

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we enter the month of December, we enter a new Church Year, and the season of Advent is upon us once again. Advent is meant to prepare us for our celebration of our Lord's coming at Christmas, and at the same time it helps us to prepare for His coming again on the Last Day. It also helps us by reminding us that He continues to come to and among us every day, and week after week, in His life-giving, nurturing Word and Sacraments.

Advent Midweek Schedule

This year we are going to try something a little bit different with respect to our Advent midweek services. Our services will rotate from St. John's, to Peace, to Immanuel, Moltke, with each congregation hosting one of the three services: St. John's on December 5, Peace on December 12, and Immanuel on December 19. Services will begin at 7:00 p.m. and will be preceded by a light supper at the host church at 6:00 p.m. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend all three services.

Christmas Schedule

As we are starting to look ahead to the Christmas season, please take note of our Christmas schedule, as well:

Christmas Eve: Monday, December 24 – Family Service & Children's Christmas Program at 6:00 p.m.

There will be **no late service** on Christmas Eve this year.

Christmas Day: Tuesday, December 25 – 9:30 a.m. with Holy Communion

The Sunday after Christmas, December 30, will feature a special **5th Sunday Scripture & Song Service** focused on the joys of the Christmas season. There will be no New Year's service this year.

For some wonderfully simple Advent and Christmas suggestions, please see the article elsewhere in this newsletter, entitled "**It's Better to Underprepare for Christmas.**"

Ways to Care during the Holidays

As the holidays approach, many people are hurting due to the loss of a loved one, a cancer diagnosis, divorce, job loss, or some other significant life challenge. These experiences can make an ordinarily joyous season difficult, lonely, and perhaps even painful.

A recent book published by Stephen Ministries, entitled *Cancer – Now What?*, describes how the holidays can be a struggle for someone who is suffering. I received these

suggestions in a recent E-mail, and I thought they might be worth sharing:

When you know someone is suffering during the holidays, here are some simple ways you can make a big difference:

Offer to help in specific ways: Try to anticipate needs and ways you can help. For example, you might ask, "Can I help you prepare Thanksgiving dinner?" Or "Can I help you put out your Christmas lights?" Remember, however, to follow the person's lead and not just impose your help.

Help people pace themselves: The holidays are busy, and those who are hurting may need help or permission to slow down or do less than they ordinarily would. Let people know it's okay to conserve energy, take breaks, and pick which activities and traditions in which to take part.

Ask people how they're really doing: During the busyness of the holidays, it can be easy to just interact with people on a surface level. Finding a good time to ask hurting people how they're *really* doing – and then listening – is a powerful way to care.

Validate feelings: When people do open up and share, listen and then show that you believe them and accept their feelings. Letting people know it's okay to feel whatever they're feeling can provide a lot of comfort.

By relating in these ways, you can help hurting people find comfort and hope in a difficult time.

Advent and Christmas blessings to each of you in Christ, our Savior and King!

In His Service,

Pastor Derek Riddle

Board of Elders

Jesus is the Reason for the Season! The church year begins with Advent. It is a time we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus, celebrating His birth and giving thanks for the greatest gift we all have ever received. Come, let us celebrate as we hear God's Word in the Advent services and share our greatest gift, "Jesus", with all we see and talk to throughout our daily walk.

Advent services have a new schedule this year as there will be one service at St. John's (Dec. 5th), one service at Peace (Dec. 12th) and one service at Immanuel (Dec. 19th). The services will begin at 7:00 pm. Come, celebrate as we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus, our greatest gift!

CELL PHONE vs BIBLE

I wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our cell phone?

- >What if we carried it around in our purses and pockets?
- >What if we flipped through it several times a day?
- >What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?
- >What if we used it to receive messages from the text?
- >What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?
- >What if we gave it to our kids as gifts?
- >What if we used it when we traveled?
- >What if we used it in case of emergency?
- >This is something to make you go....hmm...where IS my Bible?
- >Oh and one more thing...Unlike our cell phone, we don't have to worry about our Bible being disconnected because Jesus already paid the bill.
- >And no dropped calls!

In Other News...

