

The Changing Seasons: Advent And Christmas

In most sections of the country, there are distinct changes in the seasons of the year. For example, the barren branches and slippery snow of winter eventually give way to the budding leaves and bright flowers of spring. While it's not uncommon to hear complaints in January about the bitter cold and similar protests in July about the unbearable heat, many people say that they'd have it no other way - they like the seasonal changes.

Over the centuries, the Christian Church has recognized its own changing seasons - the "church year" or "liturgical calendar." Most people could name a few of these seasons, such as Christmas, Lent, and Easter. But what is the purpose of observing these different seasons? And what is the benefit of maintaining the distinctiveness of the seasons even as fewer and fewer people are aware of them?

To answer these questions, we'll consider two seasons that will soon be upon us: Advent and Christmas. Advent comprises the three to four weeks that precede Christmas Day. Its purpose is not to celebrate the birth of Jesus - that will come at Christmas - but to humble ourselves before the coming King.

- It's during Advent that we're reminded how ancient Israel waited for the promised Saviour.
- This is the season in which we hear the preaching of John the Baptist who points us to Jesus.
- Advent is a time of patient waiting as we pause to ponder the great gift whose birth we will celebrate on Christmas.

The world, of course, has no idea as to what the season of Advent is even about. Long before December rolls around, the trappings of Christmas can be found everywhere. The reasoning is quite simple: if lights and tinsel and seasonal signs can get you into the Christmas spirit, you'll be more generous with your purchases. But once December 25 passes, don't expect to find many reminders of Christmas.

How different it is in the Church. By keeping Advent as a distinct season, we give ourselves the opportunity to savour the beauty of God's plan of salvation. Then, when Christmas finally arrives, our celebration knows the joy of the shepherds as we join in the song of the angels.

Our observance of Advent might be compared to children who wait for weeks to open the presents that temptingly rest under the Christmas tree. The excitement builds and builds until finally the day arrives and the gifts are opened. By sharing in the anticipation of Advent, we arrive at Christmas -- including the 12 days after it which lead up to Epiphany on January 6 - with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the great gift that God has given by sending His Son in the flesh to save this world from sin and death.

Holiday Office Hours



With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, please make sure someone will be here if you need to access the church.

December 26 Office Closed
December 27 8:30 - 2:30 (Reduced Staff)
December 28 8:30 - 2:30 (Reduced Staff)
December 31 8:30 - 2:30 (Reduced Staff)
January 1 Office Closed

There are **Advent Devotion booklets** (in regular and large print) available on the Welcome Desk. Please help yourself for your own use and also to give away



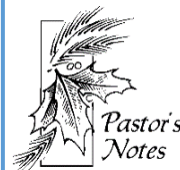
"OUR INSURANCE DOESN'T COVER CANDLELIGHT SERVICES ANYMORE."

Offering Envelopes for 2019 Available

The new offering envelopes for 2019 will be available after December 12th. When these are distributed, **please do not use them until January**. At that time, we also ask that you discard any old envelopes from 2018. Each year some numbers are changed to maintain a continuous sequence of numbers, and we cannot assure proper credit if old envelopes are used in the new year - or if new envelopes are used early. If you do not receive your envelopes, please notify the church office.

FOOTHILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Advent & Christmas Communique



Pastor's
Notes

Dear Friends in Christ, our King, born to save us

I think that most people are familiar with the story behind the beloved Christmas hymn, "Silent Night". Briefly, Joseph Mohr, assistant priest in the Church of St. Nicholas in the region of Tyrol, received word that the church organ would not function. He decided that he must write his own Christmas hymn immediately in order to have music for the special Christmas Eve mass. He did not want to disappoint his faithful flock. Upon completing the text, he took his words to Franz Gruber, who exclaimed when he saw them, "Friend Mohr, you have found it—the right song—God be praised!" Gruber soon completed a tune for the text. His simple but beautiful music blended perfectly with the spirit of Father Mohr's words. The carol was completed in time for the Christmas Eve mass, and Father Mohr and Franz Gruber sang their new hymn to the accompaniment of Gruber's guitar. The hymn made a deep impact upon the parishioners even as it has on succeeding generations.

