



Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

December 2024 Newsletter

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." [Saint John 10:27]

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **John 10:27-28**

Dear Sheep of the Divine Shepherd:

As we approach the joyous season of Christmas, I would like to reflect on the deep spiritual and historical significance of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. For Christians around the world, these days mark not just the commemoration of Christ's birth, but also an opportunity to gather in the Divine Service, celebrating the fulfillment of God's promises, and also to examine the rich traditions that have shaped our faith.

Christmas Eve: A Time for Waiting and Anticipation

For Christians, Christmas Eve is more than just the day before Christmas—it is a time for anticipation and quiet reflection. Christmas Eve is the night when we gather for our candlelight service of Lessons and Carols, which bring to us hope, peace, and the promise of our coming Savior.

In the liturgy, the service we will once again sing hymns such as "*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*," invoking the centuries of longing for the promised Messiah. The reading of the Nativity story from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:1–20) is central, as it recounts the miraculous birth of Jesus in a humble stable in Bethlehem. The night is illuminated by the soft glow of candles, symbolizing the light of Christ coming into the world to dispel the darkness of sin.

Christians observe this night with solemn joy, remembering that Christ, the promised Savior, came to save His people from their sins. As the organ plays and the congregation and choir sings, we are reminded that the birth of Jesus is a fulfillment of God's plan for humanity, a moment when heaven and earth meet in the person of Jesus Christ.

Christmas Day: A Day of Rejoicing and Celebration

Christmas Day, the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus, is the beginning of 12 days where the Church focuses on the blessed babe who also is Lord over heaven and earth. We remember that the birth of Christ is not just a historical event but the very heart of our faith. The incarnation—the belief that God became flesh in the person of Jesus—reminds us that God is intimately involved in the world He created. It is a day of great rejoicing, for as the angels declared to the shepherds, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

Christmas Day is a time to gather together to confess our faith and partake of the Lord's Supper, receiving the body and blood of Christ which gives to us the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. The church's festive services are filled with hymns of praise, such as "*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*" and "*Joy to the World*," as we join the heavenly hosts and all the company of heaven in giving glory to God.

Christmas is also a time for family gatherings, acts of charity, and the sharing of gifts. As we exchange gifts with loved ones, we are reminded of the ultimate gift God gave us in His Son. In this spirit, we emphasize that Christmas is not only a time of personal joy but also a time to remember and care for others, reflecting God's love and mercy.

The Historical Development of Christmas Traditions

The Origins of Christmas

The history of Christmas is rich and multifaceted, with its roots in both Christian and pre-Christian traditions. While the exact date of Jesus' birth is not known, early Christians in the 4th century chose December 25 as the official date for the celebration of Christ's nativity. This date was likely selected to coincide with the Roman festival of Sol Invictus (the "Unconquered Sun"), which celebrated the return of the sun after the winter solstice. By choosing this time of year, early Christians symbolically linked the birth of Christ—the "Light of the World"—with the return of the physical light of the sun. In the Middle Ages, the celebration of Christmas evolved with a blend of local customs, religious observances, and festive practices. The tradition of the Christmas tree, for example, has roots in Germanic pagan customs, but it was adapted and Christianized in the 16th century by figures such as Martin Luther. Legend holds that Luther, inspired by the beauty of stars shining through the branches of trees, was the first to decorate a tree with candles to symbolize the light of Christ.

Other Christmas traditions, such as the singing of carols, the giving of gifts, and the Christmas feast, have also developed over time, shaped by both religious observance and cultural influences.

The Influence of Martin Luther and the Reformation

In the 16th century, Martin Luther had a profound impact on the way Christmas was celebrated in the Lutheran tradition. Luther emphasized the importance of the incarnation and the need for personal faith in Christ. He also encouraged the use of hymns as a means of worship, leading to the creation of some of the earliest Lutheran Christmas carols, such as "*From Heaven Above to Earth I Come*."

Luther was also instrumental in making the Christmas season more accessible to the people. He advocated for the use of the vernacular in church services, ensuring that ordinary people could participate in the worship and celebrations. In Lutheran and Reformation traditions, Christmas was not just a time for the clergy to offer ritual, but for all Christians to actively engage in the joy and hope of the season.

