# Parish Rebuilder

**St. Luke's Lutheran Church - 5150 Wilson Street, La Mesa, CA 91942**

**www.st-lukes-la-mesa.org**

December 2026
Monthly Newsletter
Volume 26 Issue 12

**We invite you to attend**

**St. Luke's Lutheran Church**

Please contact Lupita in the office to discuss a visit or to arrange an appointment with Pastor Mark:

619-463-6633 or office-sllc@att.net

## *Table of Contents*


| | |
|---|---|
| Pastor Mark | page 1 |
| WSL | page 4 |
| Coffee Hour Hosts | page 6 |
| Worship Text/Birthdays | page 7 |
| Prayer Calendar | page 8 |
| Worship Teams | page 9 |
| Monthly Activity Calendar | page 10 |





## *The Gift of Christmas*

Amidst all the festive and tranquil scenes of Christmas is the stark reality of human life and sin. Luther said that one could see the cross of Christ in the folds of baby Jesus' diapers. From the very beginning, for Luther the cross was part of the incarnation.

As the Christmas narrative shows, however, the attacks on Jesus' life did not start when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. Instead, while he was yet young, Herod sent troops to Bethlehem to kill all boys two years old and younger. It is a brutal scene. Jesus and his family were able to escape, to die another day. We celebrate Christmas, however, because God raised Jesus from the dead on Easter Sunday. Christmas means nothing without Easter, and both holidays flank the cross of Good Friday.

In Scripture, Jesus advised that those operating a plough not only should not look back but those who do are not worthy of the kingdom of God. The church as a whole routinely "looks back" to days gone by to secure its future. Whatever glories the past may contain, these glories have not been able to stave off the destructive episodes which have befallen the church throughout the ages. In fact, one could argue that the past, both good and bad, might be the greatest danger to the future of the church.

Being a keen observer of church history, in my view there is a noticeable tendency in the church to want to recapture and replicate the

past. On one hand, the past is what we know while the future is uncharted and uncertain. Continuing to do things "the way we have always done them" seems a reasonable and safe thing to do. On the other hand, doing more of the same may lead one to miss opportunities for a greater understanding of the gospel, its mission, and thus the future.

This general tendency of the church I call "walking backwards into the future." We look back fondly to the past, to the early church, to the apostles, to half price indulgences, and all those trips abroad making pilgrimages to work off our sins. Well, maybe not all Lutherans do this, but even we Lutherans relish what was or in countless ways is "tradition."

The Lord of the church, however, is not in the past and is not in the grave. Jesus Christ is raised from the dead. He is the consummation of time coming from the future. In other words, he comes to us in the present from the future. We cannot see him or serve him while looking to the past. We cannot find or serve him by turning a church into the empty tomb no matter how lovely the stained glass windows are.

When Jesus was born, many forces wanted to snuff out his life from its infancy. History shows continual attempts to extinguish Christianity from the world. As Judas shows, however, the greatest threat to our life in and of Christ often comes not from without but from within the closest circle of those following Christ, namely ourselves.

The past, present, and future of the church meet at the same point, namely in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:8). When the word became incarnate in the infant Jesus, God gave humanity a new beginning and created a different church. The church is not council led, and it is not pastor led. The church is word led, or it is not the church. As a creature of the word (*creatura verbi*) the church is always Christ's church. It is not a place for sinners to play out their religious fantasies. It is not the domain of national institutions to exploit. It is not a career path for pastors. It is not a semi-private social, dinner, construction, or arts and entertainment club. It is not a monument to individuals, living or dead. It is not the target audience of special interest groups or a marketplace for corporate interests. It is Christ's church, and whenever anyone within Jesus' closest circles of followers forgets whose church it is, out come the swords, nails, and hammers.

Although Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter are inseparable, they are also distinct. Whereas each marks a particularly different gift of God to sinful humanity, each is part of the greater gift given by the Father through the Son to evil and unfaithful sinners like us. We do not like to hear those words and would happily apply them to others, those "real sinners." "Sinner," however, is really quite a mild and civil term to describe humanity of which we all are part. That is why Christ came and likewise became flesh and dwelt among us, namely to save sinners like us from the inside out to recreate us in his own image.

In a comment to Psalm 38:23, Luther explains why and to whom God does this, "God's nature is that he makes something out of nothing. Therefore, whoever is not yet nothing, out of him can God also make nothing. Human beings, however, make a thing out of something else, but that is an utterly useless act/work. Therefore, God only accepts those who are forsaken, makes only the sick well, makes only the blind able to see, makes only sinners pious, makes only the unwise wise. In short, he has mercy only

on the wretched, gives grace only to those outside of grace. Therefore, no haughty saint, no wise or righteous person, can become God's material, and God's work cannot be accomplished in him. Instead, he remains in his own work and makes a fictitious, pretend, false painted saint of himself; that is, a hypocrite" (author's translation of WA 1, 183-184 / WA 18, 497-498; see also LW 14:163).

What kind of gift would you like God to make out of you? Pray to become nothing and see what happens.



## Holiday Season Activities and Ride Sharing

Mark your calendars! The First Sunday in Advent is 29 November. The Christmas Tree Decorating Party will take place on Friday, 04 December at 6:00 pm. The German Christmas Carol Service is scheduled for Sunday, 20 December to be held in conjunction with the House of Germany adult and children's choirs. A very special Christmas Eve service at 6:00 pm is in the planning.

The holidays are very special times, and spending them together with the very special people at St. Luke's makes them even more joyful. To facilitate that, if you desire transportation to any of these events, please let the church office know. Likewise, if you are willing to transport folks to any of these events, please also let the church office know. Remember, St. Luke's is a church where you can, and if necessary, will be taken for a ride!



Dear Women of St. Luke's,

We are once again approaching Christmas, the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior. Oh, how I eagerly anticipate decorating our gorgeous new tree in the sanctuary with our Chrismons that we refreshed at our "Christmas in July" event. I delight in our giving of gifts to those in need in our community and on mission fields around the world. What joy it will be to thank and bless those who serve and minister to us throughout the year!

I have been pondering the gifts the Magi presented to Mary and Joseph and the young Jesus. Matthew 2:10-11 records their story, "When they [the Magi] saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." The Magi had traveled a long way from the East following the star to Jerusalem. They asked King Herod, "Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw the star when it rose and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2).

I am struck by their focus to worship Jesus. Their gifts were given to honor him as King of Kings (gold), as God come down to earth (frankincense), and as a holy sacrifice to die for our sins (myrrh). They traveled to worship the one born King of Kings.

As we approach Christmas this year, let's examine our focus. Amidst the flurry of activities, the buying and wrapping of gifts, and the decorating and festivities, may we, like the Magi, be intentional in our focus. May we seek to worship Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

**O Come, All Ye Faithful**

John Francis Wade

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!

Come and behold Him, born the King of angels!

O come, let us adore Him;

O come, let us adore Him;

O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

God of God, Light of Light,
Lo, He abhors not the virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten not created;

O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels; sing in exultation;
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!

O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!

O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him;
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

**Merry CHRISTmas!**

In His service,

Laurie



# Coffee Hour Hosts for December

- December 6th — Pending Host
- December 13th — Pending Host
- December 20th — Pending Host
- December 27th — Pending Host

## Volunteers Needed!

## Please Sign Up

**We need volunteers to host Coffee Hour in December.**

Thank you for helping make Coffee Hour a special time of fellowship. ♡

*Your help is greatly appreciated!*



## *DECEMBER WORSHIP TEXTS*

**Second Sunday in Advent**
**— December 6, 2026**
First Lesson — Isaiah 40:1–11
Psalm 85
Second Lesson — 2 Peter 3:8–14
Gospel — Mark 1:1–8

**Third Sunday in Advent**
**— December 13, 2026**
First Lesson — Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11
Psalm 126
Second Lesson —
1 Thessalonians 5:16–24
Gospel — John 1:6–8, 19–28

**Fourth Sunday in Advent**
**— December 20, 2026**
First Lesson — 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16
Psalm 89:1-5 (19-29)
Second Lesson — Romans 16:25–27
Gospel — Luke 1:26–38

**Christmas Eve — December 24, 2026**
First Lesson — Isaiah 7:10–14
Psalm 110:1–4
Second Lesson — 1 John 4:7–16
Gospel — Matthew 1:18–25

**First Sunday after Christmas**
**— Isaiah 61:10–62:3**
First Lesson — Leviticus 19:1–2, 15–18
Psalm 111
Second Lesson — Galatians 4:4–7
Gospel — Luke 2:22–40




| | |
|---|---|
| Debbie Parks | 12/6 |
| Cheri Murrell | 12/6 |
| Timothy Smith | 12/8 |
| Pat Kettler | 12/9 |
| Raymond Yerger | 12/13 |
| Elizabeth Dunnigan | 12/17 |
| Joe Makowski | 12/17 |
| Mario Salas | 12/18 |
| Kim Emerson | 12/25 |
| Donald Smith | 12/30 |




Robin & Roy Wheeler 12/2

## *DECEMBER PRAYER CALENDAR* *"Guide my Ways Oh Lord"*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Psalm 138:1-3 |
| 2 | Proverbs 3:4-8 |
| 3 | Proverbs 3:21-26 |
| 4 | Matthew 7:24-27 |
| 5 | Psalm 40:16-17 |
| 6 | Proverbs 2:1-5 |
| 7 | Proverbs 2:6-10 |
| 8 | John 16:13-15 |
| 9 | 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 |
| 10 | Philippians 4:4-7 |
| 11 | Proverbs 3:11-14 |
| 12 | Ephesians 4:1-7 |
| 13 | Ephesians 5:6-10 |
| 14 | Colossians 4:2-6 |
| 15 | Isaiah 26:3-4 |
| 16 | Colossians 2:1-5 |
| 17 | Colossians 3:12-17 |
| 18 | Isaiah 40:28-31 |
| 19 | I Peter 1:13-14 |
| 20 | I Peter 5:8-11 |
| 21 | Hebrews 13:20-22 |
| 22 | Psalm 23 |
| 23 | I Thess 5:16-19 |
| 24 | Galatians 2:20-21 |
| 25 | 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 |
| 26 | Romans 6:8-14 |
| 27 | Acts 20:32 |
| 28 | John 15:1-5 |
| 29 | Isaiah 41:10-13 |
| 30 | Jude 24-25 |
| 31 | 2 Timothy 3:1-5 |

*Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways*
*To keep His statutes still!*
*Oh, that my God would grant me grace*
*To know and do His will!*

*Order my footsteps by Thy Word*
*And make my heart sincere;*
*Let sin have no dominion, Lord,*
*But keep my conscience clear.*

*Assist my soul, too apt to stray,*
*A stricter watch to keep;*
*And should I e'er forget Thy way,*
*Restore Thy wand'ring sheep.*

*Make me to walk in Thy commands*
*'Tis a delightful road*
*Nor let my head or heart or hands*
*Offend against my God.*

