
a) Micah, b) Joel, c) Jonah, d) Jeremiah
8. *What was the name of the father of John the Baptist?*
a) Zechariah, b) Joseph, c) Benjamin, d) John
9. *How much younger was Jesus than his cousin John the Baptist?*
a) One year, b) Twelve days, c) Six months, d) Two years
10. *What was the name of the angel who announced to Mary that she would conceive Jesus?*
a) Gabriel, b) Michael, c) Raphael, d) Cherubim
11. *Who speaks words to the pregnant Mary that have become part of the Church's traditional "Hail Mary"?*
a) Simeon, b) Elizabeth, c) Anna, d) Zechariah
12. *What does the name "Jesus" mean?*
a) The LORD saves, b) God with us, c) God is born, d) God in flesh
13. *In which Gospel do we find "The Magnificat"?*
a) Matthew, b) Mark, c) Luke, d) John
14. *Who speaks the words that have become a part of our liturgy known as the Nunc Dimittis?*
a) Zechariah, b) Simeon, c) Mary, d) Elizabeth
15. *Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem, according to the Gospel of Luke?*
a) His adoptive father, Joseph, went home for a census, b) That's where both Mary and Joseph lived, c) His mother went to visit Elizabeth, d) Bethlehem had the best hospitals
16. *When Jesus was born, we are told that He was laid in a manger. What is a manger?*
a) A barn, b) A cave, c) A type of Inn, d) A feeding trough
17. *The Bible tells us that Christ was born in December.*
a) True, b) False
18. *How do the shepherds learn of Christ's birth?*
a) There are no shepherds in the Biblical account, b) They see a new star in the sky, c) An angel appears to them, d) The magi tell them
19. *When was Jesus circumcised?*
a) At birth, b) He wasn't, c) At 13 years old, d) at 8 days old
20. *Who prophesied to Mary that Christ was "destined for the fall and rising of many" and that "a sword would pierce her own soul also"?*
a) Anna, b) Simeon, c) Elizabeth, d) Gabriel

Answers to these questions are given on page 16



A Homily Upon Midnight Mass
Rev. Larry L. Beane II
Salem Lutheran (Gretna, LA)
24 December Anno + Domini 2010
Text: Luke 2:1-20 (Isa 9:2-7, Titus 2:11-14)

In the Name of + Jesus. Amen.

A prominent Jewish celebrity once quipped: “Jews know two things, suffering, and where to get great Chinese food.” He is right about suffering, anyway. For God’s people have suffered greatly ever since the fall in the garden of Eden. All mankind has suffered because of sin, that of our ancestors, and that of our own. Sin has brought suffering and death upon our world. Sin has put us at enmity with the very God who created us. And sin stands in the way of ever restoring peace and life and wholeness.

The Old Testament people of God have suffered even more. For in addition to their own sinful flesh, the children of Israel have had to contend with the attacks of the devil. For God made Satan an offer he could not refuse: the promise of a Savior of mankind who would destroy the devil, the “Seed of the woman” who is God in the flesh Himself come to put things right.

And as a result of that threat that is also a promise, Satan has attacked and harassed the children of Israel. For the Seed was carried within the bodies of this chosen people from the very first giving of the continuation of that promise to our father Abraham.

As the holy prophet preached to suffering Israel: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.” Satan has fought from the very beginning to keep us all in darkness and to prevent even the flicker of the light of hope from being kindled.

But darkness is not to win the day, dear friends, and suffering and persecution are defeated by joy and vindication. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” The darkness of the Judean night on that most extraordinary day in history was rent in two by the glory shining in the heavens, the angelic hosts singing with us in our liturgy: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.”

For God is pleased with us, dear friends, not in our sins, but in our confession, in our repentance, in our forgiveness – for this is a gift of God – the Savior, born to us and to the people of Israel; “Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome.” He is pleased with us, His children, because He is pleased with Jesus, His Son.