Just as the Grinch couldn't keep Christmas from coming, neither can a simple malfunction of the organ. God's people will always find ways of celebrating the glorious news that God became man to live the life we never could live, and then give His life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world. How blessed we are to know the truth of God's Word, which He inspired St. Paul to write: **"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."** (Galatians 4:4-5, ESV)

There may be all sorts of things that seem unsettling this Christmas. It could be a trip that is cancelled, or a family member who has to work while everyone else is enjoying Christmas vacation. Sadly, the Christmas tree falls over on Christmas Eve, or a vandal steals part of your outdoor display. The dishwasher goes kaput just as we are preparing for the Christmas feast, or a trip to the hospital brings sad news. For some, it is the memory of the loss of a loved one or some other pain that is manifested at Christmas.

In a little church in the Alps, a less than perfect night brought one of the greatest songs of Christmas. On a less than ideal night in Bethlehem, the miracle of salvation is revealed to the world. Even in our struggles, the Christ of Christmas is still at work for us and for our salvation. That is the only thing that really matters—Christ, our Saviour is born. That is our hope. That is our confidence. This good news brings us peace and joy, even when that peace and joy seems to elude us. Yes, out of even the worst of circumstances, God can bring good. He does bring blessing. He does lift us up in His loving arms.

In that confidence and hope, rejoice in your Saviour this Christmas. Better yet, let that Christ go with you into each day of the new year! Cling to Him in faith. Come and hear His Words of forgiveness and life, and let them be your joy always!

December 2018

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Noteworthy

Children's Choir

Join us Thursday, December 6th at 6:30 pm for a peek into our children's choir and to hear some of the songs we have been working on. Rehearsals resume on Thursday, January 10th.



Moms and Tots

We meet **December 6th** at 9:30 am to continue our study on "*The Beauty of Holiness*".



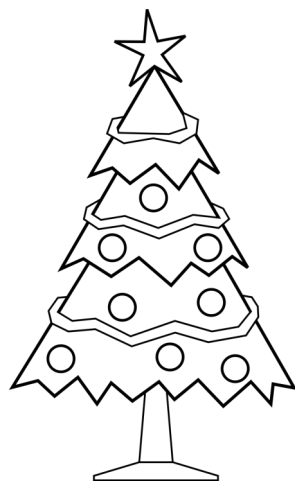
Carolling to our homebound members: Time to bring music cheer to our homebound members on Friday, **December 14th**. Meet at the church at 6:15 p.m. to form our carolling groups and pick up the plates of goodies to take to those you visit. After carolling, quench your throats and palates with fellowship and goodies at Pastor Bode's home. Look for the sign up sheet in the Narthex in December.

LYF in Christ (Lutheran Youth at Foothills)

December 14: Carolling
January 11: Family Games Activity
January 25: Mustard Seed

Watch the bulletin and your email for more details.

FAMILY ADVENT FESTIVAL



Join us **Friday, December 7th** for some Advent family fun. And by family, we mean the Foothills family!

Bring a dish to share for our **pot-blessing supper at 5:30 pm** or come at 6:00 pm to join in the festivities. Supper will be followed by a devotion, and decorating the tree and sanctuary plus other Advent activities.

All are welcome.

Ladies' Bible Study

We meet at 7:30 pm December 11th and January 8th at Deaconess Miriam's home. Contact Deaconess Miriam for more information. We are having a look at the minor prophets, Joel and Amos. Feel free to jump in.

LWML Epiphany Lunch

The LWML is hosting a congregational lunch on Epiphany Sunday, January 6th. Contributions of "finger food" (hot and cold appetizers, sandwiches, cheese, veggies, fruit, cookies ...) would be appreciated. Watch the bulletin for more information.

