

The Adventiser

Advent Lutheran Church

Our mission: To grow in the Lord and to make Him known.

Winter 2014-2015

Are You Ready for Christmas?

My Dear Friends in Christ, “ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?” As I write this, Christmas Eve is a little over a month away. I don’t know about you, but for me the time just keeps going faster and faster. The first Sunday in Advent is Nov. 30, just three days after we celebrate Thanksgiving. So, “Are You Ready For Christmas?”

There is so much to do... Cards to send, parties to plan and attend, decorations to put up, gifts and food to buy, meals to plan, preparations to make for family gatherings and serving the needy with meals and gifts... But before we throw ourselves into this frenzy of activity, let’s take some time this Advent to look at the real meaning of Christmas and do a different kind of preparation.

The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming” or “visit.” During the season of Advent, we keep in mind both “advents” of Christ: His first, over 2000 years ago on that night in Bethlehem; and His second, which is yet to come at the end of the Age.

Matthew connects Jesus’ birth with Isaiah’s prophesy of the coming Messiah when he says in Matt 1: 18-23:

“¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’ ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).”

“Immanuel, which means God with us”... C.S. Lewis, in his book *“Surprised By Joy”*, uses a wonderful analogy for why God became a man. Lewis says: “in the play Hamlet, in order for Hamlet, the character, to meet Shakespeare, the writer, Shakespeare would have to write himself into the play and become a character.” In order for the created one (us) to meet the creator (God), God would need to become one of His creations. That’s what God did on that first Christmas Eve. Christmas is an invitation by God into His very presence, to get to know Him.

Please join your Advent family for a light supper on the three Wednesdays before Christmas Eve followed by our Mid-Week Advent Worship Services focusing on how Jesus shows us the Father; and for our Christmas Eve Candle Light Service, which will include six short videos from the perspective of Elizabeth, the Bethlehem Innkeeper, Mary, Joseph, a Shepherd and a Wiseman. These videos invite us to imagine how each of these people were impacted by being in the very presence of God, and how we are impacted by getting to know God and His love for us through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

May God grant us all a new sense of His presence in this Advent season, and especially on Christmas Eve. God’s continued blessings to you all, *Pastor John*

Voter's Meeting

Our bi-annual voter's meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25, 2015 immediately after the service. The proposed 2015 budget will be presented for approval along with discussion of mission funds for 2014.

Board of Worship

Choir rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings from 7:00-8:00 pm or after Advent services in the sanctuary. Being able to read music is not a requirement. If any member or friend of Advent Lutheran Church wishes to share a musical talent as a prelude, offertory, or communion musical interlude, please contact Peggy Earnhardt, Pastor John or Xavier Richert.

Poinsettia order forms will be available in early December.

Upcoming Worship opportunities:

- Each Wednesday during Advent, join us for a light supper at 6:15 pm followed by worship at 7:00 pm.
- There will be a special children's program during worship on Sunday, December 7.
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, December 24. There will not be a Christmas Day service.
- The Praise Team will lead music in worship on Sunday, December 21, January 18, and February 15.
- The next Praise and Pizza will be on Saturday, January 17 at 5:15 pm.

The Meaning of the Advent Wreath

Most Advent wreaths use three colors – blue, pink, and white. However, some may use purple in place of blue.

1st Candle (blue): The Prophecy Candle or The Candle of Hope – We have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God.

2nd Candle (blue): The Bethlehem Candle or The Candle of Preparation – God kept his promise of a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Preparation means to "get ready".

3rd Candle (pink): The Shepherd Candle or The Candle of Joy – The angels sang a message of joy to the shepherds. A Savior was born for all people!

4th Candle (blue): The Angel Candle or The Candle of Love – The angels announced the good news of a Savior. God sent His only Son to earth to save us because He loves us.

5th Candle (white): The Christ Candle – The white candle reminds us that Jesus is the spotless Lamb of God sent to wash away our sins! His birth was for His death. His death was for our birth! We light the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the first and second Sundays after Christmas.

