

# THE HILLTOPPER

## DECEMBER 2023

If you have an event that will be happening, or some good news to share, we are interested! Any encouraging information you may have, please contact the office or anyone on the church council.

Please consider helping us make this publication grow again...

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### OFF THE COLLAR

What would it look like if the disciples valued worship and community like many believers do their church gatherings?

Peter – “My mother-in-law came in for the weekend.”

Andrew – “I was up kind of late last night.”

James (the son of Zebedee) – “Really needed some ‘me’ time.”

John – “I was there last week. Besides, I’m not really being fed.”

Philip – “Finally had a sunny day to hit the lake.”

Bartholomew – “Had brunch scheduled with my Uncle Zed.”

Thomas – “I doubt it would have been any good today.”

Matthew – “I had to get my taxes done.”

Thaddaeus – “The kids needed a rest day.”

Simon – “I didn’t hear my alarm because I didn’t set it, Because I don’t have one.”

Judas – “getting tired of hearing the same old message.”

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Going to church is not about checking a religious box off your “make God happy” list. It’s about being invested in the lives of others. Participating in the mission of the gospel. Loving and being loved.

Following Jesus was never meant to be a solo experience. Pull up a seat at the table. It is a level table and there is room for all of us. HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON!



### BIRTHDAY WISHES TO:

Dec 3 Brittany Morgenstern  
 Dec 5 Betty Weaver  
 Dec 8 Betty Schofield  
 Dec 14 Rian Barker  
 Dec 14 Leona Cannarella  
 Dec 17 Richard Foor  
 Dec 17 Emily Penrod

Dec 18 Karen Bantley  
 Dec 22 Jamie McMullen  
 Dec 26 Christine Oleksa  
 Dec 29 Noelle Berkey  
 Dec 29 Leonard Strihan  
 Dec 30 Reese Williams



### ANNIVERSARY WISHES TO:

Dec 13 Rodger and Debbie Thomas  
 Dec 14 Thomas and Janet Donaldson

Dec 21 Thomas and Kathleen Rohrbaugh  
 Dec 25 Betty Weaver and Ned

*\*Please pray for Sue, and the Osborn family, for the sudden loss of Don Osborn. The recent passing of Don was very unexpected. He will be greatly missed by all of us here at Mt. Calvary Lutheran.\**

### UPCOMING EVENTS FOR DECEMBER 2023

12/03 Family Kitchen 11:00 – 1:00  
 12/09 Salvation Army's Red Kettle 10:00 – 7:00  
 12/16 Lunch with Santa - starts 12:00 noon  
 12/17 Children's Christmas Play  
 12/23 Regular Saturday Worship 5:30 pm  
 12/24 Sunday Morning worship at 8:45 am  
 12/24 Family oriented Christmas Eve Service 4:00 pm  
 12/24 Traditional Christmas Eve Service 7:00 pm  
*Both Christmas Eve services will provide Communion*

#### Family Kitchen

Mt. Calvary will be volunteering at the Family Kitchen on Sunday, December 3 from 11-1. They are still doing take-out on the weekends, so volunteers will only be responsible for packaging the food, handing it out, and doing the dishes. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

#### Salvation Army Red Kettle Collection

Mt. Calvary will be volunteering again to help collect money for The Salvation Army's Red Kettle Collection. We will be working at the Market Basket location on Saturday, December 9 from 10-7. A sign-up sheet with 1 hour time slots is in the back of the narthex. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. There are several spots available. Please help for only 1 hour out of your busy schedule.

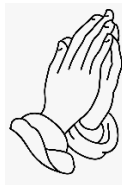
## FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH

### Hat, Glove, & Sock Collection

Mt. Calvary will be helping the children of Coopersdale this Christmas by providing them with winter clothing. Please take a labeled bag in the narthex, and return it to the bin before Friday, Dec. 22nd filled with a hat and either a pair of gloves or a pack of socks. Thank you for your continued support!

### Home Communion

Would you prefer, or need to have communion at your home? Sometimes during the winter months we realize it may be hard to get out in the cold. We have individuals that do home visitations. If you would be interested in having a visit at your residence, please contact Todd in the church office, and arrangements will be made.



### Prayer Chain

If you would like to put a name on the prayer chain please call Mary Ann Mapes at 814-266-2185, or the church office.

### WELCA

In anticipation of the dissolution of the Allegheny Synod's Women's Organization on January 31, 2024, the Mt. Calvary WELCA group met to decide how this decision would impact them. The ladies unanimously decided to continue as a women's organization whose purpose is to support and enhance the ministry of Mt. Calvary. After January 31, the group will call themselves the Women's Group of Mt. Calvary, or WGMC for short. The group will continue to meet six times annually (April/May/June, summer hiatus, and September/October/November, winter hiatus) on the third Monday of these months at 6 PM. Shirley Sholtis-Glova and Gloria Reed will serve as co-presidents; Karen Giunta will serve as secretary; and Joan Bunnell will continue to serve as treasurer. WGMC plans to continue past WELCA projects (Blanket Sunday, packing Christmas bags for residents at Torrance State Hospital, conducting a bake sale at the spring flea market, etc.), in addition to undertaking new projects to support the WGMC's mission. Contact any member of WGMC to suggest a future project. All women of Mt. Calvary are invited to be part of WGMC. The next meeting will be April 15, 2024

### Flowers

The Altar flowers chart is now available for 2024. The cost for flower donations is \$40.00. The Altar Guild is in need of large juice cans to put Altar flowers in. If you have any to donate, please drop them off at the church anytime.

## Congrats!

Congratulations to Ray Leverknight for being inducted into the Inaugural Soccer Hall of Fame sponsored by the Tribune Democrat.

Congratulations to Luke Raho son of Dave and Melissa for signing with the Mansfield University baseball squad.

## Thank you's!

Thanks to all who supported or helped with the spaghetti dinner. We were able to raise \$1,216.50...  
"Thank you for the wonderful cookies and prayers!"...*Doris Thomas, Arbutus Manor*

## A five session study, Part 1

the "5 Things that happen, When you get a new pastor."

### 1. New people show up.

They will. The new pastor will speak to new people who don't know or remember the last minister, and they will make this new pastor their own. He or she, is their pastor. When you talk about "Pastor So-and-So's way of doing things," they won't know the reference. They will desire, and start, new traditions. They'll spark some change, even as they hope for and create friendships with long-time members who loved the way things used to be.

When a new pastor comes, so do new people. This transition will require the congregation to love Christ enough to welcome the stranger and risk taking a chance on new ideas from new people.

*The second study of the series is titled "Some people will leave", will be in the January 2024 Hilltopper.*

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*MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM ALL OF US AT MT. CALVARY LUTHERAN*

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## The Four Weeks of Advent and Their Themes

The four Sundays of Advent each have a specific theme or focus. The purpose of each theme is to spend time reflecting on the true meaning of the season - the life of Jesus Christ. The goal should be to come before God with a sincere heart and to worship Jesus Christ. To help observe these weeks, many churches led their congregation through Advent Readings. This tradition includes the reading of Scriptures that reflect each week's theme. Whether in a traditional church or at home with your family, these Bible verses are a great way to reflect on the promise of the Messiah both yesterday, today, and tomorrow.



### **First Sunday of Advent Week 1: *Hope (or promise)***

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7:

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

#### **Advent Prayer #1**

Lord, help us stop comparing our Advent season to any other family because we know you have ordained us for this family, at this table, and you have "good works prepared in advance for us to do" that are specific for us. We find meaning and joy in whatever life looks like because we trust Jesus for our lives. Even more, when we're seated with Christ, we worship you and take our eyes off ourselves. Because we're experiencing intimacy with Jesus, loneliness and disconnection fade and allow us to focus on blessing others.

We can stop obsessing over ourselves and consider how we might serve and love best. When we're seated with Christ during Advent, we realize that you have sovereignly placed us right where we are for a reason this holiday season, and we can trust that you know what you're doing. Finally, when we're seated with Christ, we can reiterate to our heart that at all times, your peace, power, hope, and love are available to us in endless supply. As we take our seat with Jesus, we pray our holiday tables shimmer with your glory and that any joy and hope we've lost returns. May we overflow with spiritual gifts as we sit with you, Jesus.



## **Second Sunday of Advent Week 2: *Preparation (or waiting or prophecy)***

Isaiah 40:3-5:

"A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

### **Advent Prayer #2**

Lord, how wrong I have been to act as if Christ had never been born. As if He didn't perform miracles. As if He didn't take my every tear, my daily worries, my sin and insecurities on that cross. As if the tomb wasn't empty and the throne wasn't full of His presence and grace. It's that grace that gives meaning and power to your promises. I know that your Word prevails even when our world turns black. I trust that your healing comes in different forms, stages and ways.

I believe that you promised to provide all we need. Seeking you doesn't require physical vision, complete health or a life free of troubles. But instead, a heart full of devotion and obedience, which I offer you. No matter how many Advent seasons sweep by, Lord, your reminders remain the same. Each tear we cry has a purpose. Each trying stage has a divine reason. And in your capable hands, each icy rain of adversity is transformed into the warmth and sparkle of your grace.





## Third Sunday of Advent Week 3: *Joy (or peace)*

Matthew 2:10-11:

"When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."

### Advent Prayer #3

Lord, in a season when every heart should be happy and light, many of us are struggling with the heaviness of life—burdens that steal the joy right out of our stockings. Tragedy arrives as innocent victims suffer, and an inner voice whispers, "Be afraid!" We need your peace, Jesus. We confess that our hearts are too often filled with wonder of a different kind: wondering when the bills will be paid, when the terror will stop, when rest will come. Will it ever? Is the message still true? In a world where worry, not peace, prevails, stir up that good news again.

This Advent, make it real in our hearts. Never have we needed Your joy and peace more than now. Thank You for the gift of Jesus, our Immanuel, the Word made flesh. We not only need Your peace and joy; Lord, we crave it. You've promised rest for the weary, victory for the battle-scarred, peace for the anxious, and acceptance for the broken hearted - not just at Advent, but every day of every year. Your name is still called "Wonderful," "Counselor," "The Mighty God," "The Everlasting Father," and "The Prince of Peace." We know that peace on earth can only come when hearts find peace with You. You are still our Joy. You are still our Peace. You are no longer a babe in the manger. You are Lord of lords and King of kings. And we still celebrate You as Lord—this [Christmas](#) and always.





## **Fourth Sunday of Advent Week 4: *Love (or adoration)***

John 3:16-19:

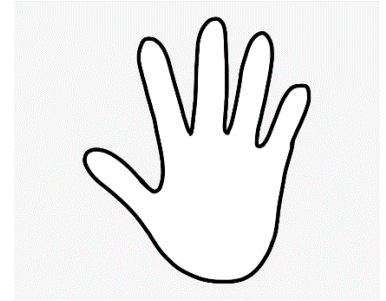
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."

### **Advent Prayer #4**

This Christmas, Lord, come to the manger of my heart.  
Fill me with Your presence from the very start.  
As I prepare for the holidays and gifts to be given,  
Remind me of the gift You gave when You sent Your Son from Heaven.  
The first Christmas gift, it was the greatest gift ever.  
You came as a baby born in a manger.  
Wrapped like the gifts I find under my tree,  
Waiting to be opened, to reveal Your love to me.  
Restore to me the wonder that came with Jesus' birth,  
when He left the riches of Heaven and wrapped Himself in rags of earth.  
Immanuel, *God with us*, your presence came that night.  
And angels announced, "Into your darkness, God brings His Light."  
"Do not be afraid," they said to shepherds in the field.  
Speak to my heart today, Lord, and help me to yield.  
Make me like those shepherd boys, obedient to Your call.  
Setting distractions and worries aside, to You I surrender them all.  
Surround me with Your presence, Lord, I long to hear Your voice.  
Clear my mind of countless concerns and all the holiday noise.  
Slow me down this Christmas, let me not be in a rush.  
In the midst of parties and planning, I want to feel Your hush.  
This Christmas, Jesus, come to the manger of my heart.  
Invade my soul like Bethlehem, bringing peace to every part.  
Dwell within and around me, as I unwrap Your presence each day.  
Keep me close to You, Lord. It's in Your wonderful Name I pray.



## The Youth Page



### The Five Finger Prayer

**Thumb:** *Pray for those closest to you: Your family and friends*

**Pointer finger:** *Pray for those who point you in the right direction: your teachers, and other leaders in your life. Pray for wisdom and support.*

**Middle finger** (tallest): *Pray for those that lead us: those in government, in business, in church leadership. Pray for guidance and wisdom.*

**Ring finger** (weakest): *Pray for those who are poor, sick, in pain, In trouble: those most in need.*

**Pinkie finger** (smallest): *Pray for yourself and your own needs.*

Don't forget, December 17 is the Children's Christmas Play. It will be held during the 8:45 Church Service. What better way to encourage our youth and enjoy their program.

We will be starting our First Communion Classes on January 14, 2024. It will include all students who have not received their first communion from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. If your child has not had their First Communion, please make sure to let Mike Kozak know they will be attending these classes, so we have enough material. There will still be Sunday School for the other students not attending First Communion classes.

**EMAIL ADDRESS & CONTACT REQUEST 2024:** Please don't forget to update your email address and make sure that your contact information is up to date and accurate with the church office. There are some interesting and enlightening happenings that you may be missing out on by mistake.

*If you would like to unsubscribe from this mailing list or would like to receive in digital format only, please call our church office at 814-266-4859 or send us an email at [office@mt-calvarylutheran.org](mailto:office@mt-calvarylutheran.org)*



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