

Christmas Casket



The hearse drove to the front entrance of Our Savior Lutheran Church.
The Worship Center was empty, waiting for a funeral.
The Education Wing was full—of Mother’s Day Out children waiting for Santa Claus’ annual visit.

It was twelve days before Christmas, and a funeral was out of sync with the season of celebration ... almost as out of sync as the phrase “Christmas casket.” But that day of grief was the day those improbable words came together. Manger. Stable. Shepherds. Those are Christmas words. But not casket. Cradle, yes. Casket, no.

The casket needed to be moved from hearse to church. The two funeral directors needed help. I immediately volunteered. “Not enough,” they said, “we’ll need at least four.”

Just then a car pulled up in the parking lot, and out jumped the Mother’s Day Out Santa. “Santa,” I called, almost in jest, “we need a hand.” Always willing to oblige a request, Santa walked up to the hearse.

“You want me to do what,” Santa responded incredulously?

Before any of us could fully process such a paradoxical sight, Santa Claus, in full regalia, was carrying the casket into the church. The casket was put in its appointed place, and Santa left for his appointed task with the Mother’s Day Out kids.

We stood dumbfounded, reflecting on what we had just seen. A white-bearded, red-and-white-trimmed jolly old St. Nicholas had exchanged his bulging bags of joyful toys to lift the ultimate container of death—a Christmas casket.

We turned to gallows humor to absorb what had just transpired. Try as we might, it didn’t make sense. We couldn’t put these opposing concepts together: a Christmas casket. The casket reminds us that some weights are more than any mortal can bear. Death chooses its own time. Even Christmas. Death yields its power to no one. Not even Santa.

So God sent a baby to carry our casket. That is the absurdly wonderful story of Christmas.

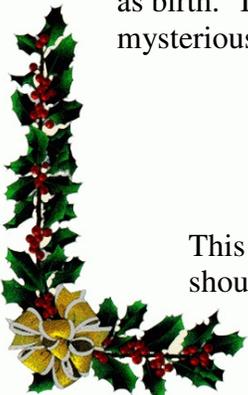
At the very moment that Mary carried a baby to his birth, that baby was already carrying, on his shoulders, our death. From the moment of his birth, Jesus was destined to carry a casket.

The Christmas baby doesn’t stay a baby any more than Christmas stays in a manger. The charm of the Christmas story soon gives way to the cruelty of the cross. The shadow of that cross covers every moment of Jesus’ life ... even his birth. In a sense, Jesus is born in a casket.

It took the farcical image of Santa carrying a casket to remind me that Christmas speaks to death as well as birth. This Christmas I’ll sing of the incongruous image of a Christmas casket through these mysterious words:

*“What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping? ...
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary.”*

This Christmas, I will ponder the imponderable: the cross was borne for me, for you ... that, on his shoulders, Jesus carried my casket ... in the full regalia of God’s love.



"O Come, Let Us Adore Him"

The Our Savior Guide to Christmas Worship

Christmas is made for worship. This Christmas Eve Weekend will offer five worship services in twenty-four hours. Each service will have its own unique style and emphasis. Each service will be significantly different. Yet each and every service will have its focus on the Word of God and the miracle of that Word made flesh in Jesus Christ. This sheet is like a 'user's guide' to Christmas Eve Weekend Worship. You will not be disappointed if you can dedicate this weekend, as it is intended, to worship the newborn King. And you will find it a special joy to invite a friend or neighbor to come with you!

Christmas Caroling

December 22—6:00pm

Tune up your voices for some rousing singing and a rollicking good time as we take the joy of Christmas on the road. We'll leave church at 6pm. After caroling we'll meet at Michael and Sonja Conoly's house for hot wassail and the very best Christmas goodies. Mike and Sonja's gracious invitation will give us a "homey" atmosphere to share this joyful evening together. So get your vocal chords ready and bring your flashlights as we bring the true spirit of Christmas to those who might have trouble getting to church for services.

If you're looking to find the joy of Christmas, there is no better way than caroling.

Dress for the weather and bring a friend.

Sunday, December 24, 8:30 & 11AM

Christmas Eve Morning Worship

Christmas begins without fanfare or fame. An unknown girl in a backwater town is greeted by a strange Christmas visitor: an angel! The news Mary receives is both wondrous and terrifying. A baby is on the way... for Mary, a virgin mother... for you... and for all. Join with Mary in worship and praise this Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve 7:00 PM

"Come, Let us go to Bethlehem and See This Child"

Childlike joy is captured in the wonder of Christmas. We journey to Bethlehem to kneel at the manger with the humblest of shepherds and the lowly beasts of the stable. There the Lord meets us with gifts of peace and joy. Children of all ages gather to sing "Silent Night" by candlelight in a family service of Holy Communion.



Christmas Eve 11:00 PM

"Silent Night, Holy Night"

As a reverent hush covers the earth on the Silent and Holy Night of Christmas Eve, we gather for the Midnight Mass and Candlelight Singing. Come and share the beauty and wonder of this night in the peace and presence of the Christchild.

Monday, December 25, 10:00 AM

IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY!

"A Contemplative Service of Readings & Carols"

School is out, the presents are unwrapped, the parties are over. It is time to leave the hustle and bustle behind and find the real meaning of Christmas. Christmas day worship offers a unique blending of the best Christmas poetry and treasures of Christmas music. In readings and carols, you will find a peaceful time for thought and reflection so that you can rest secure that every item on your Christmas list is finally checked off—except for one: like Mary, take all these things and ponder them in your heart. You will find this worship one of the most meaningful of the year.

Sunday, December 31, 8:30 & 11am, 5:30pm

Christmas is for Kids... and Senior Citizens too!

What holds us together as the years come and go on such a rapid pace? As 2017 breathes its last to yield to a new year, 2018, there is one who holds all time and all generations together. The baby who was born in Bethlehem takes his first trip to Jerusalem to meet two elderly saints: Anna and Simeon. Even as Jesus holds all generations together in love, he was held in wonder by these old residents of the temple. Open your arms to hold the Christchild throughout the New Year.

Sunday, January 7, 2018; 8:30 & 11am, 5:30pm

The Baptism of Our Lord

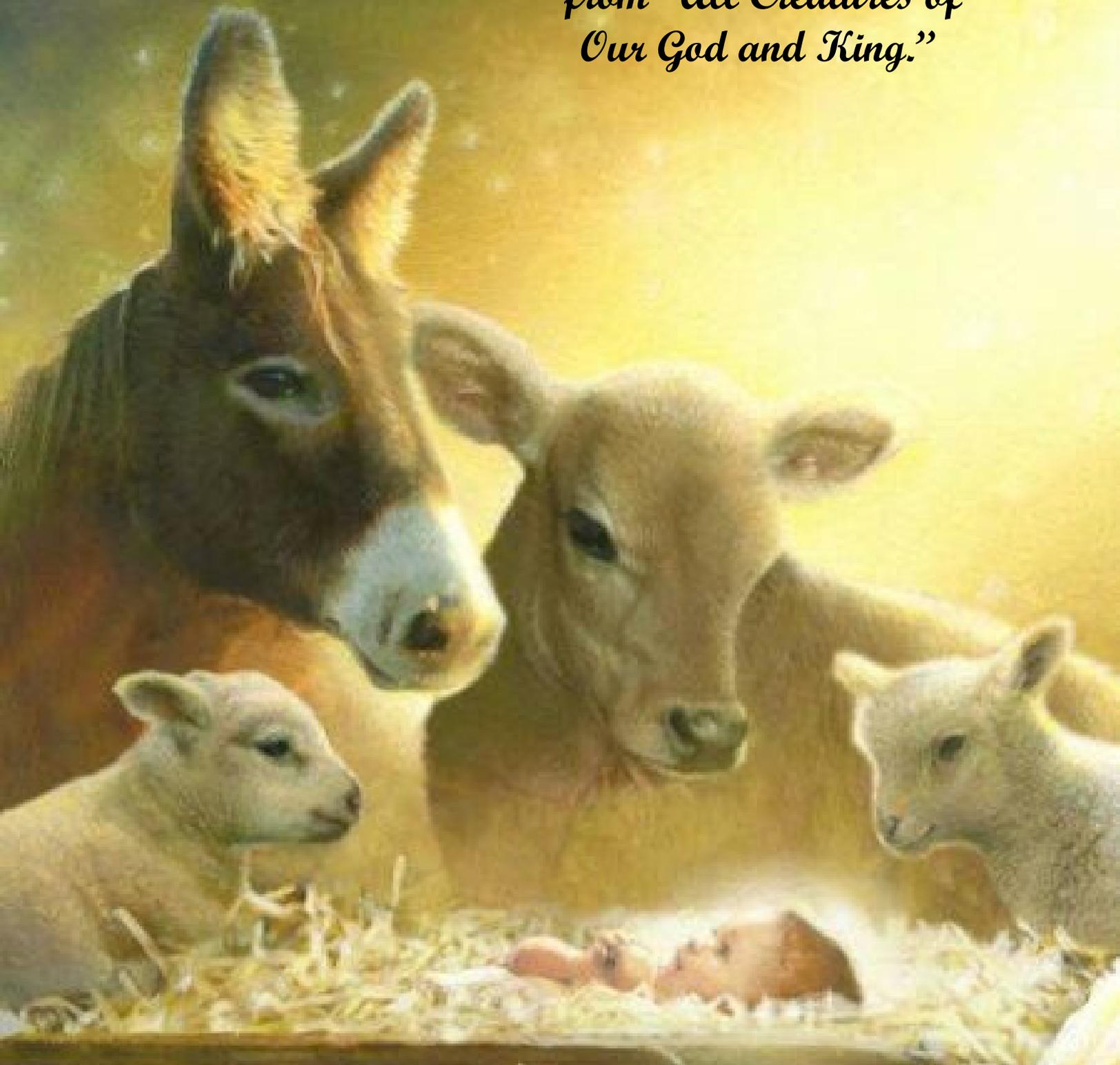
This service of Baptismal Renewal reminds us that every day of the New Year is a daily drowning to sin and rising to Christ in the waters of Baptism. Expect to get sprinkled just enough to leave walking wet in the world!

Sunday, January 21, 2018; 12:30pm

Congregation Meeting & Potluck Luncheon

Teamwork tells the tale for a New Year as we pool our talents for a Potluck Meeting and Luncheon! We'll elect new council members and approve the 2018 budget.

*Join in the "Hymn of All Creation"
to say "Merry Christmas"
from "All Creatures of
Our God and King."*



Merry Christmas wishes to you through ELCA World Hunger from:

Keith & Diana Bruneau The Chubbs Family Jerry & Kaethe Combs Robert & Lisa Holmes
Bill & Pauline Hutchinson Amy Ismail Linda Last Debbie Lonon The Lubben Family John & Pat Mangham
Lou & Marie Mazza Mark & Carol Murray Matt Nelson George NoLan David & Rhona Ouldhouse
Sue & Skip Rickmeyer Herb & Rita Salmons John & Lois Schelter The Shafer Family Charles & Connie Skyles
Melvin Vahlenkamp Ann Williams Henry & Baerbel Williams Nancy Wilson Mike & Debbie Zimmermann