

Briefings

Pilot Knob Lutheran Church

December 2021

Volume 140

WHAT IS ADVENT?

It's the most wonderful time of year, isn't it? And while some scoff at carols being sung on the radio before December 1, Christians throughout history have embraced this season of spiritual preparation using Advent readings—short Bible passages read during the lighting of the [Advent wreath](#). This sacred time invites us to slow down from all the holiday preparations and parties, take a deep breath, and remember the reason for the season: the eternal Jesus Christ taking on human flesh. But how do all the different parts of [Advent](#) work together, and how can you incorporate Advent into your life?

What Are the Four Sundays of Advent?

If you've ever struggled to keep the four Sundays of Advent straight, you're not alone. For hundreds of years, faithful Christians have observed the four weeks leading up to Christmas Day as a special time to prepare their hearts, but these practices have changed over time and place.

The first mention of Advent is found in ancient writings dating back to the sixth century, with some anecdotal mentions as early as AD 380 at the Spanish Council of Saragossa! So not only is it an old Christian practice, but it's also a very personal one, as churches have adapted the practice to suit their local churches.

So, while there's no authoritative guide to Advent, we can find some commonalities in the ways churches have practiced the observance of Advent throughout history.

Generally, the themes that correspond to each week fall into these categories:

Week 1: Hope (or promise)

Week 2: Preparation (or waiting or prophecy)

Week 3: Joy (or peace)

Week 4: Love (or adoration)



While the differences in weekly Advent themes may be confusing, we can unite in our desire to quiet our hearts during a hectic holiday season and worship Jesus. And the good news is that you can definitely mix and match these weekly themes with various Advent readings that will best serve your family. There is no right or wrong way to observe Advent as long as you're coming to God with a sincere and open heart.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighting Readings for 2021

Twinkling lights and candles everywhere remind us that Jesus is the light of the world that came to dispel the darkness. That theme of light is what originally gave birth to the Advent wreath hundreds of years ago in Lutheran Germany, and it's become a beloved tradition in many churches and homes. The Advent Wreath is typically an evergreen wreath containing five candles, each lit on successive Sundays during the Advent readings. Some variations of the Advent wreath include different colors to correspond to different themes, while others keep the candles a simple white.

As it's practiced in church services, the Advent wreath is usually lit at the beginning of the weekly service with its accompanying Advent reading from the Bible. However, many families choose to create an Advent wreath and set it on the dinner table, lighting the candles and using that family time to remind themselves and their children that the Christmas season is first and foremost about Jesus. Other families set the Advent wreath on their mantel. Again, the beauty of this tradition is that you can make it your own, as it suits you and your family.

(Article not original)

Pilot Knob Lutheran Church
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December 2021

Greetings friends

As we head into the Advent Season, I am reminded that this is a season of giving. It is a time to remember the true reason we celebrate Christmas and what a gift we have in Jesus Christ. A time to remember that our freedom to be a follower of Christ is not a freedom we should take for granted. In our monthly memory verse from Romans 6:23 we are reminded that **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** What a gift that is indeed.

I spent some time in the last weeks helping with the Operation Christmas Child program. How simple it is for us to fill a small box with a t-shirt, a few school supplies and a small toy or two. But what a HUGE impact that can make on a small person a world away. What a GIFT to be able to participate in that project. Thank you, Bobbi Elbert, for spear-heading that outreach for us.

Many times, in my article I have given a shout out to a volunteer or group of volunteers who runs a project or program or does something at our church to help it function. When I was sitting at the church this week waiting for other churches to drop off their shoeboxes, I spent some time just looking around and it really dawned on me how many people do so many little things that I don't think anyone realizes. All these things get done – many of these small tasks I bet we don't even give a seconds thought about them – but we would if those particular someone's did not do them. So, I wanted to take a few minutes to tell you about a few of them. And I will be honest and tell you that in some cases I don't even know who does it – I just know it gets done. So, whoever you are – I want to thank you for the GIFT of your time, your talent and your thoughtfulness. It does not go unnoticed.



