

Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights

Vol. 5, No. 1

December 2015

December Already?

That seems to be one of the leading sentiments about this month. I wonder why that is? Do you think maybe it is because we get caught up on the wrong things? Buying gifts, planning trips and events, decorations, etc...? In the Liturgical Calendar (Church Calendar) December isn't the end of the year, but instead stands proudly at the BEGINNING.



Advent is the first season of the church year. It is a season of anticipation. It is a season of getting ready. It is a season for contemplation and spiritual preparation. It parallels Lent in so many ways. In your life are Advent and Lent parallel seasons? Are these seasons defined by times to pause and contemplate what Christ the King has done for you?

For most of us we are so busy "preparing" for the Christmas Season, that we scarcely have time to stop and think about the gifts that God is giving us. This December, as we prepare to hang the holly and make jolly, make sure to take some time to pause and remember what is truly important. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* John 3:16. Don't let December, or Advent, pass you by.

~Pastor King



This Advent, Sunday November 29th-Christmas Day, the Sunday and midweek worship services, Adult Bible class, and daily devotions will focus on the biblical songs of God's people as they awaited the Savior. Each week, we will learn about a song from Scripture that highlights an Advent activity that will prepare us for Christ's coming among us as a baby in Bethlehem: the Song of Zechariah, the Song of Mary, the Song of the Angels, and the Song of the Church. The **Houston Lutheran Chorale** will join us for the Wednesday, December 2nd midweek service at 7:00 pm. There will be a pre-service dinner at 5:30 pm. Come and bring your family and friends!



A Visitor Is Coming

I'm going to have company and need to have my home ready for the visitor. I must have the ceiling fan cleaned, the curtains vacuumed, shelves dusted, armchair and sofa vacuumed. Everything that catches dust must be cleaned! Then I'll get to the windows and bathroom, and begin polishing the silver and putting out the best china. My home must be ready for that special visitor.

Are you ready for Advent, the time to review or get ready for a review of Christ's first coming? We all do cleaning, washing, lawn care, etc., when we expect visitors or company. How should we make ready for Advent? Review what you know of the Babe.

The first midweek service of Advent is Wednesday, December 2nd. We will recall the promises and preparations for Jesus' coming to earth. There were many prophecies in the Old Testament that are met in the New Testament. Preparation of self begins with prayer and reading the Bible. Come to the midweek services and bring someone with you!

~Pastor Perez



December Events

Christmas Concert

Sunday, Dec. 13, 3:00 pm

Home Games

Boys Basketball

Varsity: 4th 7:00 pm, 5th 2:00 pm,
18th 7:00 pm, 19th 2:00 pm

Girls Basketball

Varsity: 1st 5:30pm, 4th 5:30 pm
Jr. Varsity: 1st 4:00 pm

Boys Soccer

Varsity: 1st 5:00 pm, 3rd 6:00 pm, 7th 6:00 pm,
8th 7:00 pm, 10th 6:00 pm
Jr. Varsity: 4th 5:00

Girls Soccer, Varsity: 8th 5:30 pm

~Lynn Eickemeyer



Seeking Flower Vases

Often, the flowers donated by members for use during the worship services are left at the church to be shared with shut-in, hospitalized, and other members. We are seeking small vases to use for these flowers distributions.

If you have small or bud vases that you are willing to donate for this purpose, please drop them off at the church office at your convenience.

Advent Quiz – True or False?

- ___ 1. The name "Jesus" was given to our Savior before his birth.
- ___ 2. Mary and Joseph travel to Nazareth to register.
- ___ 3. Zechariah and Elizabeth never had children.
- ___ 4. Adam and Eve were told that Jesus would come to earth.
- ___ 5. The Prophet Ezekiel wrote that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem.
- ___ 6. Joseph turns out to be Jesus' step-father.
- ___ 7. The Roman government ruled over all Judea.
- ___ 8. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
- ___ 9. Mary and Joseph are distant relatives of King David.
- ___ 10. A crib was prepared for Jesus' first bed.
- ___ 11. The shepherds heard of Jesus' birthplace, but kept it a secret.
- ___ 12. Mary told Elizabeth that she was expecting.
- ___ 13. Zechariah, a priest, is John the Baptizer's father.
- ___ 14. Gabriel, an angel, told Zechariah that he and his wife would have a child.
- ___ 15. Jesus' birth took place during daylight hours.
- ___ 16. Joseph broke the engagement when he heard that Mary was expecting.
- ___ 17. Zechariah was dumb (could not speak) until the birth of John.
- ___ 18. The announcement of Jesus' birth was made by angels.
- ___ 19. Joseph and Mary left Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem.
- ___ 20. Bethlehem was so crowded that Mary and Joseph spent the night in a stable.

