

DECEMBER 2020

# FRIENDS IN CHRIST NEWS

Friends In Christ Lutheran Church – Friends Bringing Friends to Christ

*Silent night . . .*

*Holy night . . .*

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## WHEN WAS JESUS' BIRTHDAY? ... and the "Other Christmas Passage"



Every so often the question comes around. I remember hearing it when I was a child. It usually goes like this: ***"When was Jesus really born? We celebrate at Christmas, but we don't really know, do we? And what about the sheep? Who keeps their sheep out in the middle of winter?"***

**The last time** I studied that question, I ran into one of the sweetest set of prophecies ever.

Normally, shepherds have feed stored up for the winter and bring their sheep in, watch them more closely, protect them better – especially at night! It could be dangerous for them out there. But there is one type of sheep that cannot be brought in; that must *never* be brought in.

*Continued . . .*

## *Christmas Worship Times*

**Thursday, December 24:**

**7:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

**Friday, December 25:**

**10:00 a.m. – Christmas Morning Communion Service**



(Continued from p. 1 . . .)

The location of Bethlehem gives us a hint about this. Bethlehem is only about 6 miles from Jerusalem where there is a special role, and therefore a special market, for sheep. These particular sheep would have been Temple or Passover sheep - destined for sacrifice. Since these sheep are special, they have to be *handled* differently. They would have been much more valuable and could be sold for a much greater price! The thing about Temple and Passover sheep is that they could never be kept in any man-made enclosure. They had to be out in the field - full time - until they were sold.

How does this play into the Christmas story?

The angels came to the shepherds out in the field watching over these sheep (destined for sacrifice) at night and they tell the shepherds about the Lamb of God, born into the world, born to be our sacrifice for the washing away of our sins. The angels tell them that Jesus is our Passover Lamb, who will go up to Jerusalem at the time of Passover, and give Himself to be our one true Passover Lamb and set us free and lead us out and into God's eternal kingdom.

The prophecies go back into the Old Testament:

- to **Genesis 35:16-21**, where Rachel died and Rachel's tomb is near Bethlehem / Ephrath, which is referred to in Micah 5:2, "*But you, Bethlehem Ephratha . . . out of you will come for Me one who will be ruler over Israel . . .*". And then, in verse 21, Jacob moved on and camped by "Migdol Eder" (which means "tower of the flock" – because they built a short watchtower so the shepherds could keep watch over their sheep by night and still have the sheep out in the open). Eder is on the outskirts of Bethlehem.

- to **Jeremiah 31:15-16**, where we hear of "Rachel weeping for her children." The place named Ramah, also near Bethlehem, is where the Babylonians gathered the people of Judah to lead them into captivity. Verse 16 says, "*Restrain your voice from weeping . . . they will return*". The Rabbis had taught for generations before the birth of Jesus that the first announcement of the arrival of the Messiah would have to take place at that place – specifically at the "Migdol Eder" the "tower of the flock".

## **This Time I found more!!**

There is a specific festival around the month of December. It is called the "Festival of Lights" (you may know it as Hanukkah). Interestingly, John begins his Gospel saying: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. . . . In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. . . . The Word became flesh . . . and we have seen His glory . . .*" (John 1:1-14)

So, I looked up what day was the beginning of this festival. It is in the Hebrew month *Kislev*. Guess what day it starts on! The 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev (at sundown)! Hmmm. I wonder. Did the early Christians simply take the date and move it over into December? Does it have absolutely *nothing* to do with any Roman, 'Winter Solstice' festival? Well . . . I looked up what day in December that the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev would fall on in different years.

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Here's what I found:

In 2 BC it was December 22

In 3 BC it was December 2

In 4 BC it was December 14

In 5 BC it was December 25

Could it be that the first Christmas, in 5 BC, happened when the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev and the 25<sup>th</sup> of December came together on the same day?

There are other details, including records of a comet about 9 months before, and the death of Herod close to a year later (mid to late 4 BC) that suggest we could be celebrating Christmas on the same day in the Roman Calendar. In 2020 the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev will be December 10. (Hebrew Christmas??)

Did John talk with Mary about when Jesus was born and put the theme of "Light of the World" in the beginning of his gospel because of that? (Jesus, while on the cross, commended her into John's care and she became part of his household.)

