

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 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 to friends, family, and neighbours.

Offering Envelopes for 2020 Available

The new offering envelopes for 2020 will be available after December 15th. When these are distributed, **please do not use them until January**. At that time, we also ask that you discard any old envelopes from 2019. 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

December 2019

Advent & Christmas Foot Print



Dear friends in Christ,

One of the familiar types of commercials that we see in these pre-Christmas days is that which suggests that you show someone you love them with that gift they will remember for a lifetime. Husbands are encouraged to show their wives they love them with a gift she'll always treasure: a diamond bracelet or ring. Or book a romantic trip to Paris, or an island cruise. She'll love it! And what wife wouldn't be thrilled to find a ring or holiday tickets for two under the tree?

For children, the gifts that they will remember are the toys that are 'hot'. I remember the year that Cabbage Patch kids were all the rage. Parents went crazy in stores, actually fighting for one of these dolls. I am sure that many young girls were on cloud nine when they received that gift on Christmas morning. But I also wonder how many of those dolls lie forgotten somewhere today? When they hit the teen years, the gifts change: they don't want toys, they want stereos, computers, game machines. Again, I am sure that those who get 'just what they wanted' are ecstatic when they open those gifts on Christmas morning.

Some people understand the value of a gift only on the basis of the price tag. If you love me, you will spend more on me. Others will go through a pile of gifts on Christmas morning, only to ask, "Is that all there is?"

We all know that it is not the value of the gift that determines its true value. A mother treasures a hand-made ornament made of construction paper and white glue, simply because it was crafted by their child with all the love that a child can give. Believe it or not, there are also children who have understood the sacrifice and sentiment of a special gift that may not be of great monetary value, but which is special for both the giver and the receiver. It is the thought that counts—even though advertisers would suggest that our thoughts should be of something expensive and extravagant.

In the true Gift of Christmas we are given the most precious, valuable, and costly gift ever given. It is also the one that comes right from the heart. It is the gift that we need the most. And it truly is a gift that will bring a life-time (actually, an *eternity*) of pleasure and joy.

The gift of Christmas, of course, is the gift of Jesus Christ. It is a truly priceless gift, as the Eternal Son becomes human that He may give Himself as the ransom for the sins of a whole world. Paul reminds us: *you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.* (2 Cor. 8:9)

And what about the love behind the gift? Again, it is Paul who tells us: *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Rom 5:8)

Continued . . .

Foothills Lutheran Church

3104 - 34th Avenue NW
Calgary, Alberta T2L 2A3
Phone: 403-284-1342
www.foothillslutheran.com
office@foothillslutheran.com

David Bode, Pastor

flcpastor@foothillslutheran.com

Eric Moffett, Associate Pastor

flcpastoreric@foothillslutheran.com

Miriam Winstanley, Deaconess

Children & Family Ministry
miriam@foothillslutheran.com

Eldon Ohlinger, Pastor Emeritus

Foothills Lutheran

Christian Preschool

Phone: 403-284-1360
Betty Ann Chandler
Preschool Principal/Teacher
school@foothillslutheran.com
Website:
www.preschool.foothillslutheran.com



Noteworthy

Pastor's Notes Cont'd . . .

If the value of a gift meant anything, God gave us the most valuable gift. If the thought behind it counts, then with the psalmist we remember: *How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.* (Psalm 139:17-18a). And His love is so great that even though we don't deserve this gift, He gives it to us, that through His gift, we may receive forgiveness and life forever.

I do hope you find joy in every gift you receive this holiday season. I also pray that in each of those gifts, you will be reminded of that greater gift that God wants us to have—the gift of life through faith in Jesus Christ.

I want to express my joy in your partnership in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You are a gift to me as your pastor. I find great joy in my service among you, and am blessed by your faith evident in love and service. Brenda and I wish each and every one of you the blessings that we share together through faith in our loving God. May He bring hope, peace and joy to all your days, through the Newborn and Coming King!

