

Context: Danevang Lutheran Church Newsletter December 2024

Points to Ponder - What about the Advent Wreath?

Christian worship services are filled with symbolism, such as our use of an Advent Wreath in our sanctuary for services during the Advent/Christmas season. This practice appears to have originated with Lutherans in Germany in the 16th Century, and there are variations in the composition and use of this symbol. Let us focus on the symbols, rather than the history.

So, ponder the wonder of our rich liturgical practices – where we can share, with countless millions of believers over the centuries, the thoughts of the greatness of God such imagery brings forth within us.

First, those candle colors -- The oldest tradition had three purple candles (for 1st, 2nd & 4th Weeks). Purple is the color of royalty and repentance: God's people preparing for the coming of the King of kings. Later, some changed the three candles to a deep blue vice purple: Blue is an alternate liturgical color for the season that reminds us of heaven and the expectation we have that Jesus is coming again. A single rose, or pink, candle (representing Joy) is lit the 3rd Week of Advent (you may hear the term Gaudete Sunday, or Gaudete Candle – Gaudete is a Latin word for rejoice). Maybe think of the shift to rose (pink) from purple as the repentance of the season awakening the joy at the thought of Christ's arrival. Some Advent wreaths use a central white candle called the Christ Candle. White because Jesus is the spotless Lamb of God; born to die to give use a new birth.

The wreath is made from a circle of evergreen branches, the path around a circle is never ending, and evergreens are a symbol of life: Reminding believers that God grants new and everlasting life in Jesus – a Savior worthy of a garland of victory.

The four candles around the Advent wreath emphasize the four week period of penitence and preparation during Advent, as we eagerly await the coming of the Light of the world to bring new life and hope. One candle is lit during the first week, two in the second week, three (the pink one) in the third week, and all four during the fourth week of Advent; the gradually increasing light symbolizes the approach of Christmas, the birth of Jesus, the light of the world. A Christ Candle may be lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas to represent Jesus arrival as the light of the world.

1st CANDLE – (purple) THE PROPHECY CANDLE or CANDLE OF HOPE – We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us. Our hope comes from God. Romans 15:12-13 (ESV) :“And again, Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.’ May the God of

Context: Danevang Lutheran Church Newsletter December 2024

hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

2nd CANDLE – (purple) THE BETHLEHEM CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION – God kept his promise of a Savior who would be born in Bethlehem. Preparation means to “get ready”. Help us to be ready to welcome God. Luke 3:4-6 (ESV): “As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

3rd CANDLE – (pink) THE SHEPHERD CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF JOY – The angels sang a message of JOY! Luke 2:7-15 (ESV): “And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.’”

4th CANDLE – (purple) THE ANGEL CANDLE or THE CANDLE OF LOVE – The angels announced the good news of a Savior. God sent his only Son to earth to save us, because he loves us. John 3:16-17 (ESV): ““For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

5th CANDLE – (white) THE CHRIST CANDLE – The white candle reminds us that Jesus is the spotless Lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins! His birth was for his death; his death was for our birth. John 1:29 (ESV): “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

Chuck

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Announcements

We are thankful for grants from Lutheran Disaster Assistance allowing us to repair the Education Building, Community Hall, and Church Building roofs. We have received the check for the 2nd grant from Lutheran Disaster Assistance.

Serving This Month:

Altar Guild – Maria Barnes

Greeter – “open”

Readers for Sunday Services

Dec 1 - Ann Schaer

Dec 8 - Maria Barnes

Dec 15 - Karen Kight

Dec 22 - Doyle Schaer

Dec 24 - “open”

Dec 29 - “open”

Learning with Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study: Mondays from 9:00 – 11:00 am. All ladies are welcome to join. *No Ladies Bible Study on Monday, Dec. 9th, Dec. 23rd & Dec. 30th.*

Men’s Group: Men of the surrounding communities meet for some fellowship and a bite to eat at 6 PM on Wednesdays in the Community Hall. *No Men’s Group Meeting on Wednesday, Dec 25th.*

Sunday School: Each Sunday, 9 am to 9:45 am in the Educational Building. Open to all adults and children before church service. Coffee will be served. We will discuss the scripture readings for the current Sunday.