In spite of the devil’s attempts to destroy the Son, the Seed, by destroying the people in whom the Seed dwelt, in spite of the suffering of the children of Israel, in spite of the sins we have all committed and the punishment we all deserve, God has not abandoned us, the devil has not defeated us, death does not get the last word, and hell itself is defeated and turned away.

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.” The covenant with the children of Israel has been extended and offered to all people. The Lord, the Seed, the

Christ child, is born to us, and He is our Savior, our Champion, our Redeemer, “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession.” He is the one who overcomes darkness and defeats the devil – and God has done this through His chosen people Israel for the sake of His chosen people, the Church.

Unlike Mary and Joseph and the shepherds witnessing this “thing that has happened,” we have two millennia of hindsight. We know exactly what happened to this Christ child. We confess the truth of history and of the Church that He “was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day, He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.” We see Jesus suffering for and with Israel, and we see Jesus suffering for and with us, for our vindication and for our salvation.

He suffers for us by taking our sins to the cross, and He suffers with us taking flesh in our fallen world. He suffers that which we have earned and deserve, and we glory in that which He is and gives. And even knowing all of this, we nevertheless join the Blessed Virgin Mary in treasuring up all these things and pondering them in our hearts.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, dear fellow saved and redeemed and beloved of the Lord, let us not only treasure and ponder, but let us also rejoice and live in the hope that is ours by means of the gift of the Christ child.

And let us not marvel when Satan continues to attack us. For even as Mary bore the Seed within her and was persecuted by Satan, and even as the children of Israel were attacked and harassed by the devil over the course of thousands of years, so too does the church face diabolical attacks. She is attacked for the sake of Christ. She carries Christ within her in her very core of being – not in the form of the Christ child in the womb as did Blessed Mary, but in a similar way of carrying our Lord in our hearts and in our bodies through the preaching of the Word and our participation in the sacraments.

And though the devil will indeed harass us, let that encourage you, dear friends, for it means that the Christ dwells in you as well. For hear anew the promise, dear brothers and sisters: “The rod of His oppressor you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is given.”

And that is not just a promise given, but a promise delivered: at the manger, on the cross, in the font, from the pulpit, and at the altar. It is a promise that gives everlasting life and salvation, delivered to Jew and Gentile alike, and it is a promise that all suffering will cease. And it is in that promise that we “are waiting for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Amen.

Christmas blessings to each of you, “from this time forth and forevermore!” Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Believing Christians Meditate at Christmas on the Birth of Jesus Christ

Exhortation

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

If the birth of a royal prince causes comforting reflections and joy in the entire kingdom, the birth of Jesus Christ cannot fail to be a cause of joy to all people. The angels rejoice in the heavens above and proclaim to all tidings of great joy; how then could the children of God not rejoice? They rejoice over the love and mercy of God, who spared not His Son but delivered Him up for us all. They rejoice over the loving-kindness of Jesus, who though He is God and the Son of God, does not refuse to take on Himself the nature of man in a lowly virgin and to become a little child.

In quiet moments of devotion, believers marvel at the wonderful counsel of God for our salvation, which no human and no angel could ever have conceived—that the Son of God was to suffer in the place of humanity and thus reconcile all to God. They marvel at the unmerited grace that God offers to human beings who were His enemies (Rom. 5:10), and for which they did not pray, no matter how much they needed it. Therefore, they return all the more fervent thanks to Him once the counsel of God for our salvation has been revealed to them. They enter gladly into the order of salvation by clinging to Jesus in faith and by following Him in a godly and pious life. And thus the holy Christmas days become to them days of prayer, rejoicing, and thanksgiving.

Prayer

This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it! Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Arise my soul. Use this festival for the glory of God and for your edification and say: O Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, would that every drop of my blood were a tongue, that I might praise Your love, grace, and mercy!