The **Giving Tree** is in the narthex and has stars on it with names and gift ideas if you can help make someone's Christmas a little brighter this year. If you'd like to add something extra, books and games are always good choices. Please, WRAP the gifts, making sure the star is securely taped so they know who the recipient is. Gifts need to be to the church by December 16 to allow for delivery before Christmas. Thank you for your continued generosity!! Questions? Call Cinda at 734-2926.

Please mark your calendars! Our **December Lunch Bunch** will take place a day early and at an alternate location and time: We will meet on Monday, December 17, at 11:30 a.m., at Pam Bingle's home. Everyone is welcome!

Just a friendly reminder to our Sunday School and congregation...

During this season of giving, please remember our **ongoing Servant Project** of collecting items for our local food and baby pantry. So as to not crowd the narthex, please note that a bin for food items is in the Fellowship Hall; baby items can be placed in the Cry Room. Thank you for your support in this outreach to our community.

A **special thank you** to everyone who donated coats, boots, mittens, and scarves for our winter clothing drive; your response to give to the community was outstanding! Seeing and hearing the appreciation of the recipients was so rewarding, especially the small children who were so excited. The few remaining items were taken to area thrift stores. God bless you for *caring and sharing* and to all who helped with the distribution. *Peace Board of Stewardship*

December's Fifth Sunday Scripture and Song Service will reflect on God's Gift to us and how His Gift continues even to this day. Christmas songs and praises during this festive worship service will be provided by the congregation

as well as a special "choir." If you are interested in participating with the choral group, watch the bulletin for a rehearsal schedule. The celebration doesn't end on December 25 - and "the Gift goes on!"

Cancellations: With winter weather now upon us, just a reminder about the procedure in the event that a service or another activity has to be canceled due to inclement weather. In the case of services, once a decision to cancel is made, the cancellation will ordinarily be announced on our Facebook page and our web site, as well as on radio station WATZ 99.3/96.7. For those for whom we have contact information (cell phone numbers or E-mail addresses), an announcement will also be sent via Remind. If you would like to be added to that mailing list, or if you would like to be sure you're included, please contact the church office with your contact information. For all non-service activities, cancellations will be communicated in a manner that seems to be the most sensible for the group involved. In the event of a school snow day, all non-service activities are ordinarily canceled automatically. Services are generally handled on a case-by-case basis.

Hygiene Pantry Update: This month we will be collecting shampoo. Remember, you can go to almost any local store and purchase shampoo for around \$1.00 a bottle. In November we passed out 40 bags and gave away many winter coats. Thank you to everyone who ~~Redeemed~~ *Peace Board of Evangelism*

Beginning the second Monday of January (1/14), a new **Chronic Pain Support Group** will begin meeting at the church, 6:30-7:30 p.m. The support group will be facilitated by Lee Bingle and Dianne Darga; please see either of them with questions. Everyone is welcome!

It's Lutheran Witness time! Time to order or renew your subscription to *The Lutheran Witness*. Reminder—the *Michigan in Touch* publication is now included as a supplement each month! Renewals are \$11.60/yr if paid by December 15; otherwise, the cost increases to \$13.60. Please contact the church office if you are interested in subscribing.

Information has been placed in your mailboxes last month about Concordia Publishing House's annual **Fall Bible Sale and the 2017 revision (and expansion) of Luther's Small Catechism**. The catechism is on sale through December 30, and the Fall Bible Sale runs through December 31. Perhaps it's time for a new Bible for yourself or for someone else as a gift, and perhaps it's time to review the basics of Lutheranism by seeing what's new in the catechism revision. If you are interested in placing an order through the church, please see the sign-up sheets in the church office or contact the church office. See Pastor with questions.

The Rogers City Area Senior and Community Center is offering a free service to members of our community. This **service involves checking on people** after a major storm, long-term power outage, or other emergency situation, especially involving shut-ins with no heat or electricity. Registration forms were recently put in everyone's mailboxes; additional forms are also located in the narthex to share with others. This is available to anyone of any age; we want to make sure our friends and neighbors are kept safe.

Our **new Adopt-A-Student** from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is Ryan Schnake. He is currently in his second year of studies and preparing for his vicarage year next year. He is also a chaplain candidate in the National Guard. His latest letter is posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. For those who might be interested in sending a card or note, his address is as follows: Seminarian Ryan Schnake, 801 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO 63105.

Peace now offers **GUEST WIFI** to anyone in the building. Look for PeaceGuest in your WiFi network listing. The password is also PeaceGuest. Hop on today - and while you're there, take a look at our updated website, www.peacelcms.org! We are still testing whether our bandwidth is adequate for a large number of users. If you experience noticeable slowdown while you're using Peace's guest WiFi, please let Julie Riddle know so we can make adjustments. Thanks!

Our website has a new look! Check it out on your computer or smartphone... www.peacelcms.org. It's a work in progress, so check back often for changes. Thanks to Jenny Fenstermaker, who took photographs of the anniversary service which will soon be posted on the site.

The Lutheran Hour

The Lutheran Hour can be heard locally on Sunday mornings at 7:00 a.m. on 92.5 FM and at 11:00 a.m. on 1450 AM. You can also listen on-line or via podcast at www.lutheranhour.org. Now you can also download the new Lutheran Hour Mobile App to your mobile device. Instructions for doing so can be found at www.lhm.org/apps/.

December 2

"Reality Therapy"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

The book of Ruth deals with unimportant people and unimportant matters, but deals with them in such a way as to show that God is active in ordinary lives-like yours and mine. Ruth's story became an important part of the story of Jesus. Listening to God's work in her life can rescue us from dead end delusions and bring us into what is most real—a Jesus-centered reality.

(Ruth 1-2)

December 9

"Redeemer with a Capital R"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

When people use the word "redeem" outside of religious context, they tend to use it in a commercial sense- redeeming points from purchases or casino tokens for cash. In the Bible, the word "redeem" is used in a family setting. In the story of Ruth, Boaz is a "kinsman redeemer," who points to Jesus, our capital-r-Redeemer. Jesus has done more than pay our points. He redeems by bringing us into his clan, his people, his household, that we might be with him forever.

(Ruth 3-4)

December 16

"In Anxious Times - Rejoice! "

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Anthony (Tony) Cook

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

With anxiety on the rise, the Apostle Paul's call to "rejoice always" seems all but unobtainable. While there are many helpful ways to cope with society's increasing anxiety, Paul points us to a frequently overlooked source of joy and peace, God's grace in Christ.

(Philippians 4:4-7)

December 23

"The King's Strength "

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

A true king's strength is seen, not in vaults and arsenals, but in the loyalty of his people. We celebrate the birth of the King who won the victory, not by taxing his subjects and killing his enemies, but by serving, loving and dying for them. By his resurrection, He destroyed the power of sin and lends us strength to become His loyal subjects.

(Luke 1:26-56)

December 30

"A Long Good-Bye"

Guest Speaker: Dr. Dean Nadasdy

As the year comes to a close, we likely have regrets and guilt. We can beat ourselves up over work left undone, but Jesus Christ has assured us that He is your hope. His grace is more than sufficient to take us into another year and give us peace.

(Luke 2:27-32)

It's Better to Underprepare for Christmas

By Rick Lawrence

Every year it's the same hopeful mantra...

This year, Christmas is going to be different—I'm going to find a way to slow down and focus on "the reason for the season." I'll find the time to really focus on Jesus...

And then, with a determined face, we work hard to make it happen. And we don't get very far before the current of the season overwhelms the momentum of our convictions. We're swimming as hard as we can, but we're swimming upstream. And then we're forced to make excuses for our inability to get on top of things, or admit that we don't have the will to make it happen. In the worst-case scenario, we kick off a cycle of shame that underscores what a screw-up/victim we really are.

Well, "preparing for the Christmas season" is way over-rated as a goal—it's better for our relationship with Jesus to "underprepare" for Advent, instead. I mean, in any other intimate relationship in our life, we'd find it offensive if our beloved repeatedly told us how hard it is to pay attention to us, or what an inconvenience it is to stop long enough to listen to us, or how easy it is to habitually take us for granted. This cycle of vowing to do better, then failing in the exact same way every time,

frames our relationship with Jesus as a “should,” which drives a stake through the heart of intimacy. Underpreparing means we invite Jesus into our holiday momentum—into the nooks and crannies of our double-duty life, leading up to Christmas.

