

The

VOICE

December 2020

Missouri District Newsletter

In This Issue: Teaching Advent in the Home

DCE Heidi Lewis and Rev. David Lewis at Saint Trinity

From the President's Desk: Advent and Christmas Seasons in the Home

As our culture has advanced from television to video cassettes to DVDs and now streaming platforms, we have moved further away from oral tradition. For generations, the family history was passed down orally. Few families had written histories that documented events and relationships beyond the "Family Bible." Most records of the family history were handed on as the family gathered together for conversation (and food). While there are many challenges associated with the pandemic, it has afforded families time together for such conversation that has become increasingly less frequent with all of the other activities. During this season of Advent and our coming celebration of our Savior's birth, now is a perfect time for our homes to be filled with conversations about faith, families and our Lord Jesus Christ.

When our daughter was small, one year we used a Jesse Tree devotional book as a chance to teach our daughter about God's family. Each night she was able to place the various "ornaments" associated with the members of Jesus and Jesse's family. Not unlike how the Easter Vigil connects the Old Testament stories of deliverance, the people and events highlighted through the Jesse Tree remind us that God's plan from the beginning was to send a descendant of Adam and Eve to redeem them and God's people who clung to the promise of a Messiah.

Many congregations this year will not have all of their usual Advent and Christmas services and programs. However, this is a great time for families to gather in their homes and put down their phones and tablets and spend some time listening to the stories of God's plan for His people. Like our family members who have gone before us, we can gather by candlelight for prayer and song, quiet and meditation as we recall how God sent His Son Jesus to restore His fallen creation.

There are many devotional resources available to help you observe the Advent and Christmas seasons. There are also many wonderful traditions that can be observed in the home to teach children and adults about a family that goes back from Joseph and Mary to Daniel, David, Moses, Noah all the way back to our first parents. If you need help finding a resource, just ask your pastor. However, a hymnal and an Advent devotion (from Concordia Publishing House or Lutheran Hour Ministries) is a great place to start.

May the Word of Christ dwell in our homes richly this blessed Advent season as we await our Savior's coming as the Babe of Bethlehem and His coming again as the King of Glory. God's blessings to your family as you read, mark, learn and inwardly digest this Word this Advent season.

Fraternally in Christ,



President Lee Hagan



Thank You for Your Partnership with the Missouri District

The purpose—and joy—of being the Missouri District is the reality that no congregation, school, or church worker need ever face the highs and lows of ministry alone. God has intentionally brought us together to be a blessing to each other and the state where we live. **We count you among these blessings and thank you for your partnership.**

Collaboration and resources for rural and urban congregations. Outreach among the military, college students, and those new to our nation. New church plants. With God's direction, and by His grace, our efforts will continue to shine the light of Christ brightly in our communities. We're excited about the future and would like to invite you to be a part of it.

Will you please prayerfully consider supporting these outreach efforts—and many more—with a gift to the mission endeavors of the Missouri District?

Gifts can be made online at <https://mo.lcms.org/donate> or sent to the District office at:

Missouri District LCMS
660 Mason Ridge Center Drive, Suite 100
St. Louis, MO 63141

The Christmas season is a reminder of how much our God loves us and continually provides for us—be it the arrival of a Savior, calm for a troubled heart in a pandemic, or the partnership and encouragement from a loving friend through the peaks and valleys of ministry. Thank you for your support.

God's richest blessings this Christmas.



