

December 2024



The Mountain Top Messenger

December 2024

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1 8:45am Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP	2 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm Dartball vs. Salem 1	3 1:00pm Sewing Circle	4 5-5:45pm Soup & Sandwich 6:00pm Worship Service	5	6	7
8 8:45am Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 9:30am Confirmation 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm Mellen	9 10:00am Bible Study Dartball 7:00pm vs. Messiah	10 1:00pm Sewing Circle	11 5-5:45pm Soup & Sandwich 6:00pm Worship Service	12	13	14
15 8:45am Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 9:30am Confirmation 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP	16 10:00am Bible Study 5:30pm Council Mtg 7:00pm Dartball vs. Sanborn Methodist	17	18 1:00pm Hospice Group-Gathering 6:00pm Worship Service	19	20	21
22 8:45am Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 9:30am Confirmation 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP	23	24 4:00pm and/or 7:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25 9:00am Christmas Day Worship Service	26	27	28
29 9:00am Worship Service 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm Mellen	30	31	Wednesday Jan 1st no Service Elders: Dec. 1 Doug Dec. 4 JohnS Dec. 8 Scott Dec. 11 JohnP Dec. 15 Randy Dec. 18 Darryl Dec. 22 Randy Dec. 24 4:00pm Scott Doug 7:00pm Andy Dec. 25 9:00am JohnS Dec. 29 JohnS Jan. 1 No Service			

God's blessings on your Advent! This month we are experiencing the rare occurrence of the Advent indeed beginning on the 1st of December. This leads us to four Sundays in Advent and only 3 Wednesdays. I first want to offer up another thank you to those who helped adorn our church for the season, it looks great and I feel it really helps enhance our worship space. Things are moving right along, we have begun our Sunday series based on Isaiah 40:1-11 Comfort, Comfort My People. What an appropriate name, at least I feel for me as Pastor anyway. That is my goal, to help comfort you in your knowledge of just who Jesus is and what his coming down from heaven and entering into our world means for us. To give you comfort in knowing what Jesus has done for us here on earth and how it relates to our future comfort with Him in heaven for eternity. While Lent and Easter are my favorite season, none of that could happen without first experiencing Advent. And for me there is nothing quite like sitting in the sanctuary in the evening with nothing but the Christmas lights on and the Cross and stain glass illuminated. It is so peaceful and relaxing, I recommend you try it some time, if you would like to, let me know, I can arrange it for you. I might even be able to schedule a few times for you to come in, sit down, and really enjoy some quiet time in our Lord's house.

Our Wednesday Soup and Sandwiches will have started by the time you read this, I hope you got a chance to enjoy the first one. We have one more coming up on the 11th of December, if you didn't make the first one please try for the second. As a reminder for the Wednesday evening services. remember the service time is **6:00pm** and our services for midweek are looking at Zachariah's song, Elizabeth's song, and finishing up on Dec. 18 with Mary's Song. By the way soup and sandwich begins at 5:00 pm.

Christmas Eve Services will be at 4:00 and 7:00, the choir will be singing at the 4:00 service and both services will be candlelight services. We will also have a Christmas morning service at 9:00 am. It is going to come and go very quickly I am afraid, so please join us as often as you can.

I forgot to mention that along with the Isaiah 40:1-11 reading being our focus for our sermon messages on Sundays we will also be having an adult Bible study focusing on an overview of the entire book of Isaiah, which has sometimes been referred to as the Fifth Gospel, so please if you have the opportunity join us for that as well.

It doesn't happen often, but I believe at the moment I have run out of things to say. So I am going to close simply by saying I pray that all of you have a Happy, Safe, and Enjoyable Advent and Christmas Season. And that you always remember that Jesus is the reason for the season.

