

Friendship

Lutheran Church of



From the Pastor's Desk

Where has this year gone? Some would say to the dogs, while others may crudely say down the toilet. It would be hard to argue with any such assessment. But, I have some good news - it is December. Every December, we look back at the year that is ending, with an eye toward the future. December is a time of melancholy and a time of excitement all wrapped up in one.

It is Advent—a time to reflect, pray, and worship the Christ who has come, who comes, and who will come again. Imagine the world some two thousand years ago in the weeks before the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. People were busy doing whatever it was that defined their daily existence. For some, it was just more of the same - struggling against hunger, fear, and desperation. For others, it was the ongoing enjoyment of their wealth. For most however, it was simply the continued dealing with the pressures of day to day life. But for everyone, the weeks we call “Advent” were just days and nights being lived in darkness.

It is still a dark world. The same things that challenged the ancients haunt us even today. So, let's look back and find the context of just how we came to where we are now. God had created the world to live in union with Him. He had breathed life into Adam, a creature He made from dust. He had formed Eve from the side of Adam and had joined the two together and them to Himself. In the Garden, they lived in perfect light and harmony with the Creator. So far, so good.

But darkness came. Those created and loved by God rebelled against Him, bringing a darkness that invaded all of creation. Death had entered through sin, and as the children of Adam filled the world, everywhere they went the darkness was sure to follow and the darkness incased them.

It was a world of darkness cut off from the source of all light, the Creator. Yet a light was promised and the time had come for it to break into the world.

This Advent, so we gather in the name of Jesus and consider the great history of His Story anew. The Jesse Tree is filled with signs preparing the world to receive the light of the Creator's glory in Emanuel (God with us). This redeeming light is Jesus, from His birth as God made flesh to His second coming. The Bible, the Old and New Testaments alike, is all about Jesus. He is the Seed of Jesse's tree. He is the Root of Jesse's tree. He is the Life of Jesse's tree. And He is the Firstfruit of Jesse's tree. As the Church will sing with the angels on Christmas Day, “To God on high be glory and peace to all the earth” (LSB 383).

Join us for our mid-week Advent Series “The Jesse Tree,” as we peer into the past with an eye toward the future, where there is no more darkness – only the light of His glory that prepares us to receive the hope, peace, joy and love that enable us to walk in the light of that Glory – now and forever. Amen.

Season's Blessings!
Pastor Triplett

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Spiritual Nature of Our Earthly Battles

Genesis chapter 13 describes Abram (later called Abraham) and Lot, his nephew, arriving in Canaan at Bethel where Abram first built an altar for worshipping the Lord. Because the land could not support all the animals they processed, Abram suggested that they part and asked Lot which way he would like to go, to the right or to the left. Lot and chose to go to the Jordan Valley which was well watered and had plenty of grasslands for his animals. After they parted, the Lord said to Abram, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." (Genesis 13:14-16)

Genesis 14: An army of four Kings raided the city of Sodom where Lot and his family lived and took all the people and possessions including Lot and his family. The next day, Abram and others including 318 trained men then waged a military battle to rescue Lot under God's command to deliver righteousness and justice. These physical battles recorded in Scripture include spiritual dimensions. In this way God made His name and power known to the people then living in the promised land. Since the ascension of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit at the birth of the church, the spiritual nature of our earthly battles becomes better understood.

Jesus Christ ultimately fought and achieved victory over evil, sin, and death without physical weapons. He fought on behalf of you and me, leaving His heavenly home to become God with us. His victory on the cross was realized through obedience to the Father's will. The distinction for believers is that our enemies are not people, but evil, sin, and darkness which we cannot overcome on our own. The goal of spiritual battle is God's rescue of people from the grip of evil by the resurrection power found in Christ alone. When in the heat of spiritual conflict, we need to remember that we are not in this battle alone. We have a not so "secret weapon" on our side.

Christians are called to be on guard against godless world religions and systems. We recognize that our internal sin nature makes us prone to sin. Scripture teaches us to be armed with God's Word, to submit and to come nearer to God, and to depend on His power through His Holy Spirit. Start your day by reading God's Word and blessings will come your way. Jesus has already fought and won the war for us.

'Lutheran Witness' Introduces New Website, Podcast

By Stacey Egger

For almost 140 years, *The Lutheran Witness* (LW) has served the church and proclaimed the Gospel by publishing theological essays and reflections that interpret “the contemporary world from a Lutheran perspective.”

