



# THE MESSENGER

## ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH

December 2019

### 2019 Council Officers

**President-** Bob Thompson

**Vice President-** Kelly Bryan

**Secretary-** Karen Houseman

**Treasurer-** Jerry Wessel

### 2019 Council Members

**Christian Education -** Jerry Wessel

**Youth Ministry-** John B.

**Fellowship, Comm. & Publications**

Karen Houseman & Kelly Bryan

**Social Min./Evangelism-** Rudy M.

**Finance and Stewardship-** Bob T.

**Property-** Bob Thompson

**Worship/Music-** Lynn Kinney

**Mutual Ministry-** Ellen Randal

**Personnel-** Clay M.

### Next Council Meeting

**Tuesday Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM**

### WEEKLY EVENTS

**Spirituality Group** - Thursdays at 7pm

**AA Meeting** - Saturday's at 10:00AM

**Choir Practice** - Sundays after service

**NA Meeting** - Wednesday's at 7:30 PM

**Sunday School** - 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday

**Sunday Worship** with Holy

Communion at 10:30 AM

**Soccer Shots-** Tuesday's at 5:00 PM &

Saturday's at 9:20 (Spring-Fall)

**Happy Feet Soccer-** Taking the 2019 season off.

### From Pastor Murdy's Desk

#### Greetings in the name of our new born King!



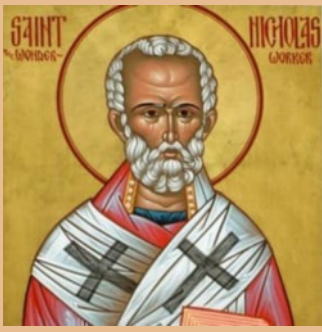
Happy Advent and soon to be a Merry Christmas! Its hard to believe that it's that time of year again. I pray that this letter finds you all in good health and in equal amazement for all that God is doing in our midst.

I love art, and in particular, icons and all the stories that go into

their creations. In my passion for symbolism I find peace in being a part of the story they tell. Icons, in particular are a rich source of this story telling. This great tradition of iconography comes from our Christian siblings in the East. Each icon symbolizes and represents a sort of window. Through these windows we can peer into the life of the church and gaze upon those persons and moments which have changed history. Icons are written with a great deal of prayer. A religious tradition dating back nearly two thousand years. The artist "writes" the story, rather than painting it. As windows, they are said to invite us into the story through meditation and prayer.

In preparation for the season of Advent, a season of waiting, I was meditating on the *Icon of the Nativity* asking myself, "Where do I see God in our world today?" It is sometimes really hard to see God, isn't it? With all the mess that surrounds us. If you look closely at the icon above you will notice a deep darkness surrounding Jesus. We often see pictures of the nativity, and everything is lit up...if not glowing! Why darkness at such a time of joy? The author of this icon, and many like it, has chosen darkness to symbolize the darkness in the cave and the dark abyss of this world. Darkness is always something that surrounds us, our doubts, fears, worries, anxieties, and so on. They surround us like a veil, and all too often we lose sight of God and our faith in that darkness.

If we think about it, God is in that darkness. God is present in the cave and emptiness in our lives. His voice echoes in the chambers of our hearts, calling us to faith and love-in-action. Born in human flesh, wrapped in rags, and placed in a feeding trough, God really does meet us where we are! God is in the midst of our darkness, resting in a manger. God came to earth-TO YOU-TO ME-in the muck and mire of our world. God is in those places we never expect,



## Saint Nicholas c. 280-December 6, 343

Saint Nicholas was a Christian bishop who helped the needy. After his death, the legend of his gift-giving grew. Saint Nicholas transformed into the legendary character called Santa Claus, who brings Christmas presents to children around the world.

He was born around 280 in Patara, Lycia, an area that is part of present-day Turkey. He lost both of his parents as a young man and reportedly used his inheritance to help the poor and sick. A devout Christian, he later served as bishop of Myra, a city that is now called Demre.

There are many legends about Saint Nicholas of Myra. One story tells how he helped three poor sisters. Their father did not have enough money to pay their dowries and thought of selling them into servitude. Three times, Saint Nicholas secretly went to their house at night and put a bag of money inside. The man used the money so that one of his daughters could marry. On the third visit, the man saw Saint Nicholas and thanked him for his kindness. He also reportedly saved three men who were falsely imprisoned.

