



HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH



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Trinity Messenger

December 2023 Issue 3

Alleluia. I am sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you.
Alleluia. Matthew 11:10



SHARING THE LOVE OF CHRISTMAS

It is not a surprise to any of us, who are of the Christian faith, that the celebration of Christmas is becoming more and more secular and commercialized each year. I remember well the four years I spent between full-time calls as a pastor in Upstate New York working part-time in congregations and part-time as an employee of Macy's department store and cringing when the Christmas trees and flood of decorations would annually appear the week after Halloween. The Macy's elves worked overtime to transform the vast retail space into their version of what the season of Christmas was all about and wanted consumers to believe and buy into it as well.

This experience of being altogether emersed in the fake, misguided world of consumer Christmas left a bad taste in my mouth every year, and until recently left me irritated at what seemed to be the hijacking of "my" Christian holiday, a holiday reserved for Christians alone. All others, stay away! After all, I do not celebrate Hanukkah or Kwanza or any other holidays that are associated with other faiths or cultures, Lunar New Year excluded. I do not pretend to be something I am not and insert myself into others' celebrations that simply have an air of fascination to me but a sacred meaning to others who rightly and respectfully observe them.

However, recently, I have come to the belief that the joyful hope given to the world and all God's children who inhabit it is not mine or anyone else's to limit. The love of God that entered world in the gift of the Messiah is not solely ours to distribute to those we deem as worthy while withholding it from others. It does not belong exclusively to those who claim Christianity as their own. Instead, it is a gift to be universally shared in the hope that its power to change hearts, minds, and lives will do just that, and bring peace and good will to places and relationships where it is desperately needed, while lifting the burdens and calming the fears of those who suffer unnecessarily.

So, as we observe and take seriously this time of faithful waiting for the hope and promise of the Messiah, let us each, who claim the gift of Christmas as our own, consider how we can and will share universally the love of Christmas with all God's children as living signs of *good news of great joy for all the people* (Luke 2:10).

Blessed with universal joy,

Pastor Mark

Stewardship Special Giving for December:

ELCA GOOD GIFTS

The ELCA Good Gifts is a creative, meaningful way to support the ministries of the ELCA that mean the most to you and your loved ones. These gifts are real examples from projects currently supported through ELCA churchwide ministries, the ELCA Fund for Leaders, ELCA Global Church Sponsorship, Disability Ministries and Lutheran Response. Each of these programs is a long-term partnership-based ministry that focuses on the needs identified by local congregations and global companion churches and their communities.

Your donation will be used where it is needed most. The ELCA is at work in nearly 80 countries around the world, including the United States. More than 85% of your donation directly supports these programs, with less than 15% used for administrative purposes.

The variety of items that may be provided ranges from different animals: cows, pigs, goats; to providing clean water for a family, to vaccinations, school supplies, seeds and gardening tools, to Sunday School start-up kits. The list goes on and on!

Please be as generous as you can! The need is GREAT!



**Holden Evening Prayer:
Wednesdays during Advent at 7:30
December 6, 13, 20**

**Caroling: Please join us on Sunday afternoon,
December 17 to go caroling! We will meet in the
Social Hall at 2:00 PM.**



Christmas Eve Services

4:00 PM: Holy Communion with carols and candle lighting.
Only the 4:00 PM service will be livestreamed.

7:00 PM: Holy Communion with carols and candle lighting.

**Kirchenwald Winter Youth Retreat:
January 5-7, 2024**

For youth in grades 3 through 9

Enjoy Kirchenwald in the Winter! Play broom hockey and other games on the frozen pond. Have fun sledding, playing snow soccer and other winter games. Creative Bible studies and worship experiences led by our summer camp counselors are an important part of this retreat. Other indoor and outdoor activities may be included, as the weather dictates. Cost for the retreat is \$170.

A great Christmas gift for that grandchild who has everything!

