

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER, 2016

“Can you tell me, is there really a Santa Claus?”

This question is asked by children every year. How should we as parents/grandparents answer? If we tell the truth, we become bashers of a legend. And if we lie about it, then we perpetuate a myth that sooner or later, they will learn anyway.

There are a few things about Santa that we must handle carefully. First, does Santa really reward good behavior, while threatening to punish bad behavior? (*“He's going to find out who's naughty or nice.”*) This myth contradicts everything we know about God's grace and love in our life. His blessings, abundant and crucial, we receive because of His mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. (See Small Catechism - Apostles' Creed - First Article.) All gifts we give should reflect the love of the giver rather than the worthiness of the receiver. That's the beauty of God's grace and the difference it makes in our life. God is not some kind of "Santa."

Then there are the attributes of God that no one could match, not even Santa! Yet, he's portrayed as being omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (present everywhere), as the song says, *"He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness' sake."* (No wonder children grow into adulthood with some serious guilt issues!) The reality is that God sees us as we are, and knows us even better than we know ourselves....and HE still loves us, not because we are good, but because HE is merciful. From the manger to the cross...God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in HIM shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

What about the presents? If that's what Christmas is about, and only that...no wonder many people feel a little deflated when the pretty wrappings come off, and we're left with that hollow feeling that says, "It that all there is?" There's got to be more! And there is! Christmas is about a birth...a gift...a promise kept...and hope eternal!

Because Santa Claus and consumerism play such prominent roles in the way our culture celebrates Christmas, it is important that as parents, we carefully respond to these influences as we teach our children. While we can't keep the myths associated with Santa Claus out of our world, and while materialism and consumerism are constantly bombarding our living rooms (T.V. and media ads)...we can keep these tempting forces from displacing the real meaning of Christmas in our families. How?

- 1) As a family, attend our worship services during Advent and Christmas, including our Wednesday evening services. This will help to diminish concerns over all the other distractions and stuff.
- 2) Talk about your children's Sunday School lessons during the following week. They point to the real Reason for the Season....Jesus.
- 3) Have Advent devotion time at home, light an Advent wreath, use an Advent calendar to help remind everyone in your family that the most precious gifts given are those from our gracious God, especially at Christmas.

I pray that this letter may help us all keep the spirit of Christmas. In closing, I just share a line from Tiny Tim in the "A Christmas Carol" movie...

"God bless us, everyone!"

Pastor Asmus

IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER ARE FACING SURGERY OR HOSPITALIZATION, please contact Pastor Erland Asmus: Cell #: (651) 308-8492 Church Office: (651) 436-3357

PASTOR ASMUS WILL BE HAPPY TO MAKE A CALL (OR IN HIS ABSENCE, ONE OF THE ELDERS), BUT WE DO NEED TO BE INFORMED

Treasures in God's Word

BASICS OF FAITH - Mondays - 7:00 a.m. @ The Machine Shed; and
Tuesdays - 10:00 a.m. - at church.

Week of:

December 5-6 - Lesson 12 - "Too Good to Be True"

December 12-13 - Lesson 13 - "Your Heavenly Home"

NO CLASS UNTIL JANUARY 2-3 - CHRISTMAS BREAK

REVELATION - Sunday morning Adult Bible Class - 10:30-11:00 a.m. As we have begun on September 19, we are moving forward into this final Book of the Bible. For those who can't attend every Sunday, all materials are made available for you to keep up with us as a self-study, and to join us as you are able.

December 4 - NO CLASS - Choir Concert in Worship - Fellowship afterwards.

December 11 - Revelation 8 - Opening the 7th seal and blowing the trumpets.

December 18 - NO CLASS - Children's Christmas Program in Worship - Fellowship afterwards.

OUR MISSION: CELEBRATING, PROCLAIMING, AND SPREADING THE WORD.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE! NEWSLETTER ARTICLES FOR JANUARY ARE DUE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE NO LATER THAN MONDAY, DECEMBER 12TH.

S.P.L.C.W. (St. Peter Lutheran Church Women) WILL HAVE A BAKE SALE on Sunday, December 4th, following the 9:00 a.m. worship service. All baked items (or canned items) should be brought to church prior to the service. Feel free to have your items priced and ready to sell.