See Answers below...

Answers: 1-T, 2-F, 3-F, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-T, 8-T, 9-T, 10-F, 11-F, 12-T, 13-T, 14-T, 15-F, 16-F, 17-T, 18-T, 19-T, 20-T

2015 Fall Community Gathering

Many **THANKS** to all who helped do preparations on Social Sunday from covering Bibles to stuffing candy bags also.



THANKS to all who came out in the very unpredictable and wet weather to reach out to the community. The 19 volunteers with cheery faces were the bright and shiny part of the evening. We handed out over 430 bags of candy, over 200 bottles of water and approximately 40 English and Spanish Bibles. *~Cathleen Chevallier*



Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying: the “King of Chorales”

Both the text and the tune of this powerful hymn (LSB 516) is by Philip Nicolai, the son of a Lutheran pastor and a pastor himself. He composed it while at Unna in Westphalia (1596-1599). During this time the bubonic plague was sweeping the country. Pondering the many deaths in his parish and the eternal life to follow, Nicolai wrote:

"Day by day I wrote out my meditations, found myself, thank God, wonderfully well, comforted in heart, joyful in spirit, and truly content; gave to my manuscript name and title of a *Mirror of Joy*, and took this, thus composed to leave behind (if God should call me from this world) as the token of my peaceful, joyful, Christian departure, or (if God should spare me in health) to comfort other sufferers whom he should also visit with the pestilence." This description of the state of mind which allowed Nicolai to produce the “king of chorales” amid the fear and horror of the time appeared in the appendix to his *Frewden-Spiegel des ewigen Lebens* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1599) in which the hymn first appeared.

The text is based on Matthew 25:1-13, the Parable of the Ten Virgins; Revelation 19:6-9; 21:21; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Ezekiel 3:17; and Isaiah 3:8 It is described by Nicolai as “a spiritual bridal hymn of the believing soul concerning Jesus Christ, her heavenly bridegroom.” It became a favorite marriage hymn in Germany. Nicolai died of a fever in Hamburg in 1608.

Johann Sebastian Bach based Cantata 140 on Nicolai’s hymn, and also rearranged a movement of that cantata as one of the *Schubler Chorales* for organ.

What a beautiful example of God causing good to come from evil. For over 400 years countless numbers of souls have sung this hymn and taken comfort and joy from it.

“The Bridegroom comes, awake! Your lamps with gladness take! Alleluia! With bridal care yourselves prepare to meet the Bridegroom who is near!.....Therefore will we eternally, sing hymns of praise and joy to Thee!”

(Information for this article was taken from Lutheran Worship: Hymnal Companion, Fred L. Precht, CPH, 1992.)

~Diane Robinson

Fritsche Update

(Excerpt from the October/November 2015 newsletter)

As the USA enjoys fall weather, things are still bright and sunny for the Fritsche family in the D.R. How richly we have been blessed!

The months of September, October, and November are big birthday months for our families, both immediate and extended. We have really enjoyed celebrating another year of God’s blessings. These blessings include wonderful care and support when Clarion broke her wrist. They also include very encouraging conferences with the boys’ teachers. We received their first report cards and are very proud of them. We are thankful for the opportunities they have at Cathedral International School.

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Fritsches . . .

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We are also thankful for the fun times we enjoy as a family around Santo Domingo. It was very wonderful to spend time with other missionary families in Boca Chica during our fall FORO (Spanish word for "forum") partner meeting. The boys really enjoyed the camaraderie of other missionary kids and Clarion had a great time connecting with fellow missionary moms while Joel was in meetings.

Time is quickly marching on and we look forward to celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year here in the Dominican Republic. Joel's parents will be coming for a visit in December, a wonderful gift for the upcoming holiday season. Thanks again for your love and prayers! God bless you all!

*~Rev. Joel Fritsche
Dominican Republic*

To support the Fritsches' ministry, see their website <http://www.lcms.org/fritsche> (information on donating by check or over the phone is also on the website).

Aschenbeck Update

(Excerpt from the quarterly newsletter #3, November)

Unsettled! That would be the word I would use to describe our family over the last few months. The two oldest boys and I left for Texas early in September. Stacey and the younger two followed in the latter half of the month. We then returned to Alaska at the very end of the month. Within our first week back I had to attend two different conferences with

one in Copper Center and the other in Anchorage. During that time we were also trying to move into a new home. Not only have we been unpacking and settling kids back into school, I have also been busily trying to get 10 cords of wood cut and chopped in preparation for winter.