Several sources state Saint Nicholas is believed to have died on December 6, 343. Over the years, stories of his miracles and work for the poor spread to other parts of the world. He became known as the protector of children and sailors and was associated with gift-giving. He was a popular saint in Europe until the time of the Reformation. Although the fest of Saint Nicholas has diminished in popularity in some ways, he remains an important figure in Holland.

The Dutch continued to celebrate the feast day of Saint Nicholas, December 6. It was a common practice for children to put out their shoes the night before. In the morning, they would discover the gifts that Saint Nicholas had left there for them. Dutch immigrants brought the legend of Saint Nicholas, known to them as Sint Nikolaas or by his nickname, Sinterklaas, to America in the 1700s.

Saint Nicholas went through many transformations in America: Sinterklaas became Santa Claus, and instead of giving gifts on December 6, he became a part of the Christmas holiday. In the 1820 poem "An Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas" by Clement Clarke Moore, he is described as a jolly, heavy man who comes down the chimney to leave presents for deserving children and drives a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer. The cartoonist Thomas Nast added to the Saint Nicholas legend with an 1881 drawing of Santa as wearing a red suit with white fur trim. Once a kind, charitable bishop, Saint Nicholas had become the Santa Claus we know today.

in the midst of His people. Who could have predicted that God would come into our world in such a fragile form? Who could have predicted that God would be "born" like you and me, fully dependent on this mother for life? Who could have predicted that the King of all creation would have stable animals as the first to kneel and pay homage to the almighty?

Christmas is a time of year for remembering, "Hunny, do you remember where we put the Christmas decorations?" "Remember when grandma almost fell into the tree?" Our memories can sometimes be our most powerful form of faith. Remember, my friends, that God is "Emmanuel"-"With us." This Christmas, I have much to give thanks for. I give thanks for my beautiful family, Amanda, McKenna, Zoey, Harper and now Jameson. Together we give thanks for each of you, and for the ways in which we recognize God at work in each and every one of you! May our Emmanuel grant you peace, joy, and a new vision to see God in new ways! Merry Christmas!

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Joseph Murdy



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

This is Christ's church.

There is a place for you here.

We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person--questions, complexities and all. Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.

## Council Highlights

### NOVEMBER

Each month we will be sharing a few highlights from the previous month's council meeting. If you ever would like more information on our council meetings, would like a copy of the constitution or are interested in looking back at previous meetings all you need to do is email the office. There is also a green binder in the narthex which contains: the agenda, minutes and reports from each meeting, the constitution, and council devotions.

-Proposed Budget – Jerry moved to present the budget, as amended by our discussion. John seconded. Motion carried. -Bob proposed to mail the budget to all members of the congregation and include an explanation, requesting an increase of 10% in giving -Road Clean-up was held in October with an Octoberfest celebration following at the church. -Presents for Patients is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. -Ellen moved for the councilmembers to lead by example and attend Presents for Patients event prior to the council meeting. Pastor seconded. Motion carried.

-Semi-annual Congregational meeting for the approval of the 2020 budget will be held on Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>

### THE LUNCH BUNCH DOES SUNNY



Drab November weather saw the Lunch Bunch craving something sunny. You may think that would mean a trip to Florida, Mexico or the Bahamas, but you would be wrong. The Lunch Bunch doesn't travel that far (and we are too cheap for those

trips, except for Nancy S. who was in Florida and missed lunch). Instead, we went to Sunny Jim's on Camp Horne Rd. The food and service were good (though Sunny Jim himself never brightened up the place) and the conversation was excellent.

Next month however, we ARE actually going to one of the islands for lunch! That would be Neville Island of course. We will be going to Carmody's on Neville Island and if you're free on December 19<sup>th</sup> we would love more company, some new stories and especially new jokes. Hopefully there will be no more reruns of bad Christmas jokes (sorry Joann). Call Nancy Schriber or Paula Wessel at least a week in advance so we can reserve enough places (there are a lot of holiday parties being booked this time of year). Plan your island get away now!

## A HISTORY OF THE CHRISMON TREE



Chrismon ornaments were first developed by Frances Kipps Spencer at Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia. In 1957, Mrs. Spencer began thinking about a way to decorate the Christmas tree in her church that would be more suitable for a Sanctuary. She thought that the traditional bright ornaments were not appropriate for a worship setting and began looking for something that would reflect the Christian faith.