IT'S TIME TO THINK ABOUT IDEAS AND MARK YOUR CALENDAR - If anyone has any ideas to share for Christmas, please talk with Judy Hansen. The decorating will take place on Saturday, December 3rd starting at 9:00 a.m. I know the holiday season is a time with many commitments, but please consider having fun together enhancing our sanctuary and narthex for the birth of Christ.

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Mission – our call to proclaim

It is a blessing to walk and work together in witness and mercy with the 35 districts of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and with our 34 partner church bodies around the world. The mission we engage together extends the reach of the Gospel around the world. Coming together as a synod, by sharing resources and people, we by God's grace, help to change lives now and for eternity. For a closer look at our LSMS Mission work being done today, take a walk down the hallway to Pastor's office, where you will see a bulletin board display, showing all the countries in the world where we are actively engaged in Missions, along with recent news articles describing what's happening in these areas.

MISSION OF THE MONTH FOR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER: UNION GOSPEL MISSION

Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities ministers to men, women and children who are experiencing homelessness, battling addiction and stuck in poverty. With the help of generous donors and volunteers, they meet the basic needs for food and shelter of the people who come to them for help. But they also do much more than that! The Gospel is the foundation of all that they do, because they believe the ultimate life change is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities provides more than 400,000 meals each year to hungry and homeless neighbors, poor families and seniors on limited incomes. The Mission also has a free dental clinic serving thousands of people every year.

Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities' shelter programs provide safe housing and care for men, women and mothers with children struggling with homelessness. Their shelters not only provide a safe place to sleep, but a full program designed to build life skills and stability.

Alcohol and drug addiction are often at the core of chronic poverty and homelessness. Their 12-step resident recovery program helps men break the grip of addiction. On October 8th, we welcomed men to spend a day at our church from the Christ Recovery Center, through "Little Church of Hope". This is a program started by Brian Smiley in 1990 to give love and hope to the homeless that evolved to the men of Union Gospel Mission's Christ Recovery Center.

UGMTC has the most effective and comprehensive job coaching support network for the "difficult-to-employ" in the Twin Cities. They offer education and career opportunities for all, from earning a GED through finding a rewarding career.

Union Gospel Mission also has a long history of engaging at-risk children and teenagers in positive activities. In fact, a path to a loving God is clearly laid out in every youth program the Mission offers—from their Child Development Center to their teen outreach programs.

SEE THE MISSION TABLE IN THE NARTHEX FOR MORE INFORMATION. BROCHURES ARE ALSO AVAILABLE. (Mission envelopes are available in your offering envelopes, in the pews, and on the Mission Table.)

...for your health

from "Better Health" (Concordia Plan Services quarterly)

The holiday season invites us all to indulge in food. Here are a few thoughts on how to buffer ourselves from this onslaught, so January diets won't have to be so painful.

- 1) Don't eat at buffets...or if you do, take smaller portions.
- 2) Plan the day...if eating a large meal, plan something lighter before and after.
- 3) Look but don't touch... before filling your plate, choose what items you will eat.
- 4) Debate the dessert...use discretion here, for these calories do pile up and must be accounted for eventually.
- 5) Food alone can be a waist buster, so drink water to avoid the additional calories that come with soft drinks or alcohol.
- 6) Finally, don't be so hard on yourself or on others either, for God loves us in spite of our weaknesses. It's not about who we are, or how we look...it's about WHOSE we are because of HIS grace! Be kind and gracious to one another, especially at Christmas.

SECOND HARVEST HEARTLAND

We will work a shift at Second Harvest Heartland on December 9th from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Please sign up on the sheet on the kiosk. If you have any questions about volunteering, please contact Cheryl Schmidt.

Our weekly worship services: (Bring your Bible!)

+ *Advent: Jesus is coming! Very Soon! Let us prepare now.*

The difference CHRIST makes in a believer's life.

Wednesday – November 30 - Advent 1 - "St. Andrew the Apostle"

5:00-6:15 p.m. Soup Supper & fellowship!