Women of Advent

The Women of Advent will hold their Annual Christmas Breakfast Buffet on Saturday, December 6, at 9:30 am at the home of Maryanne Warne, 106 Debrock Court, Cary, NC. It is a fun morning of warm fellowship and delicious food. We hope you will be able to join us. Flyers with specific information and directions are available in the church narthex.

The Tuesday Morning Women's Bible Study has completed their study of "Gideon" and is in recess until January 13, 2015, when it will begin a new Beth Moore Study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians entitled "Children of the Day." If you are able to join the study, please let Maryanne Warne know.

Watch the church bulletins and church narthex for announcements of upcoming Women of Advent activities in 2015. We will definitely have our popular February Valentine's Girls Night Out, which is full of fun and yummy food!

Christian Education and Youth Ministries

4th Grader Bible Presentation

Our 4th grade Sunday School students were presented with Bibles on Reformation Sunday. Emma Richie, Simon Walker, and Caitlyn Wriedt each received a Bible with a personalized inscription from Advent. We pray that they will turn to these Bibles for study, guidance, and comfort as they become young adults. Many thanks to Peggy Earnhardt for her leadership in this Advent tradition.



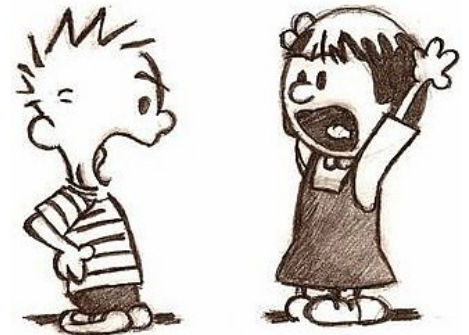
Advent Christmas Play

During the worship service on December 7, our Sunday School children will be performing a scene from *The Magi*. We hope you will enjoy their interpretation of how the wise men came to realize that Jesus was the savior of the world! Thanks to Peggy Earnhardt, Carolyn Walker, and all the Sunday School teachers for their leadership.

Adult Sunday School - Tactics In Defending The Faith

Some people just seem to have a knack for witnessing to others about Christ. How do they do it? Practice! This fall, the Adult Sunday School class is getting in some practice as we participate in the video series *Tactics In Defending The Faith*. The initial sessions have focused on the "Columbo" tactic – using questions to maneuver in conversation, rather than simply asserting your point of view. Questions are used for several purposes:

- To learn about someone else's point of view ("What do you mean by that?"). It does no good to argue against something that the other person doesn't even believe.
- To understand their thought process ("How did you arrive at that conclusion?"). When a person makes a claim about God or religion or indeed anything, it's up to them to justify it before challenging us to knock it down. We don't have to argue against every "story" somebody throws out there.
- To expose flaws in their thought process. It's more gracious (and more effective) to ask, "Have you thought about this?" rather than say "Here is where you are wrong!"



These tactics (and the ones we are yet to learn) sound simple, but require practice in order to master. Come join us and get some practice defending Christ in the company of your Advent family and it will make defending Him outside our doors a little easier!

Weekly Bible Studies

The Tuesday evening Men's Bible Study continues its study of the *Trinitarianism* video series from Credo House. Topics the group has wrestled with so far this fall:

- Can we even hope to know anything about an infinite God?
- How do we know that God exists?

Contact Cliff Mather (919-548-8608, CJMather@yahoo.com) for more information.

The Tuesday morning Women's Bible Study this fall completed its study of *Gideon: Your Weakness, God's Strength*. They will be in recess until January 13 when they will begin the latest study by Beth Moore entitled *Children of the Day*. It is a nine-week study of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians using DVD's and a study book. Contact Maryanne Warne (919-468-0183, maryanne106@me.com) for more information.

The biweekly Wednesday evening Women's Bible Study has been studying the *Following God Series: Life Principles from the Women of the Bible*. The group will resume on January 7. Contact Karen Baker (919-304-1227, krobortel@gmail.com) for more information.

