

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
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December Newsletter

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH LC-MS
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REV. DR. JOEL G. KOEPP
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ALL SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS ARE ON OUR WEBSITE
SERVICES ARE LIVE STREAMED ON OUR FACEBOOK

LET US KNOW...

If you have a change in address, phone or email, have a loved one who is or hospitalized, have a new baby, would like a pastoral visit, or if you would like a special prayer during the prayers of the church on Sunday, please contact Pastor Koepp or the church office.

DO YOU...

have an announcement for the bulletin or newsletter?

Have a prayer request? Birth/Anniversary/Graduation announcements?

If so, please submit the information as you want it to appear in the bulletin or newsletter by the deadlines listed below to the church secretary at lcms.immanuelgrinnell@gmail.com

Deadline for submitting in the weekly bulletin is Thursdays by noon.

Deadline for the monthly newsletter is the 15th of each month.

For those of you without email access, please call or submit your written request to the church secretary.



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Pastor's Message

Decorations are an important part of our preparation for Christmas. In November and December people spend hours decorating both inside and outside our living spaces. Outside lights are put on houses and decorations fill the yards. As the nights get longer, we adorn our outsides to help alleviate the darkness from become too deeply felt.

We also spend time decorating inside our living spaces. Battling the encroaching darkness of dreariness and dread of preparations and business, we set up reminders of hope and peace and joy. We add more lights. Many bring in an evergreen tree of some type, and fill it with symbols of memories shared and hope of years to come. Some place poinsettias strategically around the house and presents are strewn about under the tree. The halls are decked with boughs of holly, while the weather outside threatens of being frightful, all with an aim to bring enjoyment and anticipation to the holiday season.

Like our homes, we take this time to prepare both inside and out for the celebration of Christmas. We often use our bodies to teach and reinforce inner realities. Some common examples include hugging for comfort, kneeling for prayer, standing in silence to show honor, and making the sign of the cross to remember our baptism. These and many other rituals are good things. When they become nothing but blind rituals, it is important to stop and take note of why we do what we do. In the church year, we take two special seasons to pause and reflect in preparation for two major events in the life of Jesus. We do so, because these are major events in our own lives: birth, suffering, death, and resurrection.

Advent is the church's season of preparation for Christmas. It is also a reminder of our Lord, who not only was incarnate, became flesh and was born, but this same Lord was crucified, died, was buried, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God and will come again in flesh in all His glory. This Advent season, as part of our preparation, we will reflect upon how the outer things, our common rituals, help us to prepare internally for both the celebration of the birth of Jesus in His humility and His coming again in glory. We will spend our three Wednesday services pondering how three common Christmas decorations help us see Christ and prepare for His coming: evergreens, lights, and the creche. On Christmas Eve, we will focus on the decorated presents which point us to the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ. To further aid in our reflections this seasons, you will find devotional books that explore this theme, as well as hear from the children during the Christmas Program on Sunday, December 14.

May the Lord bless your Advent and Christmas Seasons.

Hymn 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel'

LSB 357



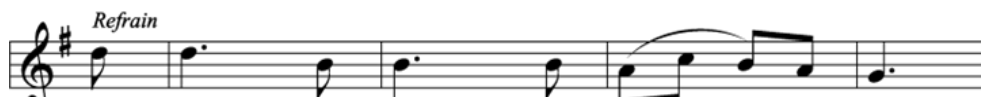
1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som
2 O come, Thou Wis - dom from on high, Who or - d'rest
3 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to Thy
4 O come, Thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, Free them from



cap - tive Is - ra - el, That mourns in lone - ly
all things might - i - ly; To us the path of
tribes on Si - nai's height In an - cient times didst
Sa - tan's tyr - an - ny That trust Thy might - y



ex - ile here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
knowl - edge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
give the Law In cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.
pow'r to save, And give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el



Shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

- 5 O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. Refrain
- 6 O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight. Refrain
- 7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace. Refrain

Text: Latin, c. 12th cent.; Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum, 1710, Köln; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–66, alt. Tune: French, 15th cent. Text and tune: Public domain

+ Soli Deo Gloria +
Rev. Dr. Joel G. Koepp

I workout regularly early in the morning. As I do, I turn on the television and watch the news. I either catch up on the events of the day before or am informed about the events to come. Lately there has been a commercial on one of the channels I watch featuring a rather well-known TV evangelist. He makes a public appeal to the need for Jesus. He does it in the form of a prayer he expects the listeners to pray along with him or at least repeat it after him.