Someone fills the oil on the candelabras

Someone bakes the communion bread

Someone types up the bulletins each and every week

Someone preps the communion wine

Someone comes in early every Sunday to fold the bulletins

Someone changes out the altar flowers seasonally

Someone changes the altar dressings to match the church season:

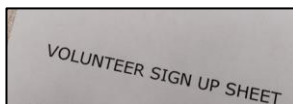
Someone buys supplies so we do not run out of soap, toilet paper, paper towels

Someone counts the offering plate



For me personally 2021 has not ended as I thought it would when it began 12 months ago. But I am so thankful for the GIFT of family and friends. You all mean so very much to me. I wish you the very best this Christmas season.

In His name, Cathy



Praise God, HE's Still in Control!

Sometimes we wonder if God truly has "got this". Does He really care about my daily life? Will he answer our prayers?

With the condition we see our world in these days coupled with the seemingly Anti-God actions we see and hear about, it especially starts us doubting if He cares much about us. To the point we wonder if He has turned his back on America?

I'd like to share my own experience to prove that God truly has control of His creation here on this old earth and really does care about us.

This all started early October. Pastor Bob stated he was going on vacation the last two Sundays of October. We 3 deacons for PKLC would need to be involved in keeping the services operating. October 24th Pastor handled by getting Pastor Scott Sokol to preach and I handled the parts Pr. Sokol was not comfortable doing.

That left the next Sunday, October 31st. Pastor Bob pre-recorded a sermon we could play at that service, but us 3 deacons were to take care of the remainder of the service. That was now all set.

Well, God had other plans. For no good reason I knew of, on Wednesday, October 27th, I had "the urge" to dig out a sermon that had been given me by a pastor friend about 5 years ago as he stated, "You should work this one up. I think you'd like doing it and it is truly uplifting and praising God!" So I started to study it and research the scriptures aligned with it, thinking I had no idea when I may be called to use it but at least I was "in the word" while studying it.

On Friday, October 29th, Pastor Bob sent us a text stating he was back early enough from vacation that he would take care of the service on the following Sunday, October 31st leaving us free to merely attend church with no duties. Yay, a free Sunday to just worship... or so I thought!

As some of you may have heard, the two churches, Leland Our Saviors Lutheran and Miller Faith Lutheran, lost their pastor who retired earlier this year and have been utilizing part time ministers until they can find a called minister. I had served them a couple times thus far so a little familiar with their services.

Midday on Saturday, October 30th, I received a call from Pastor Sokol saying he was supposed to serve those two churches the next day, October 31st. But, he had come down with a severe case of stomach flu and did not want to chance sharing it with anyone. He asked, could I take over the service in his stead?

My jaw dropped as I quickly thought it usually takes me at least a week to work up a full service and sermon and I have less than 24 hours??? But, it was like the Holy Spirit knew the needs of God's followers, however few there are in those churches, so I was led to reply. "Yes, I will take the services." He, of course, thanked me.

I usually ask the Holy Spirit to guide me into what subject and scriptures I should use for any service. Immediately after that call, I prayed asking what the Holy Spirit wanted me to do and He led me to the fact, "Well, duh, why do you suppose I led you to start looking into the "4 Legged" sermon?". Right away, I went back to continuing my research on that sermon and had it put together by supper time that evening. The services went smoother than I ever expected, however a bit short in the sermon length, but complete none-the-less. I am so grateful He can be talked to, leaned on, visited with, prayed to and simply worshiped – He's accessible!

Isn't it amazing how this all fell into place? Lastly, Miller church wanted time for fellowship after so my shorter sermon gave them that time. God is truly good!

As you can see, this proves beyond a shadow of a doubt "HE IS STILL ON HIS THRONE AND IN CONTROL!"

In His Service,
Greg Flugum



THE POWER
of a
SIMPLE
GIFT

Operation Christmas Child National Collection week for 2021 is over. Pilot Knob participated again and we sent 183 shoeboxes. This proved to be a challenging year for some but our church benefited from a team member's damp basement to fulfill our Connect Conference theme—Nehemiah 4:19-20 "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." Many of the NE Iowa team members made several trips to help pack boxes in St. Ansgar and she gave many of our members boxes of items to take to our churches to use in our own shoeboxes. She had already paid for shipping, as she donates year round. I was privileged to meet two individuals, including Vickie R. who pack over 1000 boxes personally, WOW!

As part of the Samaritan's Purse update Prayer Point, it tells of a small congregation of 25 members who started packing 20 shoeboxes for a few years. After a decade they felt the Lord leading them to ask a different question. Instead of asking "What can we afford?" they asked "God what do you want us to do?" In 2014 they set a goal of 500 boxes, yet the Lord provided 532 boxes. In 2015 they sent 2,000 boxes, and even though Hurricane Harvey flooded the homes of seven church members, the congregation packed 8,000 boxes. In 2019 the congregation of 51 members packed 11,139 shoeboxes. Is it time to ask God what he wants from us?

Bill Keel found a trailer for us to use this year and he volunteered to drive it to Waterloo. We were just south of Mason City on the Avenue of the Saints when a trailer tire shredded. Thankfully no one was hurt and he was prepared with a jack and the correct tools to get the tire off. We drove to Mason and he purchased a new tire and had it mounted. We only used an hour of time, but the fender will have to be replaced.

May God bless those who gave of their time, talent, monetary gifts and prayers. God will bless those who receive these gospel opportunities and multiply His followers.

By the numbers:

In 2016 we collected 32 shoeboxes, 406 total and shipped 27 cartons.

In 2017 we collected 37 shoeboxes, 419 total and shipped 27 cartons.

In 2018 we collected 62 shoeboxes, 346 total and shipped 23 cartons.

In 2019 we collected 84 shoeboxes, 429 total and shipped 29 cartons.

In 2020 we collected 72 shoeboxes, 308 total and shipped 23 cartons.

In 2021 we collected 183 shoeboxes, 464 total and shipped 33 cartons.

December Sermons/Scriptures

◆ December 5, 2021

Second Sunday of Advent

Morning Worship Service and Holy Communion

Sermon: Mary & Her Angel

OT Lesson: Malachi 4:1-6

Epistle Lesson: Romans 15:4-13

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:26-38

◆ December 12, 2021

Third Sunday of Advent

Morning Worship Service

Sermon: Heaven's Angel

OT Lesson: Isaiah 40:1-8

Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Gospel Lesson: Luke 2:8-14

◆ December 19, 2021

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Morning Worship Service

Sermon: Is the Virgin Birth Necessary?

OT Lesson: Deuteronomy 18:15-19

Epistle Lesson: Phillipians 4:4-7

Gospel Lesson: Luke 1:39-56

◆ December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve

Evening Worship Service

Sermon: Hope is Born

OT Lesson: Micah 5:2-5

Epistle Lesson: Titus 3:4-7

Gospel Lesson: Luke 2:1-20

◆ December 26, 2021

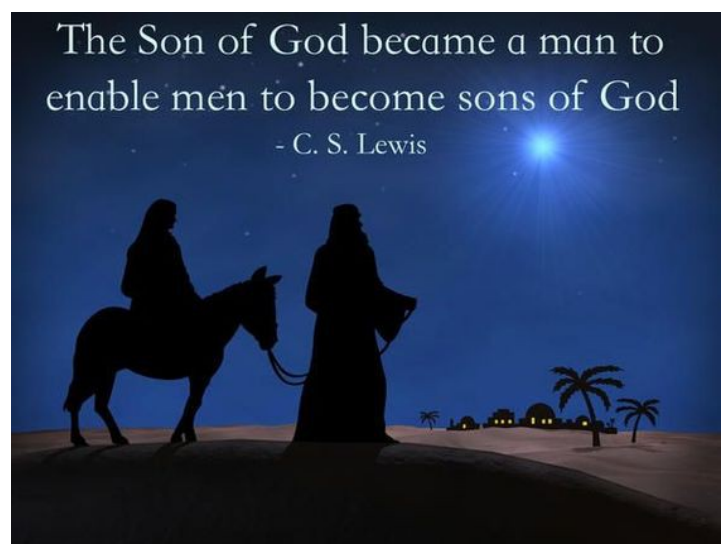
First Sunday after Christmas

Morning Worship Service

OT Lesson: 2 Samuel 7:1-16

Epistle Lesson: Galatians 4:1-7

Gospel Lesson: Luke 2:33-40





Suffering, Sacrifice...and Love

We all know that there will be no suffering in heaven, right? Have you ever really thought about that contrast between heaven and earth- I mean beyond maybe wishing for that reality of freedom from suffering now? What does it mean for us while we are still here on earth in the midst of plenty of suffering every single day?