*Hymn #707*
*Lutheran Service Books*

# *DECEMBER WORSHIP TEAMS*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Reader(s) | *Jennifer Killion* |
| | Altar Guild | *Colleen Olsen* |
| **6th** | **Communion Assistant —bread** | *Bob Urich* |
| | **Communion Assistants—wine** | *Jillian Barnard & Jennifer Killion* |
| | **Greeter** | *Randy Engel* |
| | **Prayers of the People** | *Pastor Mark Menacher* |
| | **Projectionist** | *Shirley Carrington* |
| | **Usher Team** | *Bob & Cheryl Gray* |
| | **Acolytes** | *Giuliana Salas and Charlotte Utley* |
| | **Sound Tech** | *Kendrick Jennings* |
| | **Counter** | *Jennifer Killion* |
| **13th** | **Communion Assistant —bread** | *Ted Olsen* |
| | **Communion Assistants—wine** | *Judi Dunnigan & Terry East* |
| | **Greeter** | *Laurie Floren* |
| | **Prayers of the People** | *Gleason Snashall* |
| | **Projectionist** | *Gail Knippelmeyer* |
| | **Usher Team** | *Laurie Floren & Randy Engel* |
| | **Acolytes** | *Audrey Utley and Charlotte Utley* |
| | **Sound Tech** | *Judi Dunnigan* |
| | **Counter** | *Judi Dunnigan* |
| **20th** | **Communion Assistant —bread** | *Jennifer Killion* |
| | **Communion Assistants—wine** | *Laurie Floren & Terry East* |
| | **Greeter** | *Randy Engel* |
| | **Prayers of the People** | *Ted Olsen* |
| | **Projectionist** | *Shirley Carrington* |
| | **Usher Team** | *David & Kim Emerson* |
| | **Acolytes** | *Giuliana Salas and Jocelyn Sollenberger* |
| | **Sound Tech** | *Kendrick Jennings* |
| | **Counter** | *Jennifer Killion* |
| **27th** | **Communion Assistant —bread** | *Gleason Snashall* |
| | **Communion Assistants—wine** | *Jennifer Killion & Randy Engel* |
| | **Greeter** | *Laurie Floren* |
| | **Prayers of the People** | *Dianne Foreman* |
| | **Projectionist** | *Terry East* |
| | **Usher Team** | *Gary & Carol Prior* |
| | **Acolytes** | *Giuliana Salas and Stasha Raschtschenia* |
| | **Sound Tech** | *Kendrick Jennings* |
| | **Counter** | *Judi Dunnigan* |

# December 2026

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **1**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>9:30 am Project Day | **2**<br>10:00 am WSL Bible Study<br>5:30 pm Choir<br>7:00 pm Service | **3**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>5:30 pm Catechism<br>6:30 pm Al-Anon | **4**<br>6:00 pm **Christmas Tree Decorating Party** | **5**<br>8:00 am JOY<br>10:30 am WSL Story Telling |
| **6**<br>9:00 am Worship<br>10:30 am Sunday School<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon | **7**<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon<br>6:30 pm AA | **8**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>9:30 am Project Day<br>6:00pm Council mtg | **9**<br>5:30 pm Choir<br>7:00 pm Service | **10**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>5:30 pm Catechism<br>6:30 pm Al-Anon | **11** | **12**<br>8:00 am JOY |
| **13**<br>9:00 am Worship<br>10:30 am Sunday School<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon | **14**<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon<br>6:30 pm AA | **15** 8:00 am Tai Chi<br>9:30 am Project Day<br>10: 00 am Yule Log Craft Event | **16**<br>10:00 am WSL Bible Study<br>5:30 pm Choir<br>7:00 pm Service | **17**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>5:30 pm Catechism<br>6:30 pm Al-Anon | **18** | **19**<br>8:00 am JOY<br>10:30 am WSL Story Telling |
| **20**<br>9:00 am Worship<br>10:30 am Sunday School<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon<br>6:00 pm German Service | **21**<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon<br>6:30 pm AA | **22**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>9:30 am Project Day | **23**<br>5:30 pm Choir<br>7:00 pm Service | **24**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>6:00 pm Christmas Eve Service<br>6:30 pm Al-Anon | **25**<br>**Merry Christmas** | **26**<br>8:00 am JOY |
| **27**<br>9:00 am Worship<br>10:30 am Sunday School<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon | **28**<br>5:00 pm Al-Anon<br>6:30 pm AA | **29**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>9:30 am Project Day | **30**<br>5:30 pm Choir<br>7:00 pm Service | **31**<br>8:00 am Tai Chi<br>6:30 pm Al-Anon | | |

**ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**5150 WILSON ST.**

**LA MESA, CA 91942**

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NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EL CAJON,CA
PERMIT NO 262

Dated Material
December 2026

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

**A WARM WELCOME TO ALL**

- Sunday Worship: 9:00 am in the Sanctuary
- Sunday School: 10:30 am in the Lower Level
- Wednesday Choir Practice: 5:30 pm in the Fireside Room (Lower Level)
- Wednesday Pericope / Communion Service: 7:00 pm in the Fireside Room

**St. Luke's Mission Statement:**

We are called as a community of Christians saved by grace

—through faith alone in Jesus Christ—

to spread the Holy Gospel in word, sacrament, and action

*soli deo gloria.*