



Message from Pastor Chris

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us).

Matthew 1

We decided to get into the "Christmas Spirit." So, Angie and I dug out several dusty old boxes from our storage room this past weekend. Box after box, container after container, revealed just what we expected. They were filled full of the stuff of the season. There were oodles of ornaments, Santa Claus figurines with fury beards, snow globes with winter scenes, mantel pieces, and all the stockings with our kids' names. We even found that creepy little elf that gets into mischief.

Then there's the yard. I think we have so many lights this year, you could spot us at night from outer space! I'm not joking. Christmas has filled our home with delightful sights, sounds, and smells. Even the cats get into it, jockeying for comfy positions under the tree. Yes, our household is officially in the "spirit." But will we continue to remember what that spirit means?

That's a really good question. Because even in the midst of a pandemic, the culture of Christmas continues to cast its commercial shadow over the baby Jesus. Black Friday has given way to Cyber Monday. The world of marketing has, once again, set out to persuade us that we must buy stuff that few of us need, with money some do not have, to give things to people who have more than enough. Then we'll gather together to exchange our gifts and play with new toys. Is this what the Christmas spirit is truly about?

As we were taking inventory of our seasonal decorations, I noticed one of our manger scenes. It was eventually placed with care in our entryway. But as I was taking note of it, Angie caught me eyeing it and said, "You might have to rearrange that. I don't know if I did it right." After one of my typical wise cracks, I decided that maybe Joseph needed a little nudge closer to Jesus. I scooted an angel back. Mary and the cow were fine.

The truth is, I don't know if I did it right either! None of us do. We romanticize about what it *might* have looked like when Jesus was born. There were no photographers at the scene. There were no note takers who documented minute by minute accounts. We have no idea what the weather was like or what time of day it was or if there were even any cattle chewing their cud nearby.

The only account we have of the Christmas story are in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. That's it! All the other parts of this amazing story are based human speculation, cultural tradition, or myth. In fact, there are so many things we don't know about the birth of our Savior that I wonder if Angie's statement is the most honest one we could possibly declare. Are we doing Christmas "right?"

For me, this is what the true meaning of Christmas is all about. It is about living in the mystery of the incarnation, of Word made flesh. Christmas is not just about a baby. It is about remembering the God who gives of himself into death that we would have life abundantly and eternally. For me, the meaning of Christmas is not so much the giving of gifts as it is the giving of thanks for a God who gives us the greatest treasure on earth, His only Son. Christmas is about entering the mystery of this story, and through faith preparing to face the Cross and the most glorious gift that a commercial world would never dare to market, Jesus' suffering and death.



If this conversation intrigues you in the least, I invite you to join Pastor Glenn and I for a virtual education opportunity titled, **“Unlocking the Mystery of Incarnation: The Birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke.”** These virtual zoom classes will be on Thursday, December 10 and 17 (5:30-7:00 PM). If you would like to participate in these teaching sessions and conversations, I ask that you email the Church Office so that we can email you a corresponding zoom link. This class can also be viewed live on Facebook during that time and available for viewing on our website the next day. In order to interact with conversation and questions, I strongly urge you to participate via the zoom link.

As we journey through this season of Advent and enter into the mystery of the Word made flesh, I wish you and your family a safe and blessed season. And if it will help you do Christmas *right*, I'm happy to get rid of the elf. Just let me know.

Your Partner in Ministry,
Pr. Chris

UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF INCARNATION:
The Birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke
A Study with Pastor Chris & Pastor Glenn

Thursdays, December 10 & 17
5:30 - 7:00 PM
ZOOM & Facebook Live
Contact the Church Office for information.