Board of Finance and Stewardship

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." *John 1:14* God became man; he took on human flesh so that men would once again dwell with God. In the fullness of time, the Son of God from eternity became a part of history to be born under the law to redeem those under the law. Christ came from heaven above to earth below for us men and for our salvation. He who knew no sin became sin so that we would be declared righteous in God's sight. He was defiled so that we would be cleansed. He was born so that we would not die, and He died for us so that we would live in Him. He took upon Himself everything that rightfully belongs to us—sin and death—and in exchange gave to us everything that rightfully belongs to Him—righteousness, life, and the status as the sons of God.

This is what we celebrate in Advent and at Christmas. We celebrate the coming of our Lord to save us from sin, death, and hell. We celebrate that God in Christ cared for us in body and soul, for He came not only to reconcile us to the Father by taking away our sin, but also to redeem us from death and hell so that we would live with Him in His kingdom, which has no end.

In a sermon on Acts 6 for St. Stephen's Day, preached on December 26, 1522, Martin Luther said this: "From this story we learn in the first place how a Christian community should be constituted. In addition, we have a true pattern of spiritual government that the apostles here provide. They care for souls, occupy themselves with preaching and prayer, and yet also see to it that the body is cared for; for they suggest several men who are to distribute the goods, as you have heard. Thus the Christian rule is concerned for the people in body and soul, so that no one suffers want . . . that all were richly fed and well cared for in both body and soul."

This is one reason we give to the church. We give so that people will see the church not just as a place that cares for souls, that forgives sins, but also a place that cares for the body. For the church is a place of mercy. It is a place where we inhale God's mercy and loving kindness through the Word and the Sacraments for the forgiveness of our sin. And it's a place where we exhale the mercy we received there in love and service to our neighbor. The church cares for both the body and the soul. The church is not so heavenly minded that it forgets those in need on earth. In fact, it cares for the needs of this body and life precisely because it is heavenly minded. We seek to do what God has done for us. The church is so ordered that it does both.

Giving to the church is a responsibility given to those who are the church. This can sometimes be difficult, but it is also a great joy. For in giving to the church we are giving back to God for His use for others what He has first given to us. In giving to the church, we participate in God's work here in time for all eternity. In giving to the church, we who are heavenly-minded do what God has done for us: dwell with those who live in a fallen world and care for them in both body and soul. Let us, then, in this most joyous season of the church year, dwell not on the struggles in giving, but rather on the joy set before us in caring for body and soul as God in Christ has done for us.

Birthdays

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|------------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| Pastor Herbert Walther | Dec. 1 | Lansama Sheref | Dec. 21 | Paul Simis | Feb. 8 |
| Loni Gunn | Dec. 1 | Ann Swan | Jan. 13 | Kathleen Simis | Feb. 10 |
| Gentry Gunn | Dec. 1 | Hank Swan | Jan. 16 | Kent Underwood | Feb. 12 |
| Rina Borg | Dec. 3 | Xavier Richert | Jan. 20 | Sadie Struckmeyer | Feb. 12 |
| Bob Serpas | Dec. 4 | Christine Struckmeyer | Jan. 25 | Konii Sheref | Feb. 13 |
| Barbara Bergdolt | Dec. 6 | Jon Buchleiter | Feb. 2 | Pastor John Benham | Feb. 16 |
| Sam Fischer | Dec. 16 | Lois Durr | Feb. 6 | Doug Borg | Feb. 18 |
| Melanie Nicol | Dec. 18 | Sabrina Mather | Feb. 7 | Lyla Rose Maves | Feb. 20 |
| Allyson Wriedt | Dec. 19 | | | April Welborne | Feb. 23 |

Anniversaries

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|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
| Anona & Bob Serpas | Dec. 21 | Joyce & Don Eckert | Jan. 25 |
| Ann & Hank Swan | Dec. 21 | Beth & John Benham | Feb. 21 |
| Carolyn & Frank Jones | Dec. 30 | | |

SPECIAL DATES – Please let the church office or Carolyn Jones know if your birthday or anniversary dates aren't listed or are incorrect. We want to celebrate with you and keep our church records up to date.

