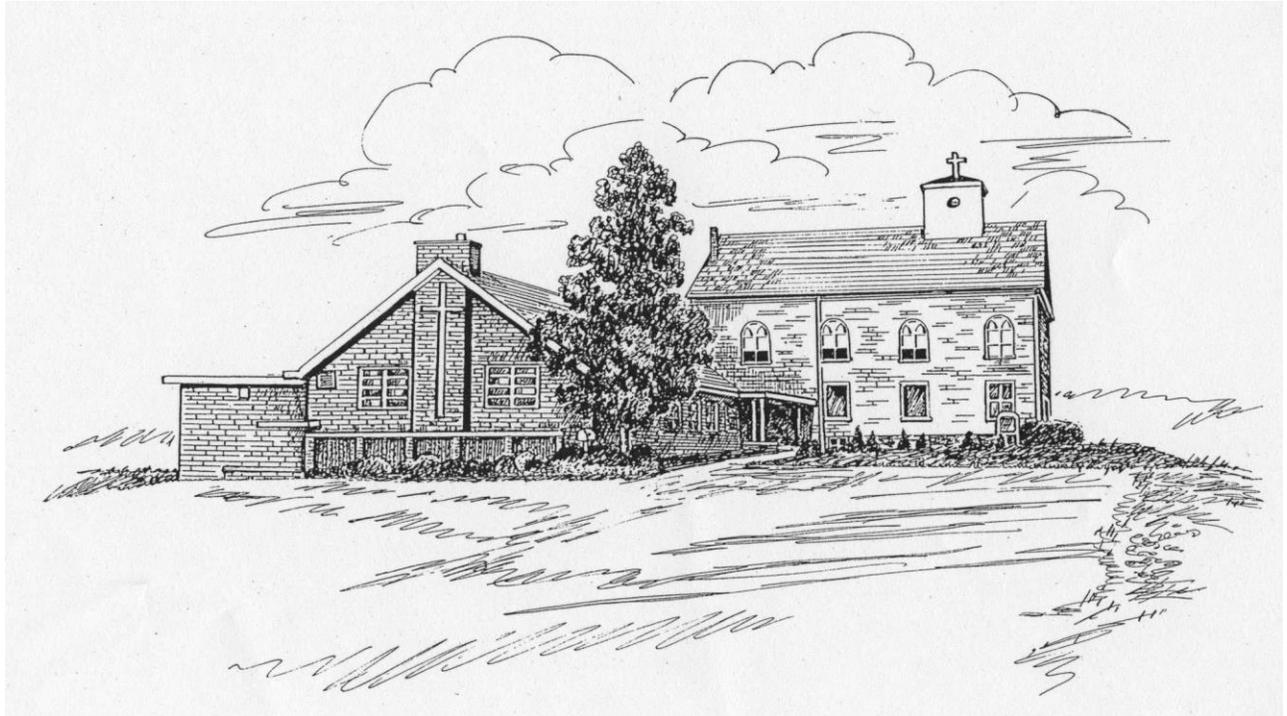


WISPS OF STRAW



St. James Lutheran Church Newsletter

December 2017

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*“Serving Christ in Word and Deed”
more than 265 Years*

From the Pastor's Desk

Looking Back to See the Future

In the financial services industry, there is a common disclaimer: "Past performance is no guarantee of future results." Financial service providers don't want current or prospective customers to assume that experiences of the past will necessarily be experienced in the future. Basically, the disclaimer tells customers, "Don't let your hopes/expectations be too high." Of course, for financial service providers this makes sense: too much is out of their control.



Advent is a time when the liturgy encourages the people of God to look back and recall past events in order to have high hopes/expectations for the future. Advent is the time when we recall the mighty acts of God in the continually unfolding salvation narrative in order to bolster our faith in God. And, of course, for the people of God this makes sense: *nothing* is beyond God's control. Advent is the time when the Church encourages the children of God to be patient.

And what do we do? We intensify the rush to Christmas. We try to make the day after Thanksgiving (or in some cases Columbus Day) to be the first day of Christmas. And we turn Christmas into the culmination of binge buying. We bring out tubs of decorations, we over-schedule ourselves, we try to cram as much "ho-ho-ho" into the first 25 days of December. The result typically is that we end the year with greater angst, tattered hope and a malnourished faith.

The Hebrew Scripture lessons in Advent take us forward from a prayer to a promise. On the First Sunday in Advent, the Isaiah text has us pray that God would come in power quickly. On the Second Sunday we read that God wants the prophet to comfort God's people by announcing that God will come. On the Third Sunday in Advent, God assures us that righteous will flourish when He comes. And on the final Sunday we hear God's promise to David that God will provide a place and someone to protect God's people. That someone will sit on David's throne forever. We know that "someone" of course is the Christ. Ironically, the Gospel lessons take us backward. They begin with a glimpse of the second coming of Christ. It is a look at the future. On the Second Sunday of Advent, the Gospel moves us *back in time* and we see John the Baptizer announcing the coming of the Lamb of God as the inauguration of Jesus' earthly ministry. On the Third Sunday we hear Mary's response (*The Magnificat*) to the angel's announcement. And on the fourth Sunday we read of the angel's announcement. The Gospel narrative moves us from promise to promise. God made good on his promise to Mary. We can trust His promise to come again and make the righteous flourish.

So, the Scriptures have us bouncing back and forth through time. For movie fans, it is very reminiscent of Doc Brown in *Back to the Future*. But the point of all of this bouncing is to remind us that God is in control. God has a plan of salvation which has been unfolding since the dawn of time. It is the Church's way of reminding us that promised future events are as dependable as the past events the people of God have experienced. So, let's keep our hopes and expectations very high. After all, with God, past performance is a *very good* indicator of future events. I encourage you to take some time in this busy Christmas rush to come and be assured of God's past performance, future promises, and constant presence. Keep a blessed Advent.

Pastor Kelly



Christmas is a-coming!

But BEFORE Christmas is ***Christmas Eve***. This is one of the highest attendance worship times all year. It is also one of the most sacred. Therefore, it is a time of worship that requires a great deal of volunteer support. Please consider these ways you may be able to help and sign-up in the lobby outside Ed Frey Hall or in the narthex of the church.

BEFORE CHRISTMAS EVE:

Come join in the fun to decorate on December 17th! After worship we will have a decorating party! We need someone to provide light refreshments, and LOTS of someones to hang lights, hang ornaments, place Nativity scene, hang wreaths, etc. We'll have Christmas music playing to set the mood!

We also need folks to take advertising postcards out into the community. Postcards will be available in the lobby of Ed Frey Hall and in the narthex of the Church.

CHRISTMAS EVE:

In order to make sure that everything goes smoothly and that visitors are made to feel welcome we need some extra volunteers. Please see the chart below and consider serving on this special occasion. Because of the different timing of each volunteer position, you could sign up for more than one. ***Please be sure to sign up in the lobby outside Ed Frey Hall*** or call the church office and let Carol know how you will serve.

<u>Service & Number Needed</u> <u>(7:45 / 11:00)</u>	<u>7:45 PM</u>	<u>11:00 PM</u> (
Greeters (arrive 30 mins. Early, help clean up)	4 needed	2 needed
Ushers (arrive 30 mins. Early, help clean up)	4 needed	Filled Thank you!
Liturgist (assisting minister)	1 needed	1 needed
Lector (reader)	Filled Thank you!	1 needed
Communion Assistants	2 needed	1 needed
Vocal ensemble	All who want to sing	All who want to sing

Expect the Unexpected

As many looked for and awaited the coming of the Messiah-King, it is unlikely they expected to find him lying in a manger in a barn with cows, donkeys and sheep and all the dirt and smells that come with them. They were looking for someone who would come and rule over all the earth, a king whose kingdom would be everlasting and not be destroyed. How could this baby, born in this filthy place, under these lowly circumstances, be the one? Surely, his coming would be much different than this! The expectations of many who were waiting were limited and clouded by their human understanding and ideas.

And it isn't all that different today, is it? We often encounter Jesus where we least expect him...in a hospital emergency room, in an encounter with a co-worker, at a funeral, in a rehab facility, at the grocery store...in other words, *anywhere!* Sometimes we just don't see him. We don't recognize him because we expect him to appear only in a certain way or a certain time or a certain place. It isn't up to us. God is full of surprises and often appears in the most unexpected places! The key can be found in our awareness and openness to meet him anywhere we are. We should maintain that Advent quality of anticipation so that we are always ready. Not only can we encounter Jesus *anywhere* we go, but as post-resurrection people, we take him with us *everywhere* we go. In his book *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart*, pastor, psychologist and founder of Stephen Ministries, Kenneth Haugk suggests that we carry Jesus with us when we reach out to another and often find Jesus in that other person, waiting for us. These are what I call those sacred, Holy Spirit moments of connection.

My wish for you this Advent and Christmas season is that you will experience those moments of connection and not only see and experience the joy of Christ's presence in the obvious, expected places such as in worship, music, and traditional celebrations, but also in the unexpected.

In Peace,

Deacon Karen

New Year Plans!

As our new ministry has begun, we have come up with an initial plan and we just want to alert you to upcoming events. In January, after the rush of the Christmas season, we are planning:

- + Classes on visitation/homebound communion
- + Regular Book/Movie study
- + Monthly youth meetings/activities
- + Regular committee meetings pertaining to Youth Gathering
- + Also, all homebound members will be visited BEFORE Christmas.



+ *Getting Through the Holidays Grief Workshop* +

Holiday seasons are often among the most emotionally difficult of times for people who have experienced the death of a loved one. Holidays are intended to be a time of great joy, family togetherness, gift giving and thankfulness. Yet, if someone in your life has recently died, holidays can evoke extreme sadness, loneliness and emptiness. Even if the death occurred years ago, sometime the wave of loss and the anticipation of the holidays and how to get through them can be overwhelming. Come to a compassionate place where you can share with others who are hurting, remember your loved one and learn some methods for coping with your grief.

Date Monday, December 4th, 2017
Time 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
Place Grace Lutheran Church
300 Roseberry Street
Phillipsburg, NJ
Facilitator Karen Kelly, Lutheran Deacon
Hospice Chaplain and RN

Registration: This workshop is free of charge, however, for our planning purposes **please do call or email** either Deacon Kelly or the church **to register**. There will be handouts and refreshments.

Deacon Karen Kelly:
215-872-0949
or email: kbak58@comcast.net

Grace Lutheran Church
(908) 859-0884
or email: gracelc2003@verizon.net

Holiday Craft Vendor Fair

Our annual Craft Vendor Fair is coming soon! This fun holiday fundraiser will be held at the church on **Saturday, December 9th, from 9 am to 3 pm**. We need help with the food concession, so if you would be willing to help prepare, sell or clean-up please let Pr. Kelly or Jan know. (You can always let the church office know as well!)



Even if you are unable to help, please stop in and do some holiday shopping from the 20+ crafters & vendors.

Save the date

Sunday January 28th at 2:00 pm

Deacon Karen Kelly will be installed at Grace Lutheran Church as their Deacon for Congregational Care.

We will also have a celebration of Shared Ministry. Bishop Tracie Bartholomew will install Karen, with a fellowship meal to follow.



Youth Group Meeting

For youth in the 7-12th grades, we will have our first joint youth meeting with Grace Lutheran Church on **Sunday, December 10th**, from 6-8 pm. There will be pizza, soda, fun, fellowship, planning for Houston, and we will make luminaries to sell to raise funds.

We will also start planning for our Youth Events in 2018! Meeting to be at Grace in Luther Hall, bring acanned good to donate to a food pantry!

We plan to meet the **SECOND SUNDAY** of EACH MONTH from 6-8 pm. (The January meeting will be on Jan. 7th)

** **

The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us

Youth Luminary Fundraiser

Our youth are selling Christmas Luminary Kits (10 white bags, 10 votive candles, 10 baggies of sand) to raise money for the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston. Each Kit will cost \$10.00 and come with instructions.



Luminary Pre-Order Form

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Number of kits: _____

Price per kit: \$10.00 each

Total Cost: \$ _____

Additional pre-order forms will be available in the church. The kits will be available for delivery after Sunday, Dec. 10th, Or, you can pick them up in church when you come and help decorate on Dec. 17th.

See Pastor or Deacon Kelly for more information.

Worship Leaders Schedule December - January

Day/Date		Special	Communion Setup/Cleanup	Greeters	Lector	Liturgist	Ushers
Dec.	Sat. 16		Sue Miller		Rick Brunsell	Kelly Perna	
	Sun. 17	Decorate Church	Marlie Raspe	Janet Bray	Karen Kelly	Jamie McLain	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sat. 23		Marian Martin		Cindy Aloise	Lexi Rosetti	
	Sun. 24	ADVENT IV	Marlie Raspe		Jamie McLain	Ralph Avard	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sun. 24	Christmas Eve 7:45	To be determined	By sign-up ----->			
	Sun24	11:00pm	To be determined	By sign-up ----->			
	Sat 30		Sue Miller		Holly Chemidlin	Tori Esposito	
	Sun 31		Marlie Raspe	Carol Steible Lois Steible	Karoline Avard	Karen Kelly	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
Jan.	Sat. 6	Epiphany	Kelly Perna		Lexi Rosetti	Kelly Perna	
	Sun. 7	Epiphany	Marlie Raspe	Dave & Charlotte Morris	Marlie Raspe	Steve Stocker	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sat. 13	MLK, Jr. Weekend	Marion Martin		Mark Aloise	Cindy Aloise	
	Sun. 14	MLK, Jr. Weekend	Marlie Raspe	Janet Bray	Karen Kelly	Jamie McLain	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sat. 20		Holly Chemidilin		Rick Brunsell	Lexi Rosetti	
	Sun. 21		Marlie Raspe	George & Chris Scherer	Polly Sue Newbold	Ralph Avard	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sat. 27		Sue Miller		Kelly Perna	Sue Miller	
	Sun. 28		Marlie Raspe	Carol Steible Lois Steible	Bob Babcock	Steve Stocker	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble

November 18th Adult Bingo at St. James