Advent
Sing-a-Long
Wednesday, December 16 ~ 5 PM

God With Us Advent Devotion Series with Greta

Join us at 5^{PM} on FaceBook LIVE or after on our website:

- Wednesday, December 2: Hope
- Wednesday, December 9: Peace
- Wednesday, December 16: Joyous Advent Sing-A-Long with Bev and Greta
- Wednesday, December 23: Love
- Friday, December 25: Christmas (time TBD)

Each year we show our appreciation to the dedicated Morning Star ministry team with a Christmas bonus. If you would like to contribute to this end-of-year gift for our staff please mail in your gift (or choose online option) to the church by December 20. Thank you for your generosity!

THE MORNING STAR MINISTRY TEAM

<i>Christopher Hawkins</i>	<i>Lead Pastor</i>
<i>Glenn Schacht</i>	<i>Associate Pastor</i>
<i>Greta Carlson</i>	<i>Director of Faith Formation & Family Ministries</i>
<i>Susie Syx</i>	<i>Office Manager</i>
<i>Susan Snow</i>	<i>Director of Preschool & Childcare Center</i>
<i>Bev McCollum</i>	<i>Organist & Bell Choir Director</i>
<i>Simone Weber</i>	<i>Music Minister</i>
<i>James Creason</i>	<i>Facility Manager</i>
<i>Susan Beeghly</i>	<i>Choir Director</i>
<i>Art Lorenz</i>	<i>Sound Engineer</i>

*Merry Christmas
from your Church Council*



Message from Greta Carlson

Welcome to the season of Advent! Advent is a time of hopeful contemplation, expectant waiting, of preparation. Similar to Lent, the six weeks before Easter, the making ready is also a time of penance, to make right, to be forgiven and to forgive. Honestly, it feels like all of 2020 can fit in this description of waiting, hoping, and longing. Even through the waiting and hoping for the end of this pandemic, life still happens. There is swift motion and transition even amidst the seeming standstill.

So much has happened in my life. I started this new job, full of the changes, excitement, and nerves that come along with that transition. I faced not getting to go home to family as I customarily do in the summer, on top of the already more lonely season of living alone during a pandemic when to show our love we must stay apart (thank goodness for kitty cats!). I lost my grandmother to COVID 19 in September, and traveled to Texas for the funeral, which presented many challenges and was not the joyous post-pandemic reunion with my family I had hoped for.

Our country also has had many tensions of newness and waiting and reckoning—about racial justice and confronting racism within our individual selves as well as in the systems of our society. About a very divided and fractured political landscape and election. And about the best ways to protect each other, both from a disease that has already taken so many precious lives as well as the effects of that pandemic on our wellbeing, such as a major toll on mental health, loss of jobs, precarious childcare, and massive education overhauls.

So what do we do when life is so different? We get creative. We learn new skills. We become more intentional. We learn that we have more strength than we can imagine. For me this year that has been firepits at a friend's backyard, more consistent phone calls to family, sending a lot of postcards and letters to friends and family near and far, virtual Sunday school videos, Zoom youth meetings and Confirmation classes, and now these Advent wreath kits that have made it to 63 families so far. It is by no means perfect or all encompassing, but it's something. It's sharing love and community in new ways.

During this Advent and holiday season that will look so different than it has before, I invite you to lean into that. How can we be intentional about finding Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love this season? How can we celebrate the birth of Christ, God among us, the promise that we are not alone?

One way I'll be trying to do that this year is with an Advent wreath. Advent wreaths help mark the time leading to Christmas with four candles that represent Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Each week we focus on one of those themes and light another candle. As a new candle is lit each week, we symbolically see the light of Christ glowing brighter and brighter. The circular shape of the wreath representing Christ's eternal victory over death. The evergreens represent God's everlasting faithfulness to the people.

The colors of the four candles around the ring have been different throughout time and trends, but really there is no official way. Traditionally the liturgical color of Advent was purple, like it is in Lent, with the purple representing Jesus' royalty, as well as a time of penance and reflection. More recently, royal blue has been adopted as the color for Advent, representing more of an expectant, hopeful waiting for the coming of Jesus. The single rose candle is for joy. Some Advent wreaths use all white candles, some all red, some all blue. Some wreaths are not even wreaths at all, they are logs, with the candles arranged in a straight line. Whatever the color or style of your Advent wreath, it is beautiful and will work just fine! If you do not have an Advent wreath, you can still participate. The value is in the practice, not the materials. Lighting a candle can still be meaningful.

I invite you to make this practice your own so that it can give you what your heart needs. Here are some ideas:

- ★ Light the Advent wreath as you watch Sunday worship in your home. Know that others in the congregation are lighting candles in their homes, too.
- ★ Join Greta for a weekly devotion on Wednesdays at 5^{PM} live on Facebook for a guided, interactive devotion (available on our website afterwards).
 - Wednesday, December 2: Hope
 - Wednesday, December 9: Peace
 - Wednesday, December 16: Joyous Advent Sing-A-Long with Bev and Greta
 - Wednesday, December 23: Love
 - Friday, December 25: Christmas! (Time TBD)
- ★ Have a daily devotion time with your household (even if that's just you!) using the devotion booklet provided or your own favorite devotion. Extra devotion books, large print, and a special children's devotion book are available upon request from the Church Office.
- ★ Sing carols around the wreath as part of your family devotion and Christmas celebrations.
- ★ Call a friend and do the devotion or say a prayer together. Connect with others however you can.
- ★ Write your Christmas cards in the glow of the candles, trusting that that warm glow will reach their heart.

Blessings to you this holiday season!

Much love,
Greta Carlson, Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministry

MISSIONS & OUTREACH

Morning Star...a light in the heart of Omaha & Beyond



Morning Star continues outreach to families in need through our Angel Tree program. You can help families of the Westside Boys & Girls Club and Lutheran Family Services by select a child or several, purchase suggested items on the list and drop them off at the church by Wednesday, December 16. You can also purchase gift cards to Target or WalMart and bring those. Find available "angels" online at the link below. Thank you for being the Light to ALL during a time when it's needed the most!

www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D45A8AD2AA6F4C61-morning

Morning Star Preschool & Child Care Center



402-393-8215 • Preschool@MorningStarOmaha.org

All Aboard! The preschool welcomes in the holiday season with Polar Express Day. The children will use tickets to board a train created from boxes and filled with imagination. Holiday traditions will be celebrated this month with a St. Nicholas Day activity, Christmas sweater day and cookie decorating. Our annual Nativity Program will be taped this year for parents and families to enjoy. You can hear songs ringing out in the hallways as children practice for the big day. Thank you for praying for this amazing outreach of Morning Star!



Mobile Grace Café will be at the Ronald McDonald House on Sunday, December 20 from 4:30-6:00 PM serving meals to the families and leading them in Christmas carols!

Green Envelope

This month our Green Envelope goes to the Kountze Lutheran Church Food Pantry. Over the past two decades, this Food Pantry has grown into a guest-choice pantry, where more than 70 volunteers serve around 1,800 guests per month, 40% of which are children. Their mission is simple: feed anyone who comes through the door. The Pantry buys most of its food from the Food Bank of the Heartland at a very low cost per pound. Monetary donations help to purchase food at this very low cost. If you prefer to shop, the following items are always appreciated:



Cereal
Oats
Canned Meat
Canned Fruit
Canned Pasta Sauce & Pasta

Macaroni & Cheese
Pork & Beans
Soup
Peanut Butter
Jelly in Squeeze Bottles



Junior/Senior High Youth Service Project

Meet at the church on Sunday, December 20 at 3^{PM} to help distribute information to the neighborhood about amazing Christmas events at Morning Star! Hot Cocoa, treats and fun, social-distancing guaranteed!

High School Youth Group

The High School Youth will meet on Sunday, December 13 at 7:30^{PM} on ZOOM!

Sunday School Zoom Meet-up

Join us on ZOOM on December 13 at 6:30^{PM}!

Attention College Students

MORNING STAR YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP

APPLICATIONS DUE MARCH 1
PICK ONE UP TODAY!

In the office, the Welcome Center or online at morningstaromaha.org/scholarship

MORNING STAR
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Ministry Investment Funds



Our Christmas Program this year is a video collage of people reading the Christmas story, sharing special memories, and musical offerings for the soul. We need you to share with us! Each part will be recorded individually and put together in a video compilation. Call Greta Carlson or Simone Weber today sign up or for more information.

Council Highlights & CELEBRATION

- The Council celebrated outreach efforts this year, as the committee has continued to serve others during the pandemic. Thanks to the Outreach Committee!
- Our PPP loan was officially forgiven. The loan allowed us to provide continued employment to our preschool staff when the preschool was shut-down this spring.
- Due to increasing COVID cases in Douglas County, the Council approved virtual Thanksgiving Eve and Christmas Eve services. While we would love to worship together during the holidays, we need to keep our members safe.



Please turn in your Annual Report to the Church Office by January 8. Thank you!



Giving is now easier!
You can donate online

at MorningStarOmaha.org/Give or scan this QR code to be directed to our secure giving site. You can also have donations deducted automatically every month. Contact the Church Office for more information!

Thanks for your generosity with the altar flowers and bulletins. Call the Church Office for sponsoring information.

flowers & bulletins

Flower Sponsors

Bulletin Sponsors

December 6	The Beck Family	Fred Zabel	Available
December 13	Nancy Darst	John & Diane Konvalina	Available
December 20	Ron & Fran Ruh	Tim & Lori Mueller	Available
December 27	Dick & Sharon Zahm	Available	Available



Morning Star Christmas

www.MorningStarOmaha.org
www.facebook.com/MorningStarLutheranOmaha

- ✦ **Weekly Advent Devotions ~ Wednesdays at 5^{PM}** *(Facebook Live)*
- ✦ **Virtual Blue Christmas Service ~ Sunday, December 6 at 11:30^{AM}** *(Facebook Live)*
- ✦ **Christmas Program: Storytime ~ Sunday, December 13 at 10^{AM}** *(Facebook Live)*
- ✦ **Advent Sing-a-Long ~ Wednesday, December 16 at 5^{PM}** *(Facebook Live)*
- ✦ **Advent Adult Studies ~ Thursdays, December 10 & 17 at 5:30^{PM}** *(ZOOM)*
- ✦ **Virtual Christmas Eve Service ~ Thursday, December 24 at 4^{PM}** *(Facebook Live)*
A living Nativity provided by Scatter Joy Acres will be available from 1-3^{PM} along with lunch, hot cocoa & goodies served by Table Grace's Mobile Café

Join us on Thursday, December 24 from 1-3 PM outside the church building for lunch, hot cocoa, socially distanced fellowship, and a living nativity then settle in at home for our candlelight service at 4^{PM} via Facebook live or join us on Zoom.



Pick up your consecrated Communion kit as well as candles for the Christmas Eve candlelight service:

Friday, December 18 ~ Noon to 3 PM
Saturday, December 19 ~ 9 AM to Noon

Blue Christmas ♦ Sunday, December 6 *A Service of Remembrance & Hope*

On Sunday, December 6 at 11:30^{AM} we will host our annual worship service on Facebook Live for those who have suffered loss or have a difficult time during the holidays.



Welcome to
December



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 9:30 Staff Meeting 5:30 AA Meeting	2 10 Bible Study 5 Advent LIVE 6:30 Confirmation Class	3 7 DBSA	4	5
 6 10 Virtual Worship 11:30 Blue Christmas Worship Service	7 9:30 Preschool Rehearsal 7 Outreach Comm	8 9:30 Staff Meeting 9:30 Preschool Rehearsal 5:30 AA Meeting 6:30 Exec Comm	9 9:30 Preschool Recording 10 Bible Study 10:30 Preschool Recording 5 Advent LIVE 6:30 Confirmation Class	10 4:30 Covid Task Force Meeting 5:30 Incarnation Bible Study 7 DBSA	11	12 8 ^{AM} DKG Christmas Party 
13 10 Virtual Worship & Storytime Christmas Program 6:30 Sunday School Zoom Meeting 7:30 High School Youth Zoom Hang-out	14 6:30 Church Council	15 9:30 Staff Meeting 5:30 AA Meeting 5:30 Personnel Committee	16 <i>Angel Tree Items Due</i> 10 Bible Study 5 Advent LIVE & Sing-a-Long 6:30 Confirmation Class	17 5:30 Incarnation Bible Study 7 DBSA	18 Noon-3 PM Drive Thru Communion Pick Up	19 9 AM-Noon Drive Thru Communion Pick Up
20 10 Virtual Worship 3 PM Youth Service Project 4:30 PM Mobile Grace Christmas Caroling at Ronald McDonald House	21	22 9:30 Staff Meeting 5:30 AA Meeting	23 10 Bible Study 5 Advent LIVE	24 1-3 PM Living Nativity by Scatter Joy Acres & lunch by Table Grace Mobile Café 4 PM Virtual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service <i>Church Office & Preschool Closed</i>	25  <i>Church Office & Preschool Closed</i>	26 
27 10 Virtual Worship "Lessons & Carols"	28	29 5:30 AA Meeting	30 10 Bible Study	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE <i>Church Office & Preschool Closed</i>		



MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

331 S. 85th Avenue
Omaha, NE 68114

Address Correction Requested

Prayers

Lindsay Bowley Rachel Hall
Janice & Greg Gienger Virgene Kobold
Ken Hagemann Eunice Levisay

Friends & Loved Ones of Morning Star

- Ben (*Rich & Betty Fiddelke's nephew*)
- Brittany (*Preschool staff member*)
- Cynthia, George & Kyle (*family of Don & Bonnie Daubman*)
- Debbie & Tom (*friend of the Moy's*)
- Don (*JoAnn Wollenburg's brother*)
- Dorothy, Elois & Michael (*family & friends of Michelle Miller*)
- Dylan, Laura & medical staff (*Hass's family members*)
- Georgette & Family (*friends of Susie Syx*)
- Jennifer & Whitney (*Gloria Miller's cousin & granddaughter*)
- Jim Mooney (*Dan Mooney's father*)
- Jose & Lidia Sanchez (*friends of Kim & Karen Hawkins*)
- Joseph (*friend of the Wollenburgs*)
- Lois Blake (*Kim Moy's cousin*)
- Margaret (*friend of Lori Mueller*)
- Michael Marks (*Susie Syx's cousin*)
- Shelley Anderson (*Carol Anderson's daughter*)
- The Vint Family (*friends of the Moy's*)

For unto you is
BORN
— THIS DAY IN THE
CITY OF DAVID
A SAVIOR
WHO IS CHRIST
The Lord

LUKE 2:11



December Anniversaries

Jesse & Kylie Warboys	6
Matthew & Jennifer Longley	9
Sharon McGrath & Paul Worcester	27
Dick & Sharon Zahm	28

December Birthdays

Kaylie Ring	1	Elizabeth McGrath	20
Karen Bertelsen	2	Lynn Hedell	21
Sydney Winstrom	2	Jeff McGrath	24
Jerry Bertelsen	4	Sherri Hunter	25
Pam Chelesvig	4	Fran Ruh	25
Nancy Sweetwood	4	Michael Bowman	26
Bev McCollum	6	Alec Jones	26
Lillian Scherer	8	Gina Ladd	26
Joel Page	10	LouAnn Hensens	28
Robert Kellams	11	Warren Little	28
Ashton Williams	11	Owen Moeller	28
Jeff Peterson	12	Thomas Gutheil	29
Sara Bichlmeier	16	Todd Moeller	29
John Finley	16	Diane Ervin	30
Cip Engel	17	Greg Foote	30
Riley Maxwell	17	Tim Mueller	30
Carol Bowley	18	Lynell Stafford	30
Les Rygg	18		