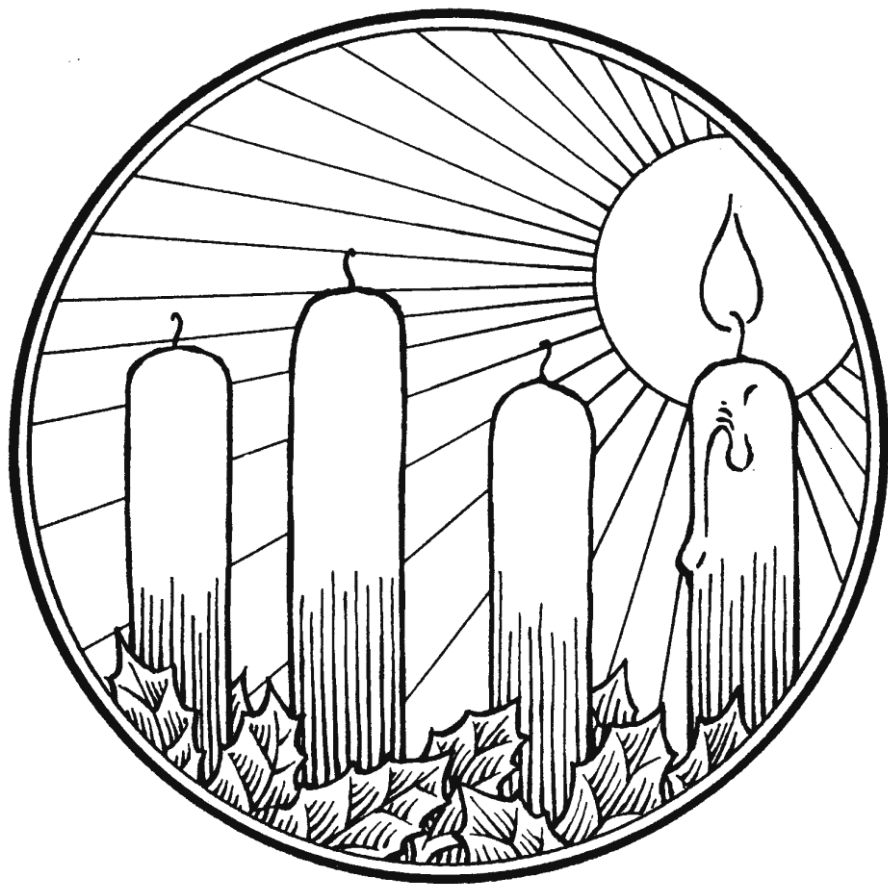


FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

1 DECEMBER 2024



OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
2589 – 190TH AVENUE CALAMUS, IA 52729

WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP, SETTING 3 (PAGES 138-145)

*The **liturgy** is in the front of the ELW with numbers at the bottom of the pages.*

*The **hymns** begin in the middle of the ELW with numbers at the top of the pages.*

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HANGING OF THE CHRISTMAS GREENS

For Christmas, we enjoy decorating our homes with lights, wreaths, nativity scenes, a Christmas tree and other decorations which bring to life the wonderful message of the birth of the Savior. Our church family also enjoys making the sanctuary ready for the birth of Jesus. You will find in this service a scripture reading and an explanation of the symbolism of several decorations which enrich our service and our personal and family devotions.

THE MEANING OF THE SERVICE

As we begin the Christian Year, we also celebrate the Holy Season known as Advent. It is a time when we prepare ourselves for the coming of our Messiah. Advent means "Coming." We celebrate these days of Advent in expectation and preparation for Christ's arrival.

Through the centuries, Christians have observed a time of waiting and expectation before celebrating the birth of the Savior at Christmas. The Advent season is a time for reflection and preparation, but its mood is joyful. Advent has been enriched by Christian tradition to reflect its distinctive Christian meaning. It proclaims the revelation of God's love as expressed in Christ's birth in a humble stable, His sacrificial death on the cross, and His victorious resurrection! It points to the hope of Christ's coming again as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Advent makes innkeepers out of all of us, asking each of us to make room for the arrival of Christ the King. Let us, today, prepare Him room in our hearts, our lives, and our homes!

