



OUR SAVIOUR LUTHERAN CHURCH
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Our Saviour's Good News

Volume XVIII, Issue XII

December 2023

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Saviour Lutheran Church welcomes all people to a safe place to grow in faith and serve the Lord Jesus Christ

Inside this issue:

- **Legend of Holly** 2
- Symbol of the Christmas Cross
- Legend of the Donkey's Cross
- **Christmas is Love** 3
- **Who is St. Nicholas** 4
- Santa Claus vs St. Nicholas
- **What Lutherans Teach** 5
- **What is an Advent Wreath** 6
- **Minutes** 7
- **Church Calendar-Events** 8
- **Shut-Ins** 9
- 2024 Church Envelops
- Need Worship Assistants (That's Not My Job)
- **Stewardship Minutes** 10
- Pearl Harbor Day
- Jesus is Better than Santa
- **CWL/Women's Meeting** 11
- Carol on the Square
- Dallas Parade
- Annual Reports Due
- Prayer List
- **Santa and Sarah** 12
- **Stewardship** 14



ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

Are you ready for Christmas? By that I do not mean, Do you have the tree up, all your shopping done, the presents wrapped, and the cards sent? Rather I am asking, Are you really ready for Christmas? Are you prepared for the arrival of God's Son?

Luke 1: 5-7 tell about an old Jewish priest by the name of Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. It says that they were "righteous before God, but they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years." They had no children, and the days for their hoping for a child were long gone.

In those days people believed that God would close the womb of a woman if He was mad at her. So a barren woman was a disgraced woman. Elizabeth was forced to live her life as though she had a sign hung around her neck that said, "God is mad at me." And even though Zechariah did not have quite the same kind of social stigma to have to deal with, still he had to live with the deep disappointment of having no child to carry on the family name.

Do you feel like Elizabeth? Is there something in your life that makes you feel ashamed or inadequate? Do you feel like Zechariah? Are you facing some deep sorrow or disappointment?

Well Luke tells us that while Zechariah was performing his priestly service in Jerusalem, he was chosen by lot to enter into the Holy Place in the Temple and burn incense there. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. While he was in the Holy Place, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and said, "Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John." (verse 13)

What do you mean, "Your prayer has been heard?" What prayer? If it was a prayer for a son, Zechariah had probably stopped praying that prayer a long time ago. Zechariah might have even forgotten about that prayer. But God had not forgotten. What prayer were you praying a long time ago? Maybe you have even forgotten about that prayer, but God has not forgotten.

In verse 18 Zechariah responds, "How will I know this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." Well the angel Gabriel did not like that response, and so he said, "Because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur." (verse 20) Zechariah comes out of the Temple unable to speak. A few days later he returns home.

Verses 24-25 tell us, "After those days Elizabeth conceived and for five months remained in seclusion." She said, "This is what the Lord has done for me when He looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

(Ready cont'd on page 2)

(Ready cont'd from page 1)

So here is Zechariah, a priest, a righteous man who knows God and who serves God. But Zechariah has some spiritual growing to do. When God gave him a wonderful promise, he did not believe that promise. He doubted and underestimated God. Zechariah is a prime example of a person who has known God for a long, long time. He goes to church. He is involved in church. He does all the right things at all the right times in all the right ways. But when God comes along and challenges him to grow to a new level of faith, he is not ready.

In contrast there is Elizabeth. Zechariah cannot speak. Elizabeth can speak, and when she does speak, she speaks about God's grace and mercy to her and of how He has taken away her shame and disgrace. She did not become bitter. Rather she kept on serving and praising God. Elizabeth was far more ready for Christmas than Zechariah.

Zechariah was not ready for Christmas because he did not believe that God could step into his life and answer some long-forgotten prayer in a totally unexpected way. How many of us are like Zechariah? If we were to be honest, we would have to admit that deep down inside we are deeply disappointed with God. And so, like old Zechariah, we keep on doing what we are supposed to be doing, but we really do not believe that God could and would step into our lives and do something that would bless us in unimaginable ways.

If that is you – if you no longer believe that God could and would step into your life and work in your life in an amazing way to bless you, then like Zechariah you are not ready for Christmas.

But the same God who sent an angel to Zechariah. The same God who sent a heavenly host to startle some shepherds and tell them about the birth of a Savior. And the same God who put a wonder in the sky to catch the attention of some star gazers, that same God has some very interesting and wonderful and amazing ways of getting through to you.

God has a way of sending you a word of hope to remind you that life is stronger than death, light is more powerful than darkness, good will prevail over evil, and joy is deeper than disappointment. All of which is at the heart of the message of Christmas.

The question is, Are we prepared for all that? Do you believe that God can work in your life in ways that you would never imagine to take away everything that is negative and disappointing in your life? If you do, then you are ready for Christmas.



LEGEND OF HOLLY

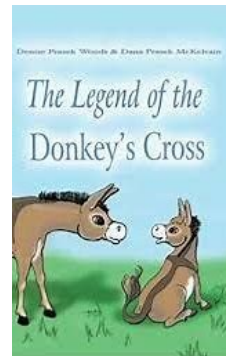


The bright red and green of holly make it a natural symbol of rebirth. Legends regarding this plant abound. According to one legend holly branches bearing white berries were woven into Christ's crown of thorns. Since the blood of Christ stained the berries, they grow red on the holly branch to this day. Holly has also come to stand for peace and joy.

SYMBOL OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE CROSS



The Christmas Tree celebrates the promise of Jesus. His Birth is symbolized by the Christ tree and yet upon another tree, the cross came His death with the promise of eternal life. The five stones are for the wounds He bore.

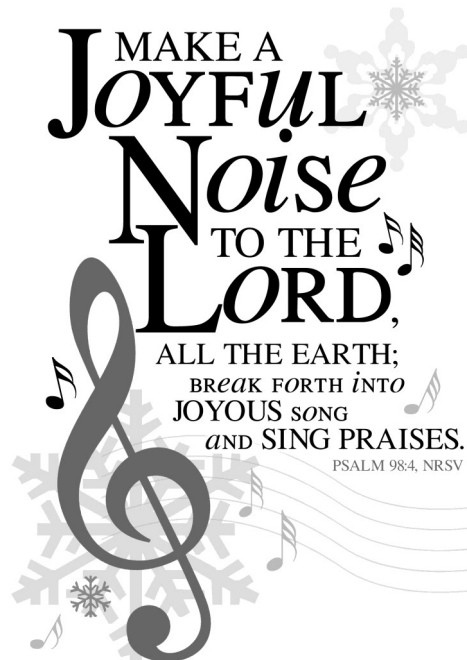


Legend tells us that the donkey that carried Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday followed Him to Calvary. Appalled by the sight of Jesus on the cross, the donkey turned away but could not leave. It is said that the shadow of the cross fell upon the shoulders and back of the donkey. A cross marking many donkeys today remains a testimony of the love and devotion of a humble, little donkey.

MAKE A
JOYFUL
Noise
TO THE
LORD,

ALL THE EARTH;
BREAK FORTH INTO
JOYOUS SONG
AND SING PRAISES.

PSALM 98:4, NRSV



Christmas Is for Love

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

Christmas is for love. It is for joy, for giving and sharing, for laughter, for reuniting with family and friends, for tinsel and brightly decorated packages. But mostly, Christmas is for love. I had not believed this until a small elf-like student with wide-eyed innocent eyes and soft rosy cheeks gave me a wondrous gift one Christmas.

Mark was an 11 year old orphan who lived with his aunt, a bitter middle aged woman greatly annoyed with the burden of caring for her dead sister's son. She never failed to remind young Mark, if it hadn't been for her generosity, he would be a vagrant, homeless waif. Still, with all the scolding and chilliness at home, he was a sweet and gentle child.

I had not noticed Mark particularly until he began staying after class each day (at the risk of arousing his aunt's anger, I later found) to help me straighten up the room. We did this quietly and comfortably, not speaking much, but enjoying the solitude of that hour of the day. When we did talk, Mark spoke mostly of his mother. Though he was quite small when she died, he remembered a kind, gentle, loving woman, who always spent much time with him.

As Christmas drew near however, Mark failed to stay after school each day. I looked forward to his coming, and when the days passed and he continued to scamper hurriedly from the room after class, I stopped him one afternoon and asked why he no longer helped me in the room. I told him how I had missed him, and his large gray eyes lit up eagerly as he replied, "Did you really miss me?"

I explained how he had been my best helper. "I was making you a surprise," he whispered confidentially. "It's for Christmas." With that, he became embarrassed and dashed from the room. He didn't stay after school any more after that.

Finally came the last school day before Christmas. Mark crept slowly into the room late that afternoon with his hands concealing something behind his back. "I have your present," he said timidly when I looked up. "I hope you like it." He held out his hands, and there lying in his small palms was a tiny wooden box.

"It's beautiful, Mark. Is there something in it?" I asked opening the top to look inside. "

"Oh you can't see what's in it," He replied, "and you can't touch it, or taste it or feel it, but mother always said it makes you feel good all the time, warm on cold nights, and safe when you're all alone."

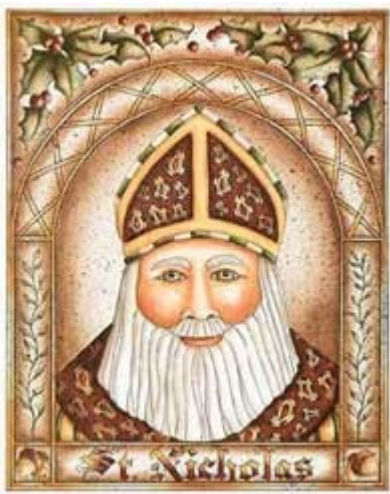
I gazed into the empty box. "What is it Mark," I asked gently, "that will make me feel so good?" "It's love," he whispered softly, "and mother always said it's best when you give it away." And he turned and quietly left the room.

So now I keep a small box crudely made of scraps of wood on the piano in my living room and only smile as inquiring friends raise quizzical eyebrows when I explain to them that there is love in it.

Yes, Christmas is for gaiety, mirth and song, for good and wondrous gifts. But mostly, Christmas is for love.



will be held on December 24 at 7:00 pm



Who is St. Nicholas

The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to

assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made of while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to the those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

Under the Roman Emperor , who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned. The prisons were so full of bishops, priests, and deacons, there was no room for the real criminals—murderers, thieves and robbers. After his release, Nicholas attended the in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra and was buried in his cathedral church, where a unique , called , formed in his grave. This liquid substance, said to have healing powers, fostered the growth of devotion to Nicholas. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration.

Through the centuries many stories and legends have been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds. These accounts help us understand his extraordinary character and why he is so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need.

One of the oldest stories showing St. Nicholas as a protector of children takes place long after his death. The townspeople of Myra were celebrating the good on the eve of his feast day when a band of Arab pirates from Crete came into the district. They stole treasures from the Church of Saint Nicholas to take away as booty. As they were leaving town, they snatched a young boy, Basilios, to make into a slave. The emir, or ruler, selected Basilios to be his personal cupbearer, as not knowing the language, Basilios would not understand what the king said to those around him. So, for the next year Basilios waited on the king, bringing his wine in a beautiful golden cup. For Basilios' parents, devastated at the loss of their only child, the year passed slowly, filled with grief. As the next St. Nicholas' feast day approached, Basilios' mother would not join in the festivity, as it was now a day of tragedy. However, she was persuaded to have a simple observance at home—with quiet prayers for Basilios' safekeeping. Meanwhile, as Basilios was fulfilling his tasks serving the emir, he was suddenly whisked up and away. St. Nicholas appeared to the terrified boy, blessed him, and set him down at his home back in Myra. Imagine the joy and wonderment when Basilios amazingly appeared before his parents, still holding the king's golden cup. This is the first story told of St. Nicholas protecting children—which became his primary role in the West.

Santa Claus vs Saint Nicholas.

Everybody loves Santa Claus. He embodies holiday cheer, happiness, fun, and gifts—warm happy aspects of the Christmas season. How do Santa Claus and St. Nicholas differ?