Meetings

Dec 1st We will gather to decorate Christmas Trees and share some Pizza after service

Dec 5th-8th Prayer for **Kairos Prison Ministry Event**

Dec 9th **Council Meeting** at 6 PM

Dec 15th **Christmas party**, Celine has invited members to her house in Bay City at 2 PM on December 15, please bring a finger food to share.

Dec 19th **Crossroads Emmaus Gathering**—congregation is invited. Covered dish at 6:30. Worship to follow. David Kight officiate with Music Group leading singing.

Dec 21st: **Christmas program & dancing around Christmas Tree** on Saturday, December 21 at 6:00 pm. Please bring a finger food to share. If you have children that would like to be in the program, please contact Maria.

Services

Sunday 10 AM & Christmas Eve 4 PM



Mission Moment

by Pastor Bryce Formwalt
Director of Mission Growth



Cheering on a Comeback

Like most sports fans, I love a good comeback! There's nothing quite like when a team mounts a comeback after falling hopelessly behind. It is thrilling to experience how the players, coaches, and fans rally to support one another and celebrate each step along the way just to get back into a position to potentially be victorious!

Recently, my wife and I came back: After a six-month absence from the church we attend when in town, we were finally able to come back to worship on a Sunday morning this month. Life and ministry commitments had us on the road since Easter and we truly missed the church that had become family to us. But the comeback we experienced was not personally thrilling for me. Instead, I sheepishly walked through those doors, wondering what people were thinking of us after all this time. I even found myself saying "the prodigals have returned" to one of my friends.

As I began to process it, my experience really bothered me. Why did I feel this way? No one was judgmental at all. Not one person asked, "where have you been?" Many greeted us with joyous expressions of welcome. So why did I, a minister of the Gospel who should definitely know better, feel such guilt and shame? And if I had this intense struggle, for how many others might similar feelings be an obstacle to coming back to church?

As we approach Advent and Christmas, we are more likely to encounter people who may not be in the pattern of attending church regularly. Many may be struggling with intense feelings of guilt and shame even thinking about returning to worship. Some of these feelings may get projected onto other church members, like my thinking we would be judged or looked down on. Other feelings might be more of an internal spiritual battle. Regardless, it is mission-critical for the church to cheer on the comeback.

If you haven't been active in church lately, I want my experience to be an encouragement for you. While the devil will use every trick he can to keep you away from the life-giving experience of a faith community gathered around word and sacrament, trust that God desires your presence and participation. I am confident that you will encounter a loving, welcoming reception by your church family who will celebrate your presence.

If you are a regular worshipper, please enthusiastically support and encourage any and all comebacks! Begin to pray daily for the Holy Spirit to gather those whom the Lord calls to come back to worship. Pray for God to bring to mind specific people to pray for and encourage. Perhaps God is leading you to reach out to someone. Be mindful to not inadvertently contribute to any feelings of guilt or shame. Instead, take an interest in them out of genuine love. Offer to meet for coffee or lunch. Find out what's going on in their lives and how you can pray for them. Consider inviting them to a special event, small group, or service project that gives the opportunity for casual, relational connection. And most importantly, when you see someone new or that you haven't seen for some time, warmly welcome them and simply let them know you are so happy to see them. These simple actions can make a difference as we cheer on a comeback!

Pastor Bryce Formwalt is the Director of Mission Growth for LCMC Texas District and Program Director of Harvest Workers, an online ministry training program (learn more at www.harvestworkers.net). Residing in Georgetown, Pastor Bryce is available to coach congregations on mission. Please contact him with any questions or comments: 512-942-7776 or bryce@lcmctexas.org.

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December 2024

WINTER RETREAT

One Another

February 2-4 or 5-7, 2025
Concan, Texas

\$120 - early bird pricing
*includes meals and lodging

Choose from 2 tracks:
Leadership or Devotional

*"A new command I give you: Love one another.
As I have loved you, so you must love one another."
John 13:34*

Same great Texas District Winter Retreat with all the benefits of the LCMC LeaderCare initiative.



Scan for more info
and registration.

www.lcmctexas.org/winter-retreat

GIVING TUESDAY

December 3, 2024

#GivingTuesday, created in 2012, is a global movement that encourages people to do good. Stay tuned for details on how you can help support the missions of the Texas District & Harvest Workers through our 2024 GivingTuesday event.