Now, LW seeks to continue this mission by refreshing and expanding its web presence. In July, LW Managing Editor Rev. Roy Askins announced an updated LW website: witness.lcms.org.

Online LW content was previously housed at the *Reporter* site, where it was less visible and harder to find. Now, with its own domain name, the refreshed LW site is more user-friendly and accessible.

“Updating the old *Lutheran Witness* site to give it its own domain name is an opportunity to get the word out there about what *The Lutheran Witness* is and what it does. *The Lutheran Witness* has been teaching Lutherans for 140 years. Now we are expanding the opportunities to teach online as well,” said Askins.

The updated site will continue to provide all the same content that was housed under the old domain name:

- Print content from each month’s issue, including the Synod president’s letter, the editor’s letter and table of contents, and one featured article.
- Online-exclusive content, including monthly articles from a team of regular Lutheran authors, such as former LW editor Rachel Bomberger, Dr. Gene Veith, the Rev. William Weedon and the Rev. Dr. John Pless.

In addition, the refreshed site will provide two new types of content:

- Article series written by Lutheran pastors, theologians or laypeople, released in installments. The first two series will be on the intersection of faith and technology (by the Rev. Trevor Sutton) and seeing world problems in light of God’s Word (by the Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz).
- A new LW podcast with recordings of each article published on the website, including the print features. The podcast is available on the site, as well as on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher and other podcast platforms.

Askins also hopes to make more of LW’s century-and-a-half of content available on the site in the future.

“*The Lutheran Witness* has been around since 1882. It is one of the longest-published magazines in the history of the U.S. And a lot of this content continues to be relevant today,” said Askins.

“We’ve got some hopes, down the road, to make a lot of that available online. What a great resource it would be for the church.”

Support LWML While Shopping



The AmazonSmile program continues to be a blessing to the LWML. Amazon has donated \$1,799.16 to LWML this biennium, with a total of \$5,334.24 since LWML began participating in the program. Choose LWML as your charity and, when you shop using AmazonSmile, 0.5% of the sale price of eligible products are donated to the LWML. These dollars are sent to LWML quarterly, with all funds supporting mission grants.

There are no fees or extra costs to sign up or to purchase items through AmazonSmile. It's easy to sign up: visit <https://smile.amazon.com>, sign in with your Amazon.com credentials, and choose the "Lutheran Women's Missionary League" in Saint Louis, Missouri. Then, start shopping! Bookmark the site, making it easy to shop again.

Or use the Amazon Shopping app. After you've signed up for AmazonSmile in your web browser, download or update the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app for IOS or Android. Open the app, go to "Settings" in the main menu, then tap "AmazonSmile" and follow the instructions.

With the holidays fast approaching, why not make a difference by signing up so more dollars will go to LWML mission grants? With your help, we can fund this biennium's remaining mission grants and spread the Gospel to the lost and the hurting.

Mission News

As you know the ministry of Reaching the Unreached is in various stages.

I. Under Construction:

There have been people coming to faith in Jesus Christ and churches formed in Ghana, Togo, the Ivory Coast, and more recently in Burkina Faso, and Benin. Our church has sponsored Pascal and Mary, natives of Togo, now working in the Ivory Coast. We have been able to help make possible the building of their home and church, the village well, and a vehicle for Pascal to make his outreach to distance villages possible.

II. In Transition:

Pascal would like to start a missionary training school in the Ivory Coast. He feels called to training and equipping future missionaries. We see his heart as the disciples he has trained are beginning to take responsibility for their own villages. We have been blessed to witness God using Pascal and his faithfulness and dedication for over 10 years now.

III. A Work In Progress:

COVID has certainly interfered with their meeting in the church. Please continued to pray God will make a way for his work to continue and for needs to be met. Praise GOD!!! He is in control.

One Month Bible Reading Plan

Most people professing faith in Jesus have never completely read their Bible. Many people start reading the Bible but then become overwhelmed by the number of chapters (1,189) and verses (31,102) there are. What we don't realize is that we can read the Bible in a year by reading fewer than four chapters a day. Every month we will post the "reading schedule" in the Newsletter. This structured approach of reading Scripture brings a fresh approach to each day's reading, while providing a clearer understanding of the Bible's larger message.