HYMN #254: "COME, THOU LONG-EXPECTED JESUS"

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: In the days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hill; all nations stream to it. Many people shall come saying,

C: Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that God may teach us His ways and that we may walk in God's path.

P: And with what shall we come to God's house?

C: With branches of cedar and holly, evergreens and pine! Make the church fragrant with the smell of living things! Hang the greens, listen to the words of the prophets, and let us prepare both this space and our hearts for the One who comes to give us second birth!

THE ADVENT CANDLES

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 9:2

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Advent is a time of expectation, and this is symbolized, not only by the four-week period of preparation, but also by the lighting of an Advent Candle on each Sunday of the season. The flame of each new candle reminds us, the worshipers, that something is happening, and something more is still to come.

The candles are arranged in a circle to remind us of the continuous power of God, which knows neither beginning nor ending. There is also symbolism in the colors of the candles. The blue candles symbolize the coming of Christ from the royal line of David. He is coming as the King of Kings as well as the Prince of Peace. The large white candle in the center is known as the Christ candle, and points to Jesus as the Christ, the Light of the world.

A progression is noted in the lighting of the candles of the Advent wreath each Sunday. Each candle symbolizes various aspects of our waiting experience. The culmination of the season comes as we light the Christ Candle on Christmas Eve. We join in rejoicing that the promise of long ago has been fulfilled.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
~ HOPE FOR THOSE WHO WAIT ~

P: Advent is a time for the human heart to wait, while trusting God's eternal time.

C: **How long, O Lord, how long?**

P: For those waiting for answered prayer:

C: **Grant Your steadfast patience.**

P: For those waiting in the face of uncertainty:

C: **Grant unshakable confidence in your sovereign provision.**

P: For those waiting for justice and mercy to reign:

C: **Grant a glimpse of your glory in our wounded world.**

P: For all of us waiting for God's kingdom to come:

C: **Grant that we might have the peace of Christ as we wait, the love of Christ as we act, and the grace of Christ as we speak.**

CANDLE LIGHTING

This morning we light the **first candle** which reminds us that throughout history, God's people have spent time waiting, wandering and wondering about the timing of God's eternal plan. Like the people of old, we long for God's presence to illuminate the areas of life where we are called to wait. This morning we echo the words of the Psalmist, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14)

"CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT!"



THE PARAMENTS AND ADVENT COLORS

Both visual and performing arts have always been important ways to communicate the Christian faith. The use of music has helped believers understand their Godly hope. Other forms of visual art have been used from the beginning to help express various aspects of Christian doctrine and life.

Colors, altar paraments or coverings, and banners are some of the most important visual ways Christians have used to express their faith in worship. The objective in covering the Communion Table with cloths of various colors was to help focus the attention of worshippers on the special nature of Christ as the Perfect Sacrifice. In the early days of Christian worship, Advent and Christmas were seen as a somber time, much like Lent is today. Purple table coverings were used to speak of Christ's Kingship, but the mood was somber.

As Christians began to share their celebration of Christmas with their non-Christian neighbors they began to focus on the joy of the Christmas event. As the emphasis of Christmas began to change to one of joyful celebration the color used also changed to express Christ the King in that more happy way. While purple is still used in some churches and at certain times, many Christian churches now use blue to speak of the Kingship of Christ when the occasion is joyful. At Advent we wait with anticipation and celebration for our coming Christ.

HYMN: ON JORDAN'S BANK THE BAPTIST'S CRY

♪ **On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and harken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!**

THE CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 40:6-8

A voice says, "Cry out."

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

Originally from Mexico, the plant is native to the American continent, as is the tradition. Introduced by, and named after, Dr. Joel Robert Poinset, an American Ambassador who was in Mexico in 1828, the flower has been cultured and cultivated in many varieties. Those of Central America refer to this flower as the “Flower of the Holy Night”.

It blooms at Christmas time with a bright red flower for the blood of Christ. The flower is star-shaped with radiant white petals for the purity of Christ and gold-star centers for the royalty of Christ.

HYMN: THE KING SHALL COME

**♪ The King shall come when morning dawns
and light and beauty brings.
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your people pray:
come quickly, King of kings.**

THE SANCTUARY EVERGREENS

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 60:13-14

The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn the place of My sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of My feet. The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

In the midst of the browns and grays of winter the green color comes as a reminder to us of the freshness and hope of life we have. Life continues for the evergreens and so does our life continue in Christ Jesus.

Among ancient Romans evergreens were an emblem of peace, joy, and victory. The early Christians placed them in their windows to indicate that Christ had entered the home. The wreath, a circle of evergreens, reminds us of the never-ending love of God and the eternal glories He holds before us.

HYMN: AWAKE! AWAKE, AND GREET THE NEW MORN

**♪ Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
Sing out your joy, for soon he is born,
behold! the Child of our longing.**

**Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
he opens wide the heav'ly door
and lives now inside us forever.**

THE NATIVITY

Scripture Reading – Luke 2:8-12

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

The Nativity speaks of the mystery of God's wisdom. In nativity scenes we remember Jesus, who has come into the world for us. We remember Mary and Joseph coming to Bethlehem and her delivering our Savior into the world in a cattle stall because there was no room for them in the Inn. The baby is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

The humble beginning of Jesus reminds us of His giving up the wealth of heaven to come to the poverty of this world. We also remember that the good news of the birth of the Savior was first announced, not to royalty or to the wealthy, but to humble shepherds in the fields outside Jerusalem. We, too, come to worship the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We lay before Him our gifts of thanks and praise as our display of love.

Today this scene generates great feelings of gratitude for our Savior's birth. We display our nativity scenes as a witness to the world that Christ, the Savior, is born.

HYMN: AWAY IN A MANGER

**Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Scripture Reading – Jeremiah 17:7-8

But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

Trees have been important parts of mankind's history. We think of the tree in the garden and its role in the fall of mankind. We think of the tree of the cross on which our Savior gave His life for our redemption.

An evergreen tree is a reminder that God comes to us and is ever-living. Trees were first used in German paradise plays portraying the creation of mankind. They were later decorated in the woods as part of the Christmas celebration, eventually being brought into homes.

Martin Luther is credited with being the first to put candles on trees. These "lights" symbolized the beauty of the sky and stars. He had seen the light of the sky reflecting off the snow-covered tree and wanted his wife and children to share in the experience. Gilded nuts, paper flowers and other decorations were later added. Today, electric lights replace the candles. Decorations, both homemade and store-bought, remind us of the beauty of God's creation shared with us anew each day.

HYMN: I AM SO GLAD EACH CHRISTMAS EVE

**♪ When mother trims the Christmas tree
Which fills the room with light,
She tells me of the wondrous Star
That made the dark world bright.**

**She says the Star is shining still,
And never will grow dim;
And if it shines upon my way,
It leads me up to him.**

THE LESSONS OF ADVENT

Over these next weeks of Advent, let us listen to the lessons of the years and the centuries, not just to impressions of the moment. The images in the biblical story are often discouraging - war, hate, famine, epidemics, a Caesar on his throne, a Paul in prison, Christians being persecuted. But now, after the centuries, the Caesar is gone; Paul is a symbol of Faith; and Jesus, the Truth and the Light, is reaching out to every nation!

Let us, through the great traditions of our Faith, join with the shepherds of Bethlehem, the wise men from the east, and the seekers throughout the ages, to welcome the One who came at Christmas. Let us at Christmastide bring our gifts to Him, and may the message of our songs be "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, Peace and goodwill to peoples everywhere."

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. (*concluding...now and forever.*)

C: Amen

READINGS

JEREMIAH 33:14-16 | PSALM 25:1-10 | 1 THESSALONIANS 3:9-13

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (PAGE 142)

**♪ Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia. Alleluia.**

GOSPEL: LUKE 21:25-36

P: The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the 21st chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

YOUTH SERMON – REV. LEAH HOLLOWAY-NILSEN

HYMN #732 “BORNING CRY”

Holy Baptism

PRESENTATION

P: In baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the church, the body of Christ. Living with Christ and in the communion of saints, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God.

Sponsors: We present Daxton to receive the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

P: Brittney and Derrick, called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to have Daxton baptized into Christ?

Parents' Response: We do.