But, even as we have been unsettled God continues to work numerous opportunities in our midst. Our whole family got involved helping out a family feed FORTY sled dogs after the husband unceremoniously removed portions of his thumb and fingers with a table saw. Tragedies like this allow us to share the love of Christ and we can't help but think God has brought us here for these very moments.

On a recent Sunday, the worship service was brought to a halt so that we could gather around a woman who had not been to church in years. As she broke down in tears at the love that Christ has for her, we were able to life her up in prayer for strength and guidance.

Yes, the changes over the last year and especially the last few months have left our family a bit unsettled for a time, but the peace and love of Christ are a constant unchanging foundation upon which we live every moment. Even in the midst of uncertainty, we have found that God continues to assure us of His unchanging love and lasting need for that light to be shared.

*~Rev. Keith Aschenbeck
Alaska Mission for Christ*

To support the Aschenbecks' ministry, donate online at <http://www.alaskamissionforchrist.org> or mail donations to: Alaska Mission for Christ, 8100 Arctic Blvd., Anchorage, AK 99518 (note "Keith Aschenbeck in the memo section).

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Field Trip to Old MacDonald's Farm



Operation Diaper Drop a Huge Success!



On October 23, the ECE children and their families visited Old MacDonald's Farm in Humble, Texas. The children had a wonderful time playing and exploring the farm. The pigs and dairy cows were a big hit, but definitely surpassed in popularity by the pony and train rides. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful day with a picnic lunch and a visit to the Pumpkin Patch!



Our ECE project for the month of October was to provide the Heights Interfaith Ministries Food Pantry much-needed size 5 and size 6 diapers. We hoped we could get one package of at least twelve diapers from every child in the ECE. More than 4,000 diapers were loaded up and delivered to a very grateful group of pantry volunteers. The delivery of the diapers, and a host of other baby items that were so generously donated, required several trips from Immanuel to the pantry.

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Operation Diaper Drop . . .

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All of the ECE classes earned an ice cream party for their efforts. Thank you so much to all who donated diapers and baby items to this worthy cause. Our ECE families are awesome!

~Winnie McNamara



Christmas Choir

If you would like to join the Adult Choir and sing for Christmas Eve (7:00 pm service) and/or Christmas Day (9:00 am service), you are welcome to attend rehearsals beginning Thursday, December 3rd at 7:30 pm. Praise to the Newborn King who was, and is, and is to come!

~Diane Robinson



THE LOVE of CHRIST COMPELS US
2 corinthians 5:14

Focus on Stewardship

Our Lord Jesus Christ healed the man with dropsy by His Word on the Sabbath (*Luke 14:1-6*). He is the great physician of both body and soul. The paradoxical symptom of dropsy was an unquenchable craving for drink even though the body was over inflated with fluid, a craving that when indulged served not to ease but to feed the disease. And so if a man drinks a great deal, but is never filled, he sees a doctor to inquire about what ails him, what is wrong with his body and how to remedy it. For that is not thirst but a disease (Seneca, *Consolation to His Mother Helvia*, 11.3).

But if the owner of five couches goes looking for ten, or the owner of ten tables buys up as many again, and even though he has plenty of land and money, he remains unsatisfied and desires yet more, losing sleep and always in discontent, does he not also require a physician to diagnose the cause of this distress? For this is not want or lack, but a disease (Aristippus, quoted in Plutarch, *Love of Wealth*, 524b). As St. Augustine of Hippo wrote, "we may rightly compare the dropsical man to a covetous rich man: For the more the one is swollen with excess of water, the more he thirsts; so also the other: The more he abounds in riches . . . the more eagerly he desires them" (*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, Vol. 4, 135).

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Stewardship . . .

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Both require physicians. Both require diagnosis and medicine applied from the outside to the inward being. For these are not desires to be fulfilled but diseases to be cured.

This is why our Lord instructs us on taking care not to be overmuch consumed by money. "No one can serve two masters . . . You cannot serve God and money" (*Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13*). The point is that our desire for money, like the disease dropsy, is never satisfied. We always desire more. We always think, if I just had this much then I would be happy. But even when that much comes, which God gladly gives, that happiness evades us. For the desire for more of these things is never satisfied. It demands our constant energy—either in procuring more or protecting what we already have. When this happens, God, in His mercy, shows us that the money that He has given is no longer serving us, but we it. We have another master.