Coffee Teams

Dec 02 Tim & Tracy Roth; Jay & Kim Anderson
Dec 09 Brenda Bode; Herb & Jane Gurski; Dave & Belinda Perrin
Dec 16 Lloyd & Carol Sandau; Tom & Joan Copeland; Bob & Elsie Will
Dec 23 Ingrid Kubke; Robert Kubke
Dec 30 Elise Glans; Vi Dusterhoft; Anne Marie Kothari
Jan 06 Carl & Shirley Berdahl; Cheryl Lemke; Ellen Wagner
Jan 13 Lorne & Pat Rosenau; Kristy & Kellen Rosenau; Lucy Oberhammer

Luther preached so eloquently on Christmas. Here are some words from one of his beautiful sermons on the Christmas Gospel and the glorious joy of the Incarnation:

"This very Christ and Lord has now been born, the angel tells the shepherds. He will put all things in order, freely bestowing the gift of righteousness, everlasting life and salvation, which were lost as a result of sin, and making heaven and earth new and at peace again. The Lord and everlasting Sovereign is born! Be comforted and undaunted, be brave and glad, renewed in courage by Him, for it is not Joshua or David whom you have, but the one and only Saviour, who is Christ and Lord indeed. He will not cast you into hell; nor judge you and condemn you because of sin, but will forgive you your sins; nor be angry with you, but will greet you with friendly laughter. He is your brother and kinsman, and on top of it, your Saviour, King, and Lord. He dies for you and redeems you from sin, death and the devil. Whoever believes on him, and rejoices in His birth is saved".

Jan 20 Heather Sommers; Warren Kee

Jan 27 **Voter's Meeting**

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Elders: December 4; January 8

Voter's Meeting: January 27

Parish Planning Council: December 17; January 14

LWML-C: January 28

There is some sort of Christian education opportunity at Foothills nearly every day of the week; if you're looking to learn, the Board of Christian Education is here to facilitate. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly! See Trevor Heumann, Board Chair.

Used Eyeglasses & Postage Stamps: Operation Eyesight sends used eyeglasses to countries around the world to help people with vision problems. Canadian Bible Society sells postage stamps to stamp collectors. Proceeds are used to purchase Bibles for inmates in Canadian prisons. (Please leave 1/4" border around the stamps.) These are ongoing mission projects. Please place your donations in the designated bins in the church foyer.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE

"*My Dear Lord Gave to Me*" will be presented by the children of our congregation during our worship service on **Sunday, December 9th**. Sunday School families - last rehearsal takes place Saturday, December 8th at 10 am.



Preschool Christmas Concerts

December 19 - 2:30 pm Afternoon Class
December 20 - 7:00 pm Morning Class
Preschool Classes resume on January 7, 2019.

Advent J.O.Y

The songs of the season declare over and over that this is a time of joy and celebration. There is joy in these days in the gifts under the tree, in the celebrations that mark the days, and the festive foods. But the greatest joy is found in the Saviour, who comes to visit and redeem His people.

Our Advent Joy is found in keeping things in order: **Je**-sus, **O**thers, **Y**ourself. We see Jesus as the reason for the season, and as the One who brings everlasting joy. In others, we see the opportunity to serve the Lord, who came for us. You, too, are a reason for joy, as you remember that Christ came to bring you life in His kingdom.

Join us for these special services and for the soup suppers that begin at 5:30 pm each week. Worship begins at 6:30 pm so all our families can participate. Be with us, as we join in fellowship in worship and at the table, as we share our hope and joy together.

SPECIAL SERVICE SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve Candlelight Carol Services
4:00 pm; 6:00 pm; 11:00 pm December 24

Christmas Day Family Celebration with Communion
10:15 am December 25

New Year's Eve Vespers with Communion
7:00 pm December 31