P: As you bring your child to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with gifts and responsibilities:
to live with him among God's faithful people,
bring him to the word of God and the holy supper,
teach him the Lord's Prayer, the Creed,
and the Ten Commandments,
place in his hands the holy scriptures,
and nurture him in faith and prayer,
so that he may learn to trust God,
proclaim Christ through word and deed,
care for others and the world God made,
and work for justice and peace.

Brittney and Derrick, do you promise to help your child grow in the Christian faith and life?

Parents' response: We do.

P: Mikaela and Andrew, do you promise to nurture Daxton in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help him live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?

Sponsors' response: We do.

P: People of God, do you promise to support Daxton and pray for him in his new life in Christ?

C: We do.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

P: I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church.

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

C: We renounce them.

P: Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

C: We renounce them.

P: Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you away from God?

C: We renounce them.

P: Do you believe in God, the Father?

**C: I believe in God, the Father, almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

P: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**C: I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

P: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit?

**C: I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

THANKSGIVING AT THE FONT

P: The Lord be with you!

C: And also with you!

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God!

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you. Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

C: Amen.

BAPTISM

P: Daxton Jean, I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

P: Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your sons and daughters new birth, cleanse them from sin and raise them to eternal life.

Sustain Daxton with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.

C: Amen.

P: Daxton Jean, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

C: Amen.

WELCOME

Congregation Representative: Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

P: Let us welcome the newly baptized.

C: We welcome you into the body of Christ and the mission we share: join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

From the beginning of Christmas celebrations, gift giving has been a part of the season. The Wise Men gave out of their treasures, and the Shepherds gave of themselves. Both express the Gift of God in giving Christ as the Savior of the World.

Unique in our history of generous givers is the story of Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia in the fourth century A.D. He is reputed to have been wealthy, his emblem being three purses and three golden balls. This was the symbol of rich Italian families of his time. The good Bishop gave his money away secretly to those whom he found in need. He was deeply interested in young people, giving his wealth especially to maidens whose lack of a dowry was affecting their matrimonial future, and to needy boys. Gifts coming from unknown sources were commonly attributed to him and parents customarily gave him credit for their gifts to their children. His name survives today as the human embodiment of unselfish giving.

HYMN #296: “WHAT CHILD IS THIS”

The offering is collected during the hymn.

THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

The greatest Gift of Christmas is the Gift of God in Christ Jesus. All that we do at this Holy Season points to that expression of Holy Love. Christ came as a babe in Bethlehem, God's gift at Christmas. As Christians we seek to pass on our heritage to our children and to those who, by faith in Christ, become part of the Family of God. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and mine that the Gift goes on.

♪ GREAT THANKSGIVING (PAGE 144)

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right....and join their unending hymn:

♪ **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow'r and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna, Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

LORD'S PRAYER (PAGE 145)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

All are welcome at the Lord's Table

Gluten-free wafers and white grape juice are available

♪ **Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
grant us peace.**

HYMN #256 "COMFORT, COMFORT NOW MY PEOPLE"

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

P: Let us pray.

O God, you have caused this world to shine with the illumination of the true Light. You have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him to reveal to us your glory and grace. As you have given this gift in love, may we receive it with joy. Grant that we, being regenerate and made your children by adoption and grace may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit. Grant us, we pray, that as we have known the mystery of that Light upon earth, so may we also reflect that light to a darkened world; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

BLESSING

P: May God direct your ways in peace, make you abound in love for one another and for all, and strengthen your hearts until the coming of our Lord Jesus. Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen

HYMN #267 “JOY TO THE WORLD”

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Prepare the way of Emmanuel.

C: Thanks be to God!

RINGING OF THE BELL

POSTLUDE

Pastor: Rev. Leah Holloway-Nilsen

Organist: Jason Boussetot or Linda Whitman

Acolyte: Caden Will

Lector:

Communion Assistant: Neil Holmquist

Usher: Eva and Rachel Burke

Cleaner: Brian Boussetot and Mary Timmerman

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This Week At A Glance

Wednesday	5:45 pm	Christmas program practice at Faith
	6:15 pm	Mid-week Advent meal at Faith
	7:00 pm	Mid-week Advent service at Faith
Sunday	8:00 am	Worship service at Our Savior's
	9:25 am	Sunday School at Faith
	10:30 am	Worship service at Faith

Those to keep in prayer: the family of Mary Jane Slaymaker, the family of Dr. Elaine Shelton, the family of Gwenda Sievers; Mallory Bousselot, Roger and Betty Bousselot, Cathy Goddard, Jade Jensen, Larry Schau, Diane Sievers, Margaret Travaille ; the homebound: Carol Christensen, Ron Gasper, Delores Lahann, Myrna Kay Peterson, Rusty Porth, Vera St. John, Betty Schau and Bus Seastrand; and those serving in the military.

This morning through Holy Baptism, **Daxton Jean Heim**, child of Brittney and Derrick Heim, will be received into the family of God and the membership of Our Savior's Lutheran Church. His sponsors are Mikaela and Andrew Rock.

Advent begins today with the "Hanging of the Greens" service. Advent is the first season in the church year and focuses on the long-awaited birth of Jesus at Bethlehem and the Second Advent when Christ will return.

Mid-week Advent services will be held Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. The confirmands will assist with the service. A meal will be offered at 6:15 pm. Faith will host the service on December 4th and 11th. Our Savior's will host the service on December 18th.

During the month of December, **winter coats, hats and gloves** will be collected for the Carroll Assistance Center.

The **Children's Christmas Program** will be at 10:30 am on Sunday, December 15th, at Faith. Two rehearsals are at 5:45 pm on Wednesdays, December 4th and 11th at Faith. The final practice at 10:00 am on Saturday, December 14th, will be followed by caroling at Wheatland Manor and then lunch.

The **noisy offering** will be collected Sunday, December 15th. The 2024 recipient is Calamus Wheatland Schools.

The **God Squad Christmas party** will be Wednesday, December 18th at Our Savior's following worship. Junior high and high school youth are invited to join in the holiday fun!

All reports for **Faith** and **Our Savior's Annual Reports** are due in the church office by **Monday, December 16th**. These reports include: Pastor, Council Presidents, God Squad, Feeding the Children, Memorials and Gifts, Our Savior's Cemetery, and all Committees (Education, Outreach, Property and Management, and Worship). Financial reports, budgets, and audit reports are due in the church office by Monday, January 15, 2024.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at Our Savior's at 9:00 pm.

Christmas Day Worship at Faith at 9:00 am

Sunday, December 29th there will be **one** service at Our Savior's at 9:00 am. There will be no Sunday School that morning.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. (Genesis 1:1-4)

Thanksgiving Day is past, the pumpkin pie gone, the turkey all eaten, and the world has survived another Black Friday. I'm excited about putting up Christmas lights. Each year I am a lot more excited about putting up the lights than taking them down. I am like a little kid about the lights of Christmas! Give me any kind of Christmas light and I am thrilled: lights on the trees, lights on the houses, lights on the shops, lights on the cars, but especially the lights of a Christmas Eve service.

The importance of light for the world is dramatically set forth on the first page of the Bible. In the beginning of the creation story darkness covers the earth. But then, God sovereignly commands: "'Let there be light', and there was light." At these powerful words the cosmic battle of light against darkness is under way.

Darkness is opposed to God's purpose of goodness, beauty, and truth so much so that God's first creative act is to speak forth light. What is the first thing we do when the lights go out, but to search for a candle or flashlight to put out the darkness? On this first Sunday of Advent we reflect on the story of God's triumph of light.

Darkness is a fitting metaphor for many of life's bitter experiences. Darkness is a spiritual reality in our world, a powerful spiritual force working evil. Scripture speaks of "the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). Although darkness covers the earth on the first page of the Bible, by the time we reach the Bible's last page, God's defeat of darkness is final. "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). There is promise here in today's Genesis text as the Spirit of God begins to pierce the darkness. As we begin this Advent season it is a great time to put up lights and ready our Advent candles.

We do this confident that darkness shall not prevail! With each light we joyfully proclaim Jesus as God's true Light who "shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Loving Father, as we begin Advent, we light a candle in the midst of darkness. This candle represents our faith that one day all darkness, pain, and sorrow will be overcome by the light of Jesus. We look forward to God's new day when death will be no more, neither sorrow, nor pain. Let this candle be our reminder and our hope for your promised coming, your final triumph over darkness. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Timothy L. Smith