A story from my book The Jesus-Centered Life will highlight what I’m suggesting...

Researchers working for Volkswagen in Stockholm, Sweden, were searching to find ways to influence people to be more physically active in their everyday life. Like the vows we make to “get better” with our efforts to focus on Jesus more during the Advent season, we all know that efforts to get in better shape follow a similar cycle of shame. So the Swedes came up with an inventive way to get people exercising that capitalized on their natural inclinations and momentum. At subway stops throughout the city, you can ride the escalator up to the street level or climb the stairs. Most people plant themselves on the escalator and let it do the work. So, working all night, a swarming team of technicians transformed the stairs leading out of the Odenplan subway stop into a giant functioning piano keyboard. The steps, mapped to look exactly like the progression of black and white keys on a real piano, each produced the sound of a corresponding musical note when stepped on. Then the planners mounted video cameras at the base of the stairs so they could record what happened when commuters showed up in the morning.

Travelers first stopped, surprised by what they saw, and then began experimenting with the stairs. Many not only climbed the stairs, they also hopped around on them as they tried to “play” music instead of trudging their way up. Stair-climbing was transformed from work into a *playful experience*. Volkswagen researchers found that the “musical stairs” diverted 66 percent more people than normal onto the staircase and away from the escalator. They managed to entice commuters into a “fitness” behavior they wouldn’t have considered otherwise. They were not *shoulding* themselves to choose a healthier option; they were caught up in an experience that made them forget about the work of physical fitness.

And here’s how we can do the same, as we enter into the Christmas season...

- Play with Jesus—Instead of compartmentalizing your relationship with Jesus, simply invite Him into the things you’re already doing. If you’re out shopping for Christmas gifts at a mall, for example, make it a playful connection to Jesus by asking Him to show you an inexpensive gift that He knows will delight someone. Then put it in a gift bag and write a little note that says “A little gift for you, from someone who appreciates you.” As you’re leaving the mall, walk through the Food Court, asking Jesus to give you the right opportunity to give your gift. Set it on

a table when the occupants won’t notice, then walk away.

- A word a day—Every day until Christmas, pause to come up with a different word that expresses Jesus’ beauty. For example: “Grace” or “Humility” or “Fierceness” or “Passion” or “Tenderness”... Ask Him for help in choosing the right word each day. Don’t make this a big-deal, intense prayer thing. Just ask, then receive whatever word comes to you. It’s that simple. Then, as you go through your day, when you’re in-between things, simply thank Him, using your word of the day, over and over under your breath: “Tenderness—thank you for how tender you are, Jesus.”
- Puddle-jumping—Because it’s hard to find the time, or slow down your pace, to sink deeply into Jesus through conventional Bible study, try something that takes little time and effort, but exercises your dependence on Him. Every day, simply ask Him to give you the name of one of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and then a chapter and verse. Whatever gospel/chapter/verse comes up in your mind, simply flip there and ask Jesus to show you His heart—what He’s really like at His core—as you mull what you read. Read the context around your chosen verse if you want, but confine your mulling to the one verse, just so it’s easy to remember. We skip over a lot of small details about Jesus as if they were mud puddles—instead, stop to wallow in a new mud puddle every day.

These are three examples of under-preparing for Christmas—and that’s what they are, simply examples... The idea here is to diligently resist making the pursuit of Jesus during this holiday time something that feels like work... Make it play, in the gap times of your day, or while you’re already doing something else. Invite Jesus into your little moments. As Eugene Peterson says, simply stay attentive to Him—that’s it. Children love to play, and their “creativity” doesn’t feel like work to them because they find delight in play. Playing with Jesus during this season will lead to delight, and that will energize you, not sap you of your strength. If you come up with your own ways to play, please shoot us a note to tell us what you’ve done... We’d love to hear about it.

Want to learn more about living a Jesus-Centered Life, visit <https://www.mylifetree.com/jesus-centered/>.

Click on this hyperlink www.michiganintouch.com to view this month’s Michigan in Touch supplement.



Peace Lutheran Church, Rogers City

Call the church office at (989) 734-7621 if you have an item for the January newsletter.