The "Festival of Lights" is also called the "Feast of Dedication" when the Temple was purified (in 165 BC) after having been desecrated 3 years before. This has continued to be observed year after year, all the way down to our time. I remember something about that in the Gospel of John, so I looked it up. It is in John 10:22-23: *"At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the Colonnade of Solomon."*

It is in the previous chapter, John 9, Jesus says, "I am the *Light* of the world" after healing the man born blind. That connects well with the Festival of Lights. But John 10 is considered the 'Good Shepherd' chapter because all through John 10, Jesus talks about how He is our *Shepherd*, calling His own sheep by name, laying down His life for the sheep, and giving eternal life to His sheep. But Shepherds and sheep are not the focus of Hanukkah, either as the Festival of Lights or the Feast of Dedication.

Could one of the reasons why Jesus would focus so much on Shepherds and Sheep have something to do with the events surrounding His own birth?

And now I have this image in my mind: Kislev 25, the beginning of the Festival of Lights / the Feast of Dedication – Jesus' last birthday before going to the cross. He is walking in the Colonnade of Solomon. He is thinking back on what Mary has told Him of His birth and of Shepherds visiting. And it is a very human and very natural thing to reminisce, to smile at the memories, and then begin to talk about sheep and about being the Good Shepherd. The whole of John 10 is now for me "the other Christmas passage" and a very tender one at that.

The days would go on. The Feast of Dedication lasted 8 days. There were sacrifices on each of the first 7 days to dedicate the temple, just like in Leviticus – one day of dedication for each day of creation. And then, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, sacrifices were made and the priest was placed in office. Back in Leviticus it was a glimpse ahead, a foreshadowing of the resurrection (just as we call Easter "the 8<sup>th</sup> day", the first day of the new creation). All of the Old Testament sacrifices were actually pointing to the resurrection earned for us by the blood of Jesus. And so, if Jesus was born on the first day of the Feast of Dedication, then the 8<sup>th</sup> day would have been the day of His naming, the day of circumcision and the first shedding of His blood.

As you celebrate Christmas this year rejoice that Jesus is your Shepherd.

Pastor Mark

# Poinsettias

(Please remember to take your poinsettia home (or pick it up) right after Christmas as they don't last long left unattended.)

## Flappy Anniversary!

**Denny & Terry Knapp**  
December 7<sup>th</sup> – 52 years

**Kurt & Tricia Johnson**  
December 10<sup>th</sup> – 21 years

**Tim & Ann West**  
December 29<sup>th</sup> – 31 years

## Flappy Birthday!

- 1<sup>st</sup> Zackary Carlson
- 6<sup>th</sup> Bonnie Sanders
- 8<sup>th</sup> Sharon Benner
- 9<sup>th</sup> Erma Turner
- Joey Castleberry
- 11<sup>th</sup> Pat Kennard
- 17<sup>th</sup> Michael Applebee
- 19<sup>th</sup> Trevor Thompson
- 20<sup>th</sup> Tristan Willig
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Logan Tondini
- 24<sup>th</sup> Sharon Wendling
- 25<sup>th</sup> Elizabeth Kirk
- 29<sup>th</sup> Ann West
- 30<sup>th</sup> Chris Willig

Oh,  
that  
you  
would  
rend  
the  
heavens  
and  
come  
down.

Isaiah  
64:1a



# The Sensations of Christmas

## ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

→ All Services Will Also Be Live-Streamed ←  
(find us at [www.facebook.com/ficlc](http://www.facebook.com/ficlc))

**Wednesday, Dec. 2 – 7:00 p.m. The Sounds of Christmas.**

They begin with the distant announcement and continue even to the “silent prophecy.”

**“Come, Incarnate Word of God! Speak to us all the promises of God.”**



**Wednesday, Dec. 9 – 7:00 p.m. The Sights of Christmas.**

From afar, as we begin to see the revelation, we realize the Kingdom of God is coming.

**“Come, O Dayspring From on High, shine upon us that we may see the light of glory.”**



**Wednesday, Dec. 16 – 7:00 p.m. The Weariness of Christmas.** We feel it, in the waiting, in the preparing, and thinking of a journey to Bethlehem where God would come to share our weariness.