6:30 p.m. - Advent Worship

Sermon: "I Shall Return." (Acts 1:1-11)

Sunday – December 4 - Second Sunday in Advent

9:00 a.m. – **Choir Concert in worship with The Lord's Supper**

(No sermon)

No Bible Class

Wednesday – December 7

5:00 - 6:15 p.m. - Soup Supper & fellowship!

6:30 p.m. - Advent worship.

Sermon: "Waiting for the Morning" (Lamentations 3:18-26)

Sunday – December 11 - Third Sunday in Advent

9:00 a.m. – **Praise Worship with Holy Eucharist**

Sermon: Advent: A matter of patience. (James 5:7-11)

Bible Class: Revelation 8 - The First Scene of End Times concludes;
The Second Scene begins.

Wednesday - December 14

5:00 - 6:15 p.m. - Soup Supper & fellowship!

Sermon: "White Christmas" (Galatians 4:4-7)

Sunday - December 18

9:00 a.m. - **Children's Christmas Program in worship with The Lord's Supper**

NO Bible Class

Wednesday - December 21 - **NO ADVENT WORSHIP** (We get ready for Christmas.)

Saturday - December 24 - Christmas Eve

4:00 p.m. - **A family Christmas Candlelight Service with Holy Communion.**

10:00 p.m. - **A Traditional Candlelight Worship with The Sacrament of the Altar.**

Sermon for both services: "Where's the Baby Jesus?" (John 3:16)

Sunday - December 25 - Christmas Day

9:00 a.m. - **A Traditional Christmas Day Service with celebration at The Lord's Table.**

Sermon: "A Promised Gift" (Isaiah 9:6)

Wednesday - December 28 - **NO WORSHIP TONIGHT** (See you on New Year's Eve.)

Saturday - December 31 - New Year's Eve

6:30 p.m. - **A Traditional New Year's Eve Service with Holy Communion**

Sermon: "Purified for Love" (1 Peter 1:13-25)

Sunday - January 1 - First Sunday after Christmas - New Year's Day

9:00 a.m. - **Traditional Worship with celebration of The Lord's Supper**

Theme: No Fear.

Sermon: "A Fearless New Year" (Deuteronomy 31:1-8)

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR WORSHIP

Sunday - December 4	9:00 a.m. Special Worship / Holy Communion 10:15 a.m. Special Coffee Hour & Special Christmas Display 10:15 a.m. Bake Sale 10:15-11:00 a.m. Sunday School Program Practice
Wednesday – December 7	5:00-6:15 p.m. – Soup Supper 6:30 p.m. – Advent Midweek Worship
Sunday – December 11	9:00 a.m. Contemporary Worship / Holy Communion 10:15-11:00 a.m. Sunday School Program Practice 10:30-11:00 a.m. Bible Class
Wednesday – December 14	5:00-6:15 p.m. – Soup Supper 6:30 p.m. – Advent Midweek Worship
Sunday – December 18	9:00 a.m. – Children’s Christmas Service / Holy Communion
Saturday – December 24	4:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Contemporary Candlelight Worship / Holy Communion 10:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Traditional Candlelight Worship / Holy Communion
Sunday – December 25	9:00 a.m. – Christmas Day Traditional Worship / Holy Communion
Saturday – December 31	6:30 p.m. – New Year’s Eve Traditional Worship / Holy Communion
Sunday - January 1	9:00 a.m. - New Year’s Day Traditional Worship / Holy Communion

Christmas caroling

*** December 16, 2016 ***NOTE DATE CHANGE FROM MAILED COPIES
OF THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER!!**

10:00 a.m. Caroling
(9:30 a.m. Coffee for Carolers)

Everyone is welcome to join us to go caroling to area Care Centers and some members’ homes on Saturday, December 10th, 10:00 a.m. (Come at 9:30 a.m. for coffee!)

NO FOUNDATIONS IN DECEMBER. It will resume on Wednesday, January 4th, with Weekday/Confirmation Classes 5:30-6:25 p.m.; Devotional Service with Communion 6:30-7:00 p.m.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE WITH COMMUNION
Sunday, December 18th, 2016 - 9:00 A.M.

