

Christ Lutheran Church

The People of Christ Sharing the Love of Christ

December 2023



Dear Friends,

With the arrival of December comes the anticipation of one of the most cherished holidays the world over. I'm speaking of course of Christmas. I have so many cherished memories connected with Christmas, from decorating cookies with my mom to checking out the window displays at the stores in downtown Chicago to opening gifts on Christmas day. And I cherish all those memories, I really do, but I also realize how few of my Christmas memories actually focus on the birth of Jesus. It always amazes me how many people in the world who celebrate Christmas don't actually know or believe in Jesus.

And that's why I so love being in worship, in God's house, on Christmas eve and day. It's the one time that I can shut out the cultural expressions of Christmas and just contemplate and celebrate the reason for and essence of Christmas. It's the one time and place where the birth of Jesus, God's son, takes center stage, and when I am reminded of why this holiday exists.

"For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior; he is Christ the Lord."

I look forward to celebrating the birth of our Savior with you.

To God be the Glory,
Pastor John

**PASTOR
JOHN
STENNFELD**



WHAT'S INSIDE

2-3 Around the Church

Special Prayers in November Worship Services for Our family members and friends

Gwendy Lewis – broken wrist
Gary Lippe – continued healing from cancer
Phyllis Mitchell - recovery from heart bypass surgery
Seth Werchan – recovery from eye injury
Leroy Albrecht—hospitalized (Brother of Katherine Richter)

Pregnancy - Christin Mercedes – healthy and safe delivery

Thanksgiving- birth of Walter Alvin Zieschang to Zachary (son of Michael and Cindy) and Mary Zieschang

- birth of Penelope Claire Mercedes to Mike and Christin Mercedes

Loss

Jim and Deborah Albers – death of their son, Daniel

Stewardship Verse

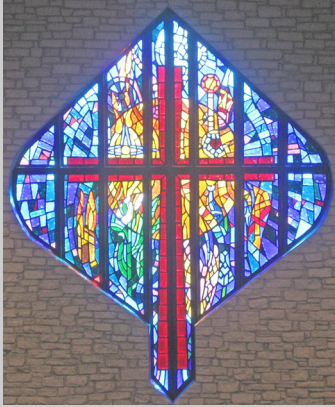
"¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share."

1 Timothy 6:17-18





Letter from the President



Saturday, December 2nd we will set up our outdoor nativity and decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. Check the bulletin for details and please help if you can.

We will have a voter's meeting on December 10th at 10:45 in the sanctuary. The most significant topics will be next year's budget and officers. As always, we will have updates from Pastor John, Jordan, the Treasurer, Trustees, and other groups. Please plan to attend and do your part to address the business of the church.

Advent represents the start of a new church year. Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation for the coming of Christ both in the past in His incarnation as the baby Jesus, but also in the future with His promised second coming as Christ. It is my continuing prayer that each of you make Sunday, the time of worship, a priority. Our congregation is not the same when you are not here.

One final note, my four-year term has president ends at the end of December, I have been honored to serve you in this way. It is my prayer that God continue to bless each of you this Christmas season and always.

David Schaare
President

Mission Statement

The mission of Christ Lutheran Church is to connect people to Jesus through:

- ✦ *Inspirational Worship*
- ✦ *Loving Service*
- ✦ *Caring Fellowship*
- ✦ *Relevant Education*

So that they may know, and grow in, his love.

Lutheran Hour Ministries - Over the last few months we have tried to bring you information on Lutheran Hour Ministries "Project Connect." Several weeks ago we asked you to help select additional booklets for LHM spinner in the narthex. Using that survey, ten new booklets were ordered and should be in place soon. These booklets can be used by you personally, and especially shared with a friend. The spinner has only so much room, but the good news is that all of the published booklets and many more can be read, downloaded or in some cases listened to, using the LHM website. For example, here are a few titles of the "booklets" you can only find online:

"Battle with the Bottle" "Beyond Divorce" "Coping with Cancer" "Finding Balance" "Forgiveness is For Giving" "Health from the Inside Out" "How to Know What's Right...and Do It" and many more.

Find the full list at lhm.org/projectconnect. You are also strongly encouraged to support LHM with your prayers and financial help. Go to lhm.org for more information or talk to Donn Trautner.

Creative Communication and Community



Just a reminder that we often take photos, and at times, video, of ministry events to put up around Church on the screen on Sundays and to post to the web that publicizes the worship, service, fellowship, and education life of Christ Lutheran.

Angel Tree Project - We are partnering with Upbring once again on the Angel Tree Project - to buy gifts for the children served by Upbring living in foster homes. Please be sure to write on the Angel Tree Ornament sheet: 1) your name and contact information 2) the names and ages of the children you signed up to sponsor. Please bring all gifts in plastic bags (w/ ornaments attached) to Church set under the Christmas tree by Sunday morning, **December 3**. For a volunteer opportunity with Upbring (which is during work hours), to wrap gifts for the children they serve for Christmas, please be sure to go to: <https://upbring.org/volunteer>. Please contact Jordan with questions. Thanks for your support!

Pledge Sunday - December 10 will be the day we make our financial pledges to God for the coming year. The pledge box will be available for you to place your pledge cards into as you come forward for Holy Communion. Please prayerfully consider your pledge to God for the coming year. Your pledge card will remain in the pledge box on the side of the altar area for the entirety of the coming year as a reminder to you of your promise to God.

Men's Discipleship Study - Our monthly men's study for 2023-2024 will meet on Tuesday, December 5 at 7:30pm in Christ's Workshop. We will meet each month on the 1st Tuesday of the month through May 2nd. This year we will be guided in our time together by the book from Concordia Publishing House entitled: "Grace Under Pressure: Responding Faithfully to Stress" by Rev. Chris Kennedy.





“I will meditate”

“SILENT NIGHT?”

“*Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright.*” O! The opening words to such a beautiful Christmas carol! I love singing it by candlelight with my church family at the end of our Christmas Eve service. It’s a moment when all my pains and fears seem to dissolve, and the world’s turmoil quiets. It was a young Catholic priest, Joseph Mohr, who in 1816 Austria wrote the poem that became this beloved Christmas carol. Two years later, on Christmas Eve, he needed a carol for Midnight Mass, and took the poem to his friend, Franz Gruber, to hurriedly write a melody for it. Franz, a school teacher and organist, wrote the simple lullaby for guitar and choir. I wonder why Mohr wrote of a silent and calm night. St. Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth (Chapter 2:1-20) reads a bit noisy, hectic, and worrisome. Bethlehem was probably bustling with travelers in town for the Roman Empire’s census. As his ancestral town, Joseph had traveled there to register with his betrothed, a very pregnant Mary, but they found no accommodations. “*There was no room for them in the inn*” (Luke 2:7). They found shelter in a nearby animal enclosure where Mary gave birth to Jesus and “*placed Him in a manger*” (vs7), a feeding trough. Shepherds were “*living out in the fields nearby*” (vs8) staying awake through the night to watch their flocks when “*an angel of the Lord appeared*” and “*they were terrified!*” (vs9). And when the angel announced, “*Today . . . a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord*” (vs11), “*suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared . . . praising God!*” (vs13). Then the shepherds “*hurried off*” to see the child and to spread the good news! (vs16, 17)! A crowded town, animals, pregnancy and birth, guarding sheep, a host of angels – all come with “noise.” Yet, each time I read Luke 2, I sense only a peace-filled silence and calm. I know it was a “Holy Night” as everything occurred according to God’s will, but why a “Silent Night”? Our *Lutheran Service Book* includes three verses of “*Silent Night, Holy Night*” (#363) in German as Mohr wrote them. (The traditional English version we sing is a translation written in 1863, by John Young, an Episcopal priest.) The literal translation of Mohr’s poem is: “¹*Silent night, holy night! All is sleeping. Alone watching, only the close, most holy couple. Blessed boy in curly hair, sleep in Heavenly Peace!* ²*Silent night, holy night! Shepherds just informed by the angels’ hallelujah, it rings out far and wide: Christ the Savior is here!* ³*Silent night, holy night! Son of God, oh how laughs Love out of your divine mouth, for now the salvation strikes for us, Christ in Thy birth!*” (german-way.com). Beautiful. When I read, or hear Luke 2, my pains and fears dissolve, the world’s turmoil quiets, and the silence and calm of the holy night ring out loud and clear. And, there is a brightness, a light dispelling all darkness. It is the Love of God, manifest in His only begotten Son, who left the glory of Heaven to do the work His Father gave Him to do. And, He completed it on a cross where He silenced the penalty of sin forever, for all believers! “*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him ‘Immanuel’ - which means ‘God with us’*” (Matt 1:23). “*Give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins*” (Matt 1:21). And Jesus said, *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life!*” (Jn 8:12). A “Silent Night”? Yes, Mohr was right. It was a silence heard throughout Creation, and for all time. Because of the Child in the manger – our Savior - and by God’s Grace, through faith, we live in peace with God the Father now and eternally! May we be filled with this true PEACE - “*Heavenly Peace,*” and the JOY it brings, this Christmas and forever!

Merry Christmas, Duannah

Cranberry Cheesecake Rollups

Easy, quick, and perfect for a holiday table!