God is love! This truth my heart and mind perceive on this holy festival. Your love has found a means for bringing grace to humanity, of which neither angels nor human beings would have dreamed to think! Namely, that the Second Person of the Godhead was to become man, to sanctify and cleanse our human nature. O gracious Jesus, everlasting praise and thanks to You for Your incarnation and birth. You became a child of man that we might become children of God. Now our human nature is truly exalted: You have united it with Your divinity and brought it into the council of the Holy Trinity. O love! O grace! As surely as the human nature is united with the divine, so surely everlasting friendship, everlasting reconciliation, everlasting peace, and everlasting love has been established between God and all people. When God beholds us in His Son, He cannot but be gracious to us. For He who spared not His beloved Son but delivered Him for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things—the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, peace, life, and salvation?

Oh, the greatness of the love of Jesus, who chose to be born a tender infant, that He might sanctify our sinful birth! He increased in wisdom and stature that He might sanctify our youth. “Welcome to earth, O noble Guest, Through whom the sinful world is blest! You came to share my misery That You might share Your joy with me” (LSB 358:8). What thanks shall I return to You? O dearest Friend of souls! My Brother! I now have in You a helper in affliction, a deliverer in tribulation, a Savior when my sins terrify me, an aid in need, a support in death. You are my light; enlighten me! You are the Way that leads me to the Father. You are the Truth that teaches me to know that life which gives life. You are my righteousness; You justify and save me. You are my High Priest, who intercedes for me and blesses me. You are the lamb sacrificed for my trespasses, the full ransom for all my transgressions.

O precious Holy Spirit, how great is Your love in having this comfort, this joy, this salvation proclaimed to me again! From my heart I rejoice on this holy festival and say: My Jesus is mine; His heaven is mine. This Child is born for me, yes, truly for me. This Son is given for me, yes, truly for me. He has obtained and given also to me, yes to me, the grace of God, sonship with Him, and the eternal inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven.

O Jesus, whom in spirit I behold and gaze upon in the manger, how lovely, how kind You are! Grant me grace never to forget You, but to keep You ever in my heart, on my lips, and before my eyes. O my salvation, sanctify me! I yield myself to You with all that I am and have. O my Bridegroom, embrace me. For You I will live, You I will serve, from love of You I renounce the world and all the pleasures of this life. Let my heart be Your manger and Your dwelling in time and in eternity. Enfold and keep me in Your love, that I may have rest, peace, comfort, safety, and the salvation of my soul. Now that my Jesus has become man, I am not lost. Since I believe in Him, I will not perish, but have everlasting life. God is my friend because by faith I am in Jesus, and because Jesus is in me. I do not fear death, for in Him I have life. I do not fear the accusation of my conscience on account of my sins, for Jesus, my Advocate, is with me.

“Thou Christian heart, Whoe’er thou art, Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee! For God’s own Child, In mercy mild, Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee! Remember thou What glory now The Lord prepared thee for all earthly sadness. The angel host Can never boast Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness” (LSB 372:4-5). Amen.

—Starck’s Prayer Book: Revised Concordia Edition (CPH © 2009), pp. 56-58.

Adopt *a* Family

Please consider helping us in our annual ADOPT A FAMILY campaign. This year, we have a family consisting of Dad and Mom, along with their four children: Boys ages 6, 4, and 2 months, and a girl age 3. Please take a tag off the tree located in the fellowship hall and purchase your gift. Then, attach the tag to the wrapped gift and place it by the tree. Deadline for gifts to be under the tree is:

Sunday, December 9, 2013.

Thanks in advance for helping us adopt this family for Christmas. Any questions, please talk to Dorothy Trgina.



IS “MERRY XMAS” EVIL?

Have you heard this one? Christians should never use “Xmas” in place of “Christmas”? While well intentioned, it’s actually not true. “Xmas” is just an abbreviation for “Christmas.” The “X” in “Xmas” is actually not an English X, but the Greek letter, χ (Chi), which is the first letter in the Greek word “Christ” (χρίστος). Thus, “Merry Xmas” is just an abbreviated way of saying, “Merry Christmas.”

Here’s another one: Christians should avoid saying, “Happy Holidays,” which is used by many who do not wish to say, “Merry Christmas.” Again, while well intentioned, this one’s not quite true, either. Now, it is true that certain stores do encourage (or even command) their employees to avoid saying, “Merry Christmas,” using “Happy Holidays” in their greetings of customers instead. However, the joke’s on them, since the word “holiday” actually means “holy day,” and was originally used only in reference to Christian holy days.

So, next time you hear or see these things, just smile, knowing that, for all its efforts, the world simply cannot help but proclaim Christ. Oh, and . . . Merry Xmas and Happy Holidays! ☺

PEACE NEWS & NOTES



DECEMBER Happy Birthday

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 5 Phyllis Hill | 19 Jim Sager |
| 10 Faith Russell | 20 Sarah Messer |
| 12 Wanda Bebow | 30 Amber Brown |
| 14 Cassie Tennant | 30 Dick Wiser |
| 18 Kelsey Gensler | |

Happy Anniversary

- 5 LeRoy and Maxine Isaksson

If we ever miss your birthday or anniversary, please

Ladies' Lunch Bunch

The ladies chose not to meet in December. We wish you a blessed Christmas and will meet again in the new year in January.

Advent Tea

Ladies, you won't want to miss this year's Advent Candlelight Tea on Tuesday, December 10 from 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Our fellowship hall will be elegantly decorated for this event. Please plan to join us for an evening of visiting, beautiful music and delicious dessert. All women of Peace Lutheran Church are invited and are encouraged to invite their friends to prepare their hearts for Advent. There is no charge for this special evening.

SALT NEWS

SALT will not have a formal meeting until January. Check the January Peace Post for more information.

Please see our Meeting Minutes on the SALT Bulletin Board

SUPPORT FOR OUR TROOPS

This is an ongoing outreach for the SALT Committee. Please get in touch with Carolyn if you know of a person in the armed forces who is serving abroad. (email ckj1969@yahoo.com).

REMEMBERING OUR SHUT-INS

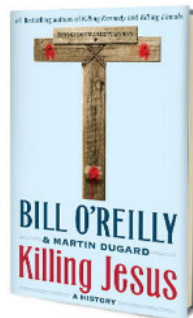
We all love to receive greetings from people who care for us. What better way to remember our shut-ins (when it is difficult for us to make a personal visit) than to send a note or a card periodically to let them know we are thinking of them and to give them something to look forward to in the mail, and especially at this time of the year! Please consider dropping a few lines to our shut-ins during the course of each month.

Marlene Wiltshire
Warwick Living Center
842 W. Warwick Dr.
Alma, MI 48801

Joan Burch
Schnepf Health Care Center
427 E. Washington
St. Louis, MI 48880

Also, while correspondence is not requested for him, please remember our dear brother in Christ, Dick Wiser, who is at Pine River in St. Louis, in your prayers.

PEACE BOOK CLUB



Our Book Club will next meet on Tuesday, December 17 at 7:00 pm at Yvonne Elenbaas' home to discuss "Killing Jesus," by Bill O'Reilly, and to determine the next book we'll read. All are welcome to join us!

PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd

Advent and Christmas Decorating

*We will continue this year with our tradition of decorating for the upcoming Advent and Christmas seasons following the guidelines of **The Altar Guild Manual** by Lee A. Maxwell, Lutheran Service Book edition. This manual, published by Concordia Publishing House, is authorized by the Commission on Worship of the LCMS.*

One section of the Altar Guild Manual is devoted to the seasons of the church year. The primary theme for the Advent Season is penitential, much like the season of Lent. In addition, during Advent, there also is an emphasis on the anticipation of the birth of our Savior.

