

THE MESSENGER

December 2023

The newsletter of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

Preparing for Christmas

Church Decorating Sunday, December 3

11:30 am



Everyone is welcome to help decorate the church for Christmas.

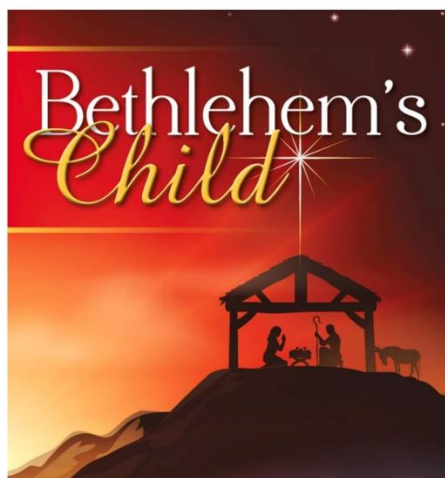


Midweek Advent Meals & Worship

Like evening or casual worship? Midweek Advent worship services will be held in the fellowship hall in the lower level of the church. Services will be in an informal, modified Bible Study format and will include: confession and absolution, opening and closing hymns, and a Bible study. **Advent worship** will be held on **Wednesdays, December 6, 13 and 20** starting at **6:30 pm**. There will be a **potluck meal** before each service starting at **5:45 pm**. All are welcome.

In this Messenger:

- 1) Upcoming Events
- 2) Pastor's Devotion
- 3) Calendar
- 4) Connecting our Community
- 4) Parking Lot Fundraiser
- 4) Save the Date: Mission Festival 2024
- 4) Attendance & Finance Numbers
- 4) Birthdays/Anniversary
- 5) Outreach Opportunity: Christmas 2023
- 5) Family and Advent Devotions
- 6) Pictures



Northland Lutheran High School's Christmas Concert (band & choir)

Sunday, December 17

3:00 pm

2107 Tower Rd
Kronenwetter, WI 54455



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www.christmerrill.com
www.facebook.com/christmerrill
1204 N. Sales Street | Merrill, WI 54452



God's Grace in Christmas

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. ² (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) ³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

(Luke 2:1-7 KJV)

What a familiar account these words are. Most of you can probably remember that as a young child you memorized these words for a Christmas service. When we hear this familiar account it puts a smile on our face and joy in our heart.

But even though this account is very familiar to us, there is something here that is completely unfamiliar to us, and that's the concept of God's grace. **Absolutely nothing in this world completely compares to the great love that God has for us unworthy sinners.** Just look at what the eternal, all-mighty, God did for us. Jesus humbled himself to be born of the virgin Mary. He was placed in a manger; there was no crib for his bed. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, just a few strips of cloth. Why would Jesus do all of this? **It's because God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** This is God's grace to us, and the only reason we know how much God loves us is because he has revealed it to us.

Hearing and knowing this familiar account should bring joy to our hearts, but there's one more thing that's also familiar to us during this time: the commercialism and business of this season. These things can rob from us the true joy of Christmas. We may be so busy with the parties and the events that they rob us from focusing on the true meaning of Christmas or rob us from coming to church to hear about why Christ was born. The commercialism of buying gifts and presents can rob from our offerings that we don't give our best offerings to God. We can be so wrapped up in the business and commercialism that we have no room in the inn of our hearts for celebrating Christ and his birth.

Therefore because of these sins there should be no room in the inn of heaven. But here we see God's grace. Even though the world would despise and hate Christ, even though we sin against him, God still sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem us under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. **Since Christ was born and redeemed us, we will inherit heaven where Christ has promised he is preparing a room for us. This is the joy of Christmas!** So as you hear this familiar account during the Christmas season may it put a smile on your face and joy in your heart to know that on Christmas in the town of David a Savior has been born to us; he is Christ our Lord.

- Pastor Neal Behm

December 2023

View the most up to date calendar at christmerrill.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 9:00 am Worship (Holy Communion) 10:30 am Children's Practice 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study 11:30 am Church Decorating	4	5	6 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:30 pm Catechism Class 5:45 pm Meal 6:30 pm Advent Worship 7:30 pm Choir	7 6:30 pm Women's Bible Study	8 6:30 pm Swing Dancing	9 9:00 am Men's Bible Study 9:00 am Children's Practice
10 9:00 am Worship 10:20 am Children's Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	11	12 2:00 pm Worship @ Bell Tower 6:30 pm Council Meeting	13 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:30 pm Catechism Class 5:45 pm Meal 6:30 pm Advent Worship	14	15	16
17 9:00 am Worship (Holy Communion) 10:20 am Children's Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	18 6:00 pm Board of Elders Meeting	19	20 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:30 pm Catechism Class 5:45 pm Meal 6:30 pm Advent Worship	21	22	23
24 9:00 am Worship 6:30 pm Worship	25 9:00 am Worship	26	27	28	29	30
30 9:00 am Worship						

8:00 am Sundays - worship service on the radio (96.3FM, 730AM)

9:00 am Sundays - worship service online at youtube.com/@christmerrill

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY New church directories will be printed this month. This resource will include members' names and contact information.

PARKING LOT FUNDRAISING A box for donations to help pay for the parking lot is available in the church narthex. If you wish to have your donation recorded with your other church offerings, please write your name or envelope number on an envelope with cash or check inside.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP '21 TRANSITION UPDATE


Beginning with the first worship service in January 2024, we will switch to full-time use of the new hymnal at all our worship services.

SAVE THE DATE: MISSION FESTIVAL


Pastor Jeffrey Mahnke from St. Peter, Schofield/Wausau, will be our guest preacher on **January 21, 2024** for a mission-themed worship service. After fellowship time, he will give a presentation about home missions and the newly established Kronenwetter mission. In addition to his duties at St. Peter, Pastor Mahnke also serves God's people as the chairman of the Western Wisconsin District's Mission Board and as a member of the WELS Board for Home Missions.

P-16 TUITION ASSISTANCE FUND Looking for a way to support those in our church that go to a WELS school? The P-16 Tuition Assistance Fund is designed to financially assist those who attend WELS preschools, grade, middle and high schools. Please consider contributing to the fund as it is currently below its target goal.

WORSHIP LIVESTREAM Christ Ev. Lutheran Church provides an internet livestream broadcast during many of the **Sunday services** (9:00 am).



Subscribe to the YouTube channel youtube.com/@christmerrill to get updates about the live streaming schedule. The videos are available on the channel to watch at one's convenience.



<i>Spiritual Growth Weekly Averages</i>	October
Sunday worship	66
Men's Bible Study	7
Sunday Adult Bible Study	15
Sunday School & Teen Bible Study	8
Wednesday Bible Study	10
Women's Bible Study	7

Our Offerings to the Lord (as of 10/31/23)
 Anticipated offerings: \$132,011
 Actual offerings: \$119,214
 Actual expenses: \$120,638
 General Fund balance as of 11/12/23: \$21,989

Your offerings help to support the ministry of the congregation. Giving continues to trend below budget. Please consider how your offerings benefit our church, our fellowship events, and our ability to reach our community. For more information, see the Treasurer Report on the bulletin board by the elevator.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Julie M.	17 Adeline H.
6 Abby R.	21 Jerome B.
9 Leah G.	21 Pamela P.
12 Paxton K.	21 Scott S.
13 Kennedy G.	22 Annie K.
16 Joy K.	29 Cindy W.
16 Tom L.	30 Melissa S.



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!
 December 17 Larry & Lois W.

SHUT-IN VISITATION The Elders welcome help from members visiting our shut-ins: **Laurene H., Tom L., Phil M., Lorna P., and Kathleen P.** Members are encouraged to visit and/or keep them in their prayers. Please reach out to Pastor or an elder for contact information.

BE PART OF CHRISTMAS 2023!

Whom will you reach? Christmas Eve has surpassed Easter as the number one service that unchurched people are willing to attend. Multiple studies have shown the majority of people will accept a direct invitation to Christmas Eve if asked by someone they trust. Those same studies show that dechurched enjoy singing Christmas carols that are familiar. C23, short for Christmas 2023, is an opportunity to share the gospel with souls in our area prior to and on Christmas Eve. Invite them to come with you to our congregation's 6:30 pm Christmas Eve worship service. Christmas Eve will be here before you know it.

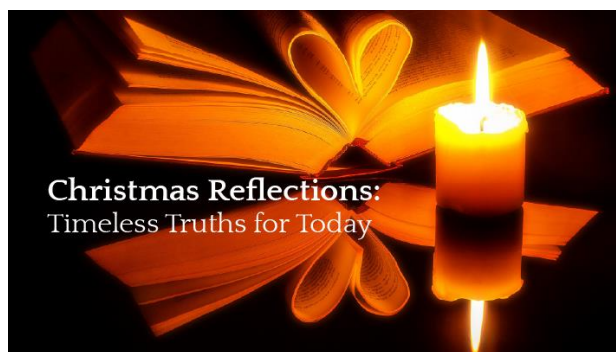


MESSENGER SIGN-UP Anyone can get an electronic copy of each month's *Messenger* in their email! Simply go to ChristMerrill.com/email and subscribe to *Messenger*. Paper copies will continue to be available at church.

WELS FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Get your family into God's Word during the week! WELS has developed short devotions for the entire family to use. Each devotion comes complete with a set of questions for different age groups, a prayer, and hymn verses that can be sung or spoken. Downloadable printable versions are also available. Find the family devotions at wels.net/family-devotions.

ADVENT DEVOTIONS



Advent is a time for preparation. It's a time of waiting. It's a time for wonder, the wonder of God's gift to all sinners – a little baby, humbly born in a manger, who will become the savior of the world. WELS Women's Ministry is offering daily devotions for the season of Advent to help you prepare your heart as you wait for the coming gift of our Lord Jesus.

Subscribe now at <https://wels.net/wm-advent-devotions/> to receive daily advent devotions to help prepare your hearts for Jesus' birth.

UPCOMING WEBINAR – Reviving Relationships Through Biblical Hospitality

Date: Thursday, January 18, 2024

Time: 7:00-8:00 pm (CST)

Want to learn about using hospitality to reconnect with others at your church and also as an evangelism tool? This webinar will inspire you to rethink your relationships and get you thinking about your own church culture with new eyes.

Panelists will talk about the importance of biblical hospitality in your home, at church, and even in public.

Learn more and register at <https://wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/womens-ministry/womens-ministry-webinars/>

Chili Cook-off & Packers Party



Best Chili Awards: Jeannie, Mary, Jacob



Swing Dancing



Join the fun on the second Friday of each month through March!

The 10 Commandments Skits



Members of the Teen Bible Study (Katelyn, Sonia, Derek, and Kaylynn) performed short skits about the 10 Commandments each ending with the line "Now you're thinking like Moses!"