Practice times for our Children's Christmas Service will be December 4 & 11 during Sunday School (10:15-11:00 a.m.), with **Dress Rehearsal on Saturday, December 17th, 9:00-11:00 a.m.**

Invite family, friends & neighbors to this special service.

YOUTH LOCK-IN - Does a night of pizza, bowling, games, movies, and worship sound like an awesome time to you? Well then, if you're in **5th through 12th grade**, you need to come to the Youth Lock-in!! **The fun begins Wednesday December 28th at 6:00 p.m. and goes to the 29th at 8:00 a.m.** We will start off with pizza at the church at 6:00 p.m., followed by a trip to PINZ to go bowling, and then head back to church for an all-nighter of games, movies, and worship. Bring a snack to share with everyone and your friends are more than welcome to come!! Make sure to sign up on the sheet in the narthex so we know how much pizza to get and how many bowling lanes we need. If you have any questions, talk to Tony.

THANK YOU to all who contributed to Operation Christmas Child. Your giving hearts have shown God's love to many children this Christmas season.

SPECIAL EVENT
Sunday, December 4, 2016

The St. Peter Choir will lead the 9:00 a.m. worship service on December 4th, with special music for the Christmas season. **Holiday treats will be served** during the fellowship time following the service. The SPLCW (St. Peter Lutheran Church Women) **Holiday Bake Sale** will have goodies you can purchase and take home with you.

There will also be a new **WHAT MAKES CHRISTMAS SPECIAL display!** We will have a display of the items special to our members (similar to what has been done in the past with nativity sets).

Let's make this a special day for all of us! If you have questions, see Karen Stoltzmann or Joan Riemer.

ADVENT SUPPERS will be served in the Parish Hall Wednesdays before the Advent service from 5:00 - 6:15 p.m. on December 7th & 14th. They will be made by Beth Kroening. Callers are asked to have 5 workers and 5 pans of bars. A donation of \$5.00 per person is the suggested price to meet the expenses. Any excess money will be used towards the Kitchen Fund. Salad, bars, peanut butter and jelly, bread, milk and coffee will also be available. Any questions, please call Sharon Wellner, Soup Supper Coordinator.

December 7: Chicken Noodle Soup, S.P.L.C.W. Group 4 serving.

December 14: Lasagna, S.P.L.C.W. Group 1 serving.

Eligible members of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans who have been designated Choice Dollars: Don't miss this opportunity to help support **St. Peter Lutheran Church**. Go to Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or call 1-800-THRIVENT and state "Thrivent Choice®."

THANK YOU to all for your generous food donations to the Valley Outreach Food Shelf. The total so far for 2016 is 195 pounds of food. Your concern and support of others in our community helped many families. The week of October 31st, St. Peter volunteered 25.5 hours, 49 households were served and 5,669 pounds of food was distributed! Thank you! Also thanks to the volunteers who worked and gave of their time this past year. Please continue to give, as you are able, to this worthwhile cause. – Dawn Plunkett, Valley Outreach Food Shelf Coordinator.

A "Life-thought"

From "Life Date" a quarterly journal from Lutherans For Life

Wherever humankind indulges immorality (Romans 13:13-14), swords and quarrels, spears and war, and all manner of death are sure to follow (Isaiah 2:4). Wherever Jesus comes humbly (Matthew 21:5) in His Word and Sacraments, salvation arrives (Romans 13:11). He dresses sinners instead in armor of light that we may cast off works of darkness (Romans 13:12). We can't expect people who don't worship to understand or accept these workings of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Coming Savior, beat our swords into plowshares, and fill our homes with Your joy and peace. Amen.

...and a smile to lift your day

Something to think about the lighter side of life...

Young Blake gave the little figure hovering over the manger a tiny flashlight to hold. He said it was the "security guardian angel."

Bulletin blooper: "After setting up the manger scene, the whole congregation will join in singing, "The First Motel."

One more blooper! "Let us give thanks to Susan Lewis for donating an organ to our music department."