Christ's Birth—A Gift for All

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, let us remember that the birth of Jesus is not just a historical event but the beginning of God's incredible work of salvation. In Christ, God came to us as one of us, bringing peace, hope, and reconciliation. The Christmas story is a story of divine love: God's love for the world, His love for you, and His invitation for all people to find peace and joy in the Savior's birth.

This Christmas season, in solemn worship and festive gatherings, let us celebrate with hearts full of gratitude for the gift of God's Son. As we remember His birth, let us also look forward in hope to His promised return, when He will make all things new.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas Eve and a joyful Christmas Season, filled with the peace and light of Christ.

Listen to Jesus,
Pastor Zimmer

Children are God's precious jewels help them shine for Christ

Christian Stewardship

Repenting of “Yours” and “Mine”

Retailers have had their Christmas displays up since before Reformation Sunday. The kids have made their list and checked it twice, or three times or more. It won't be long before the tree will start shedding its needles, the stockings emptied, the gifts unwrapped, toys broken, and the too small or out of style clothes returned. Before we know it, the annual celebration of Christmas will be over.



But for the children of God, we know that the gift of Christmas doesn't ever end. Week in and week out, the Lord continues to shower His gifts on us. Every time the Lord gathers us to His house, and we are led to kneel at His table, the gift of forgiveness is repeatedly granted to us. It is nothing we deserve. It comes to us freely!

The fourth stanza of the stewardship hymn, “Forgive Us Lord for Shallow Thankfulness” (LSB 788) highlights both this gift and our response.

Teach us, O Lord, true thankfulness divine, that gives as Christ gave, never counting cost

To learn thankfulness is necessary. The parents of young children are well-versed in the fact that they must teach their children thankfulness. It does not come naturally. The spiritual genetics inherited from our parents allow us to think that the world revolves around us. When we receive something, there is an inward desire to think that we in some way deserve it.

But there is no way that we deserve anything we get from our Lord. We need that ongoing lesson from God Himself. Thankfulness toward God is worked in us by the Holy Spirit. God's Word works this thanksgiving in us. We need this weekly reminder that Jesus didn't consider “equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself” for us, to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:6). He didn't bat an eye. He paid the price! Our life of stewardship is one of daily and weekly thanksgiving inspired by the Lord Himself.

That knows no barrier of “yours” and “mine,” assured that only what's withheld is lost.

Because Jesus gave us everything and more, there can be no ownership. The child at Christmas is quick to claim that the newly gifted toy is “mine!” But as Psalm 24:1 asserts, “The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” There isn't anything in creation that is ours. When we cling to and claim ownership of anything in creation, we are losing out on the continual gifts with which the Lord desires to shower upon us. Closed hands cannot receive anything new. We cling to the old and dead and miss the new thing that the Lord desires to do in and for us.

We are led to repent of the “yours” and “mine” and remove the lie that we have any ownership. In this we have the promise that God will continue to give to us. Not just at Christmas, but every Sunday at the altar in the Lord's house.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship



Advent



Join us this Advent season for our midweek Evening Prayer services as we ponder anew the events that led up to the birth of the Messiah. **December 4, 11 & 18** at **6:30 p.m.** Soup/sandwiches will be served at **5:30 p.m.**, prior to the service. Please sign up on the sheet in Luther Hall if you are attending.

Week of December 1-7

Sun, Dec 1, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
Sun, Dec 1, 9:30 a.m. Fellowship
Wed, Dec 4, 5:30 p.m. Soup/Sandwiches
Wed, Dec 4, 6:30 p.m. Advent Mid-week Service
Wed, Dec 4, 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice
Sat, Dec 7, 8:30 a.m. Church Decorating

Week of December 8-14

Sun, Dec 8, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
Sun, Dec 8, 9:40 a.m. Fellowship
Sun, Dec 8, 10:00 a.m. Bible Study
Wed, Dec 11, 5:30 p.m. Soup/Sandwiches
Wed, Dec 11, 6:30 p.m. Advent Mid-week Service
Wed, Dec 11, 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice

Week of December 15-21

Sun, Dec 15, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
Sun, Dec 15, 9:40 a.m. Congregational Meeting
Wed, Dec 18, 5:30 p.m. Soup/Sandwiches
Wed, Dec 18, 6:30 p.m. Advent Mid-week Service
Wed, Dec 18, 7:15 p.m. Choir Practice

Week of December 22-28

Sun, Dec 22, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service
Sun, Dec 22, 9:40 a.m. Fellowship
Sun, Dec 22, 10:00 a.m. Bible Study
Tue, Dec 24, 6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Service
Wed, Dec 25, 8:30 a.m. Festive Divine Service

Week of December 29-31

Sun, Dec 29, 8:30 a.m. Divine Service

Christmas Decorating

Come and help us decorate the sanctuary for Christmas on **Saturday, December 7** at **8:30 a.m.** Many hands are needed and make light work!



Christmas Schedule

Join us in celebrating the birth of our Savior this Christmas Eve and Day. Below is the schedule of worship services:



Candlelight Lessons & Carols
Christmas Eve @ 6:30 p.m.

Festive Divine Service
Christmas Day @ 8:30 a.m.

Invite your relatives, neighbors, and/or coworkers to join you as we hear anew the story of God becoming man to save us from our sins. The vast array of Christmas hymns and carols will be spread out over these two services, the following Sunday, and Epiphany. O come, let us adore Him!

December Birthdays

01 Shelly Quinn
03 Al Gernenz
10 Victoria Fox
11 Jasmine Fritsch
16 Rev. David Zimmer
20 Ashleigh Bingenheimer
27 Jonathan Gernenz
28 Marjorie Jahnsen
30 Aaron Castro



December Baptismal Anniversaries

15 Bobbie Koritzke
15 Shellie Quinn
24 Nick Stewart
25 Cris Ruisz
29 Al Gernenz



Congregational Meeting


Congregational Meeting on Dec. 15, 2024, after Divine Service.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:
Appointment of Financial Secretary

- Voting on Council Positions
 - Chairman
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
- 2025 Budget

Sincerely Yours in Christ,
Ed Cruz. Chairman Chairman@ds-lcms.org

Ladies Aid

 Our two current projects address these needs by giving gift cards, presents and food supplies. THE GIVING TREE is currently in the narthex of the church with envelopes requesting cards for different types of families. If you are able, please take an envelope and provide the assistance requested. Return the envelope to Lisa or Ed Cruz by **December 8**.

THE FOOD DRIVE--Our gifts of food do two things for those in need. Of course, it provides food, especially for a holiday dinner. In addition to the food that you have so generously been leaving in the narthex, we have received \$500 from Thrivent to purchase the perishables that we all need. Each family will receive meat, potatoes, vegetables, dessert, and even some "goodies" through the Thrivent grants.



Mid-size sturdy boxes are needed to pack the food and can be dropped off anytime in the nursery. (Thanks).

All food and Giving Tree donations need to be at church by **December 8** to give us enough time to purchase food, sort it by family, and have it available for pickup by Wednesday December 18. Those recipients of the Giving Tree need time to use their gift cards to purchase gifts/etc.

Thank you for your generous donations!

If you have any questions, please contact Joan.

All women are encouraged to attend the Ladies Aid meeting on Saturday, January 18 at 10:00 a.m.

Prayer Chain



Several members are part of a church prayer chain. If you (men or women) would like to join them in praying for our congregation's special needs, please contact Julie Zimmer at 712-584-5301 or jdzimmer@aol.com

Altar Flowers

Thank you to everyone who donated flowers for the altar in 2024 and to Ruth Ogden for arranging the beautiful bouquets.



Forms to purchase poinsettias for the Christmas season are in the service bulletin and/or in the Narthex. Payment with completed form is due **December 15**. In lieu of purchasing a poinsettia, a donation may be given to the General Memorial Fund

The 2025 flower charts are posted. This is a wonderful way to help beautify God's house, celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or remember a departed loved one. Traditionally flowers are not used during the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent. We typically have special floral arrangements for certain festivals: palms on Palm Sunday, spring flowers on Easter Sunday, red bouquets on Confirmation, and poinsettias on Christmas. If you would like to contribute flowers, please add your name to any open Sunday on the flower charts. Ruth will do two bouquets for \$30.00. If you sign up, Karen will contact you to get your flower request, and a brief note to place in the worship bulletin. When the worship service is over, you are welcome to take your bouquets.



Sunday Treats



Do you enjoy treats and fellowship after Sunday services? If so, please consider signing up on any given Sunday(s). *Empty slots mean no treats.* To enable our diabetic members to enjoy these treats, consider supplementing some of the "sugary goodies" with crackers/cheese /fruit. The signup sheet is posted on the Luther Hall bulletin board.