Think about this: while there may no longer be suffering once we enter into eternity, we will still be praising God continually, but the difference is that it will no longer be a *sacrifice* for us. Simply a joy and a pleasure. With the absence of pain and suffering, there's no need to lift our eyes from those distractions anymore. No longer will we be in an environment where we have to struggle against temptations, distractions, and evil in the world. So while we may be eager to bypass the struggles of the here and now on earth, and get to the "good" stuff where there is only joy, peace and love...it's only here on earth that we have the *option* of offering a real *sacrifice* to God that personally costs us something. Praise that *we choose* to offer at the depths of despair, obedience to God's voice that *we choose* to follow over our own personal desires, eyes of love that *we choose* to use in seeing other people instead of our own eyes of prejudice and judgment. Those are all sacrifices that we offer up to God when we choose His ways over our own. When our life on this earth is done, there will no longer be an opportunity to offer a true *sacrifice* of glorifying God *in the midst* of suffering.

We're always being tested as to what's really in our own hearts. How much are we really living for God, and how much is simply for ourselves? How ready are we to praise and trust in His goodness even when we feel He hasn't been "good" to us? It's a *sacrifice* to offer praise at the bottom of the pit. A pleasing aroma that ascends to the throne in a way that praise offered from a mountaintop doesn't. Don't get me wrong, all praise offered to God is pleasing to Him, yet one is more *sacrificial* than the other. It costs *us* more to give it. David's heart in 2Sam 24:24 shows us this: "...nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing."

Like the woman who used an expensive perfume to anoint Jesus (Matthew 26)...it was very costly to her. It reveals to us just how much Jesus meant to her personally that she would buy something so expensive, just to pour it out. Have you heard the modern day advice of spending three months of your salary on an engagement ring? (Apparently the idea stems from a marketing campaign from the 1930s that sold people the idea that how in love and committed you are was directly related to how much the ring costs.) Now, can you imagine spending your whole year's salary on someone else to show your love for them? Apparently, the cost of the perfume poured out on Jesus by this woman is estimated to be about a year's salary. Isn't that a beautiful picture of devotion, sacrifice, and love? To the rest of those in the room it looked wasteful and foolish, but Jesus was deeply moved by her sacrifice. He knew what it cost her- just like He knows the cost of our own personal sacrifices. No one else may know...but God does. He sees the heart in a way that no other human can. Just like this woman, we can offer up our *sacrifices* of prayer, worship, service and loving others as a similar pleasing aroma to the Lord (even when we don't feel like it- for that makes it a sacrifice). Not for recognition, or an attempt to earn His favor (which He already graciously gave us when we believed in Jesus), but simply as an offering of devotion unto the Lord. Just out of love. Because He is worthy. Anything offered out of pure love is indeed a pleasing aroma to God.

The Pilot Knob Quilters have managed to get 50 quilts done this year!

They were delivered in the middle of November to WHW Social Services, Lake Mills Care Center, Crisis Center, Good Samaritan Nursing Home and FAVA, as well as Families of the Fallen.

We meet at 10am on the first and third Thursday of each month- bring a lunch for yourself. If you can tie a knot, you're qualified to be a quilter! Stay as long as you are able. Hope to see you soon!



Prayer Reminder:

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments Dec. 1 in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which is about a Mississippi abortion law that bars abortions after 15 weeks. That case is on the substance of the law and could potentially result in the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.



- If anyone would like to submit something for publication in the Briefings please email to: emilyd@wctatel.net

December 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Confirmation- 4:30pm	2 Quilting-10am	3	4 Bday: Naomi Pederson
5 Communion Sunday Greeters: Steve/Jan Reader: Matt	6 Bday: Shiloh Smith	7	8 Confirmation- 4:30pm	9	10	11 Bday: John Jordan
12 Greeters: Russ/Marty Reader: Jack	13	14 Deacons Meeting-5:45pm Council- 6:30pm	15 Confirmation- 4:30pm	16 Quilting-10am	17	18
19 Greeters: Matt/Diane Reader: Cathy	20	21 Ladies Bible Study - 9:30am WOL Bible Study - 2pm	22 Confirmation- 4:30pm	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 4:00pm	25 Christmas Bday: Randy Hanna
26 Greeters: Joel/Bert Reader: Sherry	27	28	29	30	31	