Thinking of the tradition of decorating a birthday cake with the honoree's name, Mrs. Spencer decided to place the name of Jesus and his title, Christ, on the tree. Rather than using English, however, she used the Greek monograms. Thus the Greek "Chi Rho" became one of the earliest Chrismons because they are monograms for Christos, the Greek word for Christ. These simple monograms and some crosses decorated the first Chrismon Tree.

Over the years, Frances Spencer added other designs using signs and symbols utilized by the early Christians. As these designs increased in number, they included references to Jesus' life, ministry, and teachings. Chrismons are traditionally white, gold, and/or silver. White is the Church color for Christmas and symbolizes his Majesty and Glory. Chrismons can be made from anything, but paper and embroidered ones are the most widely used.



## DECEMBER:

Travis McEwen, December 6; Ryan Bayer, December 7; Jeanne Rose, December 12; Natalie Rodriguez, December 13; Paxton Brown, December 14; Debora Whitfield, 16; Dylan Siemons, Lauren Bayer, December 19; Katherine Neilson, December 20; Patricia Summerhill and Rudy Marnich Sr., December 21; Isabella Bryan, December 22; Joseph Neilson and James Mentzer, December 23; Barbara Thompson December 24; Jake Zoltun, December 29



## DECEMBER:

Jerry & Paula Wessel, December 2<sup>nd</sup>

Jeffrey & Debra Williams, December 4<sup>th</sup>



**LUNCH BUNCH-** Thursday Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> at Carmody's Grille on Neville Island.

We will meet there at 11:30 AM. We hope you can join us. If you are interested in coming contact Nancy Schreiber or Paula Wessel, by

Wednesday, so we can include you in our count. Everyone is welcome!

### Flower Order Envelopes

Often when people sign up for flowers we don't know if there is a specific dedication. It is also difficult to make sure that when folks sign up for flowers that they have been paid for. If you are interested in purchasing flowers (which is greatly encouraged) please fill out the flower envelop in the narthex with your name, the date and the person or occasion for the flowers. You can place your check inside and simply put it in the offering plate.

As a reminder: you must also put your name on the flower order chart by the date you wish to



### Lesser Festivals and Commemorations: Dec:

3 Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia, 1552

4 John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter, c. 749

6 Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c. 342

7 Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 397

13 Lucy, martyr, 304

14 John of the Cross, renewer of the church, 1591

20 Katharine von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, 1552

26 STEPHEN, DEACON AND MARTYR

27 JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

28 THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS

\*Lesser festivals are listed in small capital letters. The other listings are commemorations. Dates after names indicate year of death.

# FALL FUN!

## PUMPKIN PAINTING



## SILLY FACES



## ROAD CLEAN-UP



## TIPPLE DECKER S' MORES



A huge thank you to all of our members who helped with the Community Meal held at Stewart Lutheran Church! The church was sincerely grateful for the help of our willing volunteers (both youth and adults!) and for so many delicious desserts. We helped to serve 135 people an amazing Thanksgiving

meal, their best turnout to date! Thanks for supporting our church youth in this service opportunity, and our Pittsburgh community!



## "L<sup>3</sup>" Lutheran Liturgy Lessons

### ***How can lay people participate in worship leadership?***

Some worshipping communities print a bulletin that lists those involved in worship leadership. It is not uncommon to find this listing: "Ministers: The baptized people of God." When we gather for worship, we are all ministers, assembled to pray, sing, praise, celebrate communion and be sent forth in mission.

In *Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship: The Sunday Assembly*, a companion volume to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the authors base this shared leadership on Paul's description of the church in First Corinthians: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor.12: 12).

The ministries of the baptized are many and include: readers, ministers of communion, prayer leaders, cantor and other musicians, ushers, greeters and more. All of these individual ministries contribute to the health of the one body. "Each kind of minister has particular functions which are needed for the whole...no leader leads with their own authority; rather each leader uses the skills they have for the good of the assembly" (*The Sunday Assembly*, 75).

The history of the lay leadership in worship is a diverse one, but the vision expressed in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and its constellation of resources recovers the idea imagined in the very early church and in the New Testament: "a presiding minister in the midst of an active assembly, with many other lay ministers assisting in the assembly in its worship" (*The Sunday Assembly*, 80).

**Who is an assisting minister?** Although many people assist in worship leadership in a variety of ways, some might be trained to serve as an assisting minister. The rubrics (directions in red italics) in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* give directions for the presiding minister and assisting minister. The assisting minister can help the presiding minister throughout the liturgy by setting the table for communion, holding books, turning pages, and so forth.

