

December
2014

St. John Lutheran Church

Mission Statement

St. John is a living witness to the love of God as shown in Jesus Christ.

We gather faithfully in His name to worship and praise Him; and we go forth in peace to share the Good News and to serve the world around us.

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The following article is written by the Rev. Kim Rapczak, an ELCA Pastor in Beaver Falls and is shared with you with her permission.

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

There is a beautiful carol in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, the current hymnal of the ELCA (the "red book"). It is called "In the Bleak Midwinter" and speaks the good news of the coming of God in flesh and blood to a world which often times seems bleak.

Below you will find the lyrics, with brief commentary. I invite you to use these lyrics as a meditation throughout Advent, as we look forward not only to the celebration of the birth of Jesus, but to his coming again in glory and the fulfillment of the Reign of God on Earth.

While we may yearn for a "white Christmas," this first verse reflects the weariness of a long, dark winter with too much cold and too much snow. The earth cannot be plowed to be planted, so that it may nourish us, and even life giving water is almost inaccessible. It also reflects the condition of life itself to some, who each day despair that joy and plenty will ever elude them.

1) In the bleak midwinter frosty wind did moan, Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone: Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow. In the bleak mid-winter, long ago.

The second verse speaks the utterly unimaginable news that God, who was from all eternity, who created and sustains everything that is, and will be after time has passed away, came to live among us in the poorest of circumstances.

2) Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain; Heaven & earth shall flee away when he comes to reign: In the bleak mid-winter a stable-place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

I think of Philippians 2:6--- 'Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at,' when I read the third and fourth verses of the hymn. The Word of God who was with God from all eternity exchanged the glory of heaven for the lowliness of earth:

3) Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night & day, A breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay: Enough for him, whom angels fall down before, The ox and ass and camel which adore.

4) Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air -
But only his mother in her maiden bliss
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

In the final verse, we are reminded that in response to the infinite gift of God in Jesus Christ, there is really nothing we have to offer, except our very selves.

5) What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what can, I give him? I will give my heart.

May you, and all whom you love, experience the joy and wonder of this Christmas season in which we recall the astounding fact that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God came to live among us in order that we might know the infinite fullness of God's love. Blessings now and for the New Year.

Banana Bread

Pastor Nathaneil Christman

My family likes bananas! But occasionally we buy more than we can eat. In fact, on most days, you can find browning bananas on the kitchen counter. Often these bananas are long past the point that any of those in our household would eat. However, I have learned not to throw them away. I have learned that a near rotten banana still has great potential. Every brown banana in the Christman family household has the potential to become banana bread! And banana bread is my second favorite form of a banana (the first being a banana split). Warm and smothered in butter, I absolutely love it!

There are many things in life that we watch began to rot - the end of a relationship, or a job, or our health, or a tradition, or an institution – and when we see these things happen it is easy to despair. After all, a thing that we have enjoyed (even loved) is changing forever. However, in the midst of such change may we keep in mind that we know that God is in the process of making all things new. The end of one area has always ushered in the beginning of another. And while what was once can never be the same again, what will be may be far greater than we could have imagined. In the hands of the right person, old bananas can become delicious banana bread.



Thought of the day: Do not lose heart, there is reason to hope! When life gives you over-ripe bananas make banana bread. Then share it with a friend!

Banana Bread Recipe

- Prep time: 10 minutes
- Cook time: 1 hour
- Yield: Makes one loaf.

The best bananas to use for banana bread are those that are over-ripe. The yellow peels should be at least half browned, and the bananas inside squishy and browning.

Ingredients

- 2-3 very ripe bananas, peeled
- 1/3 cup melted butter
- 1 cup of sugar (can easily use 3/4 cup, or drop it down to 1/2 cup if you want it less sweet)
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- Pinch of salt
- 1 1/2 cups of all-purpose flour (continued)

Method

Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C), and butter a 4x8-inch loaf pan.

In a mixing bowl, mash the ripe bananas with a fork until smooth. Stir the melted butter into the mashed bananas. Mix in the baking soda and salt. Stir in the sugar, beaten egg, and vanilla extract. Mix in the flour.

Pour the batter into your prepared loaf pan. Bake for 1 hour to 1 hour 10 minutes (check at 50 minutes) at 350°F (175°C), or until a tester inserted into the center comes out clean.

Remove from oven and cool completely on a rack. Remove the banana bread from the pan. Slice and serve.