4 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
¼ cup powdered sugar
½ cup cranberry sauce
1 pkg. crescent rolls (8 count)
1 Tbsp. butter, melted
2 Tbsp. granulated sugar

Preheat oven to 375°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a bowl, stir together cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth. Fold in cranberry sauce. Unroll crescent dough and separate into triangles. Spread thin layer of the cream cheese mixture onto each triangle. Roll it up, beginning with the wide end, and place onto baking sheet. Brush each roll with melted butter and sprinkle with granulated sugar. Bake 9 – 12 minutes until rolls are golden brown.





Christ Lutheran Church

December 2023

Birthdays

Milton Ihlo	12/1
Roy Pietsch	12/1
Esmeralda Cano	12/2
Holly Herber	12/3
Robert Strait	12/3
Eric Harrison	12/6
B J Zamora	12/6
Blaine Bartles	12/16
Jean Wiley	12/20
Benjamin Schaare	12/27

Anniversaries

Sonny & Phyllis Mitchell	12/17/1966
Dale & Patty Brodbeck	12/19/2015
Earnest & Susan Sermons	12/22/1985

Flower Chart Given by...

December 3

BJ Zamora

December 10

Benjamin Schaare

December 17

Dale & Patty Brodbeck

December 24

Katherine Richter
In memory of Franklin

December 31

Brenda and Mark
In honor of our parents

Lectors

12/3/2023	Alan Werchan
12/10/2023	Alan Werchan
12/17/2023	Taylor Teeters
12/24/2023	Clayton Pillack
12/24/2023 PM	Micah Stennfeld
12/25/2023	Taylor Teeters
12/31/2023	MaryLou Moore

Online Giving -- A word of thanks to all of you for your continued support of our ministry here at Christ Lutheran Church, and a special note of thanks to all of you who have chosen to give online through our website with the Vanco portal. In a time of less volunteerism due to Covid-19 and such, the online giving is less cumbersome and more streamlined for our Financial Secretary to manage. That being said, we would ask those of you giving through this online way to consider giving through your bank accounts (savings or checking) as opposed to using a credit/debit card. We are charged a 2.75% transaction fee whenever a credit/debit card is used, and while that may not seem like a lot for a \$25 offering (\$0.69 fee), for a \$50 offering (\$13.75 fee) those fees become quite significant. Again, we are grateful for any and all offerings and gifts to Christ Lutheran, but in order to be the best stewards of what God has entrusted to us we do kindly ask all of you credit debit card givers to consider using one of your bank accounts instead. Thank you.

Altar Flower Chart - The flower chart for the 2024 calendar year is now posted in the narthex. If you sign up for a particular date, please remember to send/turn in your payment for your flowers (in advance of that Sunday). The cost is \$45 per flower arrangement.

Fellowship after Worship - A signup sheet is posted in the narthex that has a list of Sundays available for you to choose from to bring some type of snack. There are 2 spaces for each Sunday. If you would like to host a Sunday alone, please cross out the second space, but if you would like to have a partner to host it with you, leave that space open for someone to team up with you. There is also a Sign Up Genius link where you can go online and sign up to help out in this capacity. Sign Up Genius link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4FA5A82DAAF4C43-45825210-fellowship>

The Fellowship committee will provide coffee and juice and paper products. Please consider hosting one of our Sunday Fellowships.

Blue Santa—We will again be volunteering with Operation Blue Santa, a non-profit organization run by the Austin Police Department. We will be helping to wrap presents for children from 5:00-8:00 PM on Wednesday evening, November 29th. We have 15 slots available for our group. Please call Jordan to secure your spot on our service team.

Christmas Party - You are invited to join your Christ Lutheran family for a Christmas party fellowship at the home of Douglas and Deborah Bynum (12917 Windy Gap Drive Manchaca, TX 78652) on Friday evening, December 15, at 7 p.m. Please RSVP to Deborah Bynum at 361-548-9620. We thank the Bynums for hosting this Christmas celebration and opening their home to us. Please make sure to RSVP if you plan to attend.

Braille is planning to meet on the third Tuesday, December 19, at 9:00 a.m. at Hope Lutheran Church. Car pool from Christ @8:30. Let Mildred Westfall (512) 385-6609 know if you plan to go.

Christmas - Remote Service Opportunities - There are "at home" opportunities available during this holiday season to decorate Christmas ornaments, as well as cards, for The Adventurers Academy of Lifelong Learning (austinadventurers.org). There are a number of ornament craft kits available in the narthex for you to pick out, take home, and put those together (using the supplies provided). Please bring all the completed items to the Church by Sunday, December 10th.

During our children's discipleship hour over the next month, we will be assembling care packages of snacks for Ronald McDonald House (rmhc-ctx.org).

This loving service effort (of bringing Christmas cheer to others in our community) is a Thrivent Action Team (thrivent.com). Please contact Jordan with questions.

Christ Lutheran Web Site & Social Media

www.christaustin.org | Facebook | Twitter | You Tube