God bless you all and thank you for allowing me to be your pastor.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May He look upon you with favor and give you peace. Amen

Merry Christmas,

Pastor Rick



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
1111-11TH AVE WEST
ASHLAND, WI 54806

Sunday Worship Service 9:00am live streamed
Wednesday Evening Service 6:30pm
Sunday School - 1st – 7th grade Sunday 8:45am (Sept.-May)
Bible Studies
Sunday 10:15am Monday 10:00am (Sept.-May)

Pastor Rick Williams - 715-209-0479

Office Hours: M/Tu/Th 9-5 Wed. 12-8 Fri. off

Please call ahead if you need to speak with Pastor.

Office Secretary Lynn Ladd 715-682-6075 Office Hours M/T/Wed 8:30-2:30

Days and times may change.

Church President: John Pruss 715-292-4825 Head Elder: Darryl Warren 715-492-0488

Little Friends of Jesus Child Care Center: 715-682-5185

LFOJ Administrator: JoAnn Martkonis 715-682-6075

Website www.zionashland.org **E-mail** secretary@zionlutheranashland.com

PRAYERS for Home-bound, Assisted Living, Nursing Home

Those who aren't able to attend common worship that they would find comfort knowing that the Lord is with them.

*Ingrid Pocernich
Arlene Zimmerman
Violet Basina*

PRAYERS FOR PROTECTION

For our full-time troops and public servants, for travel, missionaries, and for peace and protection for families.

*David Wright
Jordan Thimm
Andrew Pruss*



PRAYERS FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

For good test results, treatment, positive thinking, healing, and comfort during cancer treatments, for those suffering from addiction, mental illness and for healing, strength, comfort, and peace for family we pray for:

Brad Prill
Harold Larson
Tim Erickson
Janet Houle
Karen
Mike Trimble
Molly Colgrove
Carl Kubley
Sheryl Hildebrandt
Dave Solle
Immanuel, Mellen and Trinity, Berglund Congregations while they seek a new Pastor.

Vi Basina
Linda Stenroos
Patty Hmielewski
Pam Ekholm
Wayne
Jamie Klema
Linda Parrish
Chuck
Dwayne Lynch
Judith Wismeth

James Fletcher
Steve Key
Jean Wickman
Nick Frisco
Riley Bretting
Karen Piff
Chuck Sandor
Mary Dahl
Sandy Bosma
and those in our hearts

Dear Lord, "We come to You today with heavy hearts, as we lift up those who are in need of prayer. We ask that You would bring healing and restoration to their body, mind, and spirit" Amen.

For The Man Who Hated Christmas by Nancy Gavin

It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past ten years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas—oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it—overspending... the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma—the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended; and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears.

It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat.

Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids – all kids – and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition—one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.

"On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me."

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there.

You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more.

Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing to take down the envelope.

Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit will always be with us.

December Altar Guild

Shannon Esala 715-292-0
Eleanor Munson 715-682-8155

Ashland Heath Services has their yearly "Holly Leaf Project" for gifts to the residents. It is posted on the bulletin board at the entrance. Items need to be brought in by Dec. 16th, unwrapped



The Postman Lifted Us From Depression

My parents, at the height of the Depression, were forced to go on home relief, which is known as welfare today. It was 1935, when I was 10 years old, and we lived on the first floor of a walk-up apartment on 43rd Street, in Brooklyn, New York.

A few days before Christmas, I looked out a kitchen window to see my father sitting on the stoop, dejected and depressed, with tears in his eyes. The mailman was approaching our building and asked my father what was wrong.

I heard my father say that he had used up his food vouchers and that the rent was past due. He had tried to work as a laborer through the Works Progress Administration, but he wasn't a very strong man, and the work had been too hard for him. I was scared, having seen newspaper pictures of people being put out on the street with all their belongings.

"Ike, how much do you need?" the mailman asked. My dad said he needed \$33 for the rent, and without hesitation, the mailman took \$50 from his wallet and handed it to my father.

My dad said, "I don't know when I'll be able to pay you back." The mailman put an arm around my father and said it would be okay if he paid him back or he didn't pay him back.

