



Good News From Good Shepherd

“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

John 10:11

December 2019

Mary Givhan, Newsletter Editor

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From Our Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

With “Christmas blessings” being the theme of this month’s newsletter, did you ever wonder about how the words “blessing” and “blessed” are used in the Advent and Christmas Gospels? You may be surprised to learn that only Luke uses these specific words. He does so in several different ways and places.

The first is in Luke 1:39-45 when Mary is visiting Elizabeth. ³⁹ *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,* ⁴⁰ *and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.* ⁴¹ *And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,* ⁴² *and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “**Blessed** are you among women, and **blessed** is the fruit of your womb!* ⁴³ *And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”* ⁴⁴ *For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.* ⁴⁵ *And **blessed** is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”*

Before this visit, Elizabeth hadn’t been told that Mary was pregnant. The Holy Spirit gave her not only the news, but also the words to speak. Elizabeth recognized that Mary was blessed because she had been specially chosen by God, much as Elizabeth had. The Spirit also showed Elizabeth the identity of Mary’s child, for she knew that this child was blessed – God’s Son, the promised Messiah, with a unique identity and role to fulfill.

So, in summary, Elizabeth knew that Mary was **blessed** and that Mary’s child was **blessed**. But I wonder if Elizabeth appreciated that she was a **blessing** to Mary. Even though she herself was pregnant with a long-awaited son, Elizabeth could have envied Mary, whose son would be even greater than her own. Instead she was filled with joy (and communicated it!) that the mother of her Lord would visit her.

Also, as Mary had rushed off to visit her relative, she must have been still processing the news that she had received from the angel Gabriel. Elizabeth’s greeting surely strengthened her faith. Mary’s pregnancy may have seemed impossible, but her wise relative believed in the Lord’s faithfulness and expressed it.

It’s neat that the very next words that Luke records are from Mary’s own expression of faith, a song of praise that we know as the Magnificat:

⁴⁶ *And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,* ⁴⁷ *and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,* ⁴⁸ *for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me **blessed**...”*

This Christmas, we pray that the Holy Spirit bless our expressions of faith. We ask that He use them to strengthen the faith of others, just like He did so long ago in the lives of Elizabeth and Mary. May we too be blessed to be a blessing!

Merry Christmas!

P.S. If you’re curious about the other uses of “blessed” and “blessing” that I didn’t cover, see the accounts of Zechariah’s Song (Luke 1:67ff) and the presentation of Jesus at the temple (Luke 2:22ff), which includes the Song of Simeon.

Pastor Bill

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A Christmas Memory

As far back as I can remember, my family has set up our manger scene for the Christmas season. I remember sitting next to the manger as a child studying each piece and thinking about what it all meant. How special that was to me. So, when my children were young, I decided to do something “creative”. Instead of putting all of the characters in the manger right away, we placed them around the room to better tell the story of Jesus’ birth.

Each day we would move Mary, Joseph and the donkey closer to the manger representing their traveling from Galilee to Bethlehem to be counted in the census. The anticipation would build, and we would celebrate a little more each day as they got closer to the manger and finally arrived on Christmas Eve. Baby Jesus would then appear in the manger on Christmas morning, having just been born!

My intent was to keep Christmas in the forefront of our minds, to better celebrate the season, and to teach the Christmas story in a fun way to my children. My intent...As noble as my intent was, my plan never worked out quite as I envisioned it. Frequently I would forget to move Mary and Joseph. There were too many distractions that kept me from being diligent – a late work night (too many of those), something fun on TV, or just too much chaos in our life. I have to admit, that of the three or four years that I tried this, Mary and Joseph never made it to the manger on Christmas Eve. And Jesus was no closer to my heart than he was when I first put the pieces out. Too many distractions to pay attention to His coming. I felt like the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. My spirit was willing, but my flesh was weak.

Sadly, I was not alone. John 1:9-11 (ESV) says,

⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

No one paid much attention when Jesus was born. That’s one of the reasons He was born in a manger. No one understood, and frankly, no one really cared. Yet, Jesus came anyway. He came to get us. He came to move us from our apathy and our despondency. He came to save us from our sin and move us to be His own.

My failure to move the figurines taught me a lesson. On Christmas Day, Jesus is always in that manger; no matter what I do or don’t do. And every day, Jesus is always there for us to help us through our failures. What a wonderful Christmas memory!

David Smith, Head Elder

(This excerpt is taken from the LCMS Stewardship Newsletter from a series titled *Simple Gifts – A Series of Devotions on Stewardship*)

The Gift of Christ is our Light



“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel’” (Matt. 2:3–6).