- Santa Claus belongs to childhood; St. Nicholas models for all of life.
- Santa Claus, as we know him, developed to boost Christmas sales—the commercial Christmas message; St. Nicholas told the story of Christ and peace, goodwill toward all—the hope-filled Christmas message.
- Santa Claus encourages consumption; St. Nicholas encourages compassion.
- Santa Claus appears each year to be seen and heard for a short time; St. Nicholas is part of the communion of , surrounding us always with prayer and example.
- Santa Claus flies through the air—from the North Pole; St. Nicholas walked the earth—caring for those in need.
- Santa Claus, for some, replaces the Babe of Bethlehem; St. Nicholas, for all, points to the Babe of Bethlehem.
- Santa Claus isn't bad; St. Nicholas is just better.

—J. Rosenthal & C. Myers



With our hands we give gifts that money can buy,
Diamonds that sparkle like stars in the sky,
But only the heart can give away
The gift of peace and a perfect day.

Helen Steiner Rice.

May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!
Psalms 29:11

Today, ask yourself, "If I were gift wrapped as a package for Jesus, would He be pleased to receive me? Do I concentrate to much on the outward wrappings and not enough on what's inside?"

What Lutheran Teach

(a series that will appear in Newsletters)

In 1517 Martin Luther posted ninety-five statements (theses) for debate in Wittenberg, Germany. His action was the beginning of the Reformation. Luther sought to reform the unbiblical teachings and practices that had crept into the Church, eclipsing the great good news that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting (people) trespasses against them” (1 Corinthians 5-9)

Luther and the Lutheran Reformation did not introduce new teachings to the Christian Church. Instead the Lutherans showed how the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always the vibrant, beating heart of the biblical and historic Christian faith and life.

This series summarizes the teachings of the “*one, holy, Christian, and apostolic Church*,” and thus what Lutherans teach.

GOD

Lutherans agree with the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and teach that “the Lord is our god, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4), who has revealed Himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19, John 14:25, John 15:26, 2 Corinthians 13:14). All three persons are coequal in all things, and God shows that He “is love” (1 John 4:8) by creating all things, redeeming fallen humans beings, and making us holy.

Original Sin

Lutherans teach that, since Adam and Eve fell into sin (Genesis 3), all people are “brought forth in iniquity” and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5). This sin is a hereditary sickness that prevents us from fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things, because “every intention of the thoughts of (humankind’s) heart (is) only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). This inborn sickness causes us to commit all kinds of evil deeds and merits only God’s eternal wrath.

Jesus Christ

Lutherans teach that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, took on human flesh, and was born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-38). He became true man in order to ransom the human race from the futile ways of sin, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). In Jesus Christ “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9) because He is both true God and true man, who was truly born (Luke 2:1-7), who lived a perfect life without sin (Hebrews 4:15), who “humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8), and who “has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). “He Himself bore our sins and live to righteousness. By His wound (we) have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24). When Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, God the Father “put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things in the church” (Ephesians 1:22), and “from thence He will come again to judge the living and dead” (Apostles Creed). Lutherans read the whole Bible with Jesus Christ as the center. The Old Testament prepares for and points forward to Jesus Christ, and the New Testament reveals and proclaims Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen for us sinners. As Martin Luther taught, the Bible is “the manager” that brings Jesus Christ to us.

The Gospel

Lutherans also teach that no human being can earn or obtain forgiveness of sins or life with God by any human efforts or works. A person is not justified — made right — with God “by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16). “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:22-24). Whoever “trusts Him who justified the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:5).

Office of the Ministry

In order that we may receive this gift of faith in Jesus Christ, God instituted the office of preaching the Gospel and giving out His Sacraments (Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Corinthians 4:11; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:42). Through these instruments — or means — of preaching the Gospel (Luke 24:47), baptizing with water (Acts 2:38), pronouncing forgiveness (John 20:22-23), and eating and drinking Christ’s body and blood (Matthew 26:26-28), the Holy Spirit “works faith, when and where it pleases God (John 3:8), in those who hear the good news” (Augsburg Confession, V 2).

Good Works

Lutherans also teach that this faith in Jesus Christ will naturally produce the good fruits of good works in the Christian life, “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Our good works cannot earn God’s favor, because He already gives us His forgiveness and favor in Jesus Christ. As new creations (2 Corinthians 5:7) Christians do the good works that God commands in His Word, such as trusting Him, calling upon Him in prayer, hearing His Word, and all works that “are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Romans 13:9).

The Church

Lutherans also teach that “only Holy Church is to remain forever” (Augsburg Confession, VII 1). This one Church consists of all believers among whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is purely preached and His Sacraments are given out for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. False Christians and hypocrites may associate themselves with the Christian Church, as weeds that grow among the Master’s wheat (Matthew 13:24-30), but all believers in Christ, “through many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another (Romans 12:5). As Luther said in the *Smalcald Articles*, “Thank God, today a seven-year-old child knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd” (*Smalcald Articles*, III XII 2).



(series to continue next month)



What is an Advent wreath?

As Christians, we use symbols to express visually the basic tenets of our faith and as reminders of the pilgrimage of our life in Christ. Symbols can have heightened meaning for us when associated with particular seasons of that journey. One such symbol is the Advent wreath.

The Advent wreath has its roots in the pre-Christian practices of northern Europe. People sought the return of the sun in the dark time of the year (at the winter solstice) by lighting candles and fires. As early as the Middle Ages, Christians used fire and light to represent Christ's coming into the world. Using this same symbolism, the Advent wreath developed a few centuries ago in Germany as a sign of the waiting and hopeful expectation of the return in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wreath, a circle, came to represent the eternal victory over death through Jesus Christ. The evergreens were a sign of the faithfulness of God to God's people, even in death, and the lighted candles were a reminder of the light of Christ brought into the world.

This symbolism can be just as strong for us today. As is the case with all symbols, they speak most loudly to remind us of God's promises of life when they are drawn directly out of our daily experience and environment. One should consider using only natural materials from God's creation when making an Advent wreath. Evergreens come in many varieties and may be treated with a flame retardant substance. Branches of holly, laurel, and other green shrubs, which retain their freshness longer than pine, may also be used. The circular shape, a symbol of eternal life, is most important. Using an alternative shape, such as a log, would diminish the meaning of the symbol, which is no longer a circle.