Important Phone Numbers

Church office: 630-759-5300
Pastor Zimmer: 630-759-5300
Prayer Chain: 712-584-5301 (Julie Zimmer)
Head Elder: 630-360-5573 (Scott Collins)
Newsletter info: 630-759-3188 (Karen Moritz)
(Due December 30)

Raise Right

Shop with Raise Right (new name) cards are available throughout the year for everyday expenses and gifts for any special occasion. Next order dates are, **December 1 and 15**. Pre-purchased cards are available after Sunday services and forms are on the bookcase in Luther Hall. These cards make many of the Ladies Aid projects possible, and best of all they do not cost members anything beyond the face-value amount. RaiseRight pays us to use their service. What is more, many of these cards can be reloaded so you do not have to continually buy new cards.

Your Organization:

Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church – Manna

Your Coordinator: **Lisa Cruz**

630-636-6359 • dslcmanna@yahoo.com

shopwithscrip.com

Your Enrollment Code:

B2LD2C7A55973

Follow Us on Social Media

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with church happenings and events, find a variety of new and old congregational photos, and read inspirational posts and quotes from Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and various Christians throughout the centuries. Facebook: [fb.me/](https://www.facebook.com/dslc60440) Twitter: [@dslc60440](https://twitter.com/dslc60440)



You are invited to listen to Issues, Etc. — the radio voice of the Lutheran faith for the 21st century. Issues, Etc. is Lutheran talk radio hosted by LCMS Pastor Todd Wilken and produced by Lutheran Public Radio. Listen live (3:00-5:00pm CST) or at your leisure via the following options (go to issuesetc.org and click on the ‘listen’ tab for specific options.

Thrivent Financial

Directing Choice Dollars is a great way for eligible Thrivent members to show support for what matters most to them. Thank you to everyone who donated their choice dollars. Remember to donate choice dollars for 2024.

The Heart of Christmas

Let’s try to recapture the very reason we celebrate this wondrous season. Let’s think back to yesterdays of kindness respect and simpler ways.

Remember when it was never thought odd to pledge to one nation ‘under God’, when prayer being said did not cause a stir and “Christmas” was an acceptable word?...

Think back to the time we could gather round a nativity scene in the center of town, in awe of the simple figures there, the shepherds, a mother, and a child so fair.

A miracle sent down to earth, a simple manger and a baby’s birth, a savior unto us was given to show us all the path to heaven.

It’s a season of love, full to the brim but it wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for HIM! So, let’s spread this message in all we do: “Merry Christmas and God Bless You!

May your hearts be filled with the reason for the season.

If you look for Me

If you look for Me at Christmas, you won’t need a special star-I’m no longer in Bethlehem, I’m right there where you are.

You may not be aware of Me amid the celebrations-you’ll have to look beyond the stores and all the decorations.

But, if you take a moment from your list of things to do and listen to your heart, you’ll find I’m waiting there for you.

You’re the one I want to be with, you’re the reason that I came, And you’ll find Me in the stillness as I’m whispering your name.

Love Jesus

A Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year

You are cordially invited to
A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION!!!

Guest of Honor: Jesus Christ

Date: Every day. Traditionally, December 25
but He's always around, so the date is flexible...

Time: Whenever you're ready.
(Please don't be late, though, or you'll miss out on all the fun!)

Place: In your heart.... He'll meet you there.
(You'll hear Him knock.)

Attire: Come as you are... grubbies are okay.
He'll be washing our clothes anyway. He said something about
new white robes and crowns for everyone who stays till the last.

Tickets: Admission is free. He's already paid for everyone...
(He says you wouldn't have been able to afford it anyway...
it cost Him everything He had. But you do need to accept the ticket!!)

Refreshments: New wine, bread, and a far-out drink He calls "Living Water,"
followed by a supper that promises to be out of this world!

Gift Suggestions: Your life. He's one of those people who already has everything else.
(He's very generous in return though. Just wait until you see what He has for you!)

Entertainment: Joy, Peace, Truth, Light, Life, Love, Real Happiness,
Communion with God, Forgiveness, Miracles, Healing, Power, Eternity in Paradise, Contentment, and much more!
(All "G" rated, so bring your family and friends.)

R.S.V.P. Very Important!

He must know ahead so He can reserve a spot for you at the table.
Also, He's keeping a list of His friends for future reference. He calls it the
"Lamb's Book of Life."

Party being given by His Kids (that's us!!)

