

The Epistle

December 2023

Vol. 51, No. 8

As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3:4-6)*

These words and the ones that echo from the prophet Isaiah (40:3-5) are very familiar to all of us, especially at this time of the church year. As we begin a new year in the life of our church with Advent, one cannot help but be pulled to these words of promise. As we wait patiently for the coming of the Messiah, we are compelled to set the table for His arrival and to prepare the way, for he is coming!

Unfortunately at this time of the year, it is easy to become distracted and to lose sight of the "reason for the season" as some pundit once penned. We have all heard it before how the commercialization of the season has kept us from the true meaning of the Messiah's coming. We struggle in our efforts to "keep Christ in Christmas" and to not let the secular overtake the sacred. But we also know that this is not easy and that there are many diversions to keep us from the path.

However, if we follow the writings of the prophet and of those who came after, we can indeed successfully prepare the way for the Lord and for his coming. These four weeks of Advent are the way for us to prepare to welcome the Messiah and to prepare ourselves for the joy that is Him.

There are many opportunities in the coming weeks for us to join together in worship and fellowship to prepare the way. Each Wednesday we gather at King of Kings for fellowship and to share a simple meal before worship; on Sundays, we gather to praise his arrival. We will all have a chance to join in the Christmas pageant on December 17 as we tell yet again the age-old story of the Messiah's birth. On December 16 and 17 we will gather at St. Peter's and Gloria Dei, respectively to decorate our sanctuaries for the Christmas season. And not to forget, on December 16 we will visit a few local assisted living facilities to bring some holiday cheer by raising our voices in praise. There are other opportunities and you are urged to consult the weekly Anticipations to read about them.

And of course, we cannot forget to keep Pastor Rebecca in our prayers as she recovers from her recent illness. Advent is her favorite time of the church year and for her to not be with us is tough on her. As we approach the holy night of our Lord's birth, keep Jesus and his love for you and the world foremost in your thoughts and prayers.

May you all have a Blessed Christmas!

Pete Teichmann

Advent & Christmas Schedule Gloria Dei, King of Kings & St. Peter's



Advent Mid-Week Services:

Wednesdays: 12/6, 12/13, 12/20

“Soup & Service” at the King of Kings Campus

Soup Supper at 6:30 pm followed by Holden Evening Prayer at 7:15 pm

Decorating Fun Day at St. Peter's Campus: Saturday 12/16

Decorate church: 1 p.m.

Cookie Crawl: 2 p.m. – Lower Auditorium/Community Room

Bakers bring 3 dozen of their noteworthy cookies w/recipe listing all ingredients. Participants move from table to table, tasting as many cookie varieties as they would like. (While they last!)

Christmas Caroling: 3 pm – 4:30 pm

We'll caravan from St. Peter's to Apex Rehab and then to Sunrise Assisted Living to sing some favorite Christmas carols.

Sunday, 12/17 at the Gloria Dei Campus:

Christmas Pageant: 10 am worship- Everyone participates!

Decorating at Gloria Dei following worship

****Blue Christmas Service: Thursday, 12/21****

7 pm- St. Peter's Chapel- A more solemn approach to Christmas worship

Christmas Eve: Sunday 12/24

10 am Service of Prayers at Gloria Dei campus

4 pm Family Service at Gloria Dei campus

9 pm Traditional Service at St. Peter's campus

Christmas Day– 12/25

10 am at Gloria Dei campus

Volunteers Needed at Gloria Dei

Volunteers continue to be needed for a variety of positions, including worship assistants, readers, communion assistants, church office support, committee membership, and Joseph's Storehouse. All you need is time; any training will be provided. Interested? Contact Jane Maresco @ jcmdoer@verizon.net



Sunday, February 4, 2024

following 10:00 am service.

**Please try to attend this crucial
budget & planning congregational meeting!!**

Decorating the Church for Christmas

All hands on deck!!!

Sunday, December 17, following worship,
we will be decorating the sanctuary for
Christmas.

Please come and join in the fun!



