



# Lutheran Church of the Resurrection Newsletter - December 2006

## Advent

In this season of preparation for Christmas, we encounter readings from Luke and from the prophets. What do they say to us this year? Since Advent means "coming", what is the coming we await?

At the simplest level, we await the coming birth of Jesus the messiah –and maybe that is enough. But perhaps we long for something more... the fulfillment of God's promises... or simply a future that is more than the sum of past and present. We long for the completion of all things –and yes, for peace.

Blue is the color for Advent. Blue is profound and lofty - the color of the depths of the sea and heights of the sky. Often Mary, the mother of Jesus, is pictured wearing blue –and the fourth Sunday of Advent is devoted to blessed Mary and Joseph.

The invitation of Advent - to prepare, to listen, and to make ready - may be interpreted as a call to repentance, a call to turn to the Lord.

### **Sunday, December 10** **St. John the Baptist**

This year we read from Luke, who gives us the most detailed account of John's ministry, and its relationship to Jesus' ministry. The Baptist's call is to prepare for the coming of the Christ –get ready.

### **Sunday, December 17** **Sunday School** **Christmas** **Program**

If you want to catch the "Christmas Spirit", then don't miss this presentation by our Sunday School. And if you know some children who don't go to church or Sunday School, invite them to come with you on this Sunday so they can better understand what we are celebrating.

### **Sunday, December 24** **La Posada**

**During 11:00 am Sunday Service**

It's not Christmas yet on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup>. Mary and Joseph still haven't found a place to stay, and she's due any minute. During the service we'll journey with the holy couple as they look for a room in the "La Posada" procession. For more about this ancient tradition see page 3.

### **Sunday, December 24** **Christmas Eve**

**Special Christmas Eve Services**  
**at 5:00 pm & 7:30 pm**

*Luke 2:1-20*  
**The Holy Night**

*Familiar Carols, Candles*  
*& Communion*



## First & Next

This Holiday Season has two parts –Advent, the season of preparation –and Christmas, the season of celebration.

The preparation takes place on the four Sundays before Christmas. Then our celebration spans three Sundays, from Christmas Eve through the Epiphany, the festival of the Three Kings. For these three Sundays, we celebrate with three entirely different services. It takes that long to sing all the carols we love, and hear the whole story.



### **New Years Eve** **Holy Family Sunday**

**Sunday, December 31, 11:00 am**

*Luke 2:41-52*

*Jesus was truly human, as His parents could testify citing this example. We'll put the old year behind us, and then renew our vows to the Lord for another year of grace.*

### **Epiphany** **Three Kings Sunday** **Dia de los Reyes**

**Sunday, January 7, 11:00 am**

*Matthew 2:1-12*

Our celebration concludes, and the Holy Family leaves Bethlehem,  
*but not to go home.*

## Decorating Banner Making Tree Trimming

Saturday, December 2, 9:00 am  
Tuesday, December 5, 7:00 pm

"Get ready" is an Advent theme and we'll start getting the church ready on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9:00 am. We'll work on some Christmas banners and also on the outside decorations.

We'll continue on December 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm (or whenever you can get here) by trimming the tree and hanging the greens – getting the sanctuary ready for Christmas.

Check the Sunday bulletin for other opportunities to help "get ready" for the Holy Night.

## Ladies Night Out

None in December  
See you in January!

Our Ladies Night Out group will not be meeting in December, but will resume in January. The location will be given in the January newsletter. All suggestions for future restaurant visits are welcomed. Call Joyce at 623-2288 for information or suggestions.

## Advent Prayer

"Holy Father, Almighty and ever living God, You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom You will also make all things new in the day when He comes again to judge the world in righteousness."

## Annual Appeal

Bring a friend to church!

No, this is not a request for money. Rather it's the annual appeal to you to do something - invite a friend or neighbor or co-worker to visit your church. More people "think about going to church" during this holiday season than at any of the time of the year.

Unfortunately, a lot them think about it but never actually get to church. One big reason is that they don't know what church to visit. Would they be welcomed – or feel at home? That doubt could be answered if they received an invitation from someone they know – someone like you.

You could tell them they'd be welcomed here – and there's no pressure. We won't embarrass them by singling them out, or ask them to sign up for anything.