Earlier in this journey of Simple Gifts we reflected on light. Today we spend a moment reflecting on the potential negative of light. What could be bad about light? Well, when the light comes on, that which you do wrong can no longer be hidden. When the light comes on you can’t hide the fact that you are sneaking a midnight snack, snatching some loot or cheating on your spouse! The light reveals things. Sometimes what we see isn’t always pleasant. As the light shone on Jerusalem all those centuries ago, it brought to light two very clear and disturbing realities. First, the evil King Herod was not a godly man. Second, the very people who should have seen the same star that the Magi saw, missed it! The light of Christ reveals evil and ignorance. The light of the Lord that shines on our stewardship can be just as damning to us. As we reflect on God’s generosity toward us, it shines a light on our response. What does it show? Often, it reveals our stinginess in support of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the fact that we miss out on just how significant the role we have as stewards of resources plays in the sharing of the light of the Gospel. As this light continues to shine on us today, may the Lord who calls us to faith and service, grant us His grace to reflect honestly and respond generously to His call to be stewards. Repentance is the answer to evil and ignorance. Jesus is just the light we need!

Prayer: Light of the world, Jesus the Christ, shine on us. Show us where we have fallen short as stewards of the simple gifts You give for us to show Your glory to our neighbors and the world. Overcome the evil in us and enlighten our ignorance that we may serve You and that others see the light of life in us! Amen

Submitted by Tammy Woolley, Stewardship Chair

Council and Voter Assembly News

The CAT committee presentation and stewardship plans were the council's main focus in November in preparation for the Voter meeting on November 17. I am pleased to report that the 2020 Budget was accepted by the voters and the CAT presentation generated thoughtful questions and discussion. Next steps will fall to the council to determine the most effective actions to take driven by the congregational input compiled by the committee. On the down side, fewer than 30 voters participated.



When we raise 'incorporation in the life of the church' as a top priority, we need to walk that talk to make it more than just talk. Council will take December off and reconvene in January.

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: Deuteronomy 28:2 (NKJV)

Our stewardship board has distributed an updated giving pledge form to help the council understand our financial commitment for 2020. It was thrilling this year to see how this congregation responded in faith to the blessings they enjoy and in turn shared with the mission to establish a firmer financial foundation. This church family cannot let up, as we have approved the budget based on the same general fund basis as this year. In considering how God has blessed us individually this year, it is my prayerful hope that we would continue to extend our faith walk in tithing what the Lord has seen fit to lend us in our time here.

Blessings

In keeping with the theme of Blessings, I can say that I count it a great blessing to work with a council that is Spirit-led and passionate about serving well. It is important that our congregation remember this and hold these servants up in prayer. I yet wonder who the Lord has chosen as our VP. I know they/you are out there and pray that you will answer the call to that position and that we will likewise be led to approach you for that role.

Thanksgiving week will be my ninth dealing with the discomfort and painful grip of shingles. In these weeks the blessings of the Lord have rested on me through your cards, food, flowers, texts, hugs, words of encouragement and prayers. We have a caring congregation and I am blessed by having this family of believers surrounding and encouraging me through this. For that I am truly grateful and immensely blessed.



For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, Luke 1:48-49 (NKJV)

May we all remember the True Blessing we have in Christ Jesus and may we all be driven by that truth in all we do in this time and place.

Marlis Norton, Council Pres.

Embraced by His Grace, Engaged in The Word, Empowered by His Spirit



REMINDER:

Women's Auxiliary Cookie Pack - December 9 at Christ Lutheran.

Bless a care center resident by baking cookies, dietetic or regular, NO NUTS, NO BARS. Bless your child and yourself by teaching a lesson in unrequited Christmas giving.

Bring your completed cookies **to Good Shepherd by December 8.**

Marlis Norton, Council President

Embraced by His Grace, Engaged in His Word, Empowered with His Spirit





Holiday Food Collection I'm always amazed how God moves the hearts of the people to give generously when the need arises! For the past two years we have set a goal in collecting food for our Good Shepherd food pantry. Each year we have BEAT that goal! This year's goal was to "Beat 404" and together WE DID IT! The members of Good Shepherd collected 425 items for our local holiday food boxes and to restock our food pantry!

Together, we can do great things to share God's love in our local community! Twice a year we host a Mobile Food Pantry here at Good Shepherd that provides roughly 100 pounds of food to 80-100 families that need assistance. Some of the items collected this past month will also be given at

these events. This is a wonderful volunteer activity for families to participate in on a Saturday morning!

