

Announcements

While Pastor Lilienthal is serving the vacancy at First Shell Rock Lutheran Church in Northwood, IA, some of these announcements reflect the concerns of that parish.

Please Keep in Your Prayers:

- Darrell Cafourek, who is struggling with his ailment at home
- Randy Giebel, who has various intensive medical needs
- Ernie Halvorson, who is going through various medical procedures
- Brenda Gentz, who is recovering after multiple strokes
- Stacey Johnson, who is recovering after knee surgery

Members who are homebound, kept from gathering with us, but visited and called by the Pastor:

- Darrell & Rachelle Cafourek
- JoAnn Green
- Randy Giebel
- Ernie Halvorson
- Sandy Pieper
- Marcie Severson
- Betty Stalheim
- Verna Tuttle
- Marilyn Wendt
- Dale Thompson

Scandinavian Christmas Hymns:

Ottesen Museum Christmas Open House

Tuesday, December 5, 2:30-5:30

The ELS Ottesen Museum invites you to its annual Christmas Open House. These year's theme is "Scandinavian Christmas Hymns". Join us as we sing Christmas hymns that come from Denmark and Norway that are still in use in the ELS and delve into their history. We'll also have a few Norwegian treats to sample.

ELS Ottesen Museum
4 Browns Ct.
Mankato, MN 56001

Bible Studies

There is potential interest in adding Bible study opportunities to our weekly schedules. Because we cannot exist without knowing, studying, and encouraging one another with the Word of God, we would encourage this effort. Please speak with the Pastor about possible days and times that you would be willing to make the effort to attend a Bible study, whether a weekday or on the weekend.

Bethany Lutheran College

Some of you have heard of recent developments at our Synod's beloved institution of higher learning, Bethany Lutheran College. At the time of this writing, no official communication has come from the college's administration or Board of Regents. Therefore the Christian response is to limit speculation and to seek clarity, honesty, and mutual encouragement. Specifically, it is said that various programs, including the History major and Theatre majors and minors, have been cut from Bethany's curricula. On the surface, these may not seem ground-shaking. However, there are some who have concerns regarding the overall trajectory of the college, that it is departing from its emphasis on the liberal arts, on equipping students for Christian lives and not merely careers—lives which will enrich our churches and nation. If you would like to speak with Pastor Lilienthal on these matters, please do so. If you would like to write letters of concern to the Regents or administration, Pastor Lilienthal will help you to do so. In all, please keep the college, administration, faculty, and students in your prayers as difficult decisions must be made.

December 2023

To Get Ahold of Pastor:

- **Wednesdays 11-2**
- I might not always be in my study, because I'm frequently out making pastoral calls or taking care of my family. **Call me: (715) 295-4020, or (507) 369-5832; or e-mail me: revmlilienthal@gmail.com**

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From Pastor's Desk

Rev. Michael G. Lilienthal

In Bible study I've brought up the fact a few times that the chapter divisions we have in the Bible are not original. That is, when Moses wrote Genesis, he didn't create the heading of chapter 1, then chapter 2, chapter 3, etc. Instead, he wrote one long book, and later on someone added in the chapter numbers, and even later than that, someone added the verse numbers.

The numbers are useful for identifying where certain passages are, even for breaking up our reading of the books. But sometimes the breaks are unfortunate, coming in the middle of a thought. I think one such division is where it was decided to put chapter 3 of St. Paul's letter to the Colossians. Read this as one thought:

"These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Col. 2:23-3:4). Between these two chapters, Paul demonstrates two contrary ways of thinking and living. On the one hand is the worldly way, living according to the law, trying to create one's own holiness. On the other hand is the heavenly way, living according to the

Gospel, receiving the holiness of Christ. It's the same division Jesus pointed out when he rebuked Peter: **"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of men"** (Matt. 16:23). The point is that sinful flesh cannot overcome sinful flesh. We like to think it can. We like to think that if we try harder, if we put our efforts into the right pursuits, then we can achieve something really worthwhile. But such things have only **"an appearance of wisdom."** Things of this corrupt creation cannot achieve righteousness. We need the things of heaven.

So the things of this world that are sanctified by the things of heaven, like the waters of Baptism sanctified by the Word of God, and like the bread and wine that become Jesus' body and blood through the Word, these are the things which truly accomplish God's purposes. Another way that we Lutherans tend to think of this is the difference between works-righteousness and the righteousness of Christ alone given by grace alone and received by faith alone in Scripture alone.