For the Advent Season, we will continue this year with our use of violet, the traditional color for Advent altar paraments and vestments. Violet symbolizes the penitential nature of the season. In addition, we will keep our decorating very simple by removing the candelabra from the chancel, using seasonal greenery with minimal flowers instead of fancy floral arrangements and minimizing decorations in the nave. The only real decoration for the Advent Season will be the Advent Wreath. Our brass Wreath is simple and elegant. It holds five candles, three purple, one rose and the white Christ Candle in the center.

The remainder of the decorating will be done after the Divine Service on December 22, 2013, the last Sunday in Advent. At that time we will put up the Christmas tree, hang the Christmas banners, bring back the candelabras and adorn the nave with wreaths and candles. The minimal decorating for Advent will be transformed into the more elaborate adornments of the Christmas Season, thus making a distinction between penitential/anticipatory Advent and joyous Christmas.

It is the sincere desire of the Ladies' Guild members to enhance the season of Advent and improve our preparation for the most joyous occasion of the birth of our Lord and Savior. We invite and encourage all of the adults to join us on December 22, 2013, following the Divine Service, to decorate for Christmas. There will be no Adult Bible Class that day, but the children will have Sunday School as usual. When Sunday School is complete, the Ladies' Guild will provide a pizza lunch for everyone.

ANNUAL COOKIE WALK AND CRAFT SHOW SATURDAY DECEMBER 7, 2013 9 AM—4 PM

The Ladies' Guild is asking all the ladies of Peace (who are willing and able) to bake 25-30 dozen small, fancy cookies for our cookie walk. Please have them at the church by Friday evening, December 6, if at all possible. Setup will be on Wednesday evening, December 4, after Evening Prayer. Also, if you are willing to help during the bazaar, please contact Coaline Luplow (763-1016). We appreciate all the help we can get!! Ladies' Guild will be making personal calls to everyone this year to determine the number of participating people and cookies. Thanks so much for your help!

Sunday School Christmas Program

The Sunday School Christmas Program will take place on Wednesday, December 18, at 7:00 p.m. Remaining rehearsals will take place after Sunday School on December 8 and 15. As in the past, lunch will be provided after class, with rehearsal following. Volunteers are needed to provide lunch for the staff and students. Please see Sharyn Greening if you are able to help. If you have any questions about this year's program, please contact Sharyn Greening or Carol Zeile.

PEACE NEWS & NOTES Cont'd

PEACE RECEIVES NEW LITURGICAL ITEMS



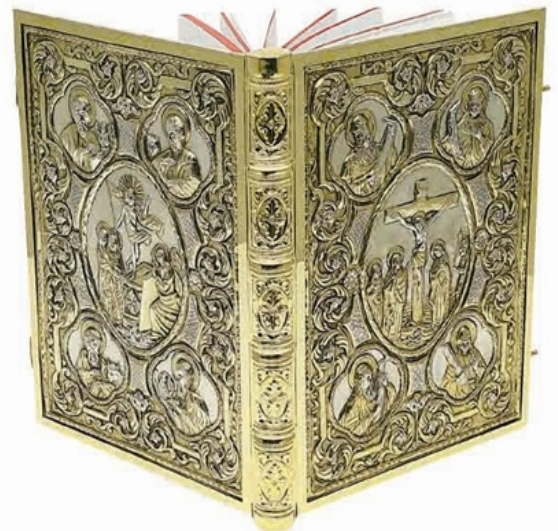
Peace will now have gold paraments and vestments to use for the High Feast Days of Christmas and Easter. Gold is the ancient liturgical color used for these High Feasts, as it represents kingship, majesty, glory, and purity. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to cover nearly all the liturgical items in the Tabernacle/Temple with pure gold, since they were to be of the highest quality and purity. The Church uses this liturgical color on the two Highest Feast Days in the Church Year to set apart our Lord's Incarnation (Birth) and Glorification (Resurrection) as being of the highest value and glory. He came down from heaven to be our King, and His Kingdom remains forever.