Join us in making a difference!



www.lcmctexas.org/giving-tuesday

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2nd Half of 2024 Lectionary Year Calendar -- Three-Year Series : “B” thru end of Nov., then year “C”						
Church Season	Date	Festival	First Reading	Psalm	Epistle	Gospel
ADVENT 2024	Dec. 1 2024	First S. in Advent	Jer. 33:14–16	Psalm 25:1–10	1 Thess. 3:9–13	Luke 19:28–40 <i>or</i> Luke 21:25–36
	Dec. 8	Second S. in Advent	Mal. 3:1–7b	Psalm 66:1–12	Phil. 1:2–11	Luke 3:1–14 (15–20)
	Dec. 15	Third S. in Advent	Zeph. 3:14–20	Psalm 85	Phil. 4:4–7	Luke 7:18–28 (29–35)
	Dec. 22	Fourth S. in Advent	Micah 5:2–5a	Psalm 80:1–7	Heb. 10:5–10	Luke 1:39–45 (46–56)
	Dec. 24 <i>Eve</i>	The Nativity of Our Lord <i>(Christmas Eve)</i>	Is. 7:10–14	Psalm 110:1–4	1 John 4:7–16	Matt. 1:18–25
CHRISTMAS 2024	Dec. 25 <i>Midnight</i>	The Nativity of Our Lord <i>(Christmas Midnight)</i>	Is. 9:2–7	Psalm 96	Titus 2:11–14	Luke 2:1–14 (15–20)
	Dec. 25 <i>Dawn</i>	The Nativity of Our Lord <i>(Christmas Dawn)</i>	Is. 62:10–12	Psalm 98	Titus 3:4–7	Luke 2:(1–14) 15–20
	Dec. 25 <i>Day</i>	The Nativity of Our Lord <i>(Christmas Day)</i>	Is. 52:7–10	Psalm 2	Heb. 1:1–6 (7–12)	John 1:1–14 (15–18)
	Dec. 29	First S. a. Christmas	Ex. 13:1–3a, 11–15	Psalm 111	Col. 3:12–17	Luke 2:22–40
	Dec. 31	Eve of the Circ. and Name of Jesus <i>(New Year’s Eve)</i>	Is. 30:(8–14) 15–17	Psalm 90:1–12	Rom. 8:31b–39	Luke 12:35–40

Context: Danevang Lutheran Church Newsletter December 2024

December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:00 am: Sunday School 10:00 am: Church Service 10 A.M. with Music Group (Pastor Kight) 11:00 am: Decorate Christmas Trees & Share Pizza 11:00 am: Music Group Practice after Sunday Service	2 9:00 am: Women's Bible Study 9:00 AM	3	4 6:00 pm: Men's Group	5 Prayer for Kairos Prison Ministry Event	6 Prayer for Kairos Prison Ministry Event	7 Prayer for Kairos Prison Ministry Event Serving This Month
8 Prayer for Kairos Prison Ministry Event 9:00 am: Sunday School 10:00 am: Church Service 10 A.M. with Music Group (Pastor Kight) 11:00 am: Music Group Practice after Sunday Service	9 9:00 am: NO Women's Bible Study this week 6:00 pm: Council Meeting on 2nd Monday	10	11 6:00 pm: Men's Group	12	13	14
15 9:00 am: Sunday School 10:00 am: Church Service 10 A.M. with Music Group (Pastor Kight) 11:00 am: Music Group Practice after Sunday Service 2:00 pm: Christmas Party Bay City hosted by Celine - bring a finger food to share.	16 9:00 am: Women's Bible Study 9:00 AM	17	18 6:00 pm: Men's Group	19 6:30 pm: Crossroads Emmaus Gathering —congregation is invited. Covered dish at 6:30. Worship to follow. David Kight officiate with Music Goup leading singing	20	21 6:00 pm: Christmas Program / Dance around the Christmas tree. Bring a finger food to share afterwards
22 9:00 am: Sunday School 10:00 am: Church Service 10 A.M. with Music Group (Pastor Kight)	23	24 4:00 pm: Christmas Eve Candlelight Church Service with Music Group 4 P.M.	25	26	27	28
29 9:00 am: Sunday School 10:00 am: Church Service 10 A.M. with Music Group	30	31				