

December, 2021

**MARK: MY WORDS**

Hopefully it will be different than last year. While much of the time during the lockdown because of the pandemic is a blur, one memory that is very clear is that we had to conduct all of our Advent and Christmas services remotely. Of all the times during the church year when that was necessary, those days were the most difficult.

Because, of course, at a fundamental level, that necessity contradicted the whole point of the season(s). What we celebrate and proclaim is the *Incarnation* of Jesus: God-in-the-*flesh* of our humanity. On Christmas Eve, Luke’s familiar birth story locates Jesus *not* among the “heavenly host” of angels who announce The Birth to the shepherds, but in the pain of labor and the blood and water of delivery and the suffering of living under the iron fist of hated occupiers of God’s People’s land and homes.

In the words of Lutheran theologian Gordon Lathrop, which I have often quoted at this time of year: “Jesus joins us in our poverty, and now we have a chance.” The power and promise and impact of that story becomes diminished when we hear it alone and without the presence of others who come looking to hear and grasp that “chance.”

At the time of this writing, La Porte County had just recently moved from the “yellow” COVID zone into “orange.” We are still meeting in person—still singing and responding—still eating and drinking and remembering our Baptism—still anointing with oil and praying for healing. As cumbersome and sometimes annoying as it is to have to continue to wear masks and keep proper social distance, at *least* we are still present to one another and to God in the flesh-and-blood in which Jesus, in the words of the Christmas Gospel from John 1, “pitched His tent.”

It is obviously too soon to be able to confidently predict whether we will remain able to worship in person throughout Advent and into Christmas Eve and Day. Our plans are that we will do so. If we enter into the “red” zone, then the Church Council will meet to discuss and decide whether we continue to meet in person or go back to remote worship.

For a variety of important reasons, we hope and pray that we will be able to be together in those days. Not least of those reasons is that simply *by* being together we bear witness to Jesus’ Body in the poverty of this world since, through Baptism, God has formed us into His head and feet, hands and arms, voice and ears that bring “good news of great joy to all the people.”

The tree, the decorations, the lights, and candles all enhance the beauty and joy of these days; but what drives the Gospel home is receiving it surrounded by fellow Body members who are again surprised and “amazed at what they had heard and seen which the Lord had made known to them” (Luke 2:20).

May God grant us a peace-full communal Advent and Christmas.



**ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

Although this information was posted last month, it is good to be reminded of our worship schedule for the end of Advent/beginning of Christmas, especially the dates and times around Christmas Eve and Christmas Day:

**Saturday, December 18** Fourth Saturday in Advent 4:00 p.m.

**Sunday, December 19** Fourth Sunday in Advent 9:00 a.m.

**Friday, December 24** Christmas Eve 6:00 p.m.

**Saturday, December 25** Christmas Day 10:00 a.m.

**(No 4:00 p.m. worship)**

**Sunday, December 26** The First Sunday after Christmas 9:00 a.m.

Some additional information will be helpful: on Christmas Eve we will have special pre-service music that will begin at **5:45 p.m.** There will be two pieces for organ and flute with Betsy Kohn again graciously agreeing to play for us before her own worship service; two pieces by the choir, and one song by the Praise Band.

On the First Sunday after Christmas, we will again offer a Service of Lessons and Carols with some traditional Scripture readings for the season interspersed with some beloved Christmas carols. There will be no homily on that day.

On the following weekend of January 1-2, we will observe the minor festival Day of The Name of Jesus, and the weekend after that we will celebrate both the Epiphany and The Baptism of Our Lord together as we have done a number of times in the past. More about those Days will be forthcoming in the January newsletter.

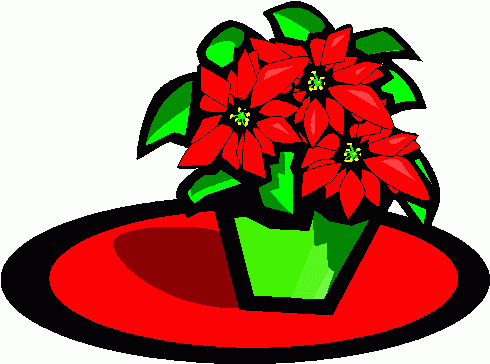
As written above we pray that this year we will be able to gather in person for the Advent/Christmas liturgies, and we hope that you will avail yourself of these wonderful opportunities to gather with us and enjoy the beauty and power of these special worship services.



**ADVENT SENIOR COMMUNION**

Although we are worshipping in person this Advent the Worship Team and Altar Guild have decided **not** to have our traditional Advent Senior Communion service and luncheon afterward. Many of those who attend that service are some of our most vulnerable members health-wise, and we want to keep the risk of illness to a minimum for them. We are also not yet gathering for meals in the St. Paul Room so that would eliminate the lunch following the service.

At the November Worship Team meeting, we discussed the possibility of returning to our practice for the Lenten Senior Communion service but we will keep you informed as that season of the church year draws closer since a decision would, of course, be based upon where the COVID infection rate for La Porte County stands at that time. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to struggle with staying safe and healthy in these difficult times.



**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS**

You still have time to purchase a Christmas Poinsettia. Each plant will be in a 6½-inch pot with 3 – 6 blooms. Each plant will cost $6.50 and can be given “in memory of” or “in honor of” a loved one. Please place your order through the church office (219-874-7293); or place your information on an envelope with cash or a check made out to St. Paul Lutheran Church, and place it in the offering plate. You are welcome to take your plant(s) home after the Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or Sunday (December 26) service. **Orders must be placed by Monday, December 13.** The final count will be turned in that day.