**“Come Shiloh, to Be Our Refuge and Our Peace”**



**Thursday, Dec. 24 – 7:00 p.m. The Smells of Christmas.** In

a certain way the sense of smell is the deepest sense, bringing back memories in a flash; the smell of the stable, of a little baby, of frankincense & myrrh, and of a piece of broiled fish.

**“Come Rose of Sharon, and fill our souls with the fragrance of Life and Salvation”**



**Friday, Dec. 25 – 10:00 a.m. The Touch of Christmas.**

“What we have with our eyes, and touched with our hands” says the Apostle John. The virgin Mary holds the newborn Jesus in her hands, and God has come to be touched by us.

**“Come Emmanuel, to be our ‘God-With-Us’ forever”**

HUMOR & NOSTALGIA  
*Christmas Movie Trivia*  
 Behind the scene facts from some Christmas Classics

*It's a Wonderful Life*

The short story that inspired the movie was called, "The Greatest Gift"

*Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*

The parade scene was entirely real. Edmund Gwenn really played Santa in the 1946 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

*White Christmas*

Fred Astaire was supposed to play Phil Davis but between the initial talks and actual filming, Astaire had "retired". Danny Kaye did a great job in the role.

*A Christmas Story*

Jack Nicholson was interested in the role of Ralphie's Father, before Darren McGavin was cast in the iconic role.

*A Charlie Brown Christmas*

This was the first animated special of the Peanuts gang ever made. Before that, they were animated characters in Ford TV commercials. The story for this timeless special was created in half of a day.

*Elf*

The lead role was originally written for Jim Carrey.

*Holiday Inn*

This movie, not "White Christmas", was the first movie in which that Irving Berlin classic song was performed by Bing Crosby.

*Chevy Chase's Christmas Vacation*

There were no rehearsals for the actors in this movie, because Chevy Chase tended to ad lib and improvise so much that it made preparation useless.



Financial Report  
 Friends in Christ Lutheran Church 2020



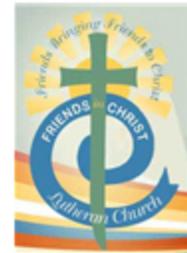
THANK YOU FOR CONTINUING TO SUPPORT OUR CHURCH DURING CORONAVIRUS

**\$9,601 OF TOTAL INCOME ARE MEMORIAL DONATIONS**

General Fund	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	AUGUST PPP **	SEPTEMBER	YTD Actual	BUDGETED
Income	\$ 15,990.00	\$ 12,128.00	\$ 9,853.00	\$ 16,656.00	\$ 11,942.00	\$ 125,082.63	\$ 121,932.00
Expenses	\$ 11,580.91	\$ 10,132.00	\$ 10,570.59	\$ -	\$ 11,415.62	\$ 103,555.16	\$ 122,427.00
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 4,409.09	\$ 1,996.00	\$ (717.59)	\$ -	\$ 526.38	\$ 21,527.47	\$ 495.00

