

Holy Crossings

Newsletter

DECEMBER 2024



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rediscovering the True Spirit of Christmas

As a kid it seemed like every made-for-TV movie I watched between Thanksgiving and New Year's preached the same gospel: "It's not about presents." But then, every Christmas morning, I was inundated with presents. It didn't make sense. Someone was lying. My parents, and probably yours, would conclude every December 25th with the same nervous question: *So... did you get everything you wanted? Everything you want? Are you kidding me? Everything I wanted? Is this what we want to teach our children about life? That you can get everything you want?*

I remember being a kid. I *never* got everything I wanted (thank God) My parents had the best of intentions at heart. Most do. But this is telling of our culture. Maybe it's America. Maybe it's humanity at its most broken. But I shudder to think of the implications of that phrase: **"everything you want."**

Over the years, I've grown cynical of Christmas, at least with the secular aspect of it. I've run out of good gift ideas, gotten fed up with the shopping mall feeding frenzy, and been downright frustrated with ungrateful people and the money I see people spend on material junk instead of on others where the really joy of the season can be found. It's made me want to write off the whole ridiculous holiday (told you I was a Scrooge) and celebrate the spiritual joy of the Gift God has given us in His Son closer to the time of year when I believe the birth of Jesus really took place (late May or early June) but that's a story for another time. Fortunately, there is *another* story to tell.

When Mary finds out she's pregnant with the Jesus, she sings a song a pretty interesting one:

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers. —Luke 1:52-55

When I first read this, I swear I heard Santa Claus drop dead of a heart attack. **"He has sent the rich away empty..."** Does that sound like **everything you wanted?** Not quite. God loves the poor. He is among them. And if we are going to celebrate the birth of his Son with any sense of conscience, we must be with them, too.

A few years ago, heard the story of a man who spent the month of December hanging out with a community of homeless men and women who lived under a bridge in downtown Nashville. He brought them candy canes, shoes, and coats. Sure, he gave them gifts; but they gave him a gift he could never repay. **They opened his eyes to the true spirit of Christmas.** As it turns out, it's not about holiday specials and sugar cookies or about getting everything you ever wanted. Through the dirty and downtrodden and nearly-forgotten, He learned what December 25 is really about: love and the visible expression of love is compassion.

The other night, as I was scanning through the channels I caught an old rerun of Frasier. It was a Christmas episode. On the show, Frasier meets a homeless man who tells him, rather pointedly, what Christmas is all about: **The rest of the year belongs to rich people with their fancy houses and expensive foreign cars, but Christmas, Christmas belongs to guys like us.** Frasier forgets his wallet and can't

(continued on next page)

FROM THE PASTOR *(continued)*

cover the cost of his meal, so the homeless man and his friends cover it. This is the great irony and paradox of Christmas, of learning to live compassionately: We don't give to the poor; they give to us.

Christmas belongs to the poor. Let's not forget that. We should be raising our glasses to them, to the outcast and the hungry, the handicapped and oppressed. Maybe if we're lucky, they'll let us in on the true spirit of the season. Because there's just something about celebrating Christmas without the poor that feels wrong. May we connect with the story of a savior born in a manger and find Christmas where it belongs — in humble places, like barns and dumps and alleys. This is where we find the true spirit of the holiday ...if we're willing to really look. And may this manger-born Boy lead us, as He promised, out of our own prisons and into the life we were meant to live.



PASTOR APPRECIATION BRUNCH

Pastor Gade will give his last sermon at Holy Cross on Sunday, December 29th. He first came to Holy Cross in February of 2021 and then became our Vacancy pastor that April. We will be recognizing his faithful service, of almost three years, to Holy Cross with a brunch following the worship service. There will be a signup to help and for brunch food. Please share how he has blessed you in a card, note, or tell him. We have also enjoyed his humor. Perhaps a "Roast" is in order!!

DECEMBER

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Advent 1

Luke 19:28-40 "Advent Joy"

Jeremiah 33:14-16 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Luke 19:28-40

Advent Midweek 1

Isaiah 40:1-2 "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People"

Isaiah 40:1-2 2 Corinthians 1:3-10
Matthew 11:1-15

Advent 2

Luke 3:1-14 "The Gift of New Life"

Malachi 3:1-7b Phil 1:2-11
Luke 3:1-14

Advent Midweek 2

Isaiah 40:3-5 "Prepare The Royal Highway"

Isaiah 40:3-5 2 Corinthians 7:1-10
Matthew 3:1-12

Advent 3

Luke 7:18-35 "Turning Darkness into Light"

Zephaniah 3:14-20 Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 7:18-35

Advent Midweek 3

Isaiah 40:6-8 "Hark the Glad Sound"

OT Isa 40:6-8 2 Corinthians 1:15-24
Matthew 24:32-42

Advent 4

Luke 1:39-56 "God's Mercy in the Flesh"

Micah 5:2-5a Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-56

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 40:9 "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

Isaiah 40:1-9 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
Matthew 1:18-25

Christmas Day

Isaiah 40:10-11 "Joy to the World"

Isaiah 40:10-11 Galatians 4:1-7
Luke 2:1-20

Christmas 1

Luke 2:21 "Circumcised to Set Us Free"

Numbers 6:22-27 Galatians 3:23-29
Luke 2:21

WORSHIP FOR SHUT-INS

Worship For Shut-Ins is a 30 min television service that is distinctly Lutheran. It is a



traditional weekly service that includes the assigned readings for the day, the Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, sermon, and traditional hymns sung by choirs. The messages, shared by Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod pastors, are designed for individuals who do not go to church because they are not able or choose not. You can view this program on DIRECTV channel 377 at 10:30 am, or you can go to their website at www.worshipforshutins.org.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Our Christmas program will be **Sunday, December 15th** during the worship service. Bonnie Nowak has once again shared her writing expertise by writing, "The Story of Joseph". We will practice on Saturday mornings, December 7 & 14, at 10:00 am and early elementary at 11:00 am.



PASTOR MARC ENGELHARDT'S INSTALLATION

Pastor Marc's installation will be the afternoon of Sunday, January 5th. A dessert reception will follow the installation service. Further details will be shared in the Happenings.

Installation
SERVICE

CHURCH COUNCIL



The next Church Council meeting will be **Monday night, December 9 at 7:00 pm**. All members of the boards are invited and encouraged to attend these meetings.

TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Join us every Tuesday morning for Bible Study from **8:00-9:00 am**. All are welcome!



- Dinah Gilberts December 4
- Ben Huston December 7
- Mui Cheng December 9
- Earl Drangstveit December 9
- Karly Oak December 19
- Jason Kruse December 20
- Lois Helms December 25
- Carol Albrecht December 26
- Bo Brunner December 28
- Nivedita Fulbert December 30

Happenings

Please submit all articles for the Happenings by Wednesdays at 10 am. We also need some new and fresh content for the Happenings, so if you have any great ideas, please send them over to megan@holycross-pl.org.

LCMS STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY – DECEMBER 2024

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

DECEMBER WORSHIP SERVICES

MIDWEEK ADVENT SERVICES

December 4, 11, and 18th at 7:00 pm

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

December 24 at 4:00 pm

December 25 at 9:00 am



Let's give a warm welcome to the Engelhardt family. Please grab a tear off item from the poster on the bulletin board, and donate that item to help the Engelhardt family acclimate from California to Minnesota. Please return item by December 10th. Thank you!

CHRISTMAS TOGETHER CONCERTS

Steven C presents his 8th annual series of "Christmas Together"

Concerts at the majestic Cathedral of Saint Paul. Talk to Carol or Dave Albrecht about carpooling. Get your tickets today!

<https://stevencmusic.com>

Concert Dates/Times:

December 12 & 13 - 7:00 pm

December 14 - 11:00 am



THE LUTHERAN HOUR



The Lutheran Hour can be heard each Sunday on WCCO (830 AM) at 6:05 am. And it can be streamed online too, www.lhm.org. Check-out LHM's daily devotions too.

December 1

"Will Everything Sad Come Untrue?"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
A mother and her young son trade a life of privilege for one of poverty, a story that is borderline unbelievable, yet nonetheless true. (Jeremiah 33:16)

December 8

"Completely Ordinary Human"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
Everyone has a story to tell and yours can be one through which Jesus is working to make the world new again. (Malachi 3:7)

December 15

"Sorrow Welcomed Here"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
The church welcomes people, but does it also welcome their problems? Dr. Michael Zeigler says the church should be a place that makes room for both joy and sorrow. (Zephaniah 3:14-20)

December 22

"Does It Matter If Jesus Is God?"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
Jesus sets a good example, but good examples can't help dead people. Only God's Son can make us alive again. (Luke 2:10-11)

December 29

"No Getting Better Than This"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Chad Lakies
The Good Life--what is it? Pastor Chad Lakies says life is truly good when it's life the way God meant it to be. (Colossians 3:12-17)

CHRISTMAS WITH DIGNITY

Hospitality House Youth Development (HHYD) will host Christmas with Dignity this year on **December 13th**. Last year, Holy Cross was amazing with the amount of gifts donated! So that HHYD can prepare for the many donations of items collected, **our deadline for collecting is Sunday December 1st**. A list of gift ideas has been posted by the red HHYD collection box. Take a picture of it for a handy reference or you can go to hhyd.org/christmas to print it.