Tips on Reading the Bible Daily

1. Start reading the Bible today — there is no better time than now!
2. Set aside a specific time each day. Set your schedule and then stick to it. Feel free to use any time that works consistently for you. If you miss a day, just make it up (don't give up); habits both good and bad are formed easily.
3. Read the Bible for the sake of learning, not simply to accomplish your next reading. Say a short prayer to God before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding, then be refreshed by the words you read!



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Romans 11:25-15:33	2 Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 1:1-4:13	3 1 Corinthians 4:14-7:40	4 1 Corinthians 8:1-12:11	5 1 Corinthians 12:12-15:28
6 1 Corinthians 15:29-16:24; 2 Cor. 1-2	7 2 Corinthians 3-7	8 2 Corinthians 8-12	9 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 1:1-4:11	10 Galatians 4:12-6:18; Ephesians 1:1-14	11 Ephesians 1:15-5:14	12 Ephesians 5:15-6:24; Philippians 1-2
13 Philippians 3-4; Colossians 1	14 Colossians 2-4; 1 Thess. 1:1-2:12	15 1 Thess. 2:13-5:28; 2 Thess.	16 1 Timothy 1-5	17 1 Timothy 6; 2 Timothy 1-4	18 Titus 1-3; Philemon 1; Hebrews 1:1-2:10	19 Hebrews 2:11-6:20
20 Hebrews 7-10	21 Hebrews 11-13	22 James 1:1-4:10	23 James 4:11-5:20; 1 Peter 1:1-3:12	24 1 Peter 3:13-5:14; 2 Peter 1-2	25 2 Peter 3; 1 John 1:1-3:12	26 1 John 3:13-5:21; 2 John; 3 John; Jude 1:1-16
27 Jude 1:17-25; Revelation 1-4	28 Revelation 5:1-9:11	29 Revelation 9:12-14:8	30 Revelation 14:9-18:24	31 Revelation 19-22		

In Our Prayers

The Power of Prayer



- ♥ Pastor Don Ehlers, former LWML CID Champaign Zone Pastoral Counselor, who had bypass surgery on November 23.
- ♥ Prayers of healing and comfort for Peggy Francisco's father, recovering from the COVID-19 virus.
- ♥ Prayers for Allison's friend, Donna, recovering from the COVID-19 virus.
- ♥ LCMS Synod, Districts, Members and Pastors
- ♥ Church members
- ♥ Those who have yet to believe
- ♥ All who travel
- ♥ Country, state, and local governments
- ♥ All who serve (first responders, military, police, fire, EMTs)

Celebrations



December Birthdays

3	Layla Pearman
6	Amber Courtright
6	Daniel Luhrsen
11	Tony Kilber
12	Joetta Morgan
16	Joanna Carlson
20	Sharon Beth
21	Jennifer Clapp
21	Ron Sexton
27	Ron Arends
30	Emma Reitmeier
31	Darrell Carlson
31	Reagan Fisher
31	Catherine Luhrsen

December Anniversaries

21	Al & Jean Hagen
27	Elmer & Gayle Zuehls



December Baptism Birthdays

Suzan Armstrong, Jonathon Fisher, Gisela Huhn,
Marian Rodgers, Jeff Voeks, Elmer Zuehls



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 7 pm Advent Service	3	4	5
6 9am Worship	7 10:30 am Elizabeth Circle	8 Council 6pm	9 7 pm Advent Service	10	11	12
13 9am Worship	14	15	16 7 pm Advent Service	17	18	19
20 9am Worship	21 10:30 am Elizabeth Circle	22	23	24 7 pm Christmas Eve Service	25 9am Worship Service	26
27 9am Worship	28	29	30	31 6 pm Worship Service		

Until further notice, communion will again be by appointment only.
Please call the office.





Thank you!

Dear Church Family,
Thank you so much for the cards, texts,
flowers and prayer shawl you sent to
me following my hip replacement
surgery. Your thoughts and prayers
meant so much to me.
God bless you all and stay safe!

Sally Nourie

Please help beautify our sanctuary with a poinsettia! They can be brought in any time between now and Christmas. They can be purchased from any retailer or ordered (and delivered) from any florist. The church office is open Monday—Thursday, 9am—2pm.

If you believe that your contact information (address, phone, email, birth date, anniversary date, etc.) is incomplete or incorrect, please notify the church office.

Friendship Lutheran Church of *joy*

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Visit us on the internet!
www.friendship Lutheran.com

OUR MISSION:

To *Joyfully* connect people to Christ and His family.