

From the Pastor's Desk

"... Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." – Luke 2:19

Ninety miles. That is how far Mary and Joseph travelled from their home in Nazareth to their ancestral home, Bethlehem. There, by law, they were required to participate in a census. To put it in perspective, ninety miles is roughly the same as the distance from Williamsport to my hometown of Altoona. I have travelled back there many times since leaving. The trip takes just under two hours by automobile. To make the trip on foot would be doable, but it's not a trip I'd be anxious to take. I certainly would not want to do it with a pregnant woman, and I can't even imagine what it would be like to undertake such a journey as a pregnant woman.

And yet, that is how Joseph and Mary prepared for the birth of the savior of the world.

The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem takes one largely the Judean desert, but even deserts get cold temperatures in the winter. They also would have travelled through the heavily forested And when traveling through the heavily forested Jordan River valley, which brought the threat of predators, not to mention bandits and thieves.

And yet this is how Joseph and Mary prepared for the coming of God's Son.

And when they arrived at Bethlehem, they might normally have expected to stay with a Jewish family, but the sheer size of the crowd participating in the census forced them to seek accommodations at an inn. Many scholars believe that the "stable" at which they eventually arrived was actually a cave used for housing animals like mules and sheep. It might have protected them from the elements, but it was hardly clean and comfortable.

And yet, this is how Mary and Joseph prepared for the advent of Jesus.

Their experience reminds us that God comes to us in the midst of life. Even when life is messy. Hard. Uncomfortable. And not only does God come to us in those circumstances, the love of God is so great that God *shares* in those circumstances with us.

This Christmas has the potential to be messy, hard, and uncomfortable. At the time of this writing, we are facing great uncertainty as to whether we will hold in-person worship during the Advent and even Christmas seasons. All I can tell you at this time is that we will likely follow whatever recommendations come from the state and/or the Synod.

And so, just as I attempted in last month's newsletter to bring you encouragement in the face of a possible worst-case Thanksgiving scenario, here I am again.

And here's the hope. The conditions for Mary and Joseph dealt with were indeed a difficult way for them to prepare for Jesus. But he did come. And so he will for us. Whatever we face in the coming months, know that Jesus will be among us!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff", with a stylized, flowing script.

Advent and Christmas Worship

Please note that this schedule is flexible, pending developments. The following precautions will be lovingly taken at all worship services in December to protect each other:

- *Masks are required and will be provided.*
- *Singing will be limited (1-2 verses per hymn)*
- *Distancing will be requested (only every other pew will be used and family group will be asked to maintain a six-foot distance)*

Midweek Advent Services

There will be a short in-person prayer service on December 2, 9 and 16 in the Nave at 7 p.m. This service will be livestreamed.

Christmas Eve

Our current plan is to hold at least one in-person Christmas Eve service at 7:30 p.m. The service will be livestreamed, and 30 minutes after its conclusion there will be an extended period (10-15 minutes) of outdoor carol singing in the front parking lot/yard approximately 30 minutes after the service concludes to which all are invited.

Originally it was thought that we might limit the in-person worship to certain groups and require all others to participate in the livestream/outdoor caroling option. However, after discussing the issue, the Worship and Music ministry felt it best to find some balance between safety and inclusion.



So, in order to determine the desire for in-person attendance, we are asking you to let us know by December 15 if you plan to attend on Christmas Eve. Depending on the interest shown, we may add an additional service to accommodate all.

You can call (570 323-7309) or email (info@stlukeweb.com) with the number of people from your family who plan on attending.

December 27 – Online Service of Lessons and Carols

The Sunday after Christmas is traditionally a service of lessons and carols, with no sermon. Given that this service has been traditionally low attended, and in order to both recognize the current situation **and** provide an opportunity to increase involvement, this service will be online only – but with a twist!

All members are invited to record yourself and/or members of your family to record a reading or a carol (or both) at home. These will be compiled along with liturgy from Pastor Jeff and other music into a recording that will be broadcast online at 10:30 on the morning of December 27. Watch the bulletin and the Facebook group for more information on how to participate!

ST. LUKE ANNUAL MEETING of the Congregation, Part One will be held **NEXT Sunday, December 13th, following the 10:30AM worship service.** *(Pandemic Permitting)* A copy of the agenda and 2021 budget is available in the back of the nave and for pick up outside the church office door, in the glass foyer. **If you would like a mailed copy, please call the church office.**

ADVENT A joint project of Outreach and Service ministries have teamed up with Jessie Young and KidsPeace! Our Advent Tree(s) will be graced with "gift tag" ornaments this year. You are encouraged to take an ornament (see below). The Advent Tree(s) will be available in two locations this year: **1. In the West Hall; 2. in glass vestibule across from the office entrance.**

Be a Christmas Angel for KidsPeace Foster Families and Kids!