Rejoicing with you,
Pastor Bode

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 Kayla Moffett and/or Tobi Stene, Co-chairs, Board of Education.

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.

Preschool Christmas Concerts

December 19 - 2:30 pm Afternoon Class
December 20 - 7:00 pm Morning Class
Preschool Classes resume on January 6, 2020.

Gifts of the Wise

While we often portray the three wise men as gathered with the shepherds at the manger on the night of our Saviour's birth, the truth is that they likely did not show up until months after the Nativity. Yet they are still a vital part of the message of the Saviour, who comes to visit and redeem all people.

To a great extent, the custom of giving gifts at Christmas comes from the gifts that the wise men brought to the newborn King. We know those gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Each gift has a unique significance, and we will learn from those gifts how we also bring our gifts through faith to the Saviour, who is the Source of every blessing.

Join us for our special Advent 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.

December 4—*Gold: A Precious (and Practical) Gift*
December 11—*Frankincense: A Fragrant Offering*
December 18—*Myrrh: For Anointing the Anointed One*

Carolling to Our Homebound Members

Time to bring music cheer to our homebound members on Friday, **December 13th**. Meet at the church at 6:15 pm. 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.

LWML Epiphany Lunch

The LWML is hosting a congregational lunch on Epiphany Sunday, **January 5th**. Contributions of "finger food" (hot and cold appetizers, sandwiches, cheese, veggies, fruit, cookies ...) would be appreciated. Watch the bulletin for more information.

Upcoming Meetings

January 6—PPC
January 7—Elders
January 13—Sunday School Teachers
January 26—Voters

Moms and Tots

We meet **December 5th and 19th** at 9:30 am to continue our study on "*The Beauty of Simplicity*".

Kid's Bible Club meets as usual **Saturday, December 7th** from 9:30—11:30 am.

LYF in Christ (Lutheran Youth at Foothills)

December 13: Carolling
December 14: Sledding
Watch the bulletin and your email for more details.

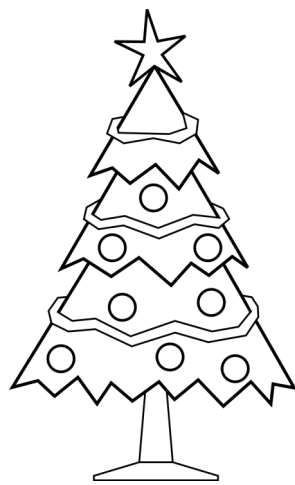
Ladizes' Bible Study

We meet at 7:30 pm December 17th at Deaconess Miriam's home. Contact Deaconess Miriam for more information. Our study is based on Nehemiah entitled "Perseverance". Feel free to jump in.

Coffee Teams

Dec 01 Taco In A Bag Pastor Eric and the Youth
Dec 08 Elise Glans; Vi & Otto Dusterhoft; Anne Marie Kothari; Coleen Judiesch
Dec 15 Carol & Lloyd Sandau; Elsie & Bob Will; Erika & Bill Schultz
Dec 22 Ingrid Kubke; Robert Kubke
Dec 29 Mark Kihn; Alice Churney; Ron & Diane Voss; Liane Voss-Roper; Kim Harvey; Art Hanger
Jan 05 LWML Epiphany Pot Blessing; Shirley & Carl Berdahl; Cheryl Lemke; Ellen Wagner

FOOTHILLS FAMILY ADVENT FESTIVAL



Join us **Friday, December 6th** for some Advent family fun. And by family, we mean the Foothills family!

Come for pizza and a devotion at 5:30 pm followed by tree decorating and crafts.

Please sign up on the list on Deaconess Miriam's door so we know how much pizza to order!

All are welcome.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE

"*Christmas Lights*" will be presented by the children of our congregation during our worship service on **Sunday, December 15th**. Sunday School families - last rehearsal takes place Saturday, December 14th at 10 am. Don't forget to sign your children up for the hot dog lunch if they will be staying after this rehearsal.



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
6:30 pm December 31