Leah Sieveking

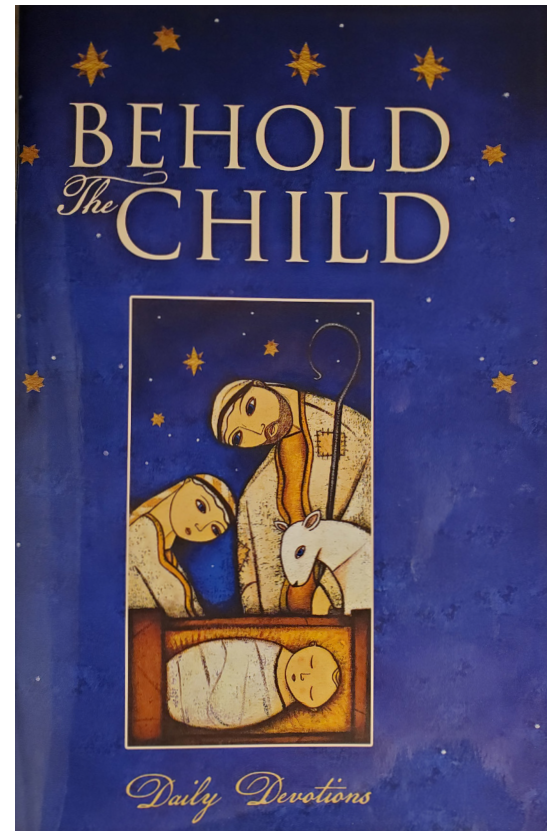
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"Behold the Child"

Our theme of "Teaching Advent in the Home" continues with a devotional designed for at-home use. Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden, authored the CPH devotional "Behold the Child" with a focus on daily and family devotions.

Rev. Golden says that advent is a perfect time to start daily family devotions! He cites that advent and the excitement of the anticipation of Christmas helps to bring the family together and can set a pattern for the rest of the year. Lighting an advent wreath is also exciting for kids and adults alike.

Each "Behold the Child" devotion is based off of psalms appointed for the Sundays in advent. "The psalms are the prayer book of the Bible," explains Golden, "The reason that the psalms are chosen on a given Sunday is that they funnel into the theological focus of that Sunday. So the focus of advent on preparing for Christ's coming is found in those psalms. So these are 'psalms of anticipation for the coming of the Messiah'."



DID YOU KNOW?

Advent is all about preparing for the birth of Christ— Christmas. The word advent comes from the latin advenio, meaning "coming to something". There are four Sundays in the season of advent, and there is a big focus on the fulfillment of Old Testament promises.



Rev. Dr. Kevin Golden has served as pastor at Village Lutheran Church in Ladue since 2009. He also serves as the second vice president of the Missouri District. In addition to "Behold the Child", he has also authored "Blessed Be His Name: Revealing the Sacred Names of God" which can be ordered from CPH.

"Light One Candle..."

One church in Missouri is providing advent wreaths for their church and members of their community.



St. Andrew's Youth Director Casey Morgan & Rev. Ronnie Backs introduce their advent wreaths in an online video.

Churches around the District are looking to find ways to connect with their congregations and their community. Some churches, like St. Andrew in Stockton, has found a unique and simple way to engage people: take home advent wreaths and a family interactive book.

Like all churches, St. Andrew has had to implement many measures during COVID-19, like having an additional service on Sundays to accommodate social distancing and switching Bible studies and services to online streaming for at-home viewing.

With midweek services often having low attendance even before COVID-19, they decided to take a hybrid approach: online only mid-week services with daily at-home advent activities.

One way they plan to help families stay engaged with devotions and church is by providing simple advent wreaths and a children's activity which includes a book with stickers to place on a backdrop of Bethlehem. Rev. Ronnie Backs, pastor at St. Andrew explains, "We thought that with the combination of the advent wreath and the children's activity that we would have [increased] interaction with parents and with their children." The theme of the devotions? Backs says, "[We went] back to the very basics of hope, peace, love, and joy." Casey Morgan, youth director for St. Andrew, leads the children's activity through brief, daily videos.

St. Andrew is an excellent example of creating an impact on a budget. They used basic supplies to assemble the advent wreaths and they are hosting their daily advent videos via Facebook. You can follow along too, simply visit their Facebook page (ST ANDREW LUTHERAN STOCKTON MO.)



MISSION OVERVIEW: Saint Trinity in Saint Louis

Saint Trinity, located in south St. Louis, is an urban mission replant funded by grant money from the District. The church is located in an historic building over 150 years old and sits next to two other properties of Saint Trinity which help with outreach: a refurbished house and a large, old school building. These properties are serving as unique blessings in a unique time.

In addition to hosting socially distant worship and streams services online, Saint Trinity has also worked hard to prepare at-home advent activities for members and others in their faith family. Heidi Lewis volunteers as DCE at Saint Trinity. DCE Lewis explains the importance of creating an at-home learning packet. "We wanted to really meet people in a powerful way, in a unique time," explains Lewis, "Also knowing that as spikes are occurring, some of our members, and as they should – have preexisting conditions or are seniors – are choosing to worship at home for their safety, which we totally understand and encourage, but we didn't want them not to have a Christ-centered advent. And so, this kind of came out of a dream of 'how can we meet people'."



Volunteers prepare advent at-home advent activities; Saint Trinity's church; High school students gather on Tuesdays

That dream of meeting people where they are, extends to their use of the two properties next to the church building. One is an old house that has been slowly and fully refurbished over the last eight to nine years thanks to volunteers' time and skills. Saint Trinity also has a large, old school building. While the school closed in the 1970s, it remained in use over the decades as the church's offices and as a food pantry on the lower floor. The large building, complete with an upstairs wooden floor gymnasium, has found another purpose during COVID-19. The large, previously unused spaces allows for people to gather for certain activities while remaining socially distant.

One great example of this is hosting virtual learning for high school students. Lewis explains, "We call it 'remote learning doesn't have to be lonely learning.'" They host students on Tuesdays from 7:15 a.m. until 3 p.m. with between two to eight students representing seven different schools. "These are all kids who have a relationship with our ministry. Some are technically members and some are active here and not necessarily members, but we consider them part of our church family," says Lewis, "By the end of the summer we were just kind of aware of the mental health of everybody, Everybody was just struggling. And, we just felt that we had this blessing here with this big, empty building." Response has been very positive and several other groups have contacted Saint Trinity about using their building, such as volleyball and basketball groups and a Girl Scout troop.

"Our ultimate goal is to use the space like a community center," Lewis comments, "That's our dream for this building, so that it would be a safe hub for our community where the light is shined and gives us an opportunity to have rich relationships that point to Jesus."

Christkindlesmarkt:

An Authentic German Christmas Market in Concordia

Looking for a fun holiday adventure? Saint Paul High School in Concordia is hosting an authentic German Christkindlesmarkt. Dr. Jerrode Marsh, Director of Music at Saint Paul, explains that a Christkindlesmarkt is an outdoor German Christmas market comprised of handmade artisan items that are either used at Christmas or purchased for Christmas. Saint Paul will have vendors on campus featuring woodworking, leatherworks, specialty foods, knitted garments, handmade jewelry, handmade ornaments, custom ceramics, pottery, and more.

But as Dr. Marsh points out, what makes this market unique is the experience and the authenticity. "In addition to that there's all this food and drink that you go and you buy and enjoy while you are strolling and buying your shopping," explains Marsh, "I think our calling card for success is the authenticity of the German part of it. Otherwise, we're just another Christmas market. So we are serving German food, German Christmas specialties, and the layout and the look feel like a German Christmas market...when you walk through you can smell the crepes being made." In addition to crepes, other German food includes roasted almonds, waffles, mutzen, gingerbread, bratwurst, pretzels, bagged caramel corn, french fries, and more. Plus there are delicious drinks, such as Glühwein and beer.

This is a family friendly event. Children of all ages can find fun things to do, such as processing with the Christkind (a friendly girl dressed like an angel who officially "opens" the market), making candles, decorating gingerbread houses, participating in a scavenger hunt, and more. Plus there are decorated horse-drawn carriage rides. There is no cost to enter the market, and many of the children's activities are free or just have a small fee.

This is the inaugural year for the Christkindlesmarkt, and as Kent Kunkel, Director of Development at Saint Paul, explains this event is more than excitement of simply hosting a great market. "At Saint Paul we are in constant service to others," says Kunkel, "and this year with COVID and everything going on, we want to give something back to our community... We want to invite them up onto the campus, walk around and get to know our faculty and staff and students." And as Dr. Marsh adds, "It's really very much a service to the community, but it's also an opportunity for us to share who we are and showing our students in service to the community."

SAINT PAUL HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTKINDLESMARKT

December 11, 4:00p.m.-9:00p.m.

December 12, 11:00a.m.-9:00p.m.



Dr. Jerrode Marsh (left) at a Christkindelsmarkdt in Germany.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE MISSOURI DISTRICT OFFICE



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD