



Reformation Lutheran Church

“Come and See, Learn and Rejoice, Go and Tell!”
December 2024

“Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.”- Psalm 25:5 -

The Light of Salvation

Have you ever noticed that a lamp appears brighter at night than it does during the day? It isn't that the lamp is brighter, but that the light from that lamp is diminished by the light that surrounds it. The lamp overcomes darkness much better than other light. That's why faith and the Gospel stand out so much more clearly when the world is in chaos.

We don't think much about God so much when things are going well. We pray and worship and offer thanks, but we don't fall on our knees in hopeful expectation of God's grace. However, we see our need for Him when we face a crisis and turn to Him in desperate prayer and expectation. Christ is not a softer light in the good times, but His light does not seem quite as bright when we need Him most.

Darkness has existed from the beginning of time. The world is constantly in flux and goes from bright moments of hope and peace to times filled with hatred and war. We begin Advent in darkness as a reminder of our life without Jesus. The light of our Advent wreaths shines brighter and brighter as we light one new candle each Sunday. That's how it is in our texts throughout this season. We begin with a promise, watch as God prepares the world for the coming of our Lord, and then end on Christmas Day with the fulfillment of the promise: Jesus Christ is born. The true Light comes into the world.

As we enter this season of waiting and wonder, let us keep our hearts and minds on the One for whom we wait, looking to His faithfulness, mercy, and grace. Jesus is coming! He is the child in the manger and the King in the clouds. He is the fulfillment of all God's promises of salvation and the restoration. Jesus is the Light that will never be overcome, He banishes the darkness of our chaotic world. Pr.

Property: Our December clean-up day will be Saturday, December 28th, 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are always welcome!

Mission and Ministry Outreach: We're finishing out the year with several Thrivent projects behind us and hopes to complete one or two more. Wayne and Carolyn plan one more food delivery to FOCUS later in December. They will also be taking jackets and coats we're getting from my friend at St. Matthew's. Chuck is reaching out to Sheriff Jolley to see what specific needs he can tell us about as far as food baskets, children in need, etc. I'd like us to put together small gift bags for our friends at Thrive/Oaks if possible.

Fellowship: Our Wednesday night Advent services begin on December 4th. As usual, we'll have a meal beforehand starting at 6:00. There will be three Advent Wednesday's this year. A sign-up sheet is in the Fellowship Hall.

Education: Please join us on Sundays, at 9:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall as we continue our Bible Study classes covering the Epistles and Revelation.



10th – Chuck Hunsaker

11th – Dick Donovan

DECEMBER CALENDAR

Sunday – Dec. 1st – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service

Wednesday – Dec. 4th – 6:00 p.m. Advent Soup Supper; 7:00 p.m. Advent Service

Sunday – Dec. 8th – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service

Tuesday – Dec. 10th – 11:30 a.m. Lutheran Men’s Lunch IHOP

Wednesday – Dec. 11th – 6:00 p.m. Advent Soup Supper; 7:00 p.m. Advent Service

Sunday – Dec. 15th – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service; Council after service

Wednesday – Dec. 18th – 6:00 p.m. Advent Soup Supper; 7:00 p.m. Advent Service

Sunday – Dec. 22nd – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service

Tuesday – Dec. 24th – 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Saturday – Dec. 28th – Clean-up Day – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday – Dec. 29th – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service

	Dec. 1	Dec. 8	Dec. 15	Dec. 22	Dec. 29
Altar Guild	Carolyn	Tammy	Junior	Amy	Carolyn
Usher	Junior	Carolyn	Amy	Junior	Amy
Lector	Pastor	Chuck	Tammy	Dick	Amy
Music	Amy	Teresa	Amy	Amy	Amy
Children Time	Pat	Pat	Pat	Pat	Pat
Sermon	Wayne	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor
Thrive	Wayne	Gabi	Wayne	Gabi	Wayne
Oaks	Chuck	Pastor	Chuck	Pastor	Chuck
Bible Study	Pastor	Tammy	Pastor	Amy	Pastor

COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S CORNER

HAPPY NEW YEAR! It's Advent season...the first season of the new church year. New Year is always an interesting time. It's a time to reflect on the good and the bad of the previous year, but it's also a time to look forward to all the fantastic possibilities of the new year.

Advent means "to come" What are the good things we can look forward to in our personal lives and also what are the good things we can look forward to for Reformation? For sure a good year of Christian messages at services and our personal devotions.

Advent carries with it two open doors for us. Later this month we will have the first of those open doors at Christmas...the birth of a savior...but with that birth we have the second open door. Jesus shows us that open door, and the view through that door is the bright, sunny, awesome view of heaven and eternal life with Jesus. That is the real promise of Advent.

Why not reach out and invite them to Reformation? There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Chuck Hunsaker
Council President

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH "Evangelism: Lutherans and "the Boat"'"

It is fairly common these days to hear American Lutherans lament the numerical stagnation (or decline) in their congregations and denominations. When asked to diagnose the cause of this current malady, it is often suggested that Lutherans are in numerical trouble because they never learned how to do evangelism. When pressed to explain how American Lutheranism got so big in the first place, the response often is, "Lutherans never did evangelism; they simply recruited the immigrants when they got off the boat." This (erroneous) statement is often known as the "myth of the boat." But this myth is wrong. Lutheran immigrants did not automatically flock to Lutheran congregations; they actually were quite resistant. Lutherans had to do quite a bit of hard evangelistic work to draw them in.

The actual numbers of Lutheran immigrants who actually joined Lutheran congregations was rather low. By about 1920, for example, the percentage of Scandinavian-Americans (first and second generation) who were members of Lutheran congregations ranged from about ten percent of the Danes to about thirty percent of the Norwegians. (It is much harder to figure the percentage of Germans, though we can assume it Immigrants entering the U.S. at Ellis Island was similar.) Back in the European old-country, the immigrants had no choice but to be Lutheran; here in the United States, they had the freedom to affiliate with any church (or none). The immigrant Lutheran churches were weak, few in number and resources, and chronically short of pastors. Voluntary American religion was also strange to these new immigrants; all this joining and financially supporting a local congregation was quite foreign to them. In retrospect, it is amazing that the American Lutheran congregations grew as much as they did. They grew because American Lutherans actually became pretty good at doing evangelism.

In the colonial period, the initial formation was driven by lay Lutherans who arrived here and founded congregations before there were any Lutheran pastors. Lay Lutherans decided to gather together, recruit their fellow immigrants, establish congregations, and then start searching for a pastor to lead them. As Americans moved west after the Revolutionary War, groups of Lutherans Zion Lutheran Church, Oldwick, New Jersey would gather together and form congregations on the frontier, served by itinerant or missionary pastors who would travel between congregations or by ministerial candidates who were in the process of becoming ordained. Occasionally Lutheran missionaries from Europe would work among the Lutherans. (America was for many years a missionary field.)

When the great nineteenth-century immigration began in the 1840s (it would continue until World War I began in 1914), the crush of millions of new, non-English-speaking immigrants threatened to over-whelm American Lutheranism. But at great cost and great sacrifice, the new immigrants managed to build congregations, schools, colleges, seminaries, hospitals, and social service agencies. Small groups of Lutherans pulled together and established local congregations. Immigrant pastors scoured the countryside to gather in scattered people. Home missionaries canvassed the new territories and rapidly growing cities, and they brought in more people.

Pastors, already pushed to their limits, traveled great distances to establish satellite congregations. By 1900 Lutherans grew to become the fourth largest religious family in the United States, with about 2.175 million members .

If the "myth of the boat" were actually true, then Lutheran growth should have leveled off or even stopped after World War I, when the United States severely curtailed immigration. Add to the end of mass immigration the Great Depression and World War II, and the prospects for growth would have seemed to be dim. However, this was not the case. By 1935 the number of Lutherans had more than doubled, to 4.6 million; by 1950 to over 6.1 million, and at its peak in the mid-1960s, American Lutherans numbered over 9 million baptized members. So how did they do it?

Evangelism. By the middle of the twentieth century each Lutheran denomination had a formal apparatus for home mission work and evangelism. Systematically they studied where to plant new congregations and then sent out pastors and lay workers to make them a reality. In the heady period from 1945 to 1965, the Lutheran denominations planted hundreds, if not thousands, of new congregations a year. And local congregations continued their work, too, planting new satellite congregations, especially in the growing suburban areas. Denominational and congregational budgets were stretched to do this work, and pastors worked for minimal wages to make this happen. There was a shared sense of purpose: that to grow the church and bring members to Christ was the most important thing the church could do.

So, it is wrong to say that Lutherans cannot do evangelism. Perhaps it could be said that we have forgotten how to do evangelism, but our history shows that once we were very good at it. And maybe we can learn this once again, beginning by looking to our past.

THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE