**OUR SAVIOUR’S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**December 2019 Newsletter**

*4900 Kinsey Drive Tyler, Texas 75703*

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*The North American Lutheran Church*

Dear Friends in Christ,

 It is December and we once again enter the wonderful Advent and Christmas Season of the Church Year. This is a time of preparation, of expectation, of hope as we look to the coming of our Savior. It is a special and blessed time of the year.

 We have numerous things happening at the church for this time of year. The first Sunday of Advent is Dec. 1 and we will make changes in our worship service to reflect that. And we will add Wednesday evening worship services to focus on Advent in an even deeper manner. The Wednesday evening services will be on Dec. 4, 11, and 18. They will be at 7:00 p.m. We will gather at 7:00 and begin with a Bible Study on the Gospel of Luke. Luke tells the Christmas story in a marvelous manner and we will explore all of that. After the study we will worship using the Holden Village Evening Prayer Service. We’ve used this service for a number of years. It is a beautiful service and most appropriate for the Advent season.

 Also on the Wednesday nights, we will invite people to come early at 6:30 for a time of prayer. We will focus on praying for our congregation but also on all needs as they arise. I can think of no more important thing to do during Advent than gathering for prayer.

 One change for Advent this year. We will not be having the soup suppers before worship on Wednesday night. The suppers have been less and less attended in recent years so we thought we’d try not offering them this year. Wednesday evening will begin with a prayer time at 6:30, followed by worship at 7:00. Please do let the church council know what you think about this. If you want the suppers reinstated we can sure do that for Lent this spring.

Christmas Eve will of course be on December 24, we will again offer two worship services. The first service will be at 7:00 p.m., the second at 11:00 p.m. The 7:00 service is always the larger of the two. It will be high energy and active. The later service is smaller and is more reflective and quieter. Both are beautiful, and both will offer lots of Christmas carols and Holy Communion. Please make a point to invite someone to join us for Christmas worship.

We are also exploring some other activities to add for Christmas Eve. We will share information about them as we get closer.

December is going to be a busy month. It is going to be a special month. Come and share as we look to the coming of our Lord and Savior.

 God Bless,

 Pastor Mark

**Areas of Focus for OSLC**

Our Church Council and Pastor Mark have been looking at areas that we need to focus on and emphasize as we finish up 2019 and move into 2020. We are going to focus on Sunday School, stewardship, and evangelism. You will be hearing some of this in December, and much more as we enter the New Year!

***On the Use of Advent Candles***

 *The use of an Advent Wreath and candles as part of worship is a relatively recent custom in the church, probably no more than about 300 years old. Originating among Lutherans in northern Europe from earlier cultural traditions, it has been adopted by many Christian denominations over the last few centuries.*

 *Designating the names for the various candles is a very recent phenomena (probably mid-20th century), and multiple traditions have developed. These often vary by denominations, region, religious publisher, and even in the literature of various candle supply companies!*

 *Strictly speaking, there is no single set of traditional names for the candles; there are, in fact, many different traditions. Some of these names were related to old lectionary texts that are no longer in use. The most commonly used names among Protestants for the candles are the designations 1) Prophets’ Candle, 2) Bethlehem Candle, 3) Shepherds’ Candle, 4) Angels’ Candle. In a similar way, Roman Catholics have often designated these same candles to refer to Advent saints: 1) Patriarchs, 2) Prophets, 3) John the Baptist, 4) Virgin Mary.*

*An even more recent tradition among various churches is to name the candles by Advent “theme” words, the most common four being Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace (or in the order: Hope, Pease, Joy, and Love). Some churches replace one or more of these words with Preparation or Expectation.*

*Keep in mind: the use of candles in Advent is a human tradition, neither mandated nor prohibited by Scripture. There is no right or wrong in the use of these names. Local congregations are free to use what they choose. “And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.” (Augsburg Confession 7)*

**Mid-Week Advent Activities**

            With December we enter the season of Advent.  We will offer a time for congregational prayer followed by a time of worship. We will have three Wednesdays when we offer these activities – Dec. 4, 11, and 18.  Here are a few more details:

At 6:30 pm we are inviting people together for a time of prayer. There is no better way to prepare for Christmas than prayer. We will pray for our congregation, and for all needs as they arise.

Worship will be at 7:00 pm.  Pastor Mark will start with a Bible study on what the Gospel of Luke tells us about Christmas.  After the study we will use the Holden Village Evening Prayer worship service. This is a beautiful and popular service and most fitting for Advent.

Here is the schedule for topics in the Bible study:

Dec. 4 – Birth of John the Baptist foretold – Luke 1:1-25

Dec. 11 – Gabriel, Mary, and Elizabeth – Luke 1:26-56

Dec. 18 – The birth of John the Baptist – Luke 1:57-80

Be sure to come and share this Advent season!

**Christmas Eve Worship**

            We will offer two worship services on Christmas Eve.

            The first service will be at 7:00 pm.  This service will include carols and candle lighting and Holy Communion.  Before the service we will offer a Christmas concert with our members sharing special music for the season.

            The second service will be at 11:00 pm.  We envision this as a smaller and quieter service.  It will also include carols and candle lighting, and Holy Communion.

 Please be thinking now of who you would like to invite for Christmas Eve worship. This is a great opportunity for inviting new people!

**No Sunday School on December 22 and 29**

 We will not have Sunday School on Dec. 22 and 29. Classes resume on Sunday, Jan. 5.

**Lutherhill this Summer**

Believe it or not, it is time to be thinking about Bible Camp for this summer. The earlier you sign up, the better chance you have of getting a spot. And for the younger campers, the earlier you sign up, the cheaper the week is.

 **Dates**

Our week of camp next summer will be July 19-24.  The camp will be for students in grades 4 through the 8th grade.

We are also looking at July 19-31 as the dates for our Senior High students to attend the LYLE program. That is LYLE II, Session B.

**When to Register – the sooner the better!**

If you would like to attend the LYLE session, be sure to register before Christmas.  This program fills up fast.  The cost for the LYLE program is $850.

For students in grades 4 – 8 who will attend the week of camp – if you register and pay before December 15 your cost is $475. From Dec. 15 through March 15 the cost goes up to $525. After March 15 the cost is $560. This camp will fill up, please be sure to register by Christmas.

**How to Register**

 We are going to do things different this year. We are going to have you register directly with Lutherhill. That should simplify things. Please go to the Lutherhill website – [www.lutherhill.org](http://www.lutherhill.org) Look for summer camp information and follow the links for registration.

 For students in grades 4 and 5 – please register as a Yearling. For students in grades 6 -8, please register for Confirmation camp. And Senior High, please register for LYLE II Session B.

 Please notify our church office when you have registered.

**Scholarships**

 We will again offer scholarships through our congregation. If you would like assistance in paying for camp, please call Pastor Mark.

**For more information**

 Please go to the Lutherhill website, there is a lot of great information there. And of course please call Pastor Mark as you have questions.

**Offering Envelopes**

The offering envelopes for 2020 will be put out in the church entryway during December. Be sure to pick up your box.

**Primetimers**

 By the time you read this, Thanksgiving will be over and Christmas will be just around the corner. Time has a way of flying past. Our next meeting will be December 12, 2019 at 12 noon at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church.

The group had so much fun with the gift exchange last year that we will be doing it again this year. It will be a Christmas ornament or gag-gift exchange. You may bring either and it can be something used or something you purchase. Don’t spend more than $5 if you purchase it. Do wrap the gift. There will also be some special Christmas music.

The luncheon will be provided by Jenny Videtto. She is asking that attendees provide desserts, like cookies etc. If you are willing, please contact Jenny to assist in this endeavor.

Theresa Ford will donate hats she has made to places like the Hope Cancer Center. If you have items to donate, please bring them to the December Primetimer’s meeting and she will deliver them.

Once again, remember December 12, 2018 at 12 noon at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church and do plan to attend. Not only will the food be great, but the fellowship is “out of this world”. Remember we are the “most caring Primetimers in the world”.

Remember, bring an ornament/gag gift wrapped for the exchange, any donations for the Hope Cancer Center, and **do bring a friend** to share the fellowship.

 Please RSVP to Mary Ferguson via email or 903-565-6607, by Monday December 9th so that Jenny will know how much food to prepare.

**Thank You!!**

 We share a wonderful word of thanks to all who gave for this year’s PATH Foor Drive in November. We had a great response of food for those in need here in Tyler. All donated items have been given to PATH for distribution. Thank you for your generous support!

**Social Ministry**

The Social Ministry Committee follows the mandates of scripture to serve others, especially those who are ill, hungry, troubled, suffering injustice, or lacking basic needs. Each month, we will include a brief description of the organization (s) that our donations target.

**Contributions:** In December, we contribute to Promise Academy, The Crisis Center and Heifer International.

**PATH:** We are grateful to all who so generously contributed to the PATH food drive in November.

 **Christmas In The Neighborhood:** Again this year, we are adopting four adults from the community who will benefit from our gifts. Sign up for bringing specific gifts was November 24 and Dec. 1. All gifts should be returned by Dec. 15.

**Quilters:** The Quilters have a variety of quilted wall hangings for sale. Watch for them in the next few weeks.

The Quilters are always looking for new members. Anyone who is interested, please join us any Tuesday morning. We meet from 9:00 to 11:30 with a coffee break at 10:00. No experience is necessary. Only a desire to learn is required.

**Egyptian Coptic Worship**

The Egyptian Coptic congregation that uses our worship space will worship here on Saturday, December 7 beginning at 8:30 a.m.

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