The mailman noticed me looking through the window and said, "Isaac, things will not be this way forever. If you or your son will remember this day, there will be times in the future when someone needs your help. Help them within your means and tell them what happened this day. This will be my payoff. Merry Christmas."

As long as he lived, my father helped others when he could, and I've done my best to do my part in paying his generosity back. —*Martin Klapper, Longmont, Colorado*



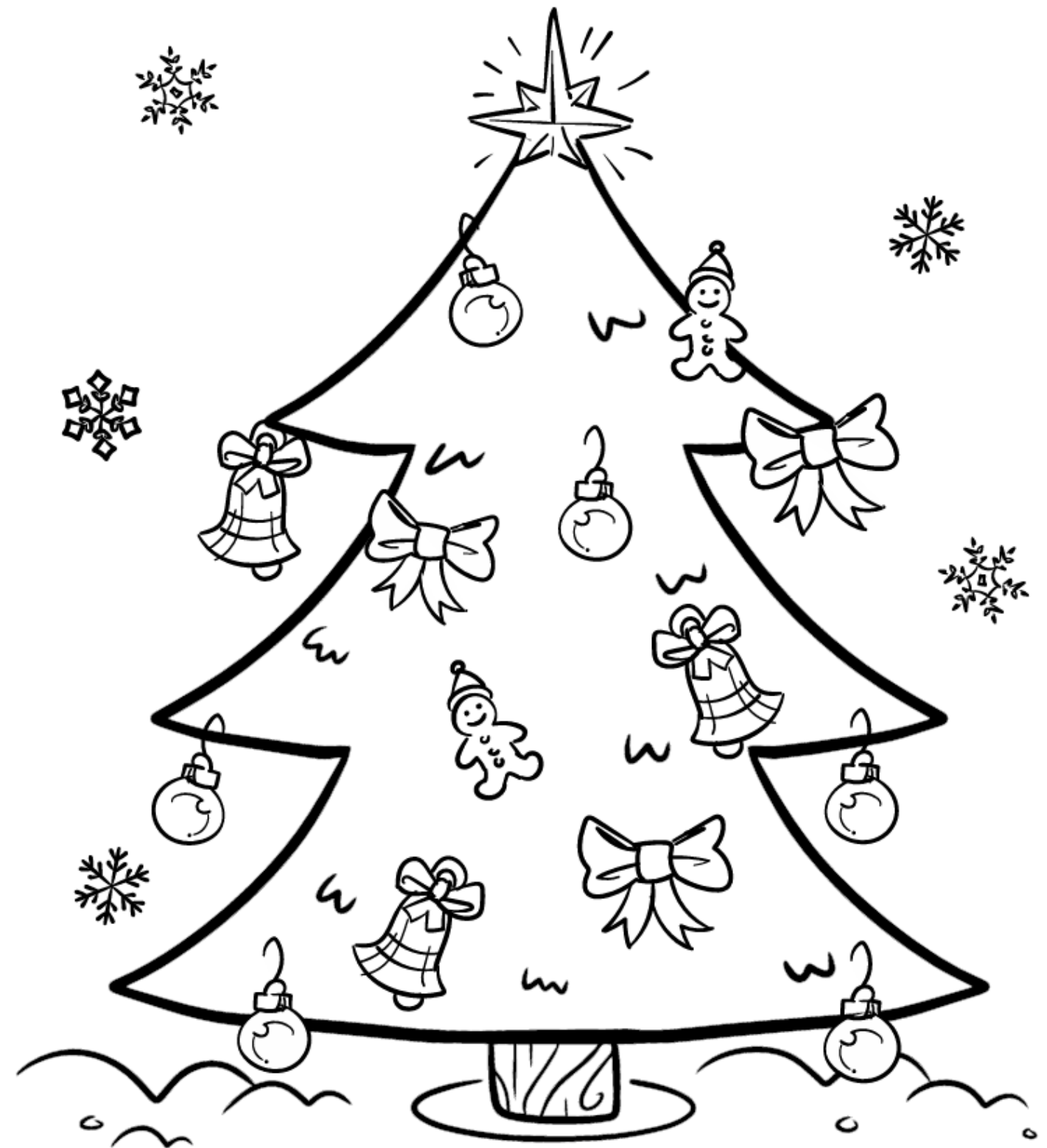
"Putting Baby Jesus in swaddling clothes was the first Christmas present wrapping."



"... When the shepherds came they had a place to park their sheep."



"Did we remember to get Jesus a present for his birthday?"

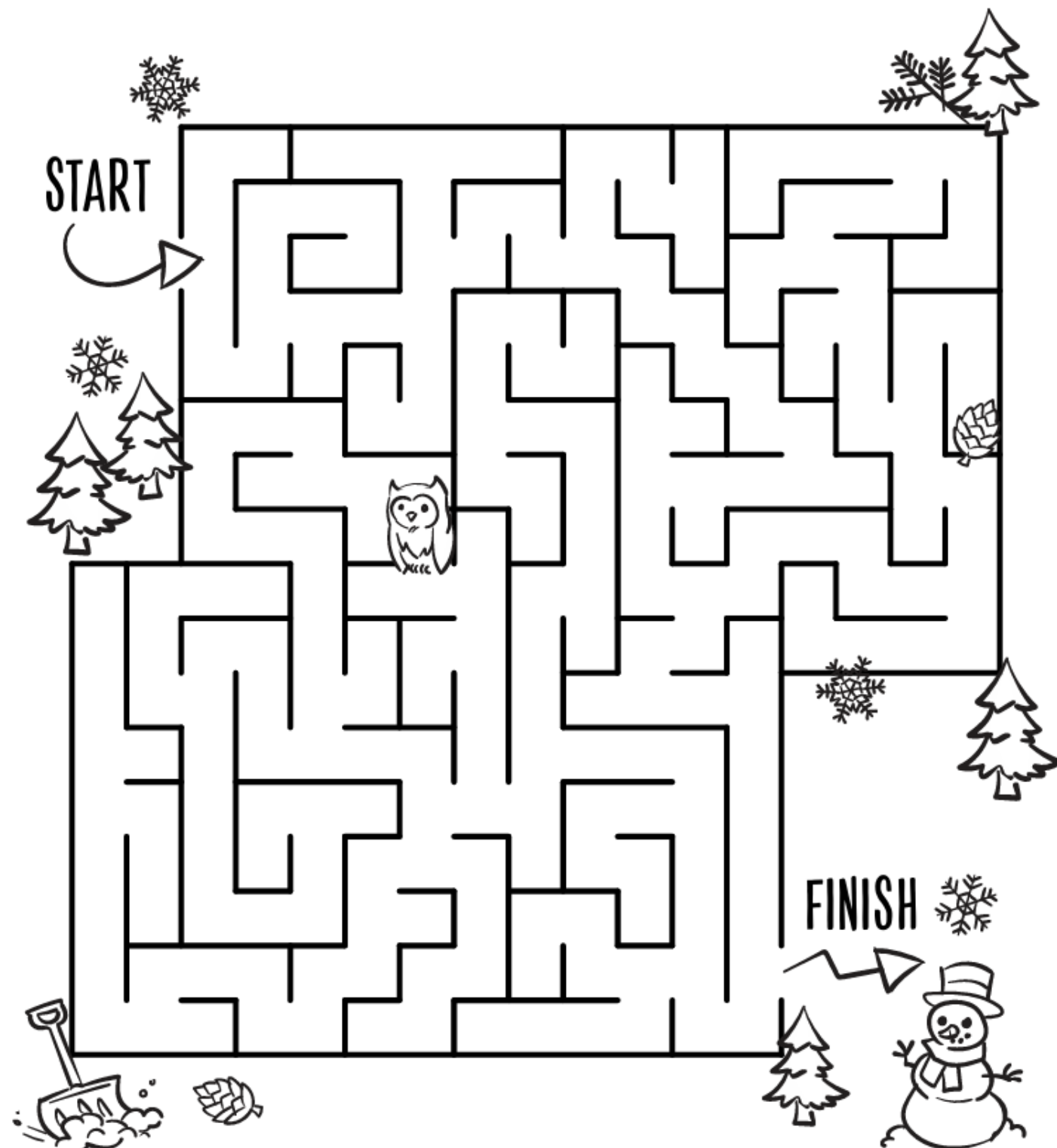


Our Community Came Through

In December 1963, my father gathered my two younger sisters and me together and told us he couldn't afford to give us any presents that year, not even our traditional treats of nuts, apples, oranges, tangerines, and chocolates. My mother had had a stroke the year before and was constantly going to the hospital, so there was no money for Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, we heard a knock on the door. Two ladies came in and gave us new coats, along with some holiday treats. Our neighbor across the street had told her church about our situation, and the people of the congregation wanted to help.

I will never forget our kind neighbor. —*Sheila Deane, Chattanooga, Tennessee.*



Why Did Jesus Come?

Unscramble the words to complete the Bible verse and learn why God sent Jesus.

The _____ sent his _____ to be the _____ of the _____.
 A E H T R F O N S R A S O I V D R O W L

1 John 4:14

'Heaven and Angels Sing'

At the Christmas Eve church service, I sat with my two boisterous grandchildren, ages three and five. Their parents sat in front of the church to present a nativity reading titled "Silent Night." They had warned the children to behave. I had warned the children to behave. With scrubbed angelic faces and Christmas wonder in their eyes, they looked like model children posing for a magazine holiday spread. I indulged myself in a few moments of pride.

Alec pinched Aubrey. I was grateful that the organ thundered into the first hymn just then, drowning out her yelp. I grabbed her hand before she could return the pinch. During the Lord's Prayer, Aubrey shredded the program I had given her to color on. The crayons had already rolled under the pew. I watched bits of paper fall on the carpet like snow. I would help her pick it up later, but for now the naughtiness I was allowing kept her occupied and her brother quietly admiring.

We were enjoying an uneasy truce when their parents stood to deliver the reading.

"Mommy!" Alec yelled.

She frowned, and he sat back in his seat.

"Silence," my son said to the congregation. "Think for a moment what that word means to you."

My daughter-in-law signed his words. Earlier that year, she began to use her new signing skills for the benefit of the few hearing-impaired members of our church.

Alec said a naughty word, thankfully too low for many to hear. I scowled at him, shaking my finger and my head. Aubrey grinned. Then she proclaimed, every syllable enunciated perfectly, in a clear voice that carried to far corners of the sanctuary, "Alec is a potty mouth!"

Everyone stared. I was too stunned to speak. My son and his wife looked at each other. But instead of anger, I saw surprise.

My son set aside his script and told another story. He told about their daughter being born profoundly deaf. He talked about four years of hearing aids and speech therapy with no guarantee she would ever learn to speak plainly. He talked about the rugged faith that kept the family praying she would have a normal life.

He said Aubrey's outburst was an answer to prayer: the first perfectly enunciated sentence she had ever spoken.

From the back of the room, a lone voice sang the last line of a beloved Christmas Carol: Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn king.

While the congregation sang four verses of the unscheduled hymn, my two little angels wiggled in their parents' arms, adding laughter and giggles to the joyful Christmas noise. -- By Carol Stigger



November/December Mission

Helping LFOJ with some items that they would like for their kids and programs. Further information will be on the mission table in the Narthex.



NOVEMBER LFOJ NEWSLETTER

TOTVILLE NEWS: Greetings and Happy Thanksgiving from the Infant room.