In that prayer are these words; "I have made a mess of my life, things are not going well, I have failed in so many things. I need help Jesus." At first that might sound fairly pious, but it is one-directional as to the need for Jesus. It focuses on problems in people's lives rather than *the problem* for which Jesus came into the flesh. What about those whose lives are not in a mess? What about the man or woman who is quite successful financially in a worldly way? What about those who have not failed in family and business?

The problem for which Jesus came into the flesh was not to restore what we have broken within personal relationships, business dealings, house and home trials and messes. Jesus came into our flesh because our flesh is dying from the day we are conceived. No amount of money, success, or worldly honor can remove the stain and corruption of sin. There is no doubt about the fact that sin leaves us in a mess. And there no other conclusion than that before God the Father we have failed in our attempts at righteousness. The problem with the television commercial prayer is that it leaves us to believe Jesus only came for those who recognize their mess.

Jesus did not come to save only those who are humbled by their mess, He also came for those who don't know they are in a mess. Jesus took on the flesh of all humanity and was born for the sake of redeeming all humanity. His ultimate mission was to be crucified in place of the whole human race; those who despair of themselves and the self-righteous. His life, death, and resurrection was the means by which He reconciled the world with His Father. Jesus did this for all people. He had to because all people are sinners. Some are wealthy with worldly success, and others are in earthly poverty. The point is both are in a mess on the inside because both are in need of forgiveness that only Jesus could earn and bestow.

Jesus did this for all people. He had to because all people are sinners. Some are wealthy with worldly success, and others are in earthly poverty.

The angel said to Joseph: "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save his people from their sins." Jesus said to Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Paul writes to the Romans: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ." This Word is for everyone. Everyone is in a mess. The mess is not by world standards. The mess is by divine standards. It is not a matter of what we can see and possess. It is a matter of what is inside our hearts that needs to be cleansed of its unrighteousness.

Faith grasps that truth. The faith the Holy Spirit creates does not look at the newborn babe in the manger with expectations other than His holy life and precious blood which was sacrificed in my place, in my stead. By the Means of Grace, the Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts from the consequences of sin no matter how unnoticeable that may be to the world around us.

President's Piece for Peace

December 25

Jesus' birth wasn't simply so He could look like us. It was so He could become us and redeem us from the mess of sin and death. He became our mess, our failure, our filth as He paid the price to purchase us back. It is that mess that the Law confronts us with, calling us to repentance. It is that mess that the Gospel lifts us out of darkness and into His marvelous light of salvation. That is the Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, that is the Jesus we believe in by His mercy. It is that Jesus who shall return, in His flesh, to lift our flesh from the ground and gather us in His arms. Those who do not see their inner mess and have no need for a savior will be banished into perdition. The same is true of those who mourn when their living conditions are in a mess but fail to realize the real mess is in the heart of everyone by nature.

What a contrast that is. What a blessing we will not have to worry about that day when Jesus returns. Faith in His Son, created and sustained by the Holy Spirit, looks forward to His return. It will come in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. In an instant, we shall be body and soul resting in the mansion prepared for us before the world began. "Born to us this day, in the City of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

Rev. Dr. Brian S. Saunders
District President

Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca



December/ January

What's Next?

