

THE
VOICE
OF

ST. PETER'S

DECEMBER 2017

From the Pastor:

*Away in a manger,
No crib for his bed,
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down his sweet head.*

*The stars in the sky
Looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep in the hay.*

In the fullness of time, when God chose to send the Divine Child to be the Savior of the world, a tiny baby was born in a stable and was laid in a manger, because there was no room for him at the inn.

The idea that the mighty Son of God would come to us as a baby, as a “little Lord” may seem like a contradiction in terms, to be sure, but that contradiction is the very heart of the Christmas story.

In God’s great mercy for us, our Savior chose to come to us as a helpless baby, so that whether we are little children or full-grown adults, we might be able to receive Jesus with warm, confident faith, and be determined to trust in him for all that we need, to serve him in any way that we can, and to make room for him within our hearts – for a little Lord Jesus is loveable!

Yours in Christ, Pastor Richard

Highlights from the November 2nd Council Meeting

The Property Committee reported that the sidewalk leading to the Church office has been replaced using volunteer labor, with a final cost under \$900. The Committee is still looking into the video project.

The Council approved the Fellowship Committee's request to have a filling sale.

The Youth Ministry Committee reported that the Halloween Party and Trunk or Treat was very well attended. The youth also shopped for food and delivered to three needy families.

Under New Business:

The Social Ministry Committee will make plans for Christmas Food Baskets, with \$250 in funding from a Thrivent Action Grant and additional funding from a special offering.

The Council approved hosting the PGA Council of Churches Music Festival on December 10th.

The Council approved the schedule for Sunday, December 24th:

9:00 AM Worship Service, 10:30 AM Sunday School;

Three Candlelight Services at 4:00 PM, 7:30 PM, and 11:00 PM.

The fund balances as of October 31st were:

General Fund -- \$ 853

General Savings -- \$ 241

Capital Improvement Fund -- \$ 15,923 (\$ 6,869 designated for the video and \$1,265 for the Fellowship Committee to use for kitchen improvements)

Memorial Fund -- \$ 9,520

Stew Zerbe Scholarship Fund -- \$ 6,995

The Treasurer reported that in 2017 expenses have been \$ 126,226, and income has been only \$ 117, 377. The Treasurer has needed to take money from the Memorial Fund and from the Capital Improvement Fund to meet current expenses this year, and that trend cannot be continued indefinitely.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE

To begin celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, in September, 2016, Pastor Richard began teaching an Adult Course on the History of the Christian Church. In October, we studied Martin Luther's development, looking at the 95 Theses during our October 25th class. We will continue with Luther and the beginnings of the Lutheran Church for several more sessions, and then move on to the other Reformers and their contributions to Church History.

The sessions are held on Wednesday evenings, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

The schedule for the December, 2017 is:

Wednesday, December 6th

Wednesday, December 13th

Wednesday, December 20th

CONFIRMATION CLASS NEWS

Our combined Middler (Eighth Graders) and Senior (Ninth Graders) class is continuing its study of the history of the Christian Church with sessions on the great change from Christianity as a small persecuted sect in the Roman Empire to Christianity suddenly becoming the official state religion under the Emperor Constantine.

The Middler-Senior Class will meet at 9:00 AM on December 2nd, and 16th. There will be no class on December 9th, 23rd, and 30th. Classes will resume on January 6, 2018, following our Christmas holiday.

The Junior Class (Seventh Grade) met on November 4th for a session on the Genesis story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It will meet on December 2nd at 9:00 AM in the Youth Room for a lesson on the Christmas story.

IMPORTANT SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

December 3 – The First Sunday in Advent –

At the 9:00 AM worship service, we will have a special children's message to explain the meaning of our Advent season and the Advent wreath. We will have Holy Communion and the lighting of the first Advent candle. As a special treat, the coffee social will include hot cocoa during the month of December. During the Sunday School hour, we will be practicing for the Christmas Program.

December 10 – The Second Sunday in Advent –

The Sunday worship will focus on John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the coming of Jesus, and we will light two candles. The Sunday School hour will be the dress rehearsal for the Sunday School Christmas Program.

December 17 – The Third Sunday in Advent –

The choir will present their annual Christmas Cantata during the 9:00 AM Worship Service. The annual Sunday School Christmas Program will begin at 10:30 AM.

December 24 – The Fourth Sunday in Advent & Christmas Eve –

Technically, the 9:00 AM Service is still the Fourth Sunday in Advent, and we will light all four candles on the Advent wreath, but the mood of our service and the hymns will have a Christmas feel.

Following the worship service, beginning at 10:30 AM, we invite everyone to join in a "Birthday Party for the Baby Jesus." There will be a special birthday cake and fun for all ages.

We will then have our three traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Services –
at 4:00 PM, 7:30 PM, and 11:00 PM.

December 31 – The First Sunday of Christmas –

We will bring our Christmas season to a fitting conclusion with a worship service that reflects on the meaning and the joy of Christmas.

ASK THE PASTOR

This is the beginning of a new column in our monthly Newsletter, in which Pastor Richard will try to answer questions of general interest to the Congregation.

QUESTION: “WHAT IS ADVENT ?”

The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *advenire*, which means “to come toward.” In Advent we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus to us as our Lord and Savior. Traditionally, we think of three ways in which Jesus comes to us – in his “first coming” as the baby in the manger, in his “second coming” as the mighty King who brings to an end this world and ushers in his new Kingdom of Heaven, and in his present coming as our gracious Savior, who makes his home within our hearts.

It used to be that Advent was closely associated with the season of Lent, which is the solemn season of preparation for Easter. Lent focuses very much on sin and guilt and our need for contrite repentance as we move toward the cross of Good Friday, and Advent used to be understood in similar terms. Purple, the color of royalty, is the color of Lent, as a reminder that Jesus on the cross was “the King of the Jews,” and the same purple paraments used in Lent were also used in Advent, in a way blending the two seasons together.

The Advent wreath used to feature purple candles, and each was thought to have a specific meaning. But with the introduction of the Green hymnal in 1978, the Lutheran Church began to rethink the meaning of Advent, understanding it as a season of joyful expectation rather than as a season of solemn penitence. Blue candles were substituted for the purple candles in order to show a clear difference between Advent and Lent. The bright and cheerful blue in the Advent candles and paraments expresses a vision of hope and joy, which is how we now understand the meaning of our Advent season. In addition, the Lutheran Church has abandoned the idea that there is a particular meaning to each of the candles. The importance of lighting the candles is that they remind us that Jesus is “the light of the world,” and each week that light becomes brighter as we move ever closer to Christmas Eve. Thus every week, as we light the Advent candles in our worship service, we sing:

***“O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel ...
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel”***

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

The money donated towards Youth Ministry Fund will help provide additional financial resources for children, youth, & Sr. activities, events, camping, youth ministry conference and community outreach projects and events.

-The Youth Ministry Committee has recently completed a Halloween Party and 1st annual Trunk or Treat event on October 31st.

-The Youth Ministry Committee would like to thank everyone who helped participate in our Halloween Party and 1st annual Trunk or Treat.

-During our 4-6pm Halloween Party we had a total of 48 children, 35 parents, and 2 teenager's. Children had a blast painting pumpkins, coloring Halloween pictures and playing games and of course, enjoying snacks.

-Youth Committee provided dinner for everyone and we enjoyed one delicious Halloween cake done by Ruth Bender Casterline. Thank you, Ruth!

-During our 1st annual Trunk or Treat from 6-8pm we had a total of (8) Trunk cars, 173 treat bags handed out to children and 13 special treat bags handed out to babies. Children walked away with loads of candy and big smiles on their faces.

-Thank you to all the parents for giving positive feedback for this event. We hope families and children of the community had a great time, and plan on joining us again next year!!

-Also, the Youth Committee would like to give a BIG THANK YOU to everyone who volunteered at both the party and the trunk or treat!! Without everyone's hard work we would not have been able to pull this event off! Total breakdown expenses for this event was a Thrivent Grant of \$250 plus \$377.71 paid from Youth Ministry Fund = \$627.71. Fund balance as of 11-5-17 was \$2,341.41.

(Please follow us on Facebook @ StPetersLutheranPineGrove for pictures of this event, and for information on future events).

The Youth Ministry will be starting a new Jubilee Youth Group for children of ages 2-5. We will be hosting this every month. This will be an hour of learning, singing, dancing, and stories about Jesus. Please follow us on Facebook for activity dates for each month.

It's that time of year again for, "The Spirit of Christmas!" All ages are invited (bring a friend, parent, and/or grandparent). Please, join us for festive Christmas Caroling on Saturday, December 16th starting at 11am. We will be spreading the Christmas Joy in the lives of our shut-in members. First, we will gather at St. Peter's Fellowship Hall at 11am for lunch and a prayer before we depart. We will then be visiting our shut-in members to sing a few Christmas songs and give them a gift. Lunch will be prepared by Mark and Erma Barry and the Youth Ministry Committee.

Also, on December 24th, Come out and Celebrate with Us "Jesus Birthday." We will be throwing a Birthday party for Jesus during the Sunday School hour on Sunday, the 24th @ 10:30-11:45am. We will have cake, games, a piñata, and small gift bags for children. If you

would like to bring a gift for Jesus, we are asking for cans of soup that will be donated as part of our “Souper Bowl of Caring.” This event will be a joint partnership by Sunday School & Youth Ministry Committee.

The Youth Ministry Committee goal in the future is to increase additional funds to our vital Youth Ministry Activities and also provide many opportunities for our youth within our church and community.

How to help fund Youth Ministry Fund:

1. Special Youth Ministry Fund Offering Envelopes located next to the envelope drop box and also in the narthex. You may write a separate check out to (St. Peter’s Lutheran Youth Fund).
2. You can also support Youth Ministry through contribution envelopes under the section called (other) by writing in the symbol YMF.

The Youth Ministry Committee would like to express their gratitude for your contributions. We hope for your continuing support and contributions towards Youth Ministry Fund in the future.

Merry Christmas to all!!!

Sincerely,

Ben Moyer
Youth Ministry Committee

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS:

- ✝ Those who were hospitalized, recuperating, ill, or in any need in the months of October & November:
Kay Potts, Gloria Harris, Chase Morgan, Shirley Tobin, Dennis & Anita Loy, James Gruber, Stephen Krammes, Elaine Bender, Tom Seibert, Chris Beeman, Ruth Casterline, Mattie Tobin & Glenda Nagle.
- ✝ Kristina Sanders serving in South Korea.
- ✝ The Family of Tom McMullen, who passed away on October 27th.
- ✝ The Family of Larry Barr, who passed away on October 31st.
- ✝ Charlotte Ann Gassert, the daughter of Daniel and Brandi (Wertz) Gassert, who was born on October 28th.
- ✝ Our 50 – Year Members: Marty Beck, Kathy Sorokach, Pat Zimmerman, Ruth Beuchler, & Shelly Derfler.

*The Prayer Circle will meet on Wednesday, December 6th @ 9:00AM.

Memorial Gifts... To the Glory of God

(Youth Ministry Fund)

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Glenn and Doris Moyer.

(Memorial Fund)

\$100 in memory of Carl W. Reed by June Reed.

\$50 in memory of Lester W. Schaeffer by June Reed.

\$25 in memory of Paul H. Schaeffer, Sr. by June Reed.

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Howard & Shirley Lengel.

\$25 in memory of Larry Barr by Howard & Shirley Lengel.

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by South Schuylkill Democratic Committee.

(General Fund)

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Norman Sr. and Brenda Kreiser.

\$50 in memory of Tom McMullen by Schuylkill County Democratic Committee.

\$50 in memory of Tom McMullen by Linda Venzl.

\$20 in memory of Tom McMullen by Tremont Area Senior Citizens.

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Pine Grove Area Democratic Committee.

\$30 in memory of Tom McMullen by Elaine Benko.

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Charles Umbenhauer.

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Dion and Kay Boyer.

\$25 in memory of Dad's Birthday by Anna, Nancy, Mattie, Mary, & Charles.

\$25 in memory of Larry Barr by Linda Venzl.

\$50 in memory of Dad's (George Gilbert) Birthday by The Charles Gilbert Family.

\$10 in memory of Tom McMullen by Robert and Linda Brennan.

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Charles and Elizabeth Dries.

\$50 in memory of Tom McMullen by Kerry and Lori Zettlemyer.

\$25 in memory of Tom McMullen by Schuylkill County Democratic Women's League.

\$150 in memory of Tom McMullen by International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers Local 404.

\$20 in memory of Tom McMullen by Randy and Nancy Brown.

(Capital Improvement Fund)

\$20 in memory of Tom McMullen by Virginia Schwartz.

-The **Sanctuary Candle** for **December** was given to the Glory of God in memory of "Our Parents" by Vernon and Sue Stroupbauer.

-The **Newsletter** for **December** was given to the Glory of God in memory of Thelma Hubler and in honor of Mabel Umbenhauer for their December Birthday's by The Hubler's.

Bible Journaling

Our new Bible Journaling Group, led by Nancy Reichelt, will meet on Tuesday, December 12th at 6:30 PM. Everyone is welcome!