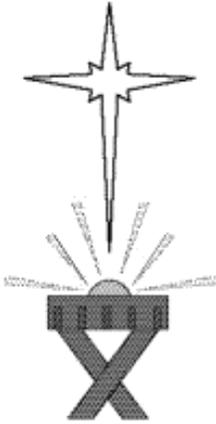


DECEMBER 2023

Rev. M. Zeuch
ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH
110 years proclaiming Christ in Bridgeland!

Agape



Hello dear readers!

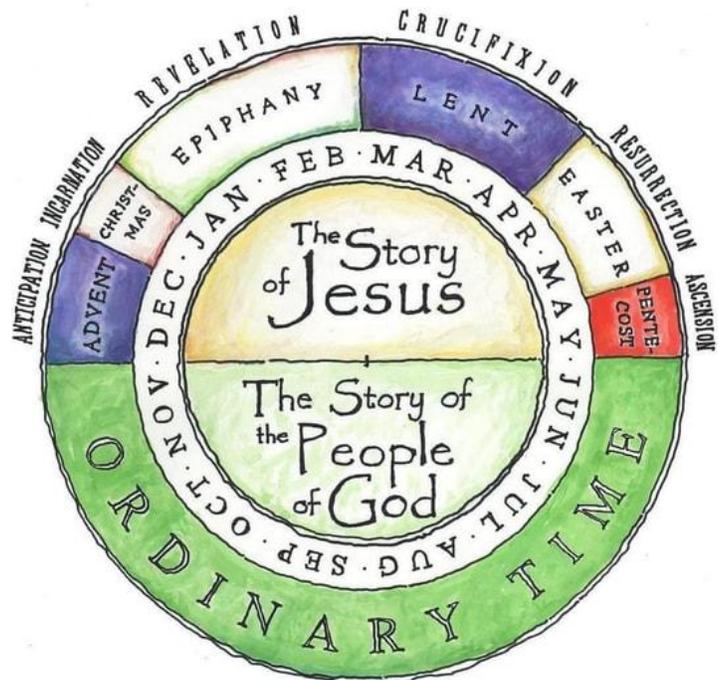
On our last edition I shared with you the text of Ecclesiastes 3: there is a time for everything". Time is a precious commodity...it runs, it flies, it slips through our fingers! We just ended another year in the church calendar. God has blessed us again. On December 3 we start a new year in the church. This new season is called Advent. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before December 25, or the Sunday closest to the Festival of St. Andrew (Nov 30), and ends with midday prayer on December 24.

The Saviour's birth is second in importance only to His resurrection on Easter Sunday. During the Time of Christmas, Christians reflect on God's great and precious gift of Himself.

The church year begins with Advent (from Latin *adventus*, which means "coming into", a four-week period of preparation before Christmas. The story of Jesus during Advent is the story of hope coming in to the world. When the time was just right, God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world. The Advent season teaches us to prepare to receive Jesus, the hope of the world.

In Advent, we wait for our coming King. Here are a few Bible passages for your devotional reading: Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-2

Micah 5:2 Matthew 1: 18-25 Luke 1: 26-38, 46-55



Advent Practices and Traditions:

- The colour for Advent is blue, which symbolizes anticipation and hope in our coming King. Violet can also be used as a symbol of our repentance in preparation for our coming King.

- We don't sing the Gloria in Excelsis in the Divine Service during Advent. This is the angels' song at Christmas, so during Advent we pass over this traditional Hymn of Praise in silent anticipation.
- It has become common to use an Advent wreath to mark the season. This wreath has four candles – one for each week in Advent. As these candles are lit each week, our anticipation mounts as we look forward to Jesus' coming.

I wish you a meaningful time of Advent and Christmas, and may our Lord Jesus Christ come into your own heart this year!



A FEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIBLE STUDY: We will continue to meet on zoom every Tuesday at 7 pm until December 19th for this year. Please join us for these special moments with God's Word. You may ask me (pastor) to send you the invitation to log in.

TANNENBAUM LIGHTING FESTIVAL: If you read this Agape before December 2nd, you still have a chance to come to the third edition of the Tannenbaum Lighting Festival! It takes place at our church on Saturday, Dec. 2 at 5 pm. There will be a Christ-centred message, beautiful choirs, poems, sing-along of Christmas carols followed by fine German "Kuchen" and coffee. We encourage you to bring your friends and family to this free event. Please bring also a free donation that goes to a chosen charity.



MEN'S BREAKFAST December 9, 2023 @ 9 AM: We are inviting all men of the congregation (18+) to join us at our men's breakfast! We will spend some good time together with fellowship, Christian discussion, and good food! Our first breakfast on last month had an attendance of 12 guys and everybody enjoyed it! Let's see if we can beat this record in December!

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:

There is Sunday school during the English service now. We will also have a children's message during worship on the first Sunday of every month, with a brief

pastor's message and a song. All children present will be invited to come forward for this little moment.