These tasks vary from place to place, depending on architecture and the size of the assembly, as well as the style and extent of ceremony.

An assisting minister will be someone who is "mature in their faith, comfortable in front of a group, able to read well and be heard clearly, and carry themselves with dignity and a calm presence" (*Assisting Ministers and Readers*, p.6). Youth may also serve in this role if they demonstrate these gifts

Continued in next issue

For more information log onto [elca.org](http://elca.org)

From the Desk of: Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow



Today I am with a handful of our pastors at Trinity Seminary. We're attending an Anchor Church training and learning about new models of shared ministry that are working to sustain and revitalize congregations across our church. The event just happens to be held where I went to seminary, so for me it's a reminder of my first experience of training for the Gospel ministry.

That was 30 years ago. Since then a lot has changed in me, in the church and in the seminary itself.

Being here, and hearing stories of shared ministry models reminds me of my first call. It was a cooperative ministry that spanned four counties and brought pastors and interns and lay leaders together in sharing the leadership of 17 congregations. The shape of that ministry benefited from the collective insights of pastoral experience, recent seminary education and the daily vocation of lay leaders.

The world has changed; and the church has changed, and it's time once again to go back to school. Our small group is here to learn together how to be faithful in our synod in a new time. It could be that some of the old ways of being church together may be our best shape for ministry today and tomorrow.

+Kurt

From "Picture This" October 18, 2019

## ADVENT By Delmer Chilton

My friend spent a semester at Cambridge University in England. During his time there, he received an invitation to a “fancy dress” party. Wanting to make a good impression, he went out and rented a tuxedo for the evening. Imagine his surprise when he arrived and was greeted at the door by Chewbacca from Star Wars, accompanied by what looked like either Snow White or Sleeping Beauty. Turns out that in British English, “fancy dress” equals “costume party” in American English. A fast thinker, he proclaimed himself “The Great Gatsby,” and all was well.

Those of us who follow the lectionary texts in our observation of Advent can sometimes feel like my friend. We look around at everyone else dressed in cheerful green and red, reveling in yuletide joy; then we look at ourselves, clad in solemn Advent blue or purple, meditating upon sin, death, the devil and the end of the world. And we wonder, “Am I in the right place?”

Well, yes—yes, we are. Too often we forget the why of Christ’s coming. We talk about a savior being born, but we forget to ask, “Hmm, what exactly is it we’re being saved from?” We proclaim that “peace on Earth” has come without reflecting too deeply on the fact that it was the war in our hearts, the war in our families, the war in our communities, the war in our country, the war in our world that created the need for the Prince of Peace to be born among us.

For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, the Nicene Creed says. Advent lessons remind us of the reasons why. Jeremiah’s promises of a righteous branch from David, who will spring up bringing justice, righteousness and safety to Israel, Judah and Jerusalem, indicate that there was much injustice, evil and danger that needed divine intervention to be overcome. In Thessalonians, Paul feels it necessary to remind the early Christians that it is important to stay strong and strive for holiness while waiting for Christ. The most likely reason is there were, and are, many temptations and evils leading God’s people astray.

Our Gospel lesson is startling in its imagery of death and destruction. Sometimes such visions are merely metaphorical. At other times they can become frighteningly literal—as the people around the world can attest after this year’s series of hurricanes, tsunamis and wildfires. At all times these visions remind us that life is tenuous and occasionally brutal amid all its beauty and joy. The promise of the gospel, the promise of a savior, the promise of Advent, is that no matter the circumstances we face, God has not forgotten us; God is not far off from us; God is Emmanuel, “God with us.”

Amen and amen.

For more information log onto: [www.livinglutheran.org](http://www.livinglutheran.org)



## **A.L.C. EVENTS**

**Mid-Week Services:** Thursday's, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM.

**Parents Night Out:** Friday December 6<sup>th</sup> 6-8:30 PM.

Drop the kids off for a fun night of baking and decorating cookies and a showing of the movie Star.

**Sunday School-** Our schedule for children (Pre-K—Confirmation) will be 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays at 9am.

December 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Adult Sunday school remains every Sunday at 9am.

**Congregational Meeting:** Sunday December 8<sup>th</sup> after service.

**Presents for Patients:** Tuesday December 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm

**Council Meeting:** Tuesday December 10<sup>th</sup> after Presents for Patients, around 7:30 PM.

**Hanging of the Greens:** Sunday December 15<sup>th</sup> .

**Christmas Eve Service:** Tuesday December 24<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM and 10:00 PM.

# **2020 Lutherlyn Calendar**

Subject to change

## **January**

14-19 Quilting/Crafting Retreat (weekend or entire week)  
24-26 Winter Retreat

## **February**

1 Saturday Safari  
14-16 Fathers & Sons Retreat

## **March**

7 Maple Sugaring Saturday Safari  
17-22 Quilting/Crafting Retreat (weekend or entire week)  
21 Intro to Blacksmithing Class

## **April**

24-26 YouthFest (NWP & SWPA synod Jr. High & Sr. High youth event)  
25 Intro to Blacksmithing Class  
25 Work Day

## **May**

9 Camp Fun Run  
9 CAMP BLAST!!!  
31 Summer Staff Training Begins (runs through June 12)

## **June**

5-7 Grown Up Camp  
7 Trinity Pines Club Banquet  
14 SUMMER CAMP BEGINS

## **July**

1-31 SUMMER CAMP CONTINUES  
31 Last day of Summer Camp

## **August**

21-23 Grown Up Camp

## **September**

2-6 Quilting/Crafting Retreat (weekend or entire week) 5  
Intro to Blacksmithing Class  
12 Saturday Safari

## **October**

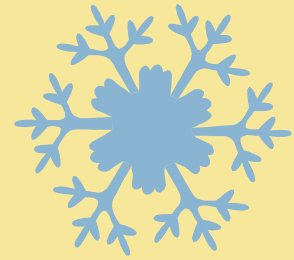
17,18 Woodland Quilters' Quilt Show  
17 Intro to Blacksmithing Class  
23-25 Fall Family Getaway Weekend  
24 Family Halloween Fun and Trick-or-treating!

## **November**

7 Saturday Safari  
17-22 Quilting/Crafting Retreat (weekend or entire week)  
21 Intro to Blacksmithing Class

## **December**




4-6 Advent Family Getaway Weekend 5  
Plunge!  
5 Family Advent Festival  
5 Advent Dinner and Worship



Visit [www.lutherlyn.com](http://www.lutherlyn.com) for more information about these events at Lutherlyn.  
*Lutherlyn ~ P.O. Box 355 ~ Prospect, PA 16052 ~ 724-865-2161 ~ [registrar@lutherlyn.com](mailto:registrar@lutherlyn.com)*



## December 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 1 <sup>st</sup> Advent	2	3	4 NA Meeting 7:30	5 Spirituality 7PM Mid-Week Service 7pm	6 Parents Night Out 6-8:30	7 AA Meeting 10AM
8 2 <sup>nd</sup> Advent Congregational Meeting after service	9	10 <i>Presents for Patients 6:30pm</i> Council Meeting 7:30PM	11 NA Meeting 7:30	12 Spirituality 7PM Mid-Week 7pm	13	14 AA Meeting 10AM
15 3 <sup>rd</sup> Advent Hanging of Greens	16	17	18 NA Meeting 7:30	19 <i>Lunch Bunch</i> Spirituality 7PM Mid-Week 7pm	20	21 AA Meeting 10AM
22 4 <sup>th</sup> Advent	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 4pm & 10pm	25 <i>Christmas Day</i> 	26 Spirituality 7PM	27	28 AA Meeting 10AM
29 1 <sup>st</sup> Christmas	30	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>				

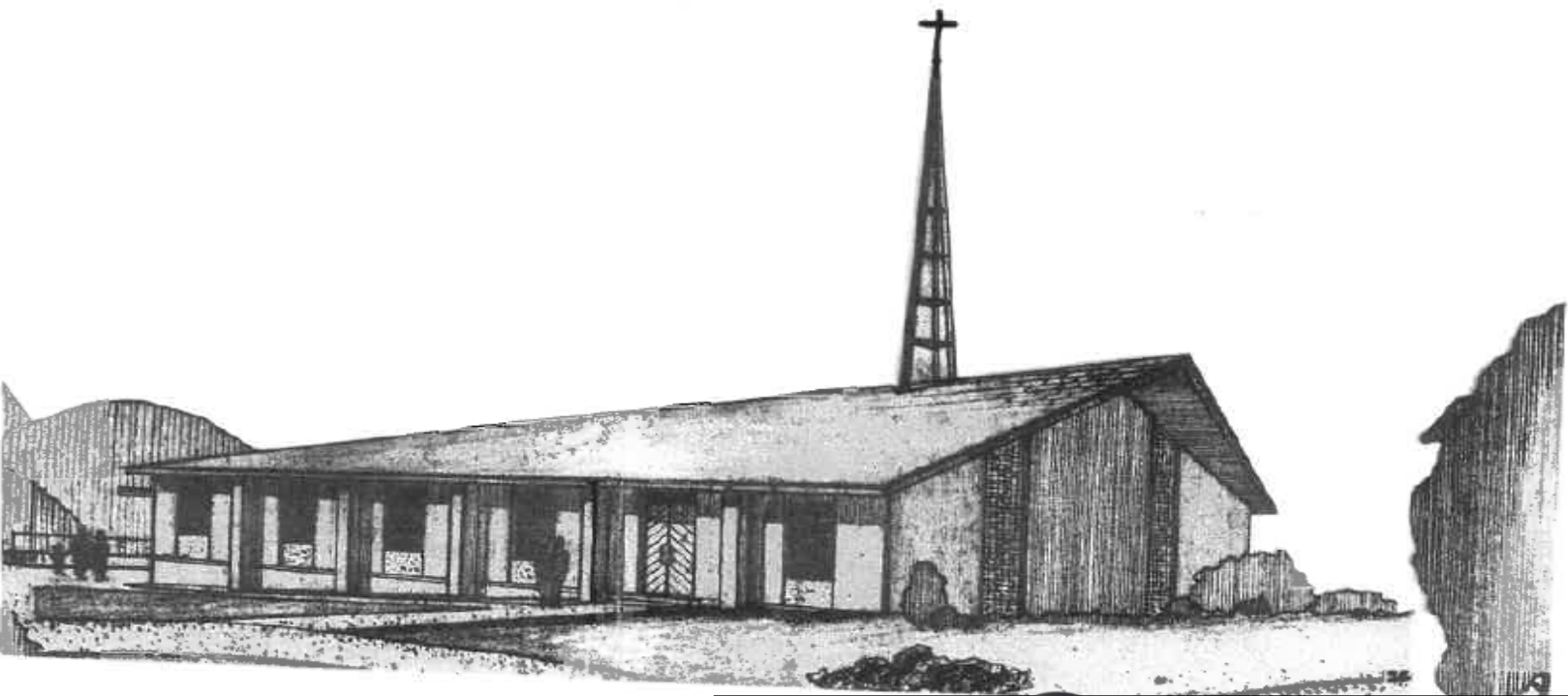
# Christmas



K	K	N	U	G	U	V	M	Y	S	T	V	F	M	M	T	Q	M	L
B	X	W	G	A	S	R	N	K	D	W	A	V	R	A	Q	D	Z	G
R	Z	I	U	U	D	H	A	N	S	M	V	G	H	H	N	N	Y	N
B	Z	S	H	D	N	L	E	N	Z	I	H	T	A	C	B	G	R	I
U	J	E	I	I	F	O	I	P	G	V	N	L	S	U	C	Z	E	K
E	Q	M	R	N	A	K	Y	H	H	E	L	A	Y	I	K	N	V	R
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N	C	N	P	R	I	N	C	E	L	Y	R	S	R	L	A	H	R	D
C	D	M	J	S	J	U	E	U	Q	N	C	D	C	X	I	M	C	Q
G	G	E	S	C	Q	Z	J	I	I	V	K	T	S	C	U	G	D	F
G	B	T	L	F	L	A	U	Y	B	B	A	V	J	X	G	T	M	M
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F	J	O	S	E	P	H	R	O	I	V	A	S	M	O	L	V	P	M
K	J	S	I	N	G	V	I	G	G	B	A	C	O	Q	V	E	S	E
A	R	F	H	H	P	B	H	U	K	Q	Y	B	A	B	A	E	G	J
Y	K	P	A	R	I	R	U	C	D	D	V	W	P	C	I	M	Z	K
Y	K	Y	T	C	S	N	F	G	J	X	R	O	E	B	O	R	N	U

Christ	Child	Baby	Born	Wisemen
Shepherds	Angels	Sing	Hallelujah	Savior
King	Prince	Peace	Love	Joy
Manger	Hay	Swaddling	Mary	Joseph





**To be Christ's Disciples, nurture our  
faith, serve God, welcome our  
neighbors, and joyfully share in His  
love**

#### Contact Us

(412) 859-3711

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