Read more: http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/banana_bread/#ixzz3JLrV6kmJ



December 7 – Vestry Election

There will be one service at 9:00 am on Sunday, December 7 with Vestry election immediately following. Please join us after for First Breakfast.

December 14 – A Festival of Lessons and Carols – 4:30 pm

St John Lutheran Church will host a service of lessons and carols entitled *Peace Came to Earth*. The service will feature favorite Christmas carols and new songs celebrating the season and will include music for organ, flute, and guitar. **You are cordially invited to attend on Sunday, December 14, at 4:30pm.**

December 24 & 25 Worship Services

Christmas Eve – Services at 3:00 pm and 7:30 pm.

Christmas Day there will be one service at 10:30 am.

December 25 & 26 – Church Office Closed

Please note the church office will be **closed for Christmas on December 25 & 26.**

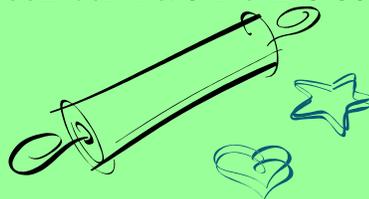
Meals on Wheels has asked for our help to provide desserts (cookies, cake, candies, whatever your specialty) during the month of December.

As you begin your Christmas baking, please think of others in our community and make a little extra. “Bring a Little Joy” to their life with something tasty!

No need for individual packaging. Please leave your dessert(s) in the kitchen on Sunday’s marked “MOW” and there will be deliveries each Monday in December.

Don't like to bake alone? Have an easy candy recipe?

Join us on December 4 & 5 from 9:30 am – 3:00 pm.



Items made to be provided for Meals on Wheels. Bring your pre-mixed batter and/or recipe and we will have a baking party.



Gingerbread House Decorating Party

December 6 – 11 am – 1 pm

Come and show off your Gingerbread House decorating skills!

Bring your preassembled gingerbread house ready to be decorated in your favorite candies. Great bonding time and lasting memories. Everyone has a fun time with lots of laughter and good cheer for all.



Angel Tree

During this holiday season, we will be sponsoring an Angel Tree for the residents at Glade Run Lutheran Services in Zelienople. Do not wrap the gifts. Please put them in a gift bag with the tag attached to the outside. There is a list of gift guidelines. **Please return your gift by Friday, December 12.**

We are also collecting socks, underwear and toiletries for Glade Run Lutheran Services. If you purchase these, place them in the appropriate bins in the greeting area. Socks and underwear need to be adult sizes. The children prefer bikini or low-ride for girls and boxers or boxer briefs for boys. They prefer low-cut or no-show socks. Hopefully you can find it in your heart this holiday season to help those who are less fortunate. Thank you for your participation, the kids will really appreciate it. If you have any questions, please contact Denise Hager.

Ladies Book Group

December 17

7:00 pm

We are now reading "Dear Life" by Alice Munro. It is a book of short stories and it includes a group reader's guide to invite discussion. There are several stories and we can do one or two at a time or however the group

First Breakfast

Sunday, December 7, 2014



Join us on the first Sunday of December for good food, fellowship and conversation!

Brown Bag Bible Study Mondays – Noon till 1:30 pm

Feel free to join us even if you haven't been coming previously. All you need is a willing spirit (though you may wish to bring your own Bible.)



Help Make a Change!

Please drop your loose change in the water jug in the greeting area to make a "CHANGE" in a young person's life. All donations collected will be turned over to the Glade Run Lutheran Services in the spring to make a life "Change-ing" impact. No amount is too small, it all adds up to making a difference!!!



December Birthdays

- 12/01 Dominic Cardinal
- 12/02 Cindy Wills
- 12/04 Timothy Wolfe, Jr.
- 12/06 Jacqueline Kennedy
- 12/10 Wanda Weidner
- 12/10 Aimee Wolfe
- 12/11 Serafina Julio
- 12/12 Beth McElhinny
- 12/13 Reed McDonough
- 12/18 Tess Bielo
- 12/23 Brynnley Bates
- 12/24 Christine Dishong
- 12/25 Jim Hager

Upcoming Events

January 4 – First Breakfast

January 10 – White Elephant Bingo

January 18 – Congregational Meeting



Worship Helpers for December

Please look in the greeting area for worship helper sign-up sheets for acolyte, lector, usher, or communion assistant for any Sunday in December.

Ushers

8:00 am	Bob Dishong
10:30 am	

Assisting Minister

8:00 am	Christine Dishong
10:30 am	Sally Foster

December Newsletter

Address service requested

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