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**WORSHIP WITH US!**  
Saturdays at 5:30 PM • Sundays at 10:00 AM • Anytime at [www.MorningStarOmaha.org](http://www.MorningStarOmaha.org)

December 2021 Newsletter

# Message

FROM PASTOR CHRIS

***“As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but the one who is more powerful than I is coming;’ ”***

***~ Luke 3:7-18***

Raise your hand if you enjoy the season of Advent. Oh, ok. Just checking. I'm wondering because in our culture, Advent and Christmas appear to be lumped together into one hustling, heaping, and hyped-up jovial season of celebration. Lights are strung. Christmas trees adorn the corners of homes and businesses. Even the sneaky little green elves and bright bearded Santa can be caught peeking at us from the upper shelf with a mischievous glimmer in their eyes.

Truth be told, we tend to get ahead of ourselves when it comes to Christmas. Part of the blame, of course, might be the human temptation to escape into the joy, skipping ahead into the good stuff and feel-good beauty of Christmas.

The other part of the blame lies at the doorstep of the commercial world. This is where our merry markets successfully conflate two entirely different church seasons into one. Retailers want us to be in a jolly good spending mood. Christmas, branded by the ideals of gift giving and hyper consumerism could not have come at a better time of year! Yet in the process, our four weeks of Advent are often transformed into a countdown clock for board room balance sheets. Bottom lines will be bolstered. Deficits will hopefully be transformed into profits.

*‘Bah humbug’* you say! And perhaps you're right, even though you'll find me scrambling around shopping for the same deals as the rest of us to supply the bottom of the tree. The point is that when we are too fast to make too much of Christmas, we minimize one of the most important seasons of our journeys of faith, Advent. When we invest more in the glory of Christmas, we skip ahead. In this way, we potentially rob ourselves of some of the essential faith practices during the season of Advent: preparation, repentance, and a holy waiting for the powerful one coming into the world.

If you think I'm being a bit harsh, consider our encounter with John the Baptist in scripture. After all, it's John who seeks to stand in the way of Christmas, not to prevent it, but to compel us to slow down and pave the way for what is about to come. John wants us to take things one step at a time, getting over ourselves a bit to instead get on with welcoming the Lord in the world.

At one point in Luke's Gospel John scolds a crowd calling out, *“You brood of vipers!”* Then he follows starkly with, *“Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance.”* Admittedly, these aren't the kinds of words scripted on seasonal greeting cards. But John does have a valid theological point when it comes to our journeys of faith. Repentance of sin.

Repentance might not seem to be all that exciting or relevant for the season's 'spirit.' But it most definitely is! I like the idea of repentance as explained by Elizabeth Self. She says that *“sin is like mud on a window.”* God's love and mercy are like rays of sunlight trying to shine through to us to light our way and give us life. But, of course, the mud keeps the sun from shining through that window. The mud stops the sun's rays from reaching us where that light is needed the most. It doesn't stop God from trying to shine his light upon us, but it does stop us from being able to see clearly a powerful and grace filled light that is coming into the world.

In this way, these four weeks of Advent have an important role for our faith. John the Baptist wants us to know about it, as do I. So, perhaps the best thing we can do is to make some time this season for some much-needed window cleaning. Perhaps amid the muddy hustle and bustle of our own personal agendas and the distractions of the world these next four weeks, we could take some intentional time in prayer and to turn back to the Lord. God has a light to shine for you. But it is only with clear vision that we will ever be able to see clearly that bright, urgent, and hopeful light for our life and the world to come. In this way, we will surely be ready for Christmas as we receive the greatest gift God has ever given us, his only Son.

Blessings to each of you in this season of hopeful waiting and preparation for the coming of the Lord. May you see God's brightly shining light of love and promise for you always.

Your partner in ministry,

Pr. Chris

PS: I invite you to consider joining Greta Carlson at 5:00 PM each Wednesday during Advent on Facebook live for a brief devotional time as we prepare our hearts this season for the coming of our Lord!

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 place your donation in the offering, the mail, or online by December 19. Thank you for your continued generosity!

#### **THE MORNING STAR MINISTRY TEAM**

<i>Christopher Hawkins</i>	<i>Lead Pastor</i>
<i>Glenn Schacht</i>	<i>Pastor</i>
<i>Greta Carlson</i>	<i>Director of Faith Formation &amp; Family Ministries</i>
<i>Susie Syx</i>	<i>Office Manager</i>
<i>Sarah Dumke</i>	<i>Director of Preschool &amp; Childcare Center</i>
<i>Simone Weber</i>	<i>Music Minister</i>
<i>James Creason</i>	<i>Facility Manager</i>
<i>Art Lorenz</i>	<i>Sound Engineer</i>
<i>Kyle Wolfe</i>	<i>Video Technician</i>
<i>Pastor Sara Jensen</i>	<i>Pulpit Supply</i>
<i>Jean Johnson</i>	<i>Saturday Pianist</i>
<i>Colleen Jeffrey</i>	<i>Saturday Pianist</i>

*Merry Christmas from your Church Council*



Our Little Free Library needs a little love. Contact the Church Office if you are able to help spruce it up!



*Welcome  
Little One!*



*Congratulations to  
Philip & Torrie Niewohner on  
the birth of their little boy, Oliver,  
on November 23rd!*



Video streaming will always be available on Facebook at 10<sup>AM</sup> or shortly after on our website [www.MorningStarOmaha.org](http://www.MorningStarOmaha.org).

Home Communion kits are available for contactless pick up anytime by contacting the Church Office.



The Faith Partners ministry team will meet on Thursday, December 16 at 4:45 PM. Contact Pastor Glenn if you would like to help in this ministry.



## Christmas at Morning Star

### *Advent Worship Services*

Saturdays ♦ 5:30 PM

Sundays ♦ 10:00 AM

November 27, December 4, 11 & 18

November 28, December 5, 12 & 19

### *Weekly Advent Devotions with Greta*

Wednesdays ♦ 5:00 PM

Online on Facebook or our website. Don't forget to pick up your Advent Kit from Greta to make your Advent practice at home more meaningful (kit contains candle holder, candles & devotion book).

### *Morning Star's Advent Festival*

Saturday, December 18 ♦ 4:00 - 5:30 PM

We will decorate cookies, have a Christmas sweater contest, and sing along to Christmas carols!

### *Morning Star's Blue Christmas Service*

Saturday, December 18 ♦ 5:30 PM

Our annual worship service for those who have suffered loss or have a difficulty during the holidays.

### *No Stress Christmas Program*

Sunday, December 19 ♦ 10:00 AM

This year's Christmas Program is interactive fun with the congregation in worship and will not require any rehearsal. All ages welcome!

### *Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Live Nativity & Treats*

Friday, December 24 ♦ 5:00 PM

Join us from 3:30-5 PM for a live nativity from Scatter Joy Acres and goodies from Table Grace's Mobile Café with fellowship before the service.

### *Lessons & Carols*

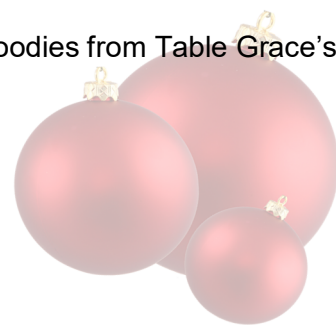
Sunday, December 26 ♦ 10:00 AM

A beautiful worship service complete with song requests.

(Note there is no December 25 Service)

### *Christmas Service Opportunities*

- Sponsor a beautiful poinsettia plants that adorns our Sanctuary for Christmas in honor or memory of a loved one! Contact the Church Office by December 19.
- Sponsor a family in need with Lutheran Family Services or Westside Boys & Girls Club through our Angel Tree. Donations are due December 13.





# Missions and Outreach

*Bringing the Light of Christ to ALL Creation*



## Green Envelope

This month's Green Envelope supports "Welcome the Stranger", our Refugee Program. Morning Star is partnering with First Presbyterian Church to sponsor a refugee family. No family has been assigned to us yet. We are asking for your help. In addition to the list of items we are already collecting for Lutheran Family Services, we ask that you consider donating household items that you may be replacing in your home. Just as we requested for the family we welcomed three years ago, the items should be in very good condition. It is exciting to partner with another church denomination and to be a part of a new beginning for a family.



## **Angel Tree is HERE!**

This time of year can be hard on families struggling to make ends meet. You can make a difference in the lives of the families served by Lutheran Family Services and the Westside Boys & Girls Club!

Just select a child or family from the tree then go shopping from the suggested list. No time to shop? Donate and the shopping will be done for you (note on the check that it's for the Angel Tree). Online donations also accepted! All donations and gifts are due by December 13.



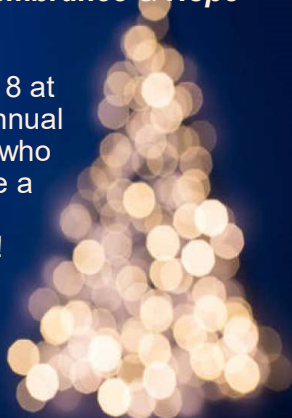
2022-2023 Winstrom Youth Service Scholarship applications are now available. Pick one up at the information center in the Gathering Space, go online or contact the Church Office for one. **Deadline is March 1!**



Poinsettias will once again fill our sanctuary! To order a poinsettia, complete the form at the church and place it in the offering plate with your check or contact the Church Office. The cost is \$15 per plant. Orders will be accepted through **Sunday, December 19**. You may pick up your poinsettia after the service on December 24.

## **Blue Christmas ♦ Saturday, December 18** *A Service of Remembrance & Hope*

On Saturday, December 18 at 5:30 <sup>PM</sup> we will host our annual worship service for those who have suffered loss or have a difficult time during the holidays. All are welcome!





# MORNING STAR

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

### CHILDREN & YOUTH

**Morning Star Preschool  
& Child Care Center**



As we talk about the reason for the season, children will be inspired by the true meaning of Christmas. We will record the performance of the Green, Red and Orange Star children for the Nativity Play on December 8. Families will be able to view the performance via YouTube.

Our Holiday Traditions and Holiday Fun themes will get us into the holiday spirit with festive activities including Wave to Santa Day, Cookie Decorating, Caroling and Christmas Sweater Day. Songs, instruments, games and counting activities will help ring in the New Year.

***Merry Christmas from all of us at the Morning Star Preschool & Child Care Center!***



This year's Christmas Program will be interactive with the congregation in worship and will not require any rehearsal! We invite you to attend worship on Sunday, December 19 to participate. All ages welcome!



#### **Crafts and Cocoa with Greta**

Come craft and enjoy hot cocoa with Greta on Tuesday, November 30 at 6 PM to prepare simple costume items for the Christmas Program. All ages welcome. We will meet in the conference room.



#### **Advent Wreath Kits**

Advent wreath kits are available again this year to help make your Advent practice at home more meaningful. Visit with Greta in the Gathering Space before or after service or request your kit by contacting Greta ([Greta@MorningStarOmaha.org](mailto:Greta@MorningStarOmaha.org) or call 402-393-5553). Supplies will be available to pick up or delivered.



Come to Family Sunday School on Sunday, December 12 at 9 AM. Contact Greta if you would like to help.



**Morning Star's  
Advent Festival  
Saturday, December 18  
4:00 to 5:30 PM**

We will decorate cookies, have a Christmas sweater contest, and sing along to Christmas carols. You do NOT want to miss this fun day! All ages are welcome. Contact Greta for more information.





## Council Highlights & CELEBRATION

- The conclusion of our stewardship campaign with timely messages led by Pastor Chris.
- A very successful Trunk or Treat event with a bounce house, Mobile Grace Cafe, trunks, and activities that served 155 children on a beautiful fall night.
- A beautiful and bittersweet Reformation Sunday service with a send off and thank you to Bev McCollum and a celebration of 55 years of ministry for Kent Morse.
- A thank you to all who supported and helped with our outreach to Westside Boys and Girls Club this Thanksgiving. We will be providing 160 meals to our neighbors.

*From Pastor Chris, Pastor Glenn, Greta, Susie, Simone, Sarah, & James*

### Worship Assistants for December

Date	Communion Assisting	Reader	Greeter/Usher
December 5	Rod Anderson	Kyle Wolfe	
December 12	Gloria Miller	Jan Zarestky	Marge Morgan & Carol Smith
December 19	Diane Konvalina	Greta Carlson	Joel Rohde & Terri Micheels
December 26	Donna J. Walter	Gloria Miller	Chris Hedican & Jim McGill



*Words cannot express the gratitude I feel for the very generous gift and beautiful cards presented to me on Reformation Sunday (and through the mail). The gift was overwhelming and I could feel the love from all of you. Thank you so much for being such an important part of my life and music ministry all these years. Your friendship will always be a part of me as I feel your wonderful support in this transitional time in my life. I am very grateful for your prayers and will somehow stay in touch with you to keep you updated.*

*I love you all!  
Bev*

## ~flowers & bulletins~

Thanks for your generosity with the altar flowers and bulletins. If you would like to be a sponsor, see the calendar in the Welcome Center or call the Church Office. Thanks **Piccolo Florists** for bringing our Altar Flowers.

### Flower Sponsors

### Bulletin Sponsors

December 5	Gretchen Backlund	Gretchen Backlund	Fred Zabel
December 12	John & Diane Konvalina	John & Diane Konvalina	Jan Dahlk
December 19	Jan Dahlk	Jan Dahlk	Rod & Cindy Anderson
December 26	Dick & Sharon Zahm	Fran & Ron Ruh	Jan Dahlk

# December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> 10 Bible Study 4 Organ Rehearsal 5 Advent Devotions 6:30 Confirmation	<b>2</b> 9 Piano Rehearsal 7 DBSA	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 9 Quilting Group Christmas Party 5:30 Worship
<b>5</b> 10 Worship	<b>6</b> 9 Preschool Nativity Play Rehearsal 6 NWFT Trailblazers 7 Outreach Committee Meeting	<b>7</b> 9 Preschool Nativity Play Rehearsal 9:30 Staff Meeting 5:30 AA Meeting	<b>8</b> 9:30 Preschool Nativity Play 10 Bible Study 10:45 Preschool Nativity Play 5 Advent Devotions 6 Youth Gathering Bible Study 6:30 Confirmation	<b>9</b> 5 Wedding Rehearsal 7 DBSA	<b>10</b> 4 Konvalina Wedding	<b>11</b> 9 DKG Group Christmas Party 5:30 Worship
<b>12</b> 9 Sunday School 10 Worship	<b>13</b> <i><b>Angel Tree Donations Due</b></i> 6:30 Church Council Meeting	<b>14</b> 9:30 Staff Meeting 5:30 AA Meeting	<b>15</b> 10 Bible Study 4 Organ Rehearsal 5 Advent Devotions 6:30 Confirmation	<b>16</b> 12 Worship at Table Grace 4:45 Faith Partner's Meeting 7 DBSA	<b>17</b> 4:30 Table Grace Christmas Smorgasbord <i><b>Order online on their Facebook page!</b></i>	<b>18</b> 4 Advent Festival 5:30 Blue Christmas Worship Service
<b>19</b> 10 Worship & "No Stress" Christmas Program 11:30 Youth Service Project	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 9:30 Staff Meeting 5:30 AA Meeting 5:30 Personnel Committee Meeting	<b>22</b> 10 Bible Study 5 Advent Devotions	<b>23</b> 7 DBSA   <i>Preschool Closed</i>	<b>24</b> 3:30 Live Nativity & Food Truck 5 Candlelight Christmas Eve Service   <i>Morning Star Offices &amp; Preschool Closed</i>	<b>25</b> <i><b>NO WORSHIP</b></i>   
<b>26</b> 10 Lessons & Carols Worship Service	<b>27</b> 	<b>28</b> 5:30 AA Meeting	<b>29</b> 10 Bible Study 4 Organ Rehearsal	<b>30</b> 7 DBSA   <i>Preschool Closed</i>	<b>31</b>  <i>Morning Star Offices &amp; Preschool Closed</i>	



# MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH

331 S. 85<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Omaha, NE 68114

Address Correction Requested



## **Prayers**

Marcia Bergstrom  
Jan Dahlk  
Lowell Gratopp  
Ken Hagemann  
Virgene Kobold  
Eunice Levisay  
Bev McCollum  
Don McWhirter  
Alexandria Clem (*Michelle Miller's daughter*)  
Angie (*Moy family friend*)  
Bob (*Gloria Miller's cousin*)  
Carol Schacht (*Pastor Glenn's sister-in-law*)

Dave Davis (*friend of Ric Miller*)  
Deanne (*friend of the Maxwell's*)  
Charlotte, Joseph & Gary (*Wollenburg's family & friends*)  
Kitty (*friend of John & Donna Walter*)  
Lauren W. (*granddaughter of Janice Hass*)  
Margaret (*friend of Lori Mueller*)  
Megan (*Betty Williams' daughter*)  
Ryan W. (*friend of the Hass*)  
Shelley Anderson (*Carol Anderson's daughter*)  
Tim (*friend of the Moys*)  
Todd Koers (*son of Wally Koers*)  
Will (*brother-in-law of Ben Byers*)



## **December Anniversaries**

Jesse & Kylie Warboys	12/6
Matthew & Jennifer Longley	12/9
Sharon McGrath & Paul Worcester	12/27
Dick & Sharon Zahm	12/28

## **December Birthdays**

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