**Please note:** Richard Cains is sponsoring St. Paul’s Christmas poinsettias this year to honor his wife, Suzanne, who passed away unexpectedly in August. With Rich’s sponsorship, 100% of your purchase of a poinsettia for $6.50 will benefit St. Paul. Thank you, Richard!

 **CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS** 

We are blessed to have volunteers who are willing year after year to organize and put up the beautiful decorations for our celebration of Advent and The Twelve Days of Christmas. It is easy to assume these decorations will always be there at the right time and in the right way. We forget how much time and effort it takes to get them out of storage, put them up, clean up afterward, then take them down after The Epiphany, and return them to storage. Normally, we list these generous, hard workers after the decorations have come down; but this year, it seemed good to honor them beforehand so that, when you see them, you might thank them for all their faithful work. Many of them have been doing the same jobs for a long time, and we are grateful for their selfless service at a time of year when everyone is busy and weary.

Christmas Tree Bob and Karen Kiser; Bill Seedorf; Larry

and Judy Litchford; Wayne and Suzann Dolson; Kelly and Brad Neulieb

Advent Log Virginia Murray

Poinsettia plants Virginia Murray; Sue Koziel

Large wooden cross Janet Bakken; Sue Koziel; Karen Steinborn

Garland (outer narthex and Communion railings) Karen Steinborn; Sue Koziel

Window treatments (nave and outside) Mary Knaup

Upper narthex nativity scene and creche Pastor Mark Kloess; Jary Tannehill; Stacie

Crozier

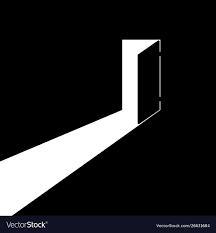


Hello, St. Paul members and staff! I would like to thank you all for the outpouring of love and help from the benefit and car show to take care of some of the medical and life expenses.

We appreciate the donations, prayers, love, and support that continues through the Church and congregation. I am getting stronger and healthier daily, along with keeping the current state of the soup kitchen afloat Sunday through Thursday.

Again, Heather and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts and wish you all a holiday season filled with peace, joy, and blessings into the new year.

Erik and Heather Tannehill



**LIGHTS AND DOORS**

Just a gentle reminder to make sure that lights are off in a room when you are finished, and doors are shut and locked. There have been lights left on in hallways recently, and a young homeless man got into the lower narthex because the side door was not locked tightly. That door in particular needs to be checked carefully because the bar doesn’t always catch and it remains open even when it seems to be locked.

With utility costs predicted to skyrocket this winter, we want to be careful about our use of heat and electricity; and we also want to keep our buildings as safe as possible. Thank you for your care and attention to these issues.



Because of the way the end of Advent and Christmas Eve/Day fall on the calendar this year, it will be difficult for me to take some time off afterward; but I hope during the week following I will be able to get away for a few days to recharge for the season of Epiphany and then the busiest time of year as we enter Lent.



**A BIG THANK YOU** to  Larry Litchford, Richard Fleming, David Squires, Mark Kloess, and Bob Kiser from the Property Team for painting the outside of the lower church windows and doors. Thanks!



**May you have**

**a Joyous Christmas**

**and a Blessed New Year!**

**December Birthdays**



2 Paul Brooks

Amy Maesch

Barbara Schillke

3 John VanGemeren

4 Jeffrey Galinowski

Mark Reshan

Emily Sebesta

6 Donna Ottersen

Dawn Pagels

Jenny Wysmier

8 Judith Gleason

9 Pamela Thiede

12 Pamela Henderson

13 Douglas Kienitz

14 Karen Steinborn

15 Ellen Pane

Maxine Powell

James Summers

17 Carol Radke

19 Christopher Eldridge

Sean Hapke

Kara Sebesta

20 Stephanie Summers

22 Virgil Miller

26 Barbara Fulkerson

27 William Hackett

28 Roger Miller

Benjamin Robbins

29 Sherry Payne



**IN MEMORY OF SUZANNE CAINS**

**Crusader Fund** by Alan & Janice Plamowski

**IN MEMORY OF HELEN STIBBE’S BIRTHDAY**

**General Fund** by her daughters, Kay Peglow, Pam Sullivan, Linda Strohacker, and Pat Jones

**IN HONOR OF ALL VOLUNTEERS**

**General Fund** by Martha Schroeder



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**Long-Term Prayer List**

Robert Atwood Sherry Brotsky Laura Eilers-Straight

Jim Gleason Dolores Hackett Terry Hygema

Jess Kalvaitis Christine Kiser Ryan Krueger

Tom & Larry Leuth Ken Mulder Duane Ormsby

George Ottersen Jean Thomas Linda Utley

Chris Weninger



Monday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Wednesday 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon

Friday 8:00 a.m. – 12 noon

**St. Paul Lutheran Church & School Staff**

Pastor Mark Reshan

Organist John Remmel

Accompanists Jary Tannehill, Mark Tannehill, Jacob Tannehill

Choir Director Lori Zylstra

Office Secretary Libby Pollock

Custodian Mark Kloess

School Principal Tracey McCay

School Office Coordinator Lisa Heddens

School Custodian Kevin Winkler

Thank$ for $haring

Last month we received $285 from Galvston. Thank you to all who participated!

This month,we will see you at Holly’s! We’re giving you two coupons so you can invite a friend and give them their own coupon. Remember, the coupon is required for the Give-Back bucks.

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