Monetary donations can be designated at any time during the year to Human Care. These funds are used to purchase meat vouchers, items like toilet paper and shampoo (which food stamps cannot be used for) and for the Mobile Pantry to purchase bulk items from agencies such as Master Provisions.

Thank you all for your generous gifts!
Julie Rath, Chair of Outreach



Youth Leadership Meeting

The Youth Leaders from our local LCMS churches gathered to discuss bringing our youth together, every quarter, for fellowship and activities. Leaders from Good Shepherd, Zion, St. Paul, Grace, and St. John planned a Citywide Youth Lock-In, at Grace Lutheran, on **January 17th and 18th**. At the lock-in, youth will have fun with a variety of activities, participate in a service project, and learn more about God's beautiful creation, from a Creation Museum representative. Other activities being planned will include an early summer overnight youth retreat and a Fall field trip. Our next Youth Leadership Meeting will be January 11, 2020 @ Grace Lutheran Church.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church- Jr & Sr High Activities/Opportunities- SAVE the DATES

- **Christmas Caroling** – December 15th
- The Reasoner family will be **Serving a Meal at Prince of Peace, Cincinnati** – Wednesday, December 11, 2019. If interested, please contact Christine ASAP – 513-305-8675.
- **GSLC Youth FUN Activity** – February – TBA
- **Jr. High Youth Gathering** – March 13 – 15, 2020-Marriott Airport Hotel – Columbus, Ohio

More details to follow... Together we are supporting our youth and young adults, as they grow in the Christian faith, engaging the youth through servant events, and volunteer opportunities.

Christine Reasoner, Youth Leader

Adopt A Family Christmas Giving Tree

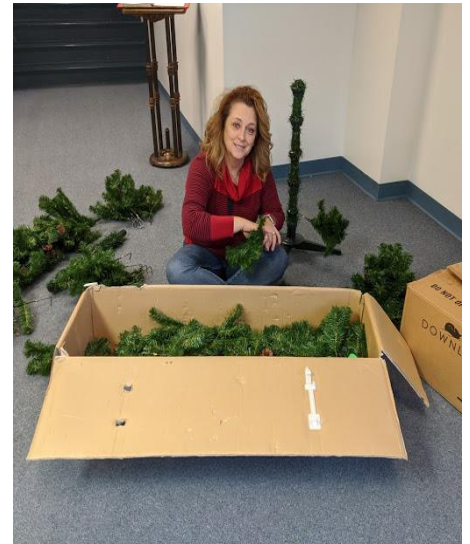


The Human Care Committee of Good Shepherd is again sponsoring the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Giving Program. As in the past we will adopt children in need from our community. We will provide Christmas gifts to brighten their holiday so they will know that they are remembered and loved on this most special holiday.

Please open your heart and consider sharing with these family by choosing a name from the Giving Tree located in the Gathering Area. Write your name on the Giving Tree list next to the tree. Purchase the items listed on the tag, attach it securely to the gift, and return the gift to the Gathering Area. All gift must be wrapped. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Givhan or Lynn Mitchell. May God bless your giving.

All gifts must be returned to the tree by Sunday, December 15th.

Decorating for Christmas



Advent Dinner and Service –The Advent services will begin this Wednesday, December 4th at 7:00 pm and run through Wednesday, December 18th. We will have dinners before each service, beginning at 6:15 pm. Volunteers are needed to provide soup, sandwiches, drinks, and desserts. The sign-up sheets are on the kitchen door. Please join us for fellowship and good food – It's always fun!



Choir News—December choir—Choir rehearsals will be immediately after the Wednesday Advent services on December 4, 11, and 18. All are welcome to join us as we prepare anthems for Christmas Eve.

We are still seeking instrumentalists and vocalists interested in participating on Christmas Eve, preservice music and/or as part of the worship service.

Please see Glen or Kim Leavens if interested. Thank you.



We have placed No Parking signs in the main and back parking lots. We have had several vacant vehicles left in our parking lots in the past year. As this became more of an issue we decided for the safety of our members and our visitors to place these signs. The policy was presented to the congregation at the November's voters meeting and was approved. There will be no cost to the church and the towing company will be responsible for contacting the owner. If you or your group need to leave your vehicle(s) in the parking lot for a period of time please contact or leave a note to notify Lynn Mitchell or Rob Nielsen



In November, the American Heritage Girls helped out with the Good Shepherd Mobile Food Pantry earning service time. Ashlee Wandstrat organized and planned “Meet the Founder Evening” on November 15th for her Dolly Madison award as a Pioneer girl. Patty Garibay the National Founder of AHG spoke to the girls on how she started AHG right from their family kitchen table. She also answered questions from the girls, signed autographs and had her picture taken with each girl. Congratulations to Ashlee on a well planned night and job well done..



