



St. James Lutheran Church

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Serving in God’s House in December

Trustee: December 3 – Brian DeVantier
 December 10– Andrew North
 December 17– Dave Antonelli
 December 24- Dave Milleville
 December 31- Chris Schimschack

Communion Assist:

December 3 – Donna Driess
 December 17– Margaret Wittmeyer
 December 25- Duane DeVantier

Altar Care: Jane Milleville

Readers: December 3– Andrea Haseley
 December 10– Joshua Haseley
 December 17– MaryAnn Kowalski
 December 24- Donna Driess
 December 25- Laurie Schmidt
 December 31- TBD

Organist: December 3– Jennifer Parris
 December 10– Janet Galvano
 December 17– Jennifer Parris
 December 24 – Jennifer Parris
 5pm- Janet Galvano
 December 25- Janet Galvano
 December 31- Janet Galvano

Channel 2 and 4 for weather closings

Christmas Eve: 9:15 Children’s Program
 5pm- Candlelight Service

Christmas Day- 9:15am Communion

Poinsettias! If you would like to share the joy of the Christmas season by placing a poinsettia - in honor or memory of a loved one - in our sanctuary, we ask that you have the plants at church between Friday, Dec. 15th. There will be a sign-up sheet on the table by the gray room. After the Christmas Day service, you may take them home with you if you like - or leave them for the Dec. 31st service. Thank you!

In honor of memory of Williams Buerger, \$200 was given to the memorial fund.

In memory of Gregory Haseley, \$60 was given to Caring Friends and \$50 was given to the capital improvement fund.

A big thank you from Caring Friends. To all who participated in our Thanksgiving Food Drive. Through your generosity, we were able to provide 34 bags of food and 52 turkeys from Pellicano’s to the North Tonawanda Food Pantry.

The annual congregational meeting will on December 10th at 10:30 in the fellowship hall. Per our constitution the only agenda items are election of officers, 2024 budget and 2024 worship services.

Advent Adiaphora

It's that time of year again; a time of great debate. When should we put up our Christmas decorations? With all the other things going on in this world, we still find time to debate this life-altering decision on the proper time to put up our Christmas decorations.

The answers and explanations to this question vary widely, as does the level of emotion and conviction of those who give them. All of the variations of answers, however, can be condensed to two main arguments. One school of thought argues that Christmas decorations can go up any time after Halloween, because Christmas is such a wonderful holiday that we should get to enjoy it as long as possible, and that its celebration should even take precedence over lesser holidays such as Thanksgiving. The other school of thought argues that Christmas decorations cannot go up any earlier than the day after Thanksgiving because we lose the excitement of Christmas when the decorations are up so long, and that it is proper that we give Thanksgiving its due honor. There is also the fringe opinion of some that Christmas decorations can be left up all year round, much to the dismay of their more sensible neighbors.

We must also factor into this argument the stipulations for decorating our churches for Christmas. Some congregations assert that if you put up Advent (not Christmas!) decorations even a day before the First Sunday in Advent then you are most assuredly a godless heathen. Others have the same view regarding turning on the lights on the tree, real vs. artificial trees, stars vs. angels on top, and other important decisions that can nearly split a congregation!

So, who is right? Which is the correct day to put up our Christmas decorations in our homes and churches? The answer is, of course, that there is no universal right or wrong day to put up your Christmas decorations. The day which you choose to put up your decorations depends on a variety of factors; factors which are themselves neither objectively good or bad. You are free to choose whichever day you'd like to put your decorations up with a clear conscious, so long as it is done to the mutual satisfaction and benefit of the members of your household, and for the good of the faith of your congregation.

It's not just decorations. Christmas music has become a polarizing subject. Some radio stations start playing Christmas music beginning November 1st. There are those who say Christmas music should wait until after Thanksgiving or even December 1st. I know a woman who listens to Christmas music year round. But how about in church? Some argue that we should sing Christmas hymns all through Advent so that we can enjoy the Christmas season for a longer period of time. Others argue that we should sing only Advent hymns in Advent and Christmas hymns during the twelve days of Christmas so that we can experience each season of the Church Year as they come. But that mostly is an argument from pastors.

So, who is right? When is the correct time to sing Christmas hymns? The answer, actually, is the same as with Christmas lights. There is no right or wrong time to sing Christmas hymns. Theologically speaking this question falls under a category we call adiaphora (indifferent things), which the Formula of Concord of our Lutheran Confessions describes as a ceremony or practice in the Church that is neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, but is introduced into the Church with good intention, for the sake of good order and proper custom, or otherwise to maintain Christian discipline.

If you want to sing Christmas songs at home during Advent, then go right ahead! We might even sneak in one or two hymns from the Christmas section of the hymnal during Advent at St. James if they help us reflect on the Scripture lessons for the day. Hopefully, though, you can appreciate the good intention of this Church tradition regarding Christmas hymns to help us all turn our hearts toward the three-fold Advent of Christ: His birth as the baby Jesus, His presence in the Word and Sacraments, and His return as Judge on the Last Day.