There is no one prescribed color for the candles, although several traditions are current. Four natural colored candles are always appropriate and symbolize the Light for which we wait. Four deep purple candles, a sign of the penitential nature sometimes attributed to the season, may be appropriate. Congregations that use blue as the liturgical color during Advent would be consistent to use blue candles. The older practice using a pink candle on the third Sunday in Advent is no longer consistent with the current lectionary.

Liturgical renewal in the last decades of this century has shifted the focus of these four weeks to one of hope and expectation of the coming of the Christ. This hope looks forward not only to celebrating the child in the manger, but even more to Christ's coming in glory at the end of time—a continuation of the eschatological emphasis of the last Sundays after Pentecost. Candles in rich royal blue are symbolic of this hope. Coincidentally, these two colors, purple and blue, have long been associated with the same ideas: the symbolic colors of royal blood and of longing; the natural colors of the dawn before the sun rises and the deep shades of midnight.

The size of the Advent wreath should be appropriate to the size of the worship space. Although the wreath should not draw attention away from the font, the table, and the ambo, it should be of sufficient size to make a strong statement about the meaning of the season. It may be hung or placed on a table or stand but it is never put on the altar.

Because the Advent wreath does not carry with it liturgical action or significance, it should be lit simply and unobtrusively, perhaps before the service when the other candles are lighted. It is also appropriate to light the candle after the Old Testament reading during the singing of the psalm or as a part of the entrance rite immediately following the entrance hymn. Blessings for the Advent wreath may be found in *Sundays and Seasons*. Some congregations like to accompany the lighting of the Advent wreath with an appropriate song. Consider using a different stanza of the same hymn, such as "Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah" (*ELW 240*), each week.

The Advent wreath is also appropriate for daily use in home devotions. The making of the wreath can be a family activity, using materials gathered from the yard or garden.



Our Saviour Lutheran Church
Anna Lowery, President
October 16, 2023 Council Minutes



Meeting called to order by President, Anna Lowery

Devotions by Alice Vlaservich

Members present: Steve Digh, Anna Lowery, Alice Vlaservich, and Robbie Wooten.

Members Absent: Becky Messick and Teri Trudnak

Minutes: Motion by Robbie Wooten to approve the July 17, 2023 minutes. Seconded by Anna Lowery and carried

Reception of Petitions and Communications:

- a. Motion by Steve Digh to put in the bulletin request to become a member of the Lutheran Military Veterans and Families Ministries (see attached) and seconded by Anna Lowery.

Report of the Pastor: None

Report of the Treasurer: Motion by Steve Digh to accept the July, August, and September reports (see attached). Seconded by Robbie Wooten and carried.

Report of the Ministries:

- a. Property: Still working on the roof and grounds.
- b. Stewardship and Finance: None
- c. Worship & Music: None
- d. Finance Committee: None
- e. Youth: None
- f. Witness: Cards and bulletins continue to be sent to shut ins. Christian Education Team: None

Report of Auxiliaries:

- a. Prayer Group met at the home of Shirlee Marazza at 2:00 pm in August, September, and October
- b. The Women's Group will meet at the home of Alice Vlaservich at 2:00 pm on October 24 and then meet on December 12 at the home of Betty Clemmer.

Old and/or Unfinished Business:

- a. Motion by Alice Vlaservich to recommend Billy Trudnak to fill vacant seat on council. Seconded by Anna Lowery. Both Anna Lowery and Steve Digh to call Billy Trudnak.

New Business:

- a. Council agreed to increase rental of the Activity Building to \$50 for members and \$100 for non-members.
- b. Council is asking for help to find an organist because of Nancy Wilson's planned retirement.
- c. Council set November 5 as our Fall Luncheon. Luncheon will be after our service and encourage all to being a friend.
- d. Council will meet again on November 20 to approve budget and present to congregation on December 10 for approval.

General Information:

- a. Attendance
- b. Laszlo Mission Report
- c. Summary of Actions at 2023 Carolinas Mission Region by Pr. Steven King

- d. Thank You from Friends of Rowan
- e. Talked to Calvin with AmeriPro Roofing called on Sept 13. We are still waiting on the engineer to submit his recommendation on the church's roof. After AmeriPro receives the engineer's finding (hopefully before meeting), cost figures will be submitted to insurance company. This might be a long process. However, they will start on the roof at the Activity Building this month.. **Received Certificate of Liability** form AmeriPro. It was requested that they submit are report to council before meeting for update with engineer and possible cost. If received before meeting, it will be submitted to council.

The Council meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is November 20, 2023 at 7 pm

Devotions: Alice Vlaservich

The Original King-Sized Bed!!



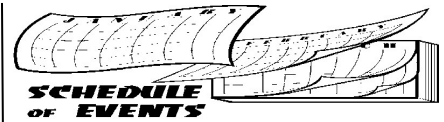
Thank God for that bed and The Baby who slept there












December 2023



Sunday School: 9:45 am Sunday
Church Service: 11:00 am Sunday



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 Food Collection					1  2	
3 	4	5 Prayer Group	6	7 Pearl Harbor Day	8	9
10 	11	12 Women's Group	13	14	15	16
17 	18	19	20	21 	22	23
24 	25  NO SERVICE	26	27	28	29	30
31 		Jan. 28 Comfort Luncheon				

- Dec. 1—Carols n the Square (see below)
- Dec. 3—1st Sunday of Advent
- Dec. 5—Prayer Group will meet at Home of Shirlee Marazza at 2:00 pm
- Dec. 7—Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (see p 7)
- Dec 10—2nd Sunday of Advent
Dallas Parade 3:00 pm
- **Congregational Meeting to approve 2024 Proposed Budget**
- Dec. 12—Rachel Group will meet at the home of Betty Clemmer at 12:30 pm—Christmas Luncheon & Program
- Dec. 17—3rd Sunday of Advent
- Dec. 21—Winter begins
- Dec. 24—4th Sunday of Advent - 11 am and *Christmas Eve Candle Light Service* 7 pm
- Dec. 25—The Birth of Jesus Christ
NO SERVICE
- Dec. 31—New Year's Eve.