2017 SPLCW Responsibilities

SPLCW Officers: Chair-Peggy Oehlke, Treasurer-Betsy Hundertmark

Ham Dinner Chair: Karen & Doug Stoltzmann

Funeral Committee: Chair-Janel Busacker, Assistant Chairs-Linda Craig & Joann Decker

LWML Representative: Carol Nelson

Prepare Work Group Lists: Laura Bauer

Spring Event: Nancy Bernath

Banners: Judy Hansen

Decorating: Judy Hansen

Altar Coordinator: Judy Hansen

Kitchen Clean-up: Joan Jordan

Confirmation Reception: Barb Fritsche & Cheryl Schmidt

Planting Flowers in Circle & Planters: Elaine Frahm & Lori Swanson

Soup Supper Coordinator: Sharon Wellner

Help with serving 'The River Valley Riders' in April: Donna Kosen, Betsy & Jerry Hundertmark, & Peggy Oehlke

High School/College Graduate Reception: Mary Hauch & Laura Nelson

Coffee Host Coordinator: Sue Suckow

Defrost Freezer: Betsy Hundertmark

DECEMBER, 2016

ACOLYTES FOR DECEMBER

December 4 - 9:00 a.m. Ryan Bernath
7 - 6:30 p.m. Lucas Oberdeck
(Advent Midweek)
11 - 9:00 a.m. Charlie Veith
14 - 6:30 p.m. Ashley Walton
18 - 9:00 a.m. Emma Schatt
24 - 4:00 p.m. Malachi Oberdeck
10:00 p.m. Gabriella Richert
(Christmas Eve)
25 - 9:00 a.m. Callie Koller
(Christmas Day)
27 - 9:00 a.m. Izaak Schmidt
31 - 6:30 p.m. Ryan Bernath
(New Year's Eve)
January 1 - 9:00 a.m. Lucas Oberdeck
(New Year's Day)

COFFEE HOSTS FOR DECEMBER

December 4 - George & Joan Riemer
(Special Coffee Hour)
11 - (Open)
18 - (Children's Service)
25 - (Christmas Day)
January 1 - (New Year's Day)

**MORE COFFEE HOSTS ARE NEEDED!
PLEASE SIGN UP IN THE BOOK ON
THE KIOSK.**

USHERS FOR DECEMBER

Grant Fritsche, Elder
Virgil Polinske
Marv Durow
John Schmidt
Pete Lind

GREETERS FOR DECEMBER

December 4 - 9:00 a.m. Eldo & Helen Thielfoldt
7 - 6:30 p.m. (Open)
(Advent Midweek)
11 - 9:00 a.m. (Open)
14 - 6:30 p.m. (Open)
(Advent Midweek)
18 - 9:00 a.m. (Open)
(Children's Christmas Service)
24 - 4:00 p.m. (Open)
10:00 p.m. (Open)
25 - 9:00 a.m. (Open)
January 1 - 9:00 a.m. (Open)

**MORE GREETERS ARE NEEDED!!
PLEASE SIGN UP IN THE BOOK
ON THE KIOSK.**

READERS DURING WORSHIP SERVICES IN DECEMBER

December 4 - 9:00 a.m. Carol Nelson
11 - 9:00 a.m. (Open)
18 - 9:00 a.m. (Children's
Service)
24 - 4:00 p.m. Joan Riemer
10:00 p.m. (Open)
(Christmas Eve)
25 - 9:00 a.m. (Open)
(Christmas Day)
31 - 6:30 p.m. (Open)
(New Year's Eve)
January 1 - 9:00 a.m. (Open)
(New Year's Day)

ALTAR GUILD FOR DECEMBER

Lorraine Hansen
Judy Hansen
Karen Stoltzmann (as needed)

USED PIANO FREE!

Call Jim Jordan or
the church office.

A Table Prayer for Your Home

*May all who enter our home find cheerfulness inside,
And Lord, may our hearts & hands,
minds & souls be always open wide.
Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest.
May all these gifts to us be blest.
Oh give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good,
and His mercy endures forever. Amen.*

XYZ CLUB for seniors 55 years and older meets on Tuesdays at Memorial Lutheran Church in Afton. This includes cards and visiting 9:30 a.m. to Noon. For information, call Marion Glasbrenner.

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