The paraments, including the superfrontal for the altar, pictured to the left (top of pic), were generously donated to the glory of God by Chris and Megan Brown. The Alpha and Omega symbols on the left and right symbolize that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Beginning and the End, and are certainly appropriate for both Christmas and Easter, since these two

High Feasts mark the beginning and the end of His earthly Ministry in our Flesh—His State of Humiliation, which begins with His Incarnation in our Flesh, and His State of Exaltation, which begins at His Resurrection and brings an end to His State of Humiliation. Of course, His earthly Ministry in our Flesh continues, as He ascended into heaven in the Flesh and continues to visit us with His Presence in the Divine Service, but you get the idea. The IHS symbol, in the middle of the superfrontal and on the front and back of the chasuble pictured, is the symbol for the name of Jesus. In Greek, these are the first three letters of His name and this symbol has long been used in the Church for Jesus. The Cross behind this symbol brings everything together and highlights the fact that the Baby born in the manger was born to die on the Cross to win our salvation, even as He rose from the dead on the third day to open to us the way to life eternal. The chasuble was purchased using the combination of a gift and money from our memorial fund.

We were also able to purchase a new Book of the Gospels Cover, pictured to the right, which will be used during the Festival Half of the Church Year and on other Feast Days for the Gospel Procession (processing to read the Holy Gospel in the midst of the congregation). The front of the Gospels Cover is adorned with etchings of the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), with the Crucifixion of our Lord depicted in the center, while the back has other etchings of the four evangelists and a depiction of our Lord's glorious Resurrection.

We give thanks to God for these new liturgical items and look forward to putting them to use in the Divine Service.



✠ Soli Deo Gloria ✠

Ladies' Guild

Ladies Guild Meeting

Our Ladies Guild will break for the summer. Next meeting is **WEDNESDAY, December 4 at 12:00 pm with potluck snacks and Christmas party.** All Ladies of the congregation are invited to attend our Guild meetings. If you are a confirmed female member of Peace, you are a member of Guild. We would sincerely encourage you to participate and be an active member of the Guild.

PLC Women's Prayer Chain

The current list is posted on the Ladies' Guild Bulletin Board. All participants should have a copy. If you wish to be added to the prayer chain as a caller, or if you wish to have yourself or someone else "sent through the chain," please see or call Marlene Miller at 463-3710.

Altar Flowers

There is a flower calendar for 2013 is posted on the fellowship hall bulletin board. We are now working toward ordering altar flower arrangements that coordinate with and enhance the liturgical colors of each Season of the Church year. Depending on the dates, flowers may not always be displayed for a calendar month. Some Seasons of the Church year cross calendar months. If you wish to place flowers on the altar sometime during the year, please put your name on the calendar. A bouquet costs \$25. We encourage two persons (families) to purchase flowers each month, one for each plant stand. Please make checks payable to Peace Lutheran Church, attach a note marked "Altar Flowers" and place in the Financial Secretary's envelope in the church office. Any questions may be directed to Carol Zeile or Coaline Luplow. Thank you for helping to beautify our chance!

PEACE LUTHERAN LADIES GUILD



The Ladies' Guild is collecting the following items to send to Lutheran World Relief:

FABRIC KIT

2 PIECES OF COTTON OR COTTON-BLEND FABRIC:

21/4 YARDS OF 60" WIDE FABRIC or
3 YARDS OF 44" WIDE FABRIC or
4 YARDS OF 36" WIDE FABRIC

2 SPOOLS OF MATCHING GENERAL PURPOSE THREAD-250-300 YARDS EACH

FOLD THREAD AND ONE PIECE OF FABRIC INSIDE SECOND FABRIC AND TIE WITH YARN, STRING, RIBBON OR FABRIC.

PEACE LADIES GUILD COOKBOOK

Cookbooks are available for \$10.00 and can be purchased during fellowship time from any member of the Guild. Please see Coaline Luplow with any questions.

LADIES GUILD SELLS CUTLERY

Rada cutlery is on display the 3rd Sunday of each month in the fellowship hall during the coffee hour., We have seven different items in stock: Paring Knife, Large Slicer Knife, Tomato Slicer, Serrated Steak Knife, Spatula, Pie Server, and Veggie Peeler. A product catalogue is available for viewing and orders may also be placed through the catalog.



December

Carol Zeile



1 Cassie Tennant
8 Jo Wendt
15 Shawna Greening
22 Miriam Cross
29 Peace Youth Group

January

Altar Care

Coaline Luplow

Coffee Hostesses

5 Carol Zeile
12 Tina Schafer
19 Coaline Luplow
26 Janice Sager

February

Carol Zeile

2 S.Greening/M.Brown
9 Dorothy Trgina
16 M.Miller/C.Dargie
23 Carolyn Johnson

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT PEACE

Sunday School and Adult Bible Class

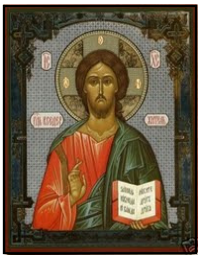
- Sunday School and Adult Bible Class (currently studying *Revelation*) is offered on **Sundays at 11 a.m.**

Wednesday Bible Studies

- At our 10:00 a.m. Bible Study, we recently finished *2 Kings* and are now studying *Lamentations*. When we finish *Lamentations*, we will study *Ezra*.
- At our 6:00 p.m. Bible Study (at 5 pm during Advent), we are studying *Isaiah*.

First Communion and Confirmation Classes

- First Communion and Adult Confirmation Classes take place as arranged (see Pastor Messer if interested); No Youth Confirmation Class this year.



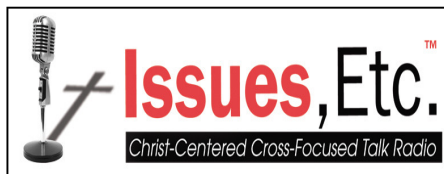
PASTOR MESSER IS BLOGGING!

www.abideinmyword.blogspot.com

*Check in from time to time
to see what's on his mind.*

Answers to "Test Your Christmas Knowledge":
1. d 2. c 3. a 4. a 5. b 6. d 7. d 8. a 9. c 10. a 11. b
12. a 13. c 14. b 15. a 16. d 17. b 18. c 19. d 20. b

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel
And Ransom Captive Israel!*



**TALK RADIO FOR THE THINKING
CHRISTIAN!**

Listen to what you want, when you want, at:
www.issuesetc.org



PAROCHIAL REPORT

(as of 11/24/13)

Membership at Peace

Baptized - 136; Confirmed - 113

Membership gains: 0

Membership losses: 0

Financial Report as of 11/24/2013

YTD Budgeted.....\$102,235.00

YTD Receipts.....\$86,724.21

Difference.....-\$15,510.79

CELEBRATION OF POST-CHRISTMAS FEASTS AT PEACE:

Mon	Dec. 30	Noon	Feast of St. Stephen
Tue	Dec. 31	Noon	Feast of St. John
<i>Wed</i>	<i>Jan. 1</i>	<i>No Feast Service; Happy New Year!</i>	
Thur	Jan. 2	Noon	Feast of Holy Innocents
Fri	Jan. 3	Noon	Circ./Name of Jesus

ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Justification that's not from around these parts

"Alien Righteousness" is a new Lutheran blog for which Pastor Messer will write from time to time. Check it out at:

www.alienrighteousness.org

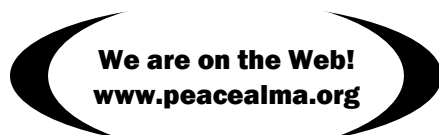
Peace Lutheran Church
325 E. Warwick Drive
Alma, MI 48801
(989) 463-5754
contact@peacealma.org
www.peacealma.org

December 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 <i>Ad Te Levavi (Advent 1)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 12:30 pm-SS lunch & practice 	2 	3 7 pm - Council	4 9:30 am - Matins 10 am - Bible Study 11:30 am - DS: St. Nicholas 12 pm - Ladies Guild 4:30 pm - Vespers 5 pm - Bible Study 6 pm - Soup Supper 7 pm - Evening Prayer 	5 	6 9-4 - Cookie Walk and Craft Bazaar	7
8 <i>Populus Zion (Advent 2)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 12:30 pm-SS lunch & practice 	9 	10 7 pm - Advent Tea 	11 9:30 am - Matins 10 am - Bible Study 12 pm - DS: St. Lucy 4:30 pm - Vespers 5 pm - Bible Study 6 pm - Soup Supper 7 pm - Evening Prayer 	12 	13 	14
15 <i>Gaudete (Advent 3)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & BC 12:30 pm-SS lunch & practice 	16 	17 7 pm - Peace Book Club at Yvonne Elenbaas' home	18 9:30 am - Matins 10 am - Bible Study 12 pm - DS: St. Thomas 4:30 pm - Vespers 5 pm - Bible Study 6 pm - Soup Supper 7 pm - Children's Program 	19 	20 	21
22 <i>Rorate Coeli (Advent 4)</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 11:15 am - SS & Christmas Decorating 	23 	24 7:00 pm - Service of Lessons and Carols 11:30 pm - Midnight Mass 	25 <i>Nativity of our Lord</i> 9:30 am - Divine Service  <i>Merry Christmas!</i>	26 	27 	28
29 <i>First Sunday after Christmas</i> 8:30 am - Choir Practice 9:30 am - Divine Service 10:45 am - Fellowship 	30 12 pm - Divine Service <i>St. Stephen, First Martyr</i> <i>(Obs.)</i> 	31 12 pm - Divine Service <i>St. John, Apostle & Evangelist</i> <i>(Obs.)</i> 	January 1 	2 12 pm - Divine Service <i>The Holy Innocents</i> <i>(Obs.)</i> 	3 12 pm - Divine Service <i>Circumcision/Name of Jesus</i> <i>(Obs.)</i> 	4

Peace Lutheran Church
325 E. Warwick Dr.
Alma, MI 48801

Church: 989-463-5754
E-mail: contact@peacealma.org
Mary's Home: 989-463-3067
Pastor's Home: 989-463-3093
Pastor's Cell: 989-388-2037



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.

Serving in December

	ELDERS	ACOLYTES	USHERS	GREETERS
December				
1 - 9:30 am <i>Advent 1</i>	Miguel Ortiz	Myka Luplow Aaron Messer	Tyrel Harwager James Sager	Terry & Coaline Luplow
8 - 9:30 am <i>Advent 2</i>	Gabriel Blair	Farrah Blair Morgan Johnson	Gary Miller Terry Luplow	Lisa Messer & Family
15 - 9:30 am <i>Advent 3</i>	Larry Elliott	Paige Harwager Aaron Cross	John Lemmermann Troy Cross	Helen Meyers
22 - 9:30 am <i>Advent 4</i>	Terry Luplow	Sierra Luplow Natalie Penzien	Miguel Ortiz Chris Brown	Miguel & Sue Ortiz
24 - 7:00 pm <i>Lessons and Carols</i>	Miguel Ortiz	Savannah Blair Aaron Messer	Vern Jakolat Gary Miller	
24 - 11:30 pm <i>Midnight Mass</i>	Terry Luplow	Farrah Blair Morgan Johnson	Vern Jakolat Gary Miller	
25 - 9:30 am <i>Nativity of Our Lord</i>	Gabriel Blair	Savannah Blair Aaron Messer	Vern Jakolat Terry Luplow	
29 - 9:30 am <i>Christmas 1</i>	Miguel Ortiz	Myka Luplow Natalie Penzien	Jon Penzien Gabriel Blair	Jon Penzien & Family
January				
5 - 9:30 am <i>Epiphany of Our Lord</i>	Gabriel Blair	Paige Harwager Sierra Luplow	Tyrel Harwager James Sager	James & Janice Sager

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