Our families and kids are AMAZING and have some wishes for Christmas....Here is how you can help their wishes come true

1. An **Amazon Wish List** has been created with gift ideas and suggestions.

Go to: https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/16Y4YNKDWNJ78?ref=wl_share

Chose and purchase what you would like to donate.

Items will be directly shipped to our Williamsport KidsPeace office.

2. **Christmas Angel Gift Tag** - Each tag has a gift request. Please consider taking a tag, purchase the gift and return it to the church by **Friday December 18, 2020.** Gifts can be dropped off during office or church hours. If you need to make other arrangements, please call the church office at 570 -323-7309 or contact Jessie Young. If you don't have the time or ability to purchase a gift, I would be happy to do that for you. Please make your donation to KidsPeace. **All gifts should be new and unwrapped please.** I will deliver them to our families the week of Christmas.

Please contact **Jessie Young**, with any questions.

Jessie.young@kidspeace.org, or 570-506-9546

About KidsPeace

KidsPeace is a private, non- profit organization dedicated to giving hope, help and healing to children and adults who love them. We serve children overcoming trauma, family disasters and other kinds of crisis. The

KidsPeace office in Williamsport serves foster children and families in Williamsport, Liberty, Montgomery, Howard, Montoursville, Picture Rocks, Loganton, Jersey Shore and Muncy Valley





**MOMS
DEMAND
ACTION**
FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA



December Service Project

We are collecting:

- **FULL-SIZE toiletry items:** shampoo and conditioner (including ethnic/textured hair products), deodorant, razors, shaving cream, hairbrushes, toothbrushes, toothpaste
- **NEW women's leggings, t-shirts, socks, bras and underwear**

(Sizes S-M-L please)

To honor the lives taken at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012, the Williamsport Chapter of Moms Demand Action will be conducting a service project to help women/families seeking shelter from domestic violence in Lycoming County. These items will be shared with the Wise Options program at the YWCA in Williamsport.

Collection Dates are November 30 through December 18

Please drop your donation items at either of these collection sites:

Representative Jeff Wheeland's office
349 Pine Street, Suite 1, Williamsport, PA 17701
Mon – Fri: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

St. Luke Lutheran Church
1400 Market Street
Williamsport PA 17701
(Drop-off box in right side entryway)

Please contact the Williamsport Chapter of Moms Demand Action at WilliamsportForGunSense@gmail.com if you have any questions.

News from the Pre-School at St. Luke

Even a global pandemic cannot contain the joy and wonder the children have at school. They are very good about wearing their masks and all CDC and Health Department guidelines are being met to keep everyone safe. With that said, December will be a busy month in the building. On December 15th, North Central PA Eye services will be here to do their annual screenings. That same day, we will start our Christmas festivities with the Gingerbread Man. On the 16th, Miss Nina will be our guest reader and we will have our book exchange while wearing red. On the 17th, we will all wear green and make Waffle Cone Christmas Trees. Our final and most fun activity will be on the 18th when the children wear their PJ's to school and we watch the movie Rudolph the Red- Nosed Reindeer.

Everyone from the Pre-School wants to wish all of our friends at St. Luke a very Merry Christmas. Your love and support are what makes our School so great.



AMERICAN RESCUE WORKER will be hosting their annual Holiday Food Distribution at 643 Elmira Street, Williamsport from 1PM to 6PM on December 22nd. The Holiday Food Distribution will be a drive thru event. They recommend that clients without transportation either ask someone they know with a car to bring them, or that they bring a cart to carry their items. They recommend this because the distribution will include one turkey, one box, and three bags of food, all equaling out to 70 pounds! No sign-up is required for this event. **For any questions or concerns, individuals can call the American Rescue Workers at 570-323-8401.**

TOY ASSISTANCE: Individuals seeking toy assistance are being referred to The Salvation Army, Williamsport for Toys for Tots sign-ups.

CHRISTMAS DINNER: American Rescue Workers will be holding a to-go Christmas meal from the donation dock at 643 Elmira St. Williamsport from **12 to 3p.m. on Christmas Day (December 25th)**. Individuals are free to take as many meals as they need in order to feed their family for the holiday.