To overcome this, we need a physician's diagnosis and a physician's remedy. And our Lord, Jesus Christ, our great physician of both body and soul, like the man healed of dropsy, applies His Word to us. He shows us how we have put our fear, our love, and our trust in our money and not feared, loved, and trusted in Him above all things. In essence, He says, "Stop it! Stop chasing after these fleeting things. They are vanity. They are the things that moth and rust destroy. For you cannot have two masters. Repent!" And in seeing our great error, we are sorry that we have not fully feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. And, in the mercy and grace that He

earned for us on the cross, He takes away this sin, restores us to health, and bids us live.

But then what? What do we do with this healing balm and care that our great physician has done? Do we simply go back to our old ways? "By no means!" St. Paul says (*Rom 3:31; 6:2*). We do not just go back to the old ways. That way is dead to us and leads us to death. No, we live a new life, a life filled with the grace, mercy, and love of God toward us. And God's great mercy, grace, and love toward us is so abundant that it overflows and pours out onto those around us. So we no longer hoard money and possessions. We no longer scrape and crawl our way to amass more. We give to those around us, as God in Christ has given to us. We press our money and possessions into service for those who need it: our family, our society, and our church. For money is God's gift to us to serve us and others. Not the other way round. It serves us because it is a gift from our Father in heaven.

(Stewardship newsletter insert for December 2015, provided on the LCMS website <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=3802>)

~submitted by Kathy Angst

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Immanuel Lutheran Church
and Early Childhood Education's
4th Annual
Christmas Community Service Project
Benefitting the
Houston Area Women's Center's
Holiday Express

Consider sharing your Christmas Blessings with the children in programs at the Houston Area Women's Center by purchasing new toys, new clothing, \$25 gift cards from any store or by making a monetary donation.



Donation boxes located in the School Office and Church Narthex. Donations can also be given to your child's teacher. For further information, please contact Winnie McNamara at mcnamara.ils.ece@gmail.com



Accepting Donations Now through December 10

Help make a difference in the life of a child!



 **Immanuel Lutheran Church - December 2015** 

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 All Boards @ 7:00 pm	2 <i>No Ladies Bible Study</i> Usher Team #2 Dinner @ 5:30 pm Advent Service <i>w/Houston Lutheran Chorale</i> @ 7:00 pm	3 Bells @ 6:30 pm Choir @ 7:30 pm	4  Christmas Lighting Ceremony @ 6:30–8:00 pm	5 FOD Christmas Dance @ 4:00–9:00 pm Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
6 Usher Team #3 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am Naomi Christmas Party @ 4:00 pm in Miertschin Hall	7 Bible Study @ 6:30 – 8:00 pm	8 Men's Breakfast @ AAA restaurant @ 6:30 am	9 Usher Team #4 Advent Service @ 7:00 pm	10 Bells @ 6:30 pm Choir @ 7:30 pm	11	12 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
13 Usher Team #5 Worship @ 9:00 am Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am Caroling 3:30 pm Chili Dinner After	14	15 Newsletter Deadline	16 <i>No Ladies Bible Study</i> Usher Team #1 Advent Service @ 7:00 pm	17  ECE Christmas Program 6:30 pm Choir @ 7:30 pm	18	19 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
20 Usher Team #2 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am Caroling to Shut-Ins 2:00 pm	21 <i>No Bible Study</i>	22 Men's Breakfast @ AAA restaurant @ 6:30 am	23	24  Usher Team #3 Christmas Eve Service @ 7:00 pm	25  Usher Team #4 Christmas Day Service w/Communion @ 9:00 am	26 Unveil Setup @ 11:00 – 1:00 pm
27 Usher Team #5 Worship @ 9:00 am Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am	28	29	30	31 Usher Team #1 New Year's Eve Service w/Communion @ 7:00 pm		



Immanuel Lutheran Church
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Return Service Requested

To the Family of:

Loving God ~ Loving Neighbors ~ Serving Others

SPECIAL DECEMBER EVENTS

Wednesdays

**Dec. 2 w/Houston Lutheran Chorale,
Dec. 9, 16 • 7:00 pm**

Midweek Advent Services

**Friday, December 4 • 6:30 pm
Christmas Lighting Ceremony**

**Thursday, Dec. 17 • 6:30 pm
ECE Children's Program**

**Thursday, December 24 • 7:00 pm
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

**Friday, December 25 • 9:00 am
Christmas Day Communion Service**

**Thursday, December 31 • 7:00 pm
New Year's Eve Communion Service**



**Sunday, December 13 • 3:30 pm
Caroling & Chili Dinner**

**Sunday, December 20 • 2:00 pm
Caroling to Shut-Ins**