# Prayer Calendar

## DECEMBER 2020



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Please pray daily for Pastor Willig, Deb Carter, Kris Farber and their families. Pray for Missionaries, Deaf Ministry, Doctors, Nurses and anyone working in the medical field. Police, Fire and EMT's. Those working everywhere.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Lord help us to live with compassion and let our hearts be caring towards others. Luke 2: 21-40</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Lord, be with our shut ins and those in nursing homes and assisted living. Bless them with healthy hearts, minds, body's and souls. Keep them in Your Word. Lift their spirits.</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>We pray for those working on developing treatments for the Corona Virus.</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>God for many the month of December is a very long month. Be with those that have a tough time during the Christmas Season. Help to lighten their load and bless them with Your special peace.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Lord, help me to turn control of my life over to You. Walk with me daily as I try to be more like You. Thank You for loving me. Rom. 13: 13-14</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>We pray for those suffering from the Corona Virus.</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>Satisfy us in the morning with Your unending love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Psalm 90:14</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>We pray for Governors and Mayors.</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>God, help us to come to You first. Praying to You for our guidance in all we do.</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Lord be with those who are having difficult times right now. Help us through these difficult times. Please bless us Lord.</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Lord help us to remember to prepare our hearts before we come to You to worship.</p>
<p><b>13</b></p> <p>We pray for our President, Vice President, Congress and Judiciary.</p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>God thank You for Your precious gift of Jesus.</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>We pray for leaders of Nations around the world.</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>Lord help us to look beyond the glitter of the holiday and see the glory of Your presence.</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>Lord as we celebrate Your coming into the world to save us, let our joyful hearts be attuned to Your voice. Proverbs 4:11-13</p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>Help us to step up and be a light for You in such a confused world. Let our everyday actions show others that we are part of Your family. Philippians 4:11-13</p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>Be with our military Lord so they can feel the love of Jesus during the Christmas season. Bless them Lord and keep them safe out of harms way.</p>
<p><b>20</b></p> <p>Thank You Lord for giving us Your Word in the Bible. Happy is a man who finds wisdom and acquires understanding in reading the Bible. Prov. 3:13, 17-18</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>Lord satisfy us in the morning with Your unending love that we may sing for joy and be glad all of our days. Psalm 90:14</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>Please help us to find the love of Jesus so His love will overflow to those around us. Matthew 2:19-23</p>	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>Before the celebrations begin let us turn our hearts to You oh Lord. No gift has ever been so costly, treasured, precious, or perfect. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift. 2 Cor. 9:15</p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p>Let us remember that Jesus is the reason for the season. Isaiah 9:6</p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>Dear God we thank You for Jesus. Joy in the heavens and peace on earth for onto us a Son is given, unto us a child is born, and He will save His people from their sins.</p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>As we read Your Word let us be still and know that You are God. Luke 1:26-38</p>
<p><b>27</b></p> <p>Lord help us to do the mission of Jesus Christ.</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>Pray that we will not love worldly things but set our minds on Christ. 1 John 2:15-17 Phil 4:8</p>	<p><b>29</b></p> <p>Let us remember that some of the best gifts we can give are gifts of time.</p>	<p><b>30</b></p> <p>Pray that we would put on the full armor of God and be alert to satans strategies. Eph. 6:10-18</p>	<p><b>31</b></p> <p>Lord, as You give us a fresh start daily, help us to start off each day of the New Year with You. If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation; old things have passed away, new things have come. 2 Cor. 5:17</p>		



# December, 2020 – Friends in Christ Lutheran Church, Morris, Illinois

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
		1 9:00 AM – Bible Study	2 10:00 AM Church Decorating 7:00 PM – Worship (also Live-Streamed)	3	4	5 <b>COMMUNION</b> 5:30 PM – Worship
6 <b>COMMUNION</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent 8:15 AM – Worship & Live-Streamed (9:30 AM – Worship Posted On Line) 10:45 AM Worship	7	8 9:00 AM – Bible Study 7:00 PM – Elders	9 7:00 PM – Worship (also Live-Streamed)	10 7:00 PM – Church Council (Zoom)	11 Kislev 25 begins at sundown on Thursday  (Read Pastor's Article)	12 5:30 PM -- Worship
13 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent 8:15 AM – Worship & Live-Streamed Installation of Officers & Board Members (9:30 AM – Worship Posted On Line) 10:45 AM – Worship	14	15 9:00 AM – Bible Study	16 7:00 PM – Worship (also Live-Streamed)	17	18	19 <b>COMMUNION</b> 5:30 PM – Worship
20 <b>COMMUNION</b> 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent 8:15 AM – Worship & Live-Streamed (9:30 AM – Worship Posted On Line) 10:45 AM – Worship	21	22 9:00 AM – Bible Study	23	24 <b>COMMUNION</b> Christmas Eve 7:00 – Worship (also Live-Streamed): Candlelight Service with Communion	25 <b>COMMUNION</b> Christmas Day 10:00 – Worship with Communion (also Live-Streamed)	26 5:30 PM – Worship
27 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas St. John, Apostle & Evangelist 8:15 AM – Worship & Live-Streamed (9:30 AM – Worship Posted On Line) 10:45 AM – Worship	28	29	30	31	January Notes: <b>In January –</b> <b>Our Service Times will be changing:</b> <b>Saturdays 5:30 PM</b> <b>Sundays 9:30 AM</b> <b>(This is the Same as Last Year)</b>	