We believe this, but we still need the reminder. Over and over that reminder comes, and the strength and righteousness comes, through the Word. We haven't reached the end after we've heard it once. We remain in the flesh, and we continue to receive what God gives. Our own inventions and efforts may be useful to an extent, but like the man-made chapter divisions, they should only serve and bow to what is accomplished by God in his Word. ✕

“Peace Came to Earth”

2023 Midweek Advent Series

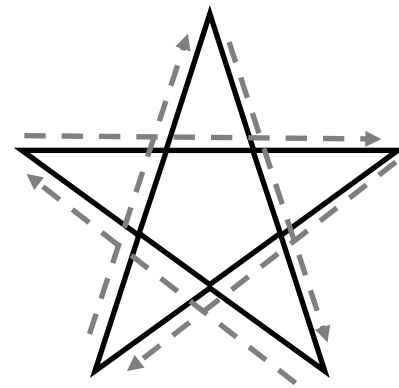
Peace is our common pursuit. As Advent leads us to Christmas, we are especially seeking a distinct season of peace. We need a quiet place to rest during this restless time. Year after year, with each Advent season, we wonder if this year will bring a peace that endures. We crave the reassurance that God knows all our needs and will provide for them, not just for these short weeks but for every season.

Often, we grow impatient as we seek peace. Despite knowing the promises of God to provide for us, we might try to find peace on our own. We then define peace according to the ways we seek it. We might imagine that peace comes when we finally have enough of all the things we plan to buy. Or we might look for the perfect place where peace is an undisturbed solitude, the cabin beside a still lake. We might seek peace by escaping memories of the past. Or peace might be an elusive future where everyone does exactly what they should. These are our many ways of defining peace, but sadly, each of these directions could go on and on without ever being fulfilled.

To illustrate both our pursuit of peace and God’s plan for us, our Advent series this year uses a five-point star for each sermon. Each message will emphasize a different point of the star. Overall, the star reminds us of the Christmas star of Matthew 2 and that wonderful light that guided the Wise Men to find Jesus. Their long journey ended with the blessing of a lasting peace. Just as the Wise Men followed the star, so we will go to each point in this Advent star. This won’t be a useless journey that never ends. We will find that God meets us at each point of the star, knowing our needs and bringing us the peace we are seeking.

Since the five-point star will guide our journey, picture yourself drawing such a star. Start in the bottom left corner and draw up to the top center point. Stop and draw downward to the bottom right corner, then upward to the middle of the left side. Draw across to the right, and back to the bottom left corner, eventually reaching each point. Every point goes a certain distance but then is stopped. In the same way, each of our paths to peace

could go on and on, never being fulfilled. There won’t be enough possessions or perfectly calm places to give us lasting peace. But as we seek peace in these many ways, God intersects us with a peace that both passes our understanding and yet meets our needs. God knows the many ways and directions by which we seek peace. As we journey, God meets us, halts our endless pursuits, and gives us a new understanding of His gift of peace. That peace comes always through the birth of Jesus, the Word become flesh who steps into the world and fulfills our desire for peace.



In the end, we find our lasting peace and treasure. God’s peace doesn’t send us on an impossible search. God’s peace is not an invisible needle buried in a haystack. God’s peace is a treasure laid in the straw of the manger. God’s peace is the priceless Son of God, born in the stable and laid in plain view for us all. He is the diamond found in the manger’s straw. As the Prince of Peace, He is the peace that we seek. ✘

December 2023

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 Hagen-Viktora Wedding |
| 3—Advent 1 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School | 4 Circuit 7 Winkel | 5 | 6—St. Nicholas 9:45 Bible Study 11a.m. Matins 7p.m. Vespers | 7—St. Ambrose | 8 | 9 |
| 10—Advent 2 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School | 11 | 12 7p.m. Parish Council | 13 9:45 Bible Study 11a.m. Matins 7p.m. Vespers | 14 12p.m. Pot-Luck | 15 | 16 |
| 17—Advent 3 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School | 18 | 19 | 20 9:45 Bible Study 11a.m. Matins 7p.m. Vespers | 21—St. Thomas | 22 | 23 |
| 24—Advent 4 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School Christmas Eve 4p.m. Service | 25—Christmas Day 6a.m. Service 9a.m. Service | 26—St. Stephen | 27—St. John | 28—Holy Innocents | 29 | 30 |
| 31—Christmas I New Year’s Eve 9a.m. Service 10:30 Sun. School | | | | | | |

Last Month:

| | Attendance: | Offerings Received: | Weekly Need: |
|-------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 10/29 | 32 | \$916.80 | \$2041.15 |
| 11/05 | N/A | \$1380.00 | |
| 11/12 | 32 | \$825.50 | |
| 11/19 | 36 | \$1785.00 | |