TIME OF GRACE

The mission of **Time of Grace** is to connect people to God. Using a variety of media, we teach tough topics in an approachable and relatable way, accessible in multiple languages, making the Bible clear and understandable for those who do not know God.

www.timeofgrace.org



2 MINUTE MULTIPLIER

FIVE TWO

A WEEKDAY 2-MINUTE DEVOTION THAT HELPS YOU SEE JESUS AT WORK IN YOUR WORLD

Grated

Home-made pizza grabbed the gold prize for comfort food some time back. I prefer vegetarian. Olives of any color. Fresh tomatoes. Artichoke hearts. Sautéed onions. Roasted sweet peppers. Extra tomato sauce. And cheese. Lots of cheese. Lots.

I ventured beyond the bag of shredded mozzarella last week. Used my nifty new cheese grater to convert some leftover exotic chunks into pizza toppings. Grated my thumb in the process. Not a fun experience. God didn't design thumbs to go toe-to-toe with sharp cheese graters. The thumb always loses.

Your world's full of sharp objects best left untackled. Every time we run into them something gets bloodied. Cheating. In school. At work. On your wife. Stealing. Items belonging to others. Money belonging to others. Glory that isn't yours. Lying. To your boss. To your employees. To your family.

Just a few of the sharp behaviors God put off limits. Doesn't want your soul to be grated to pieces like a

block of parmesan. Imagine if every time your soul got shredded it would hurt like my grated thumb knuckle? Maybe it does. Maybe you're just not noticing. Or caring. How much shredded soul will it take before you say enough?

Jesus came to heal your soul. To repair all your self-inflicted wounds. To restore the knicks and cuts you bring about. On yourself and on others.

Jesus came to protect your soul. To convince you life's not meant to be grated. Your soul always loses. To reveal how His grace and love are what your soul truly needs.

May you rest in him when you slip up. May you learn from Him to avoid the slip ups.

Rev. Bill Woolsey
President and Founder
FiveTwo Network

Sign up to receive the *2 Minute Multiplier* emailed to you! www.fivetwo.com/2mm

UPCOMING EVENTS

- DEC 3 Elder's Meeting
- DEC 4 Advent Midweek 1
- DEC 9 Church Council
- DEC 11 Advent Midweek 2
- DEC 15 Christmas Play
- DEC 18 Advent Midweek 3
- DEC 24 Christmas Eve Worship 4pm
- DEC 25 Christmas Day Worship
- DEC 29 Pastor Gade Appreciation Brunch
- JAN 5 Pastor Engelhardt's Installation/Reception
- JAN 7 Elder's Meeting
- JAN 13 Church Council

UPCOMING
EVENTS



SUNDAY SCHOOL



All children, teens and adults are welcome to join us at 10:15 am for Sunday School and Adult Bible Study. You don't want to miss this!!

I WISH EVERY DAY WAS CHRISTMAS

There's a great Christmas song called "I Wish Everyday was Christmas" and it goes something like this:

I wish everyday was Christmas
All around the world
Peace, love and harmony
For every boy and girl

I like the sentiment of this song, it reminds us of the good will that happens this time of the year. Folks who are not normally benevolent will go out of their way to give to others who are in need. Wouldn't it be great if we were all this concerned with our neighbor's well being every day? Think about the following points:

I wish everyday was Christmas...

- So we would get excited about the opportunity to give more.
- So that large corporations gave money to help feed others.
- So TV programs would have wholesome themes and happy endings.
- Because people just seem to be nicer to each other.
- Because it's quite on Christmas morning and no one seems to be in a big hurry.
- Because people talk a lot more about Jesus than they normally do.
- Because people seem to go to church a lot more than they usually do.

Let's all make a commitment to be much more benevolent than we have been in the past. James wrote that part of pure religion was "visiting" (*James 1:27*) which requires action and involvement on our part. It's easy to reach in our pockets and throw some money in a red pot, but until you roll up your sleeves and make personal sacrifices of your time and energy, you're only getting part of the job done. Our benevolence will weigh heavy in the balances on the Great Judgment Day (*Matthew 25:31-46*), so let's be sure that we have fulfilled our duty as Christians to do good to all (*Galatians 6:10*).