You can also say that we have "classic" services – classic means the 'real thing'. We sing traditional carols – the ones they remember from years gone by. And the service will be beautiful.

This holiday season, offer someone you know the "wonder of Christmas" through an invitation to Christmas services at your church.



## Poinsettias

*For Christmas  
To Decorate the  
Church - only \$10*



Once again this year we are ordering our plants through

Unicorn Center  
*a Unique Place for  
Special People.*

This year matching funds will again be received from  
Thrivent Financial  
for Lutherans,  
West Bexar County Chapter.

Thus your donation to help decorate the church for Christmas will doubly benefit the Unicorn Center.

And you can even take your plant home after the service on Three Kings Sunday.  
**All that for only ten dollars!**

Plants may be given in memory or in honor or a loved one. Please use the insert in the Sunday bulletin to order your poinsettias soon.

# Pastor's Page

By Pastor Jeff Lange

## Our Church Year

A Way of Reading  
the Bible and  
Following Jesus

The cycle of seasons and holidays called the church year is shaped by the life of Jesus Christ. It has grown over two thousand years out of the holy days of the Jewish calendar and the convergence Christ's story with the natural seasons of the Northern hemisphere. Thus, the dates Easter and Pentecost are derived from Jewish festivals while the dates of Christmas and Epiphany are related to the winter solstice and New Year.

While the seasons of the church calendar are the same each year – Advent, Christmas, Lent, etc. – we read from a different synoptic gospel in each of three years. Having finished Mark's gospel, we are now beginning a year of Luke's gospel. And there will be different Old Testament lessons and new readings from the "Letters" of the apostles. So each year is not the same.

We never enter each year as exactly the same person we were twelve months ago. The richness of the readings in a season has something new to say to us at each stage in life. We never exhaust the potential of scripture to speak personally to us.

## Four Sundays of Advent – Getting Ready

On the first Sunday we listen to the promise of the prophet Jeremiah: a righteous branch will spring from David's line

and be our salvation – i.e. we look forward to the birth of the Messiah, who is descended from David. The gospel calls us to be alert.

The second Sunday announces the messenger: John the Baptist. He invites us to prepare the way, that all may see salvation. The second lesson is a prayer that your love may overflow with knowledge and full insight, to help you determine what is best.

The third Sunday's theme is *Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice*. We rejoice because everything held against us will be lifted. The One who is coming will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

On the fourth Sunday we read Micah's prophecy: the messiah will be born in Bethlehem, David's city. The gospel reports the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth months before Jesus' birth. Salvation is recognized in the greeting of the two pregnant women, who know that in birth, God is active.

## La Posada

Many of us northerners first discovered this ancient preparation for Christmas when we moved to South Texas. It's an old tradition here and in Mexico.

It is a procession from house to house, where people pray and sing – all surrounding a ritual of asking for shelter. Again and again Joseph asks for room for his wife Mary, who is about to give birth. At each house he is refused, until the last, where his request is answered by "Enter holy pilgrims. You may use my place, not only my house, but my heart."

The implied question of La Posada is, will you open your heart, so that Jesus may be born in you at Christmas? Our La Posada procession, with traditional music, will take place on the fourth Sunday of Advent, during the morning service on December 24<sup>th</sup>.

## Christmas – the Incarnation

On Christmas Eve we meditate on the birth of Jesus. He is truly God and has become man for our sake. The technical term is 'incarnation' – God in human flesh and blood. *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*.

This is not a remembrance of the birthday of Jesus long ago, but the celebration of Christ born among us now on this day. The ancient refrain is *Christ is born today*. For "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."

The 'incarnation' is not only an event in the past, but the union of God with our fragile humanity in the present.

*In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh, you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory; that beholding the God made visible, we shall be drawn to love the God whom we can not see..*

We'll celebrate the Incarnation, the human birth of Jesus, on Sunday evening, December 24<sup>th</sup> with Christmas Eve Services at 5:00 and 7:30 pm

The season of Christmas continues for two more Sundays, December 31 and January 7, concluding with the coming of the Wise Men on Epiphany.

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On the following Sunday, January 14, we jump ahead in time to the baptism of Jesus.

Taken together, the services point us to the birth, manifestation, and identity of Jesus. After that, we are ready, in the rest of the church year, to follow His ministry and teachings.

## Getting Ready for Christmas

**New Class Sundays at 9:30 am  
The Advent of the Savior**

Both Matthew and Luke begin their gospels with the story of Jesus' birth. They serve as overtures (or preludes) to their gospels, because the major themes to be developed are set forth in the infancy narratives. In that sense, they point forward to the life and ministry of Jesus, including the cross and resurrection. These accounts also serve as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments.

Most Christians are familiar with the story of Jesus' birth, easily combining details from Matthew and Luke. But a lot can be learned by looking at them separately in the context of each gospel. Both accounts are two chapters long, with the "Christmas story" accounting for a small portion of each narrative. So there's a lot more to the story.

You're invited to join us Sunday mornings at 9:30 am as we interpret the inspired texts. We'll ask what do they teach us about Jesus Christ and His mission? And our meditation on them will prepare us for Christmas.

## Daily Bread Food Ministry

Jesus tells us in Matthew 25 that when we feed those who are in need, we are feeding him. It is our calling as Christians.

On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, through a cooperative effort by members of LCR, Horizon Church, and A Place for Kids, food baskets were distributed to 58 families. Along with the baskets of food, each family received a 10 dollar gift card to use at HEB to purchase a turkey, or other meat of their choosing.

Before the distribution in our church parking lot, over one hundred people gathered with volunteers from the two churches and the day care to sing Thanksgiving songs and to pray.

This was all made possible thanks in part to generous contributions by members of this congregation, as well as Horizon Church and the day care. Thank you to all who have answered the call.

We will repeat this special distribution again for the upcoming Christmas holiday. Please give from your abundance and remember those less fortunate.

***Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat...***

*Matthew 25:35*

## December Dates

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- Dec. 3** Advent begins  
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- Dec. 5** More Decorating, etc.  
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## Getting Ready for Christmas -- the kids

**Sunday School Classes at 9:30 am  
Christmas Program, Dec. 17**

The children are busy in Sunday School, preparing a wunderbar Christmas Program that will be presented during the service on Sunday, December 17.

If you would like your child to be involved, be sure to bring them to Sunday School for the next few weeks!



## Changes in the Service for Advent

Advent is a season with a character of its own. We'll observe it by omitting the angelic hymns of praise "Glory be to God in the Highest" and "This Is the Feast of Victory". Instead we'll sing "Light One Candle to Wait for Messiah" as the Advent Wreath is lit. We'll sing the Gloria again in the Christmas season.

In place of the Apostles Creed, we'll pray the more universal (and longer) Nicene Creed. We use the former during the Pentecost and Epiphany seasons, and the latter for the rest of the year. In that way, we remain familiar with both ancient statements of faith.

When we present the gifts, we'll pray "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, maker of all things..." in place of "Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving..." Both are fine prayers, and we alternate them seasonally. The prayer beginning "Blessed are You..." is modeled after ancient Jewish prayers.

But the biggest change will be in the hymns. Because Advent is only four Sundays, even some of the familiar hymns – the ones we sing every year at this time – seem unfamiliar. But we hope you will join in the singing – and ponder the words and imagery of them, for they are rich in meaning and beauty.

### DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 19 - Roy & Carol Ronnfeldt
- 29 - Keith & Pat Jenkins  
Richard & Laura Deckert  
Bob & Dorris Curtis
- 13 - Molly & Richard Cude



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Articles, announcements and news for the newsletter are always welcome. Feel free to call or email me with any newsletter information, or just hand it to me at church. —Sue

### DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 - Patricia Jenkins
- 2 - Fannie Rangel  
Bruce Fitzgerald  
Bob Burkhardt
- 6 - Tony Teschendorf
- 8 - Arnor Baldvinsson
- 11 - Laura McFall
- 13 - Ann Coleman
- 14 - Taylor Anderson  
Tessa Rangel
- 15 - Alysha Rangel  
Rachel Deckert
- 24 - Bob Wacke
- 26 - Shraddah Jenkins Reyes
- 29 - Louise Jones
- 30 - Michael Neuse