In fact, Advent is full of these sorts of adiaphora: traditions and practices which are neither commanded nor forbidden yet which help focus our attention on the various arrivals of Christ among us. Think about how all of these various Advent traditions at St. James can help inform, grow, and focus your faith this December. Here's a taste of just a few:

- *Blue Paraments*: In Advent our churches change colors from green to blue. Blue has come to symbolize the hope of our waiting for Christ's coming on the Last Day.
- *Evergreen Decorations*: Evergreen trees are green year-round. Evergreen trees, wreaths and garland remind us that our eternal Lord was made man so we can live with Him forever.
- *Poinsettias*: Poinsettias are called the "Flower of the Blessed Night (Christmas Eve)." Their star-like shape reminds us of the star of Bethlehem. Their red color reminds us of the blood Christ would shed for the sins of the world. White poinsettias remind us of the purity of the baby Jesus who, being true God and true Man, was born without sin.
- *Advent Candles*: Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. Advent candles are usually purple which remind us of the repentant nature of the season as well as our waiting for Christ our King. The one pink candle is for the Third Sunday in Advent, when we take a quick break from the more restrained character of the season to rejoice that Jesus has already been born, died, and has risen for us.
- *Charity Opportunities*: During Advent we will be preparing gifts for families in need. This is also a great season for your family to find your own ways of being charitable to your neighbor as well. In this way we will shine the light of Christ through those we love in His name.

In all you do, and however you do it, keep the expectation of Christ's coming the focus of this Advent season for you, your family, and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Randy





*As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.
-Romans 14:1-*



Finance Committee October 2023 Budget Summary			
Fund	Receipts/Contributions		Budget
	October	Year To Date	
General	\$14,750	\$144,698	\$172,000.00
Benevolence	\$1,360	\$15,526	\$15,000.00
Capital Improvement	\$975	\$10,245	None

A CHRIST-CENTERED CHRISTMAS ADVENT READING PLAN

Explore the true meaning of Christmas as you travel through God's Word. Discover God's promises he fulfilled through the birth of His only Son, the **KING OF KINGS**.

1 Isaiah 7:14

2 Isaiah 9:6-7

3 Malachi 3:1

4 Micah 5:2-4

5 Luke 1:5-7

6 Luke 1:10-15

7 Luke 1:18-22

8 Luke 1:24-25

9 Luke 1:26-29

10 Luke 1:30-33

11 Luke 2:1-5

12 Luke 2:6-7

13 Luke 2:8-14

14 Luke 2:15-20

15 Matthew 1:18-21

16 Matthew 1:22-25

17 Matthew 2:1-3

18 Matthew 2:4-6

19 Matthew 2:7-9

20 Matthew 2:10-12

21 Romans 15:13

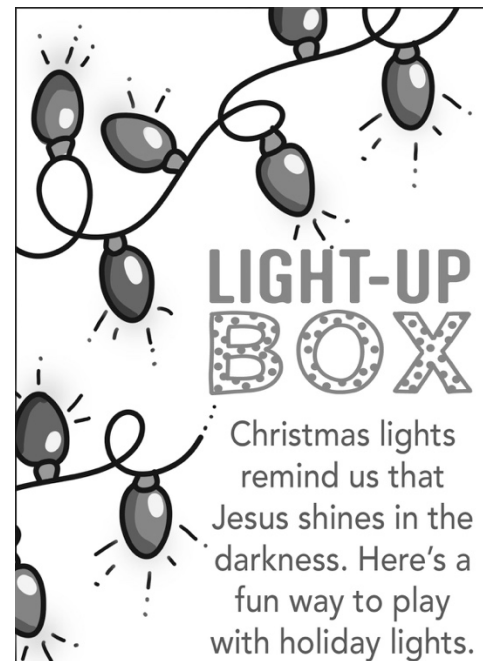
22 Galatians 4:4-5

23 Philippians 2:8-11

24 James 1:16-18

25 John 3:16

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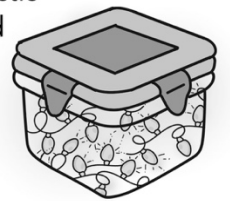


LIGHT-UP BOX

Christmas lights remind us that Jesus shines in the darkness. Here's a fun way to play with holiday lights.

What you need:

- A strand of Christmas lights
- A large clear plastic container and lid
- Green tissue paper
- Colorful beads



What you do:

1. Plug in the lights and place them in the container.
 2. Put on the lid. (If the lid isn't transparent, flip the box over.)
 3. Play with your light box, using these ideas as starters:
 - Cut tissue paper into triangles and arrange them in a tree shape. Decorate the tree with colorful beads.
 - Use the light box for tracing. Place a picture on it, with a clean sheet of paper on top. Then trace the drawing.
 - Use magnet tiles to build designs atop the light box.
- Try building a 3-D Christmas tree!