WHIZ KIDS KORNER

Whiz Kids began this year on October 2nd with 14 Whiz Kids being served by 26 volunteers. What a blessing! We have been busy getting to know the kids and most have moved up a reading level already. See the Whiz Kid board in the FLC for pictures.

We hosted a dinner in November for all the kids and their families so that the tutors and parents could get to know one another. It was a good time and everyone enjoyed it. In December, we are putting on a Christmas concert for the families. The families have been invited to join us for our Advent suppers and services as well as our Christmas services. Many of them need help this Christmas and we have put items in need on the giving tree. Check it out and help in any way you can.

There is still a need for more substitute tutors. If you could be available once in a while on Wednesdays from 5-6 p.m. and are interested in helping this ministry, please see Kathy Nielsen or Pastor Bill.

November Events

Mobile Food Pantry



Gene and Judy Stetler's 50th Anniversary Celebration



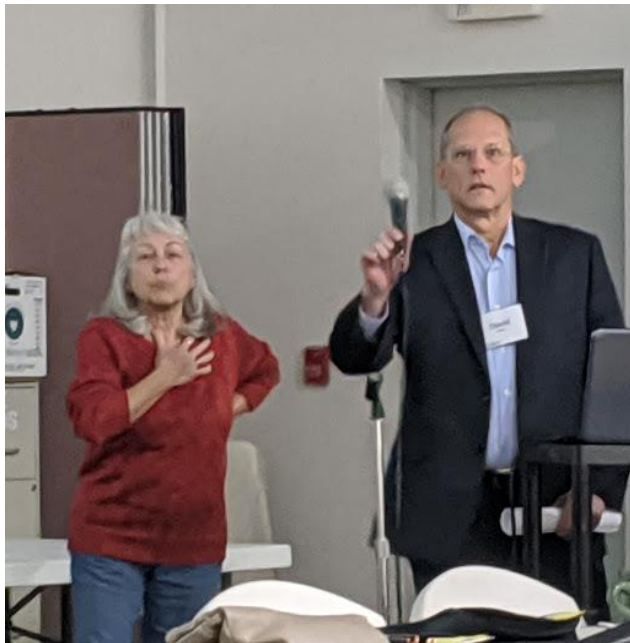
Operation Christmas Child Gift Collection



Holiday Basket Food Distribution



Voter's Meeting





Save The Date

December

<i>Marijo Raap</i>	<i>December 1</i>
<i>Vince Woolley</i>	<i>December 1</i>
<i>Taylor Mason</i>	<i>December 5</i>
<i>Craig Speicher</i>	<i>December 8</i>
<i>Erin Sladen</i>	<i>December 11</i>
<i>Calvin Herr</i>	<i>December 18</i>
<i>Ashlyn Brann</i>	<i>December 21</i>
<i>Justin O'Grady</i>	<i>December 22</i>
<i>Lisa Langsdale</i>	<i>December 27</i>
<i>Josh Molina</i>	<i>December 28</i>

December 4	Mid-Week Advent Service
December 11	Mid-Week Advent Service
December 15	Sunday School Christmas Program
December 15	Giving Tree Gifts Due
December 15	Christmas Caroling
December 18	Mid-Week Advent Service
December 24	Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service



Flower Chart

<i>December 1</i>	<i>The Woolley=Vincent's Birthday</i>
<i>December 8</i>	<i>Erin Sladen's Birthday</i>
<i>December 15</i>	<i>David and Sherrí Smith</i>
<i>December 22</i>	<i>Janice Gauger</i>
<i>December 29</i>	<i>Janice Gauger</i>

Faith Walk

1. Each day thank your Faithful God for fulfilling all His promises to you in Christ Jesus.
2. Participate daily in the study of God's Word.
3. Search the Bible for God's many promises. Make a top ten list of your personal favorites.
4. Keep a "Promise Journal" and note how God keeps His promises to you every day.
5. By the power of the Holy Spirit, share with at least one person the promise of the hope you have in Christ Jesus.



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LCMS Stewardship Ministry
Newsletter Article – December 2019

Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, is teaching those who follow Him that worrying about the necessities of life is idolatry: worshipping a false god. This is because worry and anxiety show what we care about. Our anxiety reveals what we love and to what we're devoted. It reveals what we trust in.

This is why our Lord begins this section with an overarching principle: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

But you say: "I must eat and drink. I must have clothing to wear and have a home in which to dwell." Yes, all these things you need. And Jesus says that your Father in heaven will ensure that you have them. He demonstrates this with a simple argument.

Your Father in heaven feeds the birds of the air, who neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. He clothes the lilies of the field, who neither toil nor spin but are arrayed more luxuriously than Solomon in all his glory. If, then, your Father in heaven feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, how will He not also feed and clothe you when you are worth more than they are?

For you know that you are worth more than them. You are worth infinitely more. You are worth the price of the eternal Son of God. Did the Son of God come down from heaven and become a lily? Did he descend and take on the form of a bird? No!

He came down from heaven and became a man: flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. He is one of us, our brother. And what did He do when He became flesh to dwell among us? He gave His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death, that you might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom forever.

God became man in Christ Jesus. He lived the life we failed to live, and He died the death we deserve because of it. He was raised again on the third day to overcome sin and death ... for us. He was crucified for our transgressions and raised for our justification. So, if your Father in heaven has given His Son to die for us in order that we might live with Him eternally, how will He not also give us all things to support this body and life?

To be anxious about the necessities of life, to devote yourself to food and clothing, to care about this and find security in it, is to serve another god. It is to deny that you will live forever because Jesus, the Son of God is risen from the dead, lives and reigns for all eternity. It is to believe that God – who created you, redeemed you by the death and resurrection of His Son, and sanctifies you by His Spirit – will not keep His promises of sustaining you in this life.

Jesus says this: Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. God's kingdom is His rule among us. His rule among us comes when our Father in heaven gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity. This is what we ask God to do for us in the prayer Jesus taught us.

Your Father in heaven knows what you need – food and clothing, house and home, etc. – and He promises to give it to you. Chief of the things you need is His grace and mercy in His Son, Jesus



QUESTION: Why does the church year begin at Advent, what is the history of Advent, and what is the history behind the Advent candles and wreath?

ANSWER: The word "advent" is from the Latin word for "coming," and as such, describes the "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ into the flesh.

Advent begins the church year because the church year begins where Jesus' earthly life began — in the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation. After Advent comes Christmas, which is about his birth; then Epiphany, about his miracles and ministry; then Lent, about his Calvary-bound mission; then Easter, about his resurrection and the sending of the apostles; and then Ascension (40 days after Easter) and Pentecost, with the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The first half of the church year (approximately December through June) highlights the *life* of Christ. The second half (approximately June through November) highlights the *teachings* of Christ. The parables and miracles play a big part here. That's "the church year in a nutshell," and it should help reveal how Advent fits into "the big picture."

Advent specifically focuses on Christ's "coming," but Christ's coming manifests itself among us in three ways — past, present, and future.

The readings which highlight Christ's coming in the past focus on the Old Testament prophecies of his incarnation at Bethlehem. The readings, which highlight Christ's coming in the future, focus on his "second coming" on the Last Day at the end of time. And the readings that highlight Christ's coming in the present focus on his ministry among us through Word and Sacrament today.

The traditional use of Advent candles (sometimes held in a wreath) originated in eastern Germany even prior to the Reformation. As this tradition came down to us by the beginning of this century, it involved three purple candles and one pink candle.

The purple candles matched the purple paraments on the altar (purple for the royalty of the coming King). The pink candle was the third candle to be lit (not the fourth) on Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent. "Gaudete" means "Rejoice!" in Latin, which is taken from Phil. 4:4.

("Rejoice! ... the Lord is near"). Hence a "pink" candle was used to signify "rejoicing." Some also included a white "Christ candle" in the middle to be lit during the 12 days of Christmas (Dec. 25 to Jan. 5).

The concept of giving each candle a name, i.e., Prophecy, Bethlehem, Shepherd and Angel, etc., is a relatively novel phenomenon and probably originates with certain entrepreneurial publishers seeking to sell Advent candles and devotional booklets.

There are many beautiful customs and traditions surrounding Advent as well as a load of history concerning its development. These matters would be better found in books than here.

Here are a few:

- Lee A. Maxwell, *The Altar Guild Manual, Lutheran Worship Edition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996).
- Lee A. Maxwell, *The Altar Guild Manual, Lutheran Service Book Edition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008).
- Fred L. Precht, *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992).

*“For unto you is born ... a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord.”*

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

Luke 2:11

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