BRIDGELAND WOMEN'S CENTRE TOY DRIVE: Once again please donate to the Toy Drive. There is a bulletin board in the narthex with Wish List suggestions for children ages newborn to 17 years old and for Women. Gifts are to be new and unwrapped. Gift cards are welcome. The Centre has partnered with the local toy store, *Castle Toys*, with a 20% discount. Shop in-store or online and it will go directly to the Centre. Use the Promo code WOMENSCENTRE2023. Deadline is Dec. 20. Place your gift in the box in the narthex. PLEASE NO USED CLOTHES.

OFFERINGS: Our tithing and offerings are a vital part of our Christian faith. We show our gratitude to the Lord by giving back part of what He has blessed us with. This is called a good "Christian stewardship". It helps support our mission & ministry, as well as to keep our properties in shape. We are now passing the offering plate through the pews as we used to do before the pandemic. You may also consider sending e-transfers (smlccsecretary@shaw.ca) to the congregation. Your generosity is appreciated!



WHAT'S PLANNED FOR THE MONTH?

Dec 2 Sat): The Tannenbaum Lighting Festival @ 5 pm.

Dec 3 (Sun): Worship services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m. with children's message.

Dec 5 (Tues): Online Bible Study at 7 p.m.

Dec 6 & 7: Pastor is out of town.

Dec 9: Men's breakfast @ 9 am

Dec 10 (Sun): Worship services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.

Dec 12 (Tues): Pastor holds worship service at Bethany Riverview.

Dec 12 (Tues): Online Bible Study at 7 p.m.

Dec 13 (Wed): Supper @ 6 pm and Advent evening service @ 7 pm.

Dec 14 (Thurs): Board of Elders meeting (online) @ 7 pm.

Dec 15 (Fri): Youth Christmas party @ 7 pm.

Dec 19 (Tues): Online Bible Study at 7 p.m.

Dec 20 (Wed): Supper (potluck) @ 6 pm and Advent evening service @ 7 pm.

Dec 24 (Sun): Worship services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.

Dec 24 (Sun): German Candlelight service @ 4:45 pm

Dec 24 (Sun): English Candlelight service @ 6:45 pm

Dec 25 (Mon): German worship Christmas Day @ 9:30 a.m. / English worship Christmas Day @ 11 a.m.

Dec 26 to 28: Office is closed.

Dec 27 (Wed): Bible Study (online) in Portuguese.

Dec 31 (Sun): Worship services: In German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.

UNSERE DEUTSCHE ECKE

Alle Jahre wieder

Weihnachtsgedicht

Alle Jahre wieder
hört man fromme Lieder
von der heiligen Nacht.
Süß die Glöcklein klingen
und die Englein singen
bis der holde Knabe lacht.

Es rieselt der Schnee ganz leise
und deckt so auf heimliche Weise
den Dreck und das Elend schön zu.
Der Tannenbaum kriegt Blätter,
das Essen macht uns f... (netter),
wir gönnen uns die Ruh.

Familie, Baum und helle Kerzen,
die wärmen unsre kalten Herzen.
Wie schön ist ´s doch im eignen Nest!
Ans Kind im Stall ist man gewöhnt,
es wird mit Himmelsglanz verschönt.
Ein himmlisches Geburtstagsfest!

Doch haben wir es auch bedacht,
daß Gott hier in die Windeln macht?
Als kleines Kind, als Mensch wie wir!
Und haben wir es schon entdeckt,
daß Jesus seine Eltern weckt?
Er braucht die Mutter, schreit nach ihr!

Gott wird ein Kind - wie unerhört,
mit allem, was dazugehört.
Mit Weinen und mit Lachen!
Er kann nicht sprechen und nicht laufen.
Wird er mit den Geschwistern raufen?
Wird er den Eltern Ärger machen?

So weit gibt Gott sich hier herab.
 Und schließlich weiter bis ins Grab
 treibt ihn sein Lieben.
 Er scheint vernarrt in uns zu sein,
 wir Menschen sind ihm nicht zu klein.
 Hat uns nicht abgeschrieben.

Wer hat das wirklich ganz begriffen,
 daß Gott kein Auge zugekniffen,
 nicht auf sein Recht verzichtet?
 Wer hat das wirklich ganz kapiert,
 daß er sein Liebstes für uns riskiert,
 den Sohn für uns gerichtet?

Unser Verstand und unsere Sinnen
 und alles, was wir sonst beginnen,
 kann solche Liebe niemals fassen.
 Nur "Danke" sagen können wir
 und ihn, der wartend vor der Tür,
 in unser Leben lassen.

Er kommt nicht nur ein Mal im Jahr,
 mit Nikolaus und Engelschar.
 Er ist beständig da.
 Wer ihn, den Mann am Kreuz erkennt
 und ihn zu seinem Herrn erennt,
 dem ist er täglich nah.
 Zu ihm sagt, der in der Krippe lag:
 "Ich bin bei Dir, an jedem Tag!"

(Weihnachtsgedicht, Autor: Joachim Krebs, 2005)

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I hope you enjoyed reading this December edition of Agape.

May God's amazing and unconditional love (*agape*) shown in the infant born in Bethlehem reach you and your family during this Advent & Christmas season. Remember: HE is the Emmanuel – God with us!

A BLESSED ADVENT & CHRISTMAS TIME!

In His service,
Rev. Markus Zeuch
Calgary, on Nov 30, 2023