*Jay Launius – 2021
Maud church of Christ
Maud, TX*

"READERS" FOR HAITI

A mission group will be heading to Cap-Haitian, Haiti in January and are asking for donations of reading glasses, in plus 1's, 2's and 3's. The Dollar store is a good resource.



Also, EYE DROPS are an enormous relief for them. A collection bin is located in the Commons area. The glasses and eye drops will be shipped to Michigan mid-December.

*MOST Ministries are supplying them with glasses for distance so we are not collecting those. Keith and Kim Waller had, in the past, been affiliated with HLMS. They now have their own Haiti ministry. They have continued to go to Haiti, focusing on the Cap-Haitian area which is on the north coast of Haiti.

CHRISTMAS MARKET IN THE GREENHOUSE



Queen Bee's Lawn and Garden
17860 Panama Ave., Prior Lake

They will be taking over greenhouses 2 & 3 for the weekends and loading them with over 40 vendors selling Christmas decor, gifts, soaps, lotions, vintage decor and much more. While you are there you will can shop the trees, wreaths, and other decor Queen Bee's has to offer during this time. The weekends they are open are Nov 29-Dec 1, Dec 6-8, and Dec 13-15.

Hours: Fridays 9-6 | Saturdays 9-5 | Sundays 11-4

SCHADENFREUDE

By Pastor Mark Jeske

There is no exact word for it in English, but the Germans have one: Schadenfreude (SHAH den froy deh). Schadenfreude is a spiritual sickness that leads you to enjoy other people's misery. So who tends to do that? People who feel cheated in life . . . people who resent other people's successes and secretly enjoy it when they later struggle . . . people who feel weak . . . people who feel miserable and want some company.

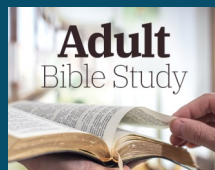
The divine Father who stooped low in mercy to lift us up cannot stand it when we show no mercy to the other fools and sinners around us. **"He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished"** (Proverbs 17:5). God takes no joy in human pain or suffering, and he forbids Schadenfreude in us as well.

As faith in Christ more and more takes over our hearts, we will hurt when we see others hurting. We will weep with those who weep and comfort those who have to bear affliction. As we reflect on the Savior who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, we will offer to be Jesus' hug and voice to people in their time of need.

An added plus of visible Christian compassion is that it authenticates what we say. As the old evangelism slogan goes, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

SUNDAY ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Join us every Sunday at 10:15 am after the service.



PRAYER

REQUESTS

As a community of faith, we are called to lift each other up in prayer and support. We invite you to share your prayer requests with us so that we can pray together as a church family. Whether you have personal concerns, joys, or challenges weighing on your heart, we are here to pray with you. Your requests can be submitted confidentially through email at megan@holycross-pl.org or given to Pastor Gade. Let us join in prayer, knowing that together, we can make a difference through the power of prayer.

COFFEE SERVERS

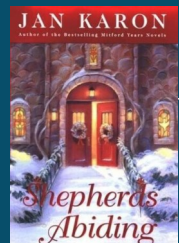


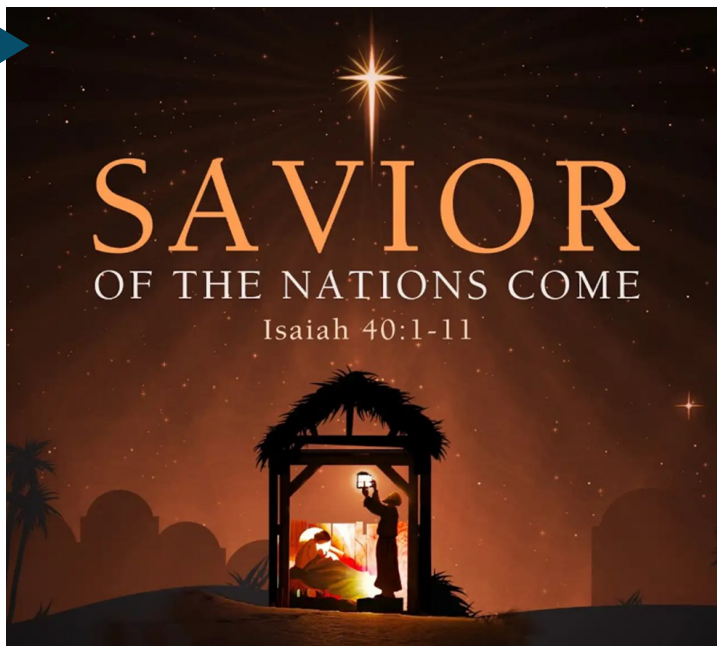
- December 8** Randy & Nancy Baldwin
- December 15** Shari Schulze
- December 22** Joy & James Anderson
- December 29** Charlie & Donna Vig

If you are not able to serve on your assigned day, please find an alternate to fill in, and make the notation on the serving list on the bulletin board. Thanks!