Poinsettias

Flowers for the Glory of God in the Chancels of St. Peter’s and Gloria Dei at Christmas may be given in honor or in memory of loved ones. To order poinsettias, please complete this form. Place page in the offering plate along with your check made payable to “Gloria Dei Lutheran Church” annotated “Poinsettias”. The cost for each plant is \$20.

Deadline for your order is Sunday, December 10.

Name: _____

Envelope Number _____

Telephone No.: _____

How many plants: _____



Poinsettias are given:

___ To the Glory of God

___ In Honor of _____

___ In Thanksgiving for _____

___ In Memory of _____

___ I will pick up plant(s) after Christmas

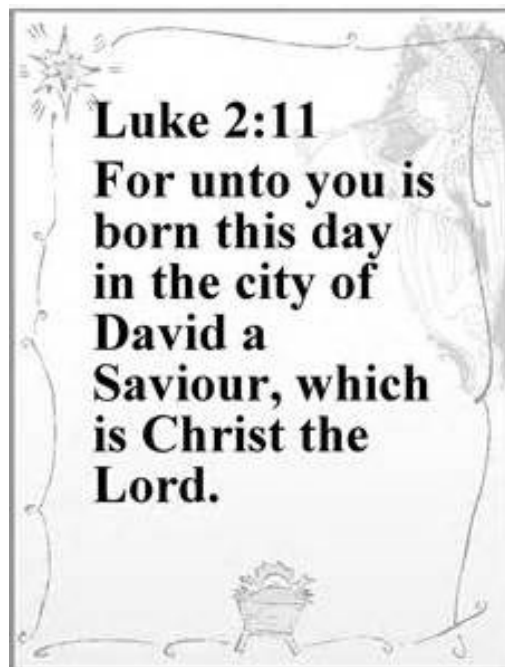
OR

___ Please deliver plant(s) to a homebound person

Amount attached: \$ _____ check _____ cash _____

Lectionary Readings for December 2023

12/3/23	Advent 1	#2-13	Jeremiah 33:[10-11], 14-18	A Righteous Brance
12/10/23	Advent 2	#2-14	Isaiah 40:1-11	Comfort My People
12/17/23	Advent 3	#2-15	Ezra 1:1-4, 3:1-4, 10-13	Returning from Exile
12/24/23	Advent 4 & Christmas Eve	#2-16	Luke 1:5-13, [14-25] 57-80	The Birth of John the Baptist
12/25/23	Christmas	#2-C1	Luke 2:1-20	The Promised Messiah
12/31/23	Christmas 1	#2-C2	Mark 1:1-20	Jesus' Ministry Begins



Congregation Council Notes

Your Congregation Council has met regularly during the August through December months. As per their charter, the Council has received and approved standing reports from the Pastor, President, Treasurer/Financial Secretary, Property Management Committee, and Collaboration Leadership Table. The Council continues to support the work of the CLT and continues to work with the CLT as it moves toward more unification.

Council members have worked jointly with their counterparts from the other congregations to affect open and equitable financial arrangements for clergy and music staff that were approved by the Council. In recent weeks the Council(s) and the CLT worked together to inform the congregation of the choices for a new name for the unified churches.

In anticipation of the Annual Meeting on February 4, 2024, the Congregation Council has begun working on the budget for the 2024-25 church year. Several Council members will be completing their terms in January and new members will be needed. If you would like to become part of this group, please speak with Pete Teichmann or Kevin Smuss.

Pete Teichmann, Council President

Collaboration Leadership Table

The CLT has been busy and continues to work closely with all three Congregation Councils on important decisions in the life of our church. With the congregations' help, a new name for our unified parish has been chosen. Going forward the name Tri Lutheran Collaborative will no longer be used and will be replaced by United Lutheran Church; each campus will retain its name and identity for the near future as further discussions take place about the next steps. The CLT thanks all who voted for their favorite name and for the suggestions that have been submitted to date. A new suggestion box has been placed at the rear of the sanctuary and you are encouraged to submit your suggestions.

The CLT and invited Councils will attend a Zoom workshop led by Peggy Hahn (our LEAD consultant) that will begin to guide the CLT on the future opportunities available to our church and our church as it relates to our community.

As mentioned above, your suggestions and thoughts are encouraged. You are encouraged to reach out to members of your Council or the CLT at any point to share your suggestions and/or concerns. A Listening Session is scheduled for March 3, 2024, following worship at which time you can bring your thoughts to the congregation at large.

Lutheran Counseling Center—December

Twelve deep breaths to humble our hearts

By Rev. Forrest Parkinson, LMSW, LP

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. (Luke 1:46-50)

Who wistfully reminisces on the pure and simple memories of childhood Christmas? We recall all the joy and excitement - with a touch of greedy anticipation perhaps? And now, stress, news of war, illness and bereavement are all woven into our experience of the Christmas season. How can we recapture that simple joy when anxious pressure or grief colors our reality? We even dare to ask: Wouldn't our joy deny the suffering in our world? Can we rejoice in a world full of suffering and pain?

The season upon us was likely kicked off by Thanksgiving sermons on the theme "If you want to feel gratitude, give generously because we meet God in the giving and receiving of blessings." We then distract ourselves with the busy-ness of shopping and decorating and parties. While all that has a goodness, there can be emotional flatness, too. Mary's words, from the Magnificat, testify to a wholeness that includes adversity. She was a child of her age, and no doubt felt all the anxiety of the social censure entailed in her pregnancy. Even with the angelic voice echoing, what teenager wouldn't think "My parents will freak! My engagement and wedding day is ruined!" Yet, Mary's words "*mypirit rejoices*" do not deny the trials of life while she simultaneously feels God's "*favor*."

We can take our cue from those Thanksgiving messages by digging deeply into gratitude in our prayer time. Perhaps the classic "gratitude list" is a bit much to manage. As an Advent devotion, can we offer up a few moments quietly taking "twelve deep breaths?"

Each time, as we breathe in, can we search for a blessing?

Before we exhale, can we entertain the mix of feelings that naturally arise as we consider God's favor and humbly allow for the real pain and anxiety?

As we exhale, can we ponder how we might extend our blessing with compassion?

I am grateful for my family. I grieve they are scattered so I will not see grandchildren open their Christmas presents. I will visit a widower who is lonely, too.

To be whole and complete includes the trials of life. Humility is knowing and living life realistically.

Faith is trusting God's love in the mix. Breath in blessing, turn over our troubles to God and exhale compassion. Twelve times. Every day make this your practice.

Our counseling center wishes all the joys of this Christmas season, that you may be whole and complete and though compassionate love, lack in nothing. God is with us!

Rev. Forrest Parkinson, LMSW, LP provides secure telehealth counseling sessions for teens, adults, couples and families. For an appointment, call LCC at 1-800-317-1173 or e-mail us at <https://www.LCCNY.org>.

December Birthdays

Alexa Dikeakos	12/2
Rudolf Sobina	12/3
Janice Colonna	12/6
Joseph Calderone II	12/10
Richard Harris	12/12
Demetrios Pantazis	12/14
Barbara Jones	12/15
Katherine Readinger	12/19
John Siedlecki	12/19
Edward Boos	12/23
Joseph Calderone	12/24
Christine Powers	12/24
Nancy Danielo	12/25
JESUS	12/25

STAYING CONNECTED

Church Office 631-271-2466
FAX 631-271-0237

The church office is open Tues-Thur
9:30am-2:00 pm

The Rev Rebecca Pollicino, Coverage Pastor
 (516) 225-6859
 Email: revrebeccap@gmail.com

Karen DeMotta, Parish Administrator
 office@gloriadeihuntington.org

Kurt Sobina, Sexton, Finance Secretary
 (631) 241-9641
 Email: kurtsobina@gmail.com

Peter Teichmann, Church Council President
 (631) 988-5843
 Email: pwteichmann@yahoo.com

Joseph's Storehouse Food Pantry, Olson Hall
Dennis Hood, Director
 (631) 974-2918



*The church office is open
 Tuesday—Thursday from
 9:30am to 2:00pm.*

Merry Christmas