Board of Outreach - Faith in Action

Over the last two months, Advent Lutheran Church has been displaying **faith in action**. As usual, we have had and will continue to have a busy fall. We started the season with volunteers helping Grace Lutheran Church take care of 100 plus neighbors that surround their church. We have collected and sorted food for PORCH. We have purchased thousands of items for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child, and we are now collecting and will be distributing Thanksgiving baskets to three families. To finish off the year, you will see the Angel tree that will provide gifts to some very needy families. So I say to each and every one of you, "Job well done!" I am sure you can see where you fit into the above sharing events – that is **faith in action**!

Some may wonder if it will ever end. I hope not because we are our very best when we are in the mode of giving and thinking about those less fortunate. "Let us not become weary in doing good..." Galatians 6:9

Grace event: Physical and spiritual support to 100+ people who live around the church. Volunteers provided visitors with a hot meal, bags of food and clothing, and guided them through health services and personal care like haircuts.

Shoe box event: With the support of Thrivent we collected 110 shoe boxes. Every shoebox gift delivered by Operation Christmas Child is a tangible expression of God's amazing love. But a shoebox is just the beginning! The Greatest Gift booklet, available in 96 languages, is a picture book about Jesus given with the shoebox. The gift-filled shoebox also presents an opportunity in nearly 75 countries for our church partners to invite children into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ through The Greatest Journey. This discipleship program includes 12 engaging Bible lessons, teaching the children how to live for Jesus and share their faith among their family and friends. To date 1.3 million children have come to Christ!

Thanksgiving Baskets: We provided meals to three families, which included 12 adults and 8 children. Thanks to a donation from Thrivent, we were able to provide a gift certificate to each family.

As you can see, when we are doing God's work we are living out our **faith with action**. As we all are aware, living our faith is not a passive activity. It involves us doing what God commanded us to do. We are currently having a Sunday Bible class that is equipping us with tools to share our faith with those who are unchurched. Maybe some of the information we glean from this class will allow us to have the courage to step out and talk with those in need of salvation! The following is food for thought:

"Research from LIFEWAY found that 82 percent of people who are unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited. 63 percent of Americans say they are willing to receive information about a church when it comes from a family member, while 56 percent say they'd receive it from a friend or neighbor. But this is the hardest truth of all...seven out of ten unchurched people claim they have never been invited to church in their lives, and 98 percent of churchgoers have never extended an invitation to anyone."

I read somewhere that a Lutheran invites someone to church once every 22 years! That is not a joke...but the truth. Ask yourself - when was the last time you invited someone to church?

Thank you for being part of the effort to contribute to the fall events and making Thanksgiving and Christmas a bit brighter for those in our community.



The Adventiser, the newsletter for Advent Lutheran Church, is published quarterly. If you have something you would like included or have other comments or suggestions, contact Karla Byrnes (kmkbyrnes@gmail.com).

*Newsletter Deadline for the Spring 2015 issue:
Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2015*

Advent Lutheran Church
230 Erwin Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Contact the Church:

Phone: (919) 968-7690

e-mail: Advent_Lutheran@bellsouth.net

web: www.AdventLutheranCH.org

Contact the Pastor:

Rev. John V. Benham III, Pastor

Phone: (919) 943-7082

e-mail: adventpastor@bellsouth.net

Sundays

9:00am Sunday School/Confirmation/Bible Class

10:30am Divine Service with Holy Communion



Dates to Remember

Tuesdays – 10:30am

Beginning January 13
Women's Bible Study

Tuesdays – 7:00-8:00pm

Men's Bible Study

Wednesdays – 7:00-8:00pm

Choir/Praise Band Rehearsal
(after worship service during Advent)

Alternate Wednesdays – 7:00-8:00pm

Beginning January 7
Women's Bible Study

Wednesdays, December 3, 10, 17

6:15 pm – Supper

7:00 pm – Advent Service

Saturday, December 6 – 9:30am

Women of Advent Christmas Brunch

Sunday, Dec. 7 – 10:30am

Children's Christmas Program

Tuesday, December 24, 7:00 pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Saturday, January 17 – 5:15-7:00pm

Praise and Pizza

Sunday, Jan. 25 – Noon

Voter's Meeting

May 1-3, 2015

Women of Advent Retreat
Salter Path NC