This past month, the children made footprint turkeys for the bulletin board. Thanks to Jurek, Lyla, and Lovell for helping make the ones for the babies. They have also enjoyed painting, coloring, playing with playdough and playing outdoors. We've been loving the beautiful fall weather, but realize that winter is just around the corner.

Our Bible stories this month were, Simon and His Boat, Jonah and the Big Fish, The Man who couldn't see, and The Man who said Thank You.

"Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever."

-Psalm 106:1

-Denise and Jordan

TODDLER TIDBITS:

The Toddler room will be finishing up the month talking about Thanksgiving, families, and kindness. We incorporated a kindness jar into our classroom that the kids strive to fill up with acts of kindness. I will send those hearts home so you can see their kind acts at school.

We are excited to welcome some new friends to school this month, so we are working hard on establishing and getting comfortable with routines.

If you haven't yet, please send in a family photo for our family tree that will be hung in our classroom. Happy Thanksgiving!

-Jane and Michelle



LEARNER LANE: Our themes this month include fall leaves and trees, fall harvest, woodland animals, and Thanksgiving! The Bible stories we are learning about are Joseph and his coat, Joseph and the promised land, Jesus teaches about humility, and Matthew 11.

For Veteran's Day, we learned about who Veterans are and how we have Veterans all around us. We also made cards to send to some of our local Veterans who are currently deployed!

A reminder if you haven't done so, please send your child with hat, gloves, boots and a heavier coat for outside time.

I am so thankful to have such amazing students and families to work with! You have all been so welcoming and kind as I've started my journey at LFOJ. I hope you all have a happy Thanksgiving!

-Miss Hanna

UPDATES:

We had a grandparent of a child here at our center donate a nice television for our Toddler room. We are so grateful for all the helping hands that have kept the center running.

If you are able, please send your child with a pair of slippers or something for them to wear inside. It works great if we are able to keep them at the center during the week.

Our cookie dough fundraiser has been a huge success! Orders will be delivered to the center on Friday, December 6th.

Due to children not attending LFOJ, we will be closed Monday, December 23rd, Tuesday, December 24th and Wednesday, December 25th. We plan to be open Thursday, December 26th and Friday, December 27th. Close those days as well. We will keep you updated.

God Bless,
Tressa Groom
Director

JoAnn Martikonis
Administrator

10 December Activities to Prepare Your Family for Christmas

Go see Christmas Lights in Your Community.

Take time to talk about Jesus, the Light of the World, bringing light into the darkness.

Celebrate Advent by using a Jesse Tree. If you don't currently have one or want a guide to follow, this is a free download:

www.feelslikehomeblog.com/ebooks/jesse-tree/

Go Christmas caroling (or even just visiting) at a nursing home.

Have a time of fellowship with family or friends by organizing a cookie swap or cookie decorating party for the whole family.

Set up a "store" in your home for your children to shop for their siblings/relative/friends. This is a fun way to give them the opportunity to feel the joy of giving.
www.manylittleblessings.com/christmas-shopping-for-siblings-in-mom/

Watch your favorite Christmas themed movie as a family.

Bonus: Bundle up in blankets, eating hot buttered toast (or popcorn) and drinking hot chocolate

www.manylittleblessings.com/nutella-hot-chocolate

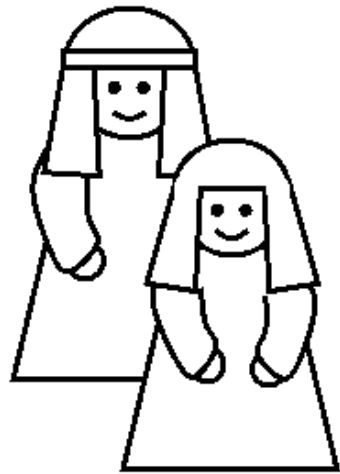
Use an Advent Wreath at home weekly (or even each night!)



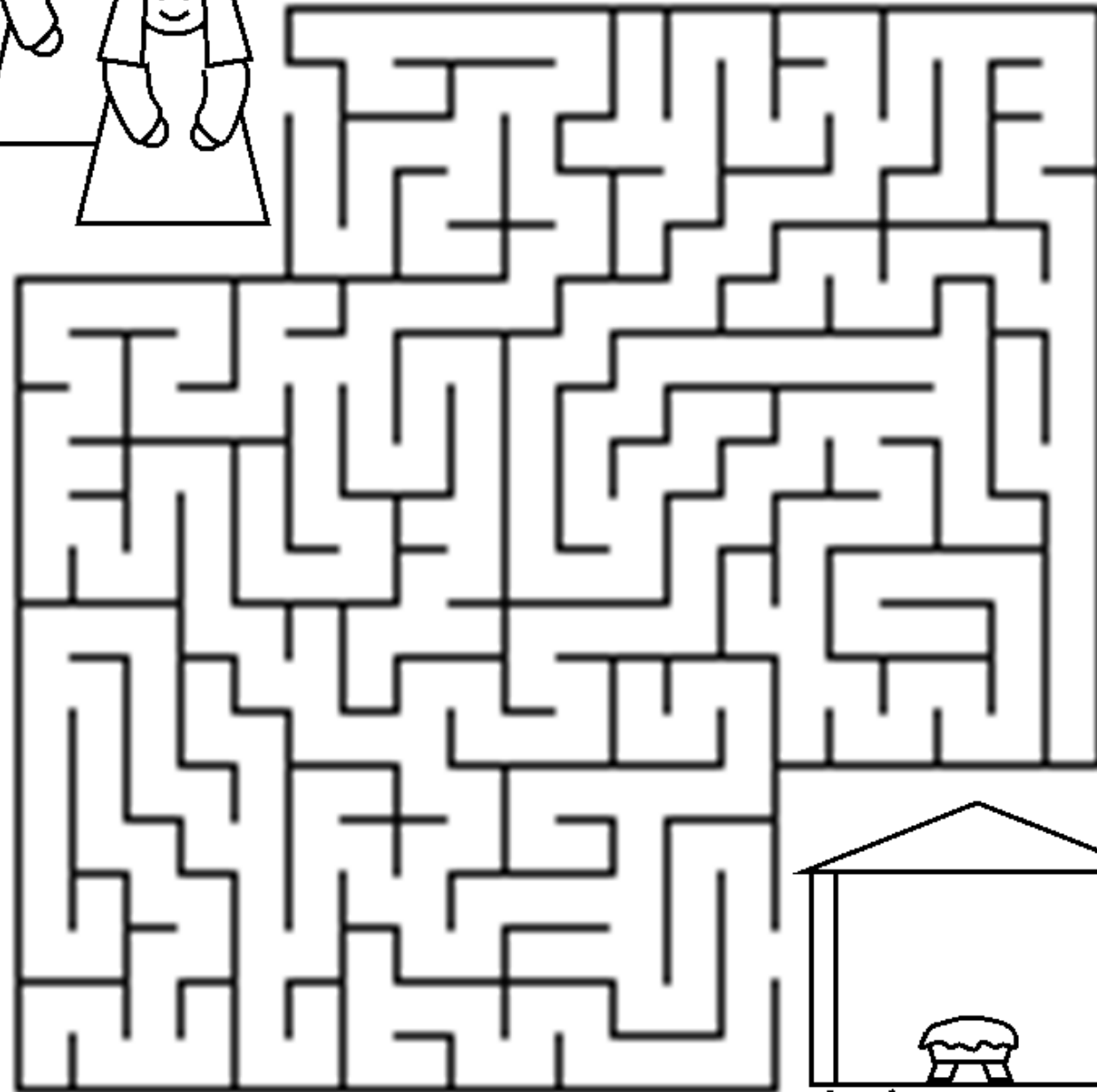
Attend an Advent or Christmas themed musical performance, play, or a Living Nativity

Do something to make the holiday season better for someone who is in need, sad, or lonely this year

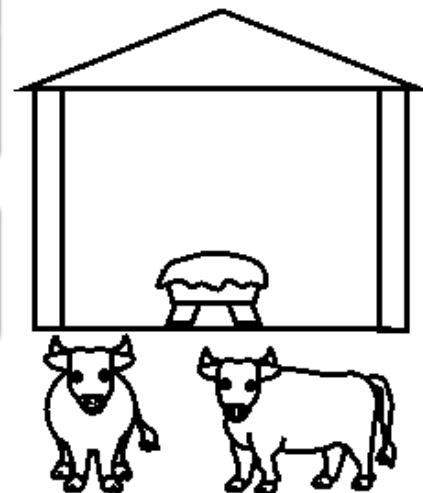
Read one of the Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Wait until then to add Jesus to your family's Nativity scene. Ask the youngest family member to add Him to the crèche.



Help Mary and Joseph get
to the stable.



For more creative learning ideas check out
www.makinglearningfun.com



The **CHRISTMAS STORY**
Crossword Puzzle

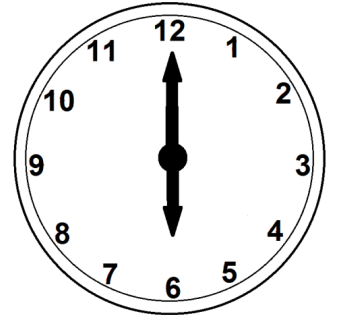
ACROSS

- 1 - Mary and Joseph came from _____
- 2 - Mary was the mother of the Christ _____
- 3 - Mary and Joseph lived in the city of _____
- 4 - Jesus _____ is the Son of God.
- 5 - An angel also visited _____
- 6 - _____ was the cousin of Elizabeth.
- 7 - Jesus would be know as the _____ of God.
- 8 - A new _____ was a sign of Christ's birth.
- 9 - The King of Kings came to Earth as a _____
- 10 - Jesus was a descendant of Kind _____
- 11 - A precious gift given by the wisemen.
- 12 - These men followed a star to find Jesus.
- 13 - _____ saw angels outside the city.
- 14 - Mary rode a _____ to Bethlehem.
- 15 - The only place Joseph could find for Mary.
- 16 - At the _____, Simeon met the Christ child.
- 17 - The wisemen travelled on _____

DOWN

- 1 - The angel _____ revealed Christ's birth.
- 2 - Christ was born in _____
- 3 - Away in a _____, no crib from a bed...
- 4 - The _____ One of Israel.
- 5 - Bethlehem was _____ David's city.
- 6 - _____ was one of the wisemen's gifts.
- 7 - The Christ child would be born to a _____
- 8 - _____ appeared to the shepherds.
- 9 - A shepherds job is to care for his _____
- 10 - Jesus was a descendant of Kind _____
- 11 - Another gift from the three wisemen.
- 12 - _____ was the capital city.
- 13 - The House of Israel awaited their _____

Soup & Sandwich
will be held
Wed. Dec. 11th,
5:00-5:45pm prior
to Wednesday's
Advent service



Wednesdays
starting December
4th, all services will
start at 6:00pm.
One exception will
be Christmas Day at
9:00am.

DARTBALL
7:00pm
Dec. 9th Messiah
Dec. 18th Sanborn
Methodist
Jan, 6th at Salem 2
Jan. 13th Good
Shepherd
Jan. 20th at Salem 1

L I F T: "Lutherans In Fellowship Together"

Friday, December 13th, at 6:00pm, we will meet at the church. Pizza, bingo, prizes, fun and fellowship. Bring a beverage and it is optional to bring a white elephant wrapped gift under \$5.00.

Contact Sue Spangle, 715-209-1082, if you have any questions