2020

Poinsettias this year will be on a per-order basis. They can be placed as a memorial or honorarium using the coupon below. White, red, and a few pink poinsettias will be placed in the nave for Christmas Eve. All will remain in place until after the service Dec. 24th, after which time donors may take a plant or donate it to the church for decoration. ***No distribution deliveries will be done this year.*** Poinsettias are \$10 each. Pay with

the coupon and place in an envelope marked "Poinsettias". **Return them via the offering plate or to the office by Dec 9th.**

~~~~~

**PLEASE PRINT**

Given in memory of

\_\_\_\_\_

Or

Given in honor of

\_\_\_\_\_

By

\_\_\_\_\_

\$10 each

I would like:

1<sup>st</sup> color choice: \_\_\_\_\_ RED \_\_\_\_\_ WHITE \_\_\_\_\_ PINK

2<sup>nd</sup> color choice only: \_\_\_\_\_ RED \_\_\_\_\_ WHITE \_\_\_\_\_ PINK

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I will take my plant after the December 24<sup>th</sup> service.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I will donate my plant to the church for after Christmas service.

(Your 2<sup>nd</sup> color choice will only be placed if the green house is out of your 1<sup>st</sup> color choice or poor flower quality.)

# St. Luke Church Calendar

December 2020

| Sunday                                                                                                                       | Monday                                                                                                 | Tuesday                                                | Wednesday                                                                                                                                               | Thursday                                                                                                                                    | Friday                                                                | Saturday  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
|                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                        | <b>1</b><br>SERVICE 3P LIB.<br>WORSHIP & MUSIC 7P LIB. | <b>2</b><br>ADVENT MID-WEEK<br>SERVICE 7P<br>IN-PERSON &<br>FACEBOOKLIVE<br>(Pandemic & Weather<br>Permitting)                                          | <b>3</b><br>RCA 6:45P LIB.                                                                                                                  | <b>4</b>                                                              | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>6</b><br>ADVENT 2<br>8A WORSHIP<br>10:30A IN-PERSON &<br>FACEBOOKLIVE<br>CUB SCOUTS 5P-6:15P BH<br>(Pandemic Permitting)  | <b>7</b><br>BELLES BH 9A<br>SCOUTS 6:30P-9P BH<br>PERSONNEL 7P ZOOM<br>EXEC. COMM. MEETING<br>LOUNG 8P | <b>8</b>                                               | <b>9</b><br>ADVENT MID-WEEK<br>SERVICE 7P<br>IN-PERSON &<br>FACEBOOKLIVE<br>(Pandemic & Weather<br>Permitting)<br>POINSETTIA ORDERS<br>RETURN TO OFFICE | <b>10</b><br>RCA 6:45P LIB.<br>COIN CLUB BH 7P                                                                                              | <b>11</b><br>First day of Chanukah                                    | <b>12</b> |
| <b>13</b><br>ADVENT 3<br>8A WORSHIP<br>10:30A IN-PERSON &<br>FACEBOOKLIVE<br>CUB SCOUTS 5P-6:15P BH<br>(Pandemic Permitting) | <b>14</b><br>SCOUTS 6:30P-9P BH<br>ST. LUKE FUND 6:30P<br>COUNCIL ZOOM 7:30P                           | <b>15</b>                                              | <b>16</b><br>ADVENT MID-WEEK<br>SERVICE 7P<br>IN-PERSON &<br>FACEBOOKLIVE<br>(Pandemic & Weather<br>Permitting)                                         | <b>17</b><br>RCA 6:45P LIB.                                                                                                                 | <b>18</b>                                                             | <b>19</b> |
| <b>20</b><br>ADVENT 4<br>8A WORSHIP<br>10:30A IN-PERSON &<br>FACEBOOKLIVE<br>CUB SCOUTS 5P-6:15P BH<br>(Pandemic Permitting) | <b>21</b><br>SCOUTS 6:30P-9P BH<br>PRE-SCHOOL 7P LIB.                                                  | <b>22</b>                                              | <b>23</b>                                                                                                                                               | <b>24</b><br>Christmas Eve<br>CANDLELIGHT SERVICE<br>7:30P IN-PERSON &<br>LIVESTREAMED<br>OUTDOOR CAROL<br>SINGING<br>(Pandemic Permitting) | <b>25</b><br>Christmas Day<br>CHURCH OFFICE IS<br>CLOSED<br>BH RENTAL | <b>26</b> |
| <b>27</b><br>CHRISTMAS I<br>SERVICE OF LESSONS &<br>CAROLS<br>10:30A FACEBOOKLIVE<br>ONLY<br><br>CUB SCOUTS 5P-6:15P BH      | <b>28</b>                                                                                              | <b>29</b>                                              | <b>30</b>                                                                                                                                               | <b>31</b><br>New Year's Eve<br>RCA 6:45P LIB.                                                                                               |                                                                       |           |