Registration

As 2025 comes to a close, we have begun planning and preparing for summer of 2026! We are excited to announce our theme of *Free to Serve*, focusing on Jesus' vocations and how that affects our approach to vocations in our daily lives. This theme will be taught during each session of camp this summer. Registration for summer camp will open on **January 19th, 2026** with the first day of summer camp being **June 10, 2026!** We hope to see you this summer!

Coming Soon! Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca Auxiliary Board

At Camp, we are always looking for ways to advance our mission of promoting and providing Christ-centered education, recreation, and inspiration for individuals and groups of all ages. Our newest way of doing this is with the creation of a Camp Auxiliary Board. Beginning January 1st, we will be looking for representatives from each congregation in Iowa District East to be a part of the Auxiliary Board. If you are interested in supporting Camp in this way, we would be happy to have you! We look forward to providing more information soon!



IDE Middle School Retreat (and Snowlympics!) January 30-31

The 2026 IDE Middle School Retreat and Snowlympics are scheduled for January 30-31 with Pastor Thomas Van Hemert of St. John Lutheran Church, Marengo presenting on *All About Worship: Why Do We Do What We Do?* Visit <https://lcmiside.org/msretreat/> for more information and to register!



SUMMER 2026 Theme: Free to Serve

Registration will open at 1:00pm on January 19th!

3271 Sandy Beach Road NE, Solon, IA 52333

phone 319.848.4187

web www.campiodiseca.org

email office@iodiseca.org

“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Romans 12:4-5).

One of the most forgotten concepts in stewardship is the interdependent nature that makes up the Body of Christ and the way that body supports the shared work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is experienced in the local congregation, as well as in broader mission and ministry efforts at the district and Synod levels. Yet in these words, St. Paul reminds the Romans and us that we are indeed members of one another. This is true in our worship. It is also true in our stewardship of the Gospel. Stewards of all shapes and sizes, ages and abilities, affluence and influence are all assembled around Word and Sacrament in the local congregation with no one being more important than the other.

Part of this forgetting lies in what the eyes see and how our human mind operates. Our eyes and our minds are quick to come to the erroneous conclusion that the person who writes the biggest check is the more important steward. Human logic, flawed by sin as it is, could make a claim that the youngest child or the most infirm, aged member of the congregation would certainly be considered something less than important when it comes to the stewardship of the Gospel.

Paul makes it clear in these words that this is not how stewardship of the Gospel is measured in the Body of Christ. Rather, it would be better to view local stewardship like the lost art of harmony in congregational singing. This has been lost not only due to the performative nature of the lead singers of the local praise team, but also because modern hymnals are written to almost force the novice hymn-singer into unison voice. Creative harmonization by talented organists is beautiful to listen to, but does not always support the people in the pews in singing in parts. This is a loss in demonstrating a very practical aspect of whole-body stewardship.

The sound that builds when choral and congregational singers settle into their voice parts is nothing short of heavenly! Yet when altos, tenors and bass sing their individual parts without any concept of how they fit together, the music doesn't sound as powerful. The narrow range of the typical alto line almost sounds monotonous. The tenor line can get painfully high, and the base line can get uncomfortably low. But, when interdependently entwined, along with the melody that is so often carried by the sopranos, the music becomes a tremendously powerful tool in communicating the Gospel.

The same is true of individual stewards. Certainly, stewards with more financial means are in a unique place to “carry the tune” for ministry in a local congregation. But that doesn't rule out the faithful stewardship of the saint-like 94-year-old Hulda, who prayed for her young pastor in German every night while the aches and pains of arthritis and the grief of losing a daughter to cancer kept her awake. This does not rule out Jimmy, the profoundly developmentally disabled confirmand whose basic but dramatically eloquent confession of the faith left an impression on a congregation long after he went to be with Jesus. It doesn't rule out the single parent, the recovering addict, the family coming out of bankruptcy, the elderly widow and everyone in between.

The Lord has entrusted all the baptized with stewardship of the one thing needful: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No one member of any congregation is more important than another when it comes to this stewardship. The biggest check isn't always the best way to communicate the Gospel. In fact, it is almost always better communicated with the widow's mite, the tenacious stewardship of the talents and so much more.

In the local congregation and beyond, our corporate stewardship of the Gospel needs each other to fill out our great confession. It is not about equal amount. It is about interdependence that only the Holy Spirit can work! Each of us has a role to play, a harmony to sing. The standard for that role is faithfulness. We do not have the same function, but we have the same Jesus! As we sing the parts entrusted to us by the Holy Spirit, the sweet music of the Gospel goes out!



Lutheran
Family Service

For Nothing is Impossible with God

lutheranfamilyservice.org

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Advent In An Age Of Instant Gratification

by Rev. Nathan Grewe, tLMHC



A Culture That Has Forgotten How To Wait We live in an age that has nearly erased the word *wait* from our vocabulary. Packages arrive on the same day. Entertainment auto-plays before we ask. Answers appear instantly with a tap or swipe. Our world relentlessly trains us to expect immediacy—and to grow anxious, frustrated, or even despairing when our desires are not met on demand.

And then comes Advent. Not only is *wait* not erased, but **WAIT** is written in big, bold letters.

The Season That Slows Us Down

The Church Year refuses to rush. It calls us to slow down, to watch, to long, to hope. Advent is a season shaped not by instant gratification, but by holy expectation. For pastors, teachers, DCEs, and all who serve the Church, this contrast is especially sharp. You shepherd souls who are deeply formed by hurry, while you yourself are not immune to the pressures that come from a culture of “now.”

God’s People Have Always Waited

This tension brings Advent’s riches into clearer focus: the story of God’s people has always been one of waiting—not passive waiting, but faithful, watchful, hope-anchored waiting.

Israel waited centuries for the promised Messiah.

Zechariah and Elizabeth waited for answered prayer.

Mary waited in hiddenness as the Word grew in her womb.

And now the Church waits for Christ's return, even as we confess that He already comes among us in Word and Sacrament.

Why Waiting Feels So Hard

Putting on my clinical hat, waiting is uncomfortable because it exposes our vulnerability. Waiting means we are not in control. It surfaces anxiety, restlessness, and the ache of unfinished things. As I sit with clients, waiting often becomes the crucible where faith, trust, and endurance are tested and formed.

Advent names this reality openly rather than pretending it away. The season invites us to sit with longing—not to be consumed by it, but to let it draw us toward the One who fulfills His promises in His time.

A Gift — And A Challenge — For Church Workers

For church workers, this invitation is both gift and challenge. You minister to people who carry their own deep waits: for healing, for reconciliation, for clarity, for stability, for answers to prayers long prayed. You carry your own as well.

Advent gives you permission to acknowledge that some things remain unresolved. It lifts your eyes from the pressure to “fix it now” and redirects your gaze to the God who comes precisely to those who wait in hope.

The Patience Of Hope

St. Paul writes, “If we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Romans 8:25). Patience here is not resignation. It is the Spirit-given confidence that the God who acted decisively in the incarnation will act again in His perfect time. His timing is never late, never rushed, and never dependent on the speed of our world.

Advent is your reminder that waiting is not failure. It is formation.

A Prayer For This Season Of Waiting

As you light candles, preach, teach, and care for the people entrusted to you, may this season slow your spirit, deepen your longing, and anchor you again in the promise that Christ has come, Christ is coming, and Christ will come again.

In a world addicted to immediacy, Advent invites the Church to breathe deeply, to watch with expectation, and to rediscover the holy goodness of waiting.

Our church needs healthy workers. Lutheran Family Service knows the importance of proactive wellness and encourages church workers to prioritize mental health just as much as physical health. We have years of experience serving church workers in LCMS congregations and schools. If your congregation, yourself, or a church worker you know would benefit from the support of Lutheran Family Service, refer to or contact us today.

- Call: 515-573-3138
- Email: info@lutheranfamilyservice.org
- Web Form: <http://lutheranfamilyservice.org/contact/>



Confirmation

MEMORY WORK SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

**Shortened class time*

5th & 6th Grades Memory Work

December 3*: 1st Article and Meaning

December 10*: 2nd Article and Meaning

December 17*: 2nd Article and Meaning

December: 24 NO CLASS

December: 31 NO CLASS

7th & 8th Grades Memory Work

December 3*: Baptism: Part I and Meaning

December 10*: Baptism: Part II and Meaning

December 17*: Baptism: Part III and Meaning

December: 24 NO CLASS

December: 31 NO CLASS



Midweek Advent Service

Wednesdays at 6:30pm

December 3
'Evergreens'

December 10
'Lights'

December 17
'Creche'

Fellowship Meal
5:15-6:15pm

Christmas Services

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Sunday, December 14th at 10:30am

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS


Wednesday, December 24th at 4:00pm

CHRISTMAS DAY DIVINE SERVICE

Thursday, December 25th at 9:00am

NEW YEAR'S EVE DIVINE SERVICE

Wednesday, December 31st at 6:30pm



The Board of Evangelism's Christmas Share this year will run through the months of November and December. Immanuel will be collecting food and hygiene products for MICA. The need to help aid in this program is greater than ever this year. The items listed below will be collected up until December 21st. *(Please make sure items you bring are not outdated.)*

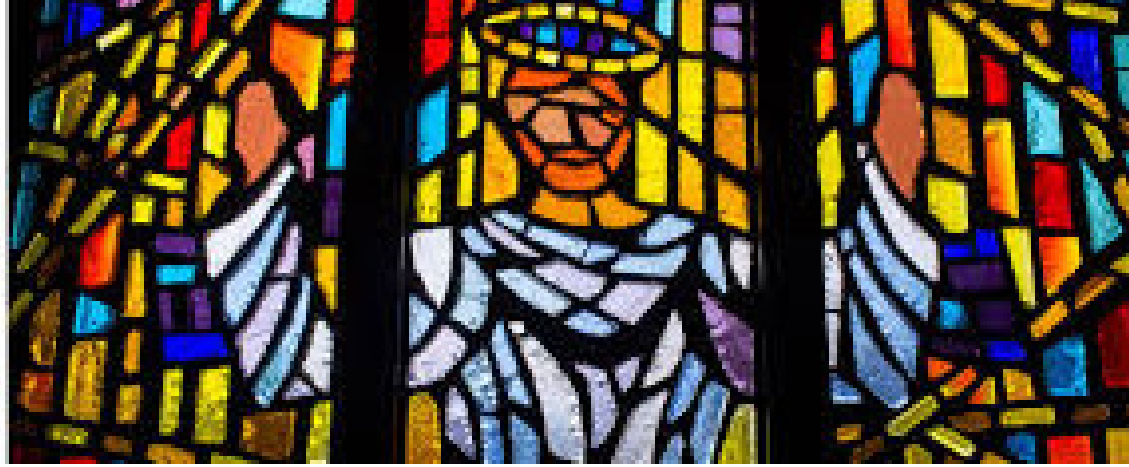
PANTRY ITEMS

Peanut Butter *(always requested)*
Jelly
Soup (all kinds)
Ramen Noodles *(most requested)*
Pancake Mix/Syrup
Oatmeal
Cereal
Canned Goods
Mac and Cheese boxes

HYGIENE ITEMS

Toilet Paper
Laundry Soap *(always requested)*
Dish Soap
Shower Gel
Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Bath Soap Bars

***If you have questions, please see any
member of the Board of Evangelism.
Dianna K. June R. Bev H.***



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LCMS Stewardship Ministry – lcms.org/stewardship

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? Do you have a person or two on your list that you just don't know what to give them? While I know you are running short of ideas...dad doesn't really want another tie, and your kid's teacher doesn't need another coffee mug. It can be nothing short of maddening to try to figure things out in the middle of this busy season!

As stewards of all of life and life's resources, we know that life is more than giving gifts. We stewards never want to take anything the Lord provides for granted. During this season of Advent and Christmas, it is a great idea to do whatever you can to be a faithful steward of your pastor. Even more so than the rest of the year, the demands on their time, their presence and their stewardship of the Gospel in the congregation become heightened.

The demands on pastors can wear them down and wear them out. How does the steward in the congregation serve as a faithful steward of the treasure that is their pastor? Here are a few ideas:

- Put them at the top of your prayer list. – Pray that the Lord guards them against the weariness that makes them susceptible to the work of the devil.
- Make worship a priority – St. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians and us to respect those who labor among us. There is no greater way to steward your pastor than to respect him enough to show up and receive what he has been sent to offer in the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Holy Sacraments.
- Be receptive to his work – If your pastor is tasked with calling you to repentance or encouraging you to be in worship, know that he is only caring for your soul.
- Esteem him highly – Take the time to thank him for his faithful service to Christ, the congregation and your family.
- Be at peace – This is an easy time for even minor annoyances to get blown out of proportion and become full-blown conflict. This not only spoils the season of Advent and Christmas, but it also spoils our stewardship of the Gospel and those who serve us in that Gospel. Remember that Jesus came into the world to be the Prince of Peace. This is an act of grace and mercy. The steward seeks to reflect this toward their pastor and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Stewardship at Christmas can be a challenge. Stewardship of your pastor during this time of the year is critical to our shared stewardship of the Gospel at a time of year when many are more open to hear and receive it.



Thanks to all members who helped with the Fall Church Cleaning. Many items were cleared away and organized which was needed. See you in the Spring! ~ LWML



There will be no LWML meeting in December. There will also be no meeting for the Board of Evangelism in December.



Those currently giving electronically, if you wish to make changes to your online giving for next year, please inform the church secretary by December 7th.



Snowbirds: For those of you that head for warmer weather for the winter and would like the monthly newsletter mailed to you, please submit your address, date departing and date returning to the church secretary. Even those that have submitted their address in the past, please do so again to make sure we have the correct address.



Poinsettias for the Christmas Eve service are \$15.

Please have your order form filled out and leave in the offering basket with payment by December 7th.

Checks should be made payable to
‘Immanuel Lutheran Church’
with ‘Poinsettia’ in the memo line.

If you wish to provide your own plant, please fill out an order form indicating so and the in memory/in honor of portion so we can include it in the bulletin.



December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	SWADDLING CLOTHES, ST JOHNS-MARENGO 1	ST JOHNS-MARENGO 2	REV THOMAS VAN HEMERT 3	ST JOHN-HOMESTEAD 4	TRINITY - CONROY 5	GOOD SHEPHERD-WELLMAN 6
REV GARY SEARS 7	TRINITY LUTHERAN-OTTUMWA 8	REV JAMES PREUS 9	Advent Meals Shared By All Churches 10	Lydia Armbrecht Holt -Seward Student 11	LUTHERAN INTERPARISH SCHOOL-WILLIAMSBURG 12	ST PAUL-WILLIAMSBURG 13
REV JASON ZOSKE 14	HOPE - SIGOURNEY 15	IMMANUEL - WILLIAMSBURG 16	REV RICHARD MEYER 17	CALVARY LUTHERAN - DEEP RIVER 18	ST JAMES - VICTOR 19	REV MICHAEL KOLESAR 20
Candy/Cookie Walk 21	Christmas Caroling to Shut -ins and Nursing Homes 22	Apple Pie Auction & Bazaar 23	Nativity Scene, Christmas Hymn Singing, Fellowship 24	BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOR 25	Community Tree of Sharing 26	Community Food Banks 27
WEDNESDAY PRESCHOOL - ST JOHNS-VICTOR 28	Dr Cari Chittick-St Johns-Victor, Concordia-Irvine Professor 29	ST JOHNS -VICTOR 30	REV STUART RETHWISCH 31			WILLIAMSBURG ZONE