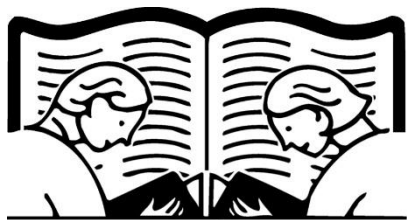
Register information is on-line

at www.LutheranCamping.org or get a form from Lisa Garrett. Please register by **December 15th**.



Notes of **THANKS**

Dear Neighborhood Friend, We thank you for your generous donation to our Neighborhood Santa Program---your act of kindness is very much appreciated!! We thank you for helping to bring joy and peace to those less fortunate. Many thanks for supporting and helping us grow this great cause!! Well wishes from Neighborhood Santa!! Kimberly and Friends



**Revelation
Bible
Study**

Bible Study: *The Revelation to John*

You are invited to join Pastor Mark on Tuesday mornings, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, for a study of the book of *Revelation (The Revelation to John)*. The group will meet in the conference room next to the office. The class will run for six consecutive weeks. You are invited to bring your own Bible to take notes if you wish (yes, writing in your Bible is okay); however, Bibles will be available. You are also invited to bring lunch with you in case you want to hang out afterward for more discussion on any topic or to enjoy fellowship time.

Pickleball update

Beginning January 2nd, our Pickleball Court will be available every Tuesday from 8AM to 10AM. Additional days and times will be determined upon interest of court times once we begin this new activity. All experienced players come and join



us. Those who expressed interest in learning how to play Pickleball are invited to come to our December 10th and January 14th Game Day from 2PM to 4PM. Come and give it a try. See Ron Kerschner if you have questions.



Senior Choir rehearsals are Wednesdays at 6:45 PM! All are welcome!!!

BELL CHOIR Rehearsals are Tuesdays at 7:00 pm.



December 17-23 Calendar

Sunday, December 17	
9:00am	Worship
10:00am	Coffee Hour After Worship
10:15am	SCS
Monday, December 18	
10:00am	Women's Prayer Group
6:30pm	Yoga
Tuesday, December 19	
11:00am	Bible Study
3:30pm	Trini Mini
7:00pm	Bell Choir
Wednesday, December 20	
12:00pm	Luther Lunch Ladies
6:30pm	Senior Choir
7:30pm	Advent Evening Prayer
Thursday, December 21	
3:30pm	Trini Mini
7:00pm	Yoga
7:00pm	Thursday Worship
Saturday, December 23	
7:30am	Walking Group

There will be NO Coffee Klatch on December 26.

[View This Month's Interactive Calendar Here](#)

December 17th Servers

Council: Christy Boos, John Weiss
Assisting Minister: Kathy Kuhns
Lector: Kathy Kuhns
Acolyte: CH: Anya Gilbert
Ushers: Denise Shirker, Trig Olson,
Matt Shirker
Altar Guild: Brenda Wangman,
Heather Zimmerman, Lisa Garrett
Linens: Patricia Fassnacht
Deliver Flower: Dan Doremus



Office Hours: December 18-22

We recommend you call the office prior to stopping in to ensure hours have not changed.
Office Phone: 717-733-4134 Pastor's Cell: 315-317-8517 Donna's Cell: 717-669-7831

Day	Sue	Pastor
Monday	8:00 AM- 4:00 PM	9:00 AM-12:30 PM
Tuesday	8:00 AM- 4:00 PM	9:00 AM-12:30 PM
Wednesday	8:00 AM- 4:00 PM	9:00 AM-12:30 PM
Thursday	8:00AM -12:00 noon	OFF
Friday	8:00AM -12:00 noon	OFF

Pastor Mark will be on vacation from December 28-31.

Make Your Regular Offering Electronically

On the Holy Trinity website (www.holytrinityephrata.org), a tab on the menu bar called "Online Giving" will take you to a secure web site for you to give. You can also give your Regular Offering, your Special Appeal donation, your building fund, or your Homes of Hope fund donation by using your Smart Phone and following the QR code.



Thanks for reading! Have a great week ahead!