FOOD FOR THE MONTH:

Green Peas, Crackers, Peanut But

Choir practice each Wednesday at 4:00 pm unless otherwise announced in the bulletin



"Carols on the Square" Dec. 1 6:30 pm
Reading of the Christmas Story
Christmas Choir
Singing of Carol

Visit The Gaston Co. Museum & enjoy refreshments after program

***Birthdays***

2	Pastor Pete	Bryan Petzold
3	Mary Feige	Jerry Mullen
6	Kaitlyn Feige	Katie White
6	Tiffany Cobb	Robbie Wooten
7	Jeff White	
10	Bryan Petzold	
12	Doyle Clemmer	
25	Kathy Trudnak	
26	Julie Digh	

**Holy Communion Schedule:**

All Sundays and
Dec. 24: Christmas Eve

Worship Service Assistance:

Acolyte: Nora Cole
Communion
Asst: Nora Cole
Lay Reader: Anna Lowery
Worship Asst: Anna Lowery
Greeters: OSLC Members
Ushers: OSLC Members

Collection: Anna Lowery

Board Devotions: Teri Trudnak (Jan)

FLOWERS**Flower Schedule:**

Dec. 3 Open
Dec. 10 Poinsettias*
Dec. 17 Poinsettias*
Dec. 24 Poinsettias*
Dec. 25 NO SERVICE
Dec. 31 Open

*Wayne Ann Penley

Please sign up to place flowers on the altar in the glory of God and in honor or memory of your love ones for 2024

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:**

"Comfort Sunday Luncheon on Jan 28 following Church service. Bring your favorite comfort food and a friend."



OUR SAVIOUR LUTHERAN CHURCH
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OUTREACH MISSION

SHUT-INS NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

Please remember our church members who are shut-ins or reside in a nursing home* and visit them.

(If others, please let the church office know)



EVENTS for:

Agrape/Kure Beach

Contact Camp Agapé:
Telephone: 919-552-9421
e-mail: agape@agapekurebeach.org
Contact Kure Beach Lutheran:
Telephone 910-458-0783
e-mail: kurebeach@agapekurebeach.org
Web site: www.agapekurebeach.org

Directions to Camp Agapé are on the web site.

Please see calendars and other information on the bulletin board or go on-line

"Want to keep Christ in Christmas? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have done unto you."

Steve Maraboli



That's Not My JOB!"

This is a story about four people named **Everybody**, **Somebody**, **Anybody** and **Nobody**. There was an important job to be done and **Everybody** was sure that **Somebody** would do it. **Anybody** could have done it, but **Nobody** did it. **Somebody** got angry about that, because it was **Everybody's** job. Everyone thought **Anybody** could do it, but **Nobody** realized that **Everybody** wouldn't do it. It ended up that **Everybody** blamed **Somebody** when **Nobody** did what **Anybody** could have.

Author Unknown.



GO OUT ON A LIMB GET INVOLVED BE A WORSHIP ASSISTANT

A positions are still open. Participate in the service of the Lord and sign up.

Sign up sheets
for the 2024 calendar year are on the
wall in the Education wing.

=====

2024 Church Envelops are
On table in hallway.

=====

DECEMBER QUOTE

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

A Stewardship Minute

There is a compelling sentence in an article found in the December issue of *Stewardship*:

"Let us not be ashamed to have the Lord look not only at our gifts, but also into our hearts."

Christmas, of course, is basically all about giving. Christians understand that the first Christmas giver was God. As the Gospel of John puts it, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

It is because of that incomparable gift that we Christians are stirred to be givers ourselves. We give because God has given to us greatly and generously. We respond to God's blessed gift to us by giving back to God through God's church and Christian institutions that strive to meet the needs of those suffering from various causes. Christmas inspires us to also give to others: family members and friends whom we love and cherish.

We need to remember that we give because God has given to us first. We give because our hearts are greatly appreciative of what God has given to us: our families, our lives, our tal-

ents, and so forth. But we give mainly because of the gift God gave us in Christ who saves us, sustains us, and who gives us meaning, hope, and joy as we live out our life's journey from now to eternity.

Prayer: Loving God, we rejoice in your bountiful gifts to us day in and day out. We thank you most of all for your matchless gift of Christ our Lord, whose birthday we joyfully celebrate again. In his name we pray. **Amen**



National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Proclamation

On a serene Sunday morning 76 years ago, the skies above Pearl Harbor were darkened by the bombs of Japanese forces in a surprise attack that tested the resilience of our Armed Forces and the will of our Nation. As explosions sounded and battleships burned, brave service members fought back fiercely with everything they could find. Unbeknownst to these selfless individuals, the sacrifices endured on that infamous day would galvanize America and come to symbolize the mettle of a generation.

In the wake of the bombing of our harbor and the crippling of our Pacific Fleet, there were those who declared the United States had been reduced to a third-class power. But rather than break the spirit of our Nation, the attack brought Americans together and fortified our resolve. Patriots across our country answered the call to defend our way of life at home and abroad. They crossed oceans and stormed beaches, freeing millions from the grip of tyranny and proving that our military is the greatest force for liberty and security the world has ever known. On the home front, dedicated civilians supported the war effort by repairing wrecked battleships, working in factories, and joining civilian defense organizations to help with salvage programs and plant Victory gardens. At this time of great strife, we reminded the world there is no challenge we cannot meet; there is no challenge we cannot overcome.

On National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, we honor the more than 3,500 Americans killed or wounded during that deadly attack and pay tribute to the heroes whose courage ensured our Nation would recover from this vicious blow. Their tenacity helped define the Greatest Generation and their valor fortified all who served during World War II. As a Nation, we look to December 7, 1941, to draw strength from the example set by these patriots and to honor all who have sacrificed for our freedoms. The Congress, by Public Law 103-308, as amended, has designated December 7 of each year as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

Jesus is Better than Santa

- Santa lives at the North Pole. JESUS is everywhere.
- Santa rides in a sleigh JESUS rides on the wind and walks on the water
- Santa comes but once a year JESUS is an ever present help.
- Santa fills your stockings with goodies JESUS supplies all your needs.
- Santa comes down your chimney uninvited JESUS stands at your door and knocks.. And then enters your heart.
- You have to stand in line to see Santa JESUS is as close as the mention of His name.
- Santa lets you sit on his lap JESUS lets you rest in His arms.
- Santa doesn't know your name, all he can say is "Hi little boy or girl, What's your name?" JESUS knew our name before we did. Not only does He know our name, He knows our address too. He knows our history and future and He even knows how many hairs are on our heads. Santa has a belly like a bowl full of jelly JESUS has a heart full of love
- All Santa can offer is HO HO HO JESUS offers health, help and hope.
- Santa says "You better not cry" JESUS says "Cast all your cares on me for I care for you
- Santa's little helpers make toys JESUS makes new life, mends wounded hearts, repairs broken homes and builds mansions.
- Santa may make you chuckle but JESUS gives you joy that is your strength.
- While Santa puts gifts under your tree JESUS became our gift and died on the tree.

It's obvious there is really no comparison. We need to remember WHO Christmas is all about. We need to put Christ back in Christmas.



Church News



"Carols on the Square"

Dec. 1, 6:30 pm

Reading the Christmas Story

Gentlemen Songster

Christmas Choir

Singing of Carols

Santa

Refreshments

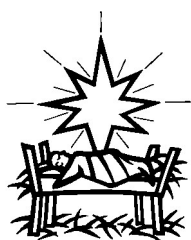


DALLAS CHRISTMAS PARADE

**DECEMBER 10
3:00 PM**

**Holiday Open House
at the Gaston Museum
from 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm**

**after the Dallas Parade. Sugar Cookie and hot
cider will be served.**



REMEMBER
THE CHILD

Annual Report



With the year end close in sight it will be here before we can say Happy New Year.

Please start working on your Annual Reports, Scheduled for Team Meeting dates, and Looking Ahead activities, such as: Group Meeting, VBS, Conventions, etc. Please submit by Jan. 15, 2024

If you need a Pastor, please contact Pastor Pete Feige at 704-516-2805 or our office at 704-922-4648. Check out our website at oslc-nc.org or email us at oslcdallas@aol.com.



CLW/Women's GROUP

will meet at the home of Betty Clemmer Dec. 12 at 12:30 pm

"Christmas Luncheon"



PRAYER GROUP

Will meet in the home of Shirlee Marazza

Dec 5 at 2:00 pm



LET US PRAY... "Are any among you suffering? They should pray...The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up." (James 5:13-15)

MARGARET Addington, SETH Alexander, AMANDA (friend of the Penley's), MARVIS Anderson, WHITNEY Auten (breast cancer), LEAH Bradley (Marsha Patton's sister-Pituitary tumor and upcoming surgery), KELLY Ballard (friend of Shana Dease), NORMAN Bever (Brother-in-law of Brady Ratchford-stroke), ADDISON Blanton (friend of Dease's), KATHY Bohanan (cancer), RHONDA Bradley (Marsha Patton's mom, surgery for foot fusion), KAREN Brady, MIKE Coffey (Robbie Wooten's uncle), STEVE Cloninger (friend of Brady Ratchford-cancer), ROB Curley (cancer), STEVE Digh (cancer), JULIE Digh (Thyroid), ROWDY and BAILEY Drummond (Becky and Chris Messick new grandson and daughter), GLEEN Fraizer (friend of Steve & Julie Digh -cancer), MONA Gardner (John Patton's grandma-declining health), BECKY Goodwin (friend of Brady's - cancer), JASON Hames (friend of the White's), GRACE Harbin (friend of Robbie Wooten-cancer), LESA Hughes (friend of Robbie Wooten-throat cancer), JEFF Lineberger (stroke), DANA Kirshman (friend of Robbie Wooten-cancer), JACK Lonon (Kasey Digh's step-father-cancer), MARINA Marazza (Shirlee Marazza's granddaughter-Long Haul Covid19), CARL Martin (friend of Pattons-multiple myeloma plus chemo) BO Messick (foot), FRANCIS McAllister (broken hip), CHRIS Messick (recovering back surgery), JASON, ALLISON & LEX Murray, ELIZABETH Mustin (rare breast cancer), GARY Neal, (friend of Caleb Dease), JOHN & MARSHA Patton (the in vitro procedure produces healthy baby(ies), ANDY Peeden (cancer), SONDR A Phillips (friend of Melinda White), BRADY Ratchford, JAN Splawn (friend of Robbie Wooten- cancer), TERI Trudnak, TONY Trudnak (cancer reoccurring), GARY Turner (father of Jason Murray), JEFF White, KENT Wilborn (friend of Robbie Wooten-heart surgery) NANCY Wilson, MARY BETH Wright (cousin of Nick Vlaservich - cancer).

Santa & Sarah

Three years ago, a little boy and his grandmother came to see Santa at Mayfair Mall in Wisconsin. The child climbed up on his lap, holding a picture of a little girl. "Who is this?" asked Santa, smiling. "Your friend? Your sister?" "Yes, Santa," he replied. "My sister, Sarah, who is very sick," he said sadly. Santa glanced over at the grandmother who was waiting nearby, and saw her dabbing her eyes with a tissue. "She wanted to come with me to see you, oh, so very much, Santa!" the child exclaimed. "She misses you," he added softly.

Santa tried to be cheerful and encouraged a smile to the boy's face, asking him what he wanted Santa to bring him for Christmas. When they finished their visit, the Grandmother came over to help the child off his lap, and started to say something to Santa, but halted.

"What is it?" Santa asked warmly. "Well, I know it's really too much to ask you, Santa, but ..." the old woman began, shooing her grandson over to one of Santa's elves to collect the little gift which Santa gave all his young visitors. "The girl in the photograph .. my granddaughter . well, you see ... she has leukemia and isn't expected to make it even through the holidays," she said through tear-filled eyes. "Is there any way, Santa ... any possible way that you could come see Sarah? That's all she's asked for, for Christmas, is to see Santa."

Santa blinked and swallowed hard and told the woman to leave information with his elves as to where Sarah was, and he would see what he could do. Santa thought of little else the rest of that afternoon. He knew what he had to do. "What if it were my child lying in that hospital bed, dying," he thought with a sinking heart, "this is the least I can do."

When Santa finished visiting with all the boys and girls that evening, he retrieved from his helper the name of the hospital where Sarah was staying. He asked the assistant location manager how to get to Children's Hospital.

"Why?" Rick asked, with a puzzled look on his face. Santa relayed to him the conversation with Sarah's grandmother earlier that day. "C'mon I'll take you there," Rick said softly. Rick drove them to the hospital and came inside with Santa. They found out which room Sarah was in.

A pale Rick said he would wait out in the hall.

Santa quietly peeked into the room through the half-closed door and saw little Sarah on the bed. The room was full of what appeared to be her family; there was the Grandmother and the girl's brother he had met earlier that day. A woman whom he guessed was Sarah's mother stood by the bed, gently pushing Sarah's thin hair off her forehead. And another woman who he discovered later was Sarah's aunt, sat in a chair near the bed with weary, sad look on her face. They were talking quietly, and Santa could sense the warmth and closeness of the family, and their love and concern for Sarah. Taking a deep breath, and forcing a smile on his face, Santa entered the room, bellowing a hearty, "Ho, ho, ho!"

"Santa!" shrieked little Sarah weakly, as she tried to escape her bed to run to him, IV tubes in tact. Santa rushed to her side and gave her a warm hug. A child the tender age of his own son -- 9 years old -- gazed up at him with wonder and excitement. Her skin was pale and her short tresses bore telltale bald patches from the effects of chemotherapy. But all he saw when he looked at her was a pair of huge, blue eyes. His heart melted, and he had to force himself to choke back tears. Though his eyes were riveted upon Sarah's face, he could hear the gasps and quiet sobbing of the women in the room. As he and Sarah began talking, the family crept quietly to the bedside one by one, squeezing Santa's shoulder or his hand gratefully, whispering "thank you" as they gazed sincerely at him with shining eyes. Santa and Sarah talked and talked, and she told him excitedly all the toys she wanted for Christmas, assuring him she'd been a very good girl that year.

As their time together dwindled, Santa felt led in his spirit to pray for Sarah, and asked for permission from the girl's mother. She nodded in agreement and the entire family circled around Sarah's bed, holding hands. Santa looked intensely at Sarah and asked her if she believed in angels. "Oh, yes, Santa ... I do!" she exclaimed. "Well, I'm going to ask that angels watch over you," he said.

Laying one hand on the child's head, Santa closed his eyes and prayed. He asked that God touch little Sarah, and heal her body from this disease. He asked that angels minister to her, watch and keep her. And when he finished praying, still with eyes closed, he started singing softly, "Silent Night, Holy Night - all is calm, all is bright." The family joined in, still holding hands, smiling at Sarah, and crying tears of hope, tears of joy for this moment, as Sarah beamed at them all. When the song ended, Santa sat on the side of the bed again and held Sarah's frail, small hands in his own.

"Now, Sarah," he said authoritatively, "you have a job to do, and that is to concentrate on getting well. I want you to have fun playing with your friends this summer, and I expect to see you at my house at Mayfair Mall this time next year!" He knew it was risky proclaiming that, to this little girl who had terminal cancer, but he "had" to.

He had to give her the greatest gift he could -- not dolls or games or toys -- but the gift of HOPE.

(HOPE cont'd on [age 13])

(HOPE cont'd from page 12)

"Yes, Santa!" Sarah exclaimed, her eyes bright.

He leaned down and kissed her on the forehead and left the room.

Out in the hall, the minute Santa's eyes met Rick's, a look passed between them and they wept unashamed. Sarah's mother and grandmother slipped out of the room quickly and rushed to Santa's side to thank him.

"My only child is the same age as Sarah," he explained quietly. "This is the least I could do." They nodded with understanding and hugged him.

One year later, Santa Mark was again back on the set in Milwaukee for his six-week, seasonal job which he so loves to do. Several weeks went by and then one day a child came up to sit on his lap. "Hi, Santa! Remember me?!" "Of course, I do," Santa proclaimed (as he always does), smiling down at her. After all, the secret to being a "good" Santa is to always make each child feel as if they are the "only" child in the world at that moment.

"You came to see me in the hospital last year!" Santa's jaw dropped. Tears immediately sprang in his eyes, and he grabbed this little miracle and held her to his chest. "Sarah!" he exclaimed. He scarcely recognized her, for her hair was long and silky and her cheeks were rosy -- much different from the little girl he had visited just a year before. He looked over and saw Sarah's mother and grandmother in the sidelines smiling and waving and wiping their eyes.

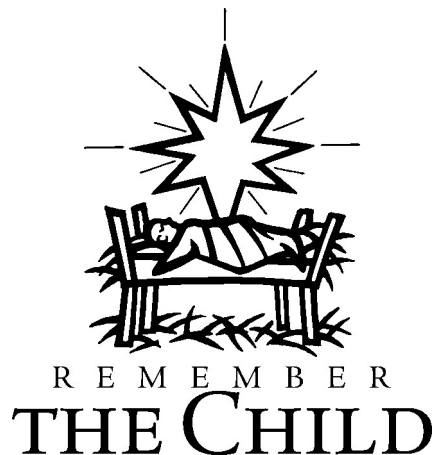
That was the best Christmas ever for Santa Claus.

He had witnessed --and been blessed to be instrumental in bringing about -- this miracle of hope. This precious little child was healed. Cancer-free. Alive and well.

He silently looked up to Heaven and humbly whispered, "Thank you, Father. 'Tis a very, Merry Christmas!"

If you believe in miracles give to someone else to read!!

LIFE IS GOD'S GIFT TO YOU ...
HOW YOU LIVE IT IS YOUR GIFT TO GOD, YOURSELF AND LOVED ONES.



Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

December 2023


Advent is a time of anticipation. It is season of quiet waiting, expectation and reparation. We are waiting for our Lord to come into the world as the baby Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. We are also preparing for the Lord's return as the shepherd-king, to restore harmony to all creation.

Advent is a season yearning for God to come and set the world right with justice, truth and peace. It is a season of hope and a time to emphasize preparation through prayer. While Lent emphasizes a spirit of repentance through prayer and fasting, Advent's prayers are prayers of humble devotion and commitment, prayers for deliverance, prayers of gladness and joyful expectation, prayers that await the light of Christ coming into the world.

Advent scripture readings reveal a strong prophetic tone of accountability and judgment. Christ's disciples expect the Lord to hold them accountable for what has been entrusted to them, just as a spouse, parent, teacher or supervisor holds us accountable. And just as the steward was found faithful in small matters by the master, we too are confident that we will be found faithful and will enter the joy of the master. We have absolute trust in the Lord's countenance.

During Advent we anticipate the Lord's coming with hope. It is that hope that keeps us from despair and the darkness of sin and its destructiveness. It is a hope that urges us to be kind, loving and compassionate toward one another. It is a hope that encourages our faith in a merciful God who continues to pour

grace upon us.

We celebrate the great promise of Advent with gladness and we rekindle that positive, joyful spirit within us because we know, as Zechariah prophesied, that the light of Christ will shine on all who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and he will guide our feet into the way of peace. 

A sense of stewardship tells us we must take time to do God's work on earth. When you compare what you have contributed in time, do not compare it to what your fellow church member has done, but compare what you have done to what God has done for you!



Young STEWARDS' Corner




Why People Give

I can recall many years ago in Sunday school discussing various reasons why people give. Unfortunately, not all of the reasons were good reasons for giving. God cares not only what we give to others, but also sees and cares why we give. Let us consider first three poor reasons for giving:

1. **To try to buy God's grace and favor.** Salvation is free, not to be earned or paid for by us. It is God's gracious gift to those who believe in Christ.
2. **To look good in someone else's eyes.** Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."
3. **Because we feel forced to give.** Maybe we give grudgingly just to get the caller or the preacher off our back. Remember the counsel of St. Paul in II Corinthians 9:7: "Each man should give what he has decided to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

So why should Christians give gladly and generously to the Lord; to the church, and to our neighbors in need? The Word of God provides the following good reasons that will truly glorify and please God:

1. **In response to God's great goodness to us and Christ's abundant love for us.** God's greatest gift to us is his beloved son, Jesus Christ our Savior. When we give, we acknowledge God's goodness and grace to us.
2. **Because good stewardship of purse and life is a fruit of our faith in Jesus and our love for God.** True faith produces good works. The love of God, which has reached out to us, also moves us to reach out to others.
3. **Because we, like Abraham, have been blessed to be a blessing** (Genesis 12:2).
4. **Because giving done from the proper motivation glorifies God, aids our neighbor, and enables God to bless and prosper us according to God's will** (Malachi 3:10-12).

Your church's treasurer may know how much you give, but remember that the Lord God also sees why we give. Let's not be ashamed to have the Lord look not only at our gifts, but also into our hearts! 

Let the theme of this Christmas be giving and receiving.


Receiving first, the amazing grace of God in the gift of Jesus Christ. Then to give. A gift for someone in need. A thank-offering of money for the Lord's work at your church.



About 12 years ago, I was given an insight into the true meaning of stewardship without ever realizing it until recently. My then two-year old son had his bath and was given a snack to enjoy. While he came into the living room to watch television with his me, he climbed up on the sofa and showed me his snack ... an absolutely perfect pear. He then said to me, "Daddy, would you like the first bite of my pear?"

The heart of stewardship

It was very nice of him to offer, but more importantly, he had hit on the heart of stewardship. Do we offer the first "bite" of our most precious fruit to God for all that he has given to us? Or, do we offer the second, third, or sometimes the core back to God?

It is important to ask ourselves these questions and to remember that stewardship is not just a new "buzz word" but a new way of life for us all. 



There is a small church in a small town with a big impact on a big city.

A DeSoto, Kansas church heads a Bible school in inner-city Kansas City and gives away 5,000 toys at Christmas and 5,000 backpacks in August. The 200-strong church also transports over 100 people to service on Sunday and serves a free meal afterward.

How can it afford this?

"A lot of people look at the size of their church and say, 'Oh, we can't do that,'" Rev, Steele says, "but when you make your resources available to God, God will multiply your resources."



This little church uses the resources it has - not a big budget. For instance, the church pays for backpacks mostly through calls to businesses and manned barrels at discount stores.

"When I stand out at a barrel and people are walking into Wal-Mart," the pastor says, "it's my ability to talk that encourages them to bring pencils and paper to put in our barrel. It's my ability to talk when I get on the phone and say, 'We are raising five thousand backpacks for needy children and we'd love for you to donate,' and I know I've made that resource available to God."



Will you make the time of Advent important, valuable for your family, friends and neighbors? Prayer, repentance and the spiritual discipline of attending the church's liturgies, can sharpen our spiritual consciousness to truly celebrate Christmas.



The Forces that Shape Our Lives


Scott Gowrey is a man who by profession is a potter. He does beautiful work with clay and his wheel. He is a Christian who has centered his life on the permanence of Christ.

“Over the years, I have learned that the forces that shape a pot are the same forces that shape a person’s life: unless it is centered, the clay flies off the wheel. Unless it is disciplined, a life has no focus. My goal is to be centered like those pots.”

Focus your talents to shape your life. Talents are a gift from God. It behooves us to use these gifts to the best of our ability. Realizing that some of us receive more talents than others, we cannot ignore those less gifted. Everyone, young and old, should audit his or her capabilities and make an effort to contribute where and when there is a need. Remembering that all things come from God, will you be willing to accept the challenges and responsibilities of your church community?

Share your gifts

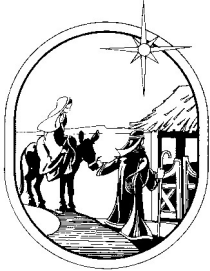
Use your time and talent for the honor and glory of God. Rather than burying your gifts, share them with your fellow parishioners.

Let your God-like response be, “Yes, I will,” rather than, “No, I will not.” Let’s hear it for your church. Yes, I will! 





Our Saviour Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 457
725 Gastonia Technology Parkway
Dallas, NC 28034



December 2023



Christmas Worship Schedule

Dec. 3.....1st Sunday of Advent..... 11:00 am

Dec. 10..... 2nd Sunday of Advent.....11:00 am

Dec. 17..... 3rd Sunday of Advent.....11:00 am

Dec. 24.....4th Sunday of Advent.....11:00 am

Dec. 24.....Christmas Eve
Candle Light Service..... 7:00 pm
Holy Communion

Dec. 25.....Christmas Day*Merry Christmas*