BIBLE BOOKENDERS

If you are someone who likes to plan ahead, get a copy of Jan Karon's book, *Shepherds Abiding*. It would be a great read for the first snowstorm, and it is the selection of Bible Bookenders book for **January 28th**. The story centers around a nativity set that Father Tim finds. It is in poor condition, and even though he isn't the artist in the family, he decides to paint and repair the pieces himself. The story, of course, includes the Mitford characters we all love. This is the eighth book in the Mitford series and a nod to Karon's 30th anniversary this year. Any questions may be directed to Michele Lein or Bonnie Nowak.





THE MASTER GREETER

Actions That Build a Friendlier Church

Pray for each other. Be open to share your prayer needs. Then, in time, others will be open to share their needs with you. Praying for each other is living on a deeper level of life. It is the level we should strive to be on with each other. It verifies our love and care for a person. It lifts us up when we are down. To get on this level with others we must be the first to ask for prayer when we need it. In a simple way share with your friends that you could use their prayers. "It has been a tougher than normal week. I could use your prayers." When you are the first to share your prayer needs, in time others will follow your example and come to you with their prayer needs. In your conversation with people, be alert for comments that imply that a person could use your prayers. When they mention that situations are tough, tell them you will pray for them.

SAVIOR OF THE NATIONS COME

Located on the front of the historic Trinity Church in Boston are the sculptures of six men. At the center are four Gospel writers who are flanked on the right by Paul and on the left by Isaiah. Isaiah's presence in this distinguished cloud of witnesses speaks volumes about his importance for the church.

Jerome (c. 342–420) wrote of Isaiah, "He should be called an evangelist rather than a prophet because he describes all the mysteries of Christ and the Church so clearly that you think he is composing a history of what has already happened rather than prophesying about what is to come." Likewise, when Augustine (345–430) asked Ambrose (c. 327–400) for his advice on what he should read, the latter suggested Isaiah, "Because, I believe, he is more plainly a foreteller of the Gospel and of the calling of the Gentiles than are the others." Isaiah is one of the most theologically significant books in the Bible.

This year's series for Advent and Christmas employs a section in this book—Isaiah 40:1–11. For Advent grandeur, majesty, and supreme artistry, no section in Isaiah comes close to these verses. Their soaring language and unforgettable imagery are tightly woven into the fabric of the season's hymnody, liturgy, and devotional literature. An inspiring time awaits us as we sing anew, "**Savior of the Nations Come.**"

Here's the lineup of sermons:

Advent 1 -

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People (Isaiah 40:1–2)

Advent 2 -

Prepare the Royal Highway (Isaiah 40:3–5)

Advent 3 -

Hark the Glad Sound (Isaiah 40:6–8)

Christmas Eve -

O Come, O Come Emmanuel (Isaiah 40:9)

Christmas Day -

Joy to the World (Isaiah 40:10–11)

DECEMBER 2024



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1st Sunday in Advent 9:00 am Worship 10:15 am Bible Study 10:15 am Sunday School 1	6:00 pm IFC 2	8:00 am Bible Study 7:00 pm Elder's Meeting 3	10:00 am Happenings Articles Due IFC 6:00 pm Advent Worship 4	7:00 pm Choir Practice 5	6	7
2nd Sunday in Advent 9:00 am Worship 10:15 am Bible Study 10:15 am Sunday School 8	6:00 pm IFC 7:00 pm Church Council 9	8:00 am Bible Study 10	10:00 am Happenings Articles Due IFC 6:00 pm Advent Worship 11	7:00 pm Choir Practice 12	13	14
3rd Sunday in Advent 9:00 am Worship & Christmas Program 10:15 am Bible Study 10:15 am Sunday School 15	6:00 pm IFC 16	8:00 am Bible Study 17	10:00 am Happenings Articles Due IFC 6:00 pm Advent Worship 18	7:00 pm Choir Practice 19	20	21
4th Sunday in Advent 9:00 am Worship 10:15 am Bible Study 10:15 am Sunday School 22	6:00 pm IFC 23	4:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship 24	9:00 am Christmas Day Worship <i>Merry Christmas</i>	7:00 pm Choir Practice 26	27	28
1st Sunday after Christmas 9:00 am Worship 10:15 am Bible Study 10:15 am Sunday School 29	6:00 pm IFC 30	10:00 am Happenings Articles Due 31				