

CHURCH *Matters*

Glory Lutheran Church Newsletter - 12.23 Edition



Advent & Christmas Worship Services

December 3 - December 24 - Advent Services

In-person and online

with Advent Candle Lighting - Sundays 10:30 am

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

In-person and online

Sunday, December 24, 4:00 pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Communion

In-person (will not be live-streamed)

Sunday, December 24, 7:00 pm

Christmas Day

Worship with Holy Communion

In-person (will not be live-streamed)

Monday, December 25, 10:30 am

God's blessings to all!



A Message From Pastor Markus

The Christmas Story and the Christmas Store

Dear family of Glory in Christ,

Canadian Tire proclaims itself “The Christmas Store”, cleverly or accidentally alliterating **story** and **store**, suggesting perhaps that the meaning of Christ’s birth can be bought. “Christmas starts here!”, the sign also says, in case you were accidentally going in the wrong direction, perhaps to Bethlehem. The road of hyper consumerism probably leads not to the manger in the barn and the baby Jesus, helpless on the bed of hay his poor parents Mary and Joseph improvised. It leads rather, in my experience, to nowhere except back to itself, back to the “story-less store”. Commerce is self-referencing. The idol of mammon has no purpose but to promote itself. And so “the good news of great joy” proclaimed to certain poor shepherds gets replaced by a pointless Merry-Christmas-Go-Round of endless competitive consumption. How do we get off this commercial Merry-Christmas-Go-Round?

By getting back into the biblical story. Do you and your children and grandchildren know the Christmas story as well as you know the Christmas store? Where and how do you make room for the wonder and the mystery of the Christmas story? It is a story at once simple, ordinary, and mundane, but at the same time overflowing with meaning, promise, and divine love. We can let the stories of Christmas (there are in fact two!) inspire our own story telling ability again. Read again, carefully, and meditatively, Luke chapters 1 and 2. Notice Mary’s consent to become the mother of God. Remember the imperial decree that put the holy family on the road to the city of David, Bethlehem, fulfilling ancient prophecy. Watch once again with the shepherds in the field over their flock by night and tremble with them at the appearance of angels and God’s glory. Ponder with them and Mary and Joseph at the manger what the shepherds had been told about this child. Read again Matthew 1 and 2. Consider the wisemen, the Magi, the astrologers from the far East, who recognized in the alignment of the stars that a new king was born to the people of Judah. Watch Joseph, descendant of king David, the silent dreamer of dreams, protect Mary from public dishonor, and her child from the murderous king Herod. The story is where Christmas starts.

We feel obligated by tradition to wish each other Merry Christmas, to give gifts, to be with family, to have decorations, to prepare a special dinner, to sing and listen to certain music, to host and attend events. Of course, these things are not wrong, but they are not what it is about. My wife Andrea is spending Christmas with her mother and brothers and other family and friends in Germany this year. Of course, I'd like to be with her, but I remind myself that being without someone on December 25 is really no more tragic than being without them on August 15. The supposed need to be together on a particular day is a cultural construct. After all, as Luke tells the story, Jesus' family was far from their home and relatives in Nazareth, but close to shepherds in a strange town. God's son was far from heaven as he lay in a barn in a manger. In fact, however, God came close, heaven came to earth. God was where God needed to be. And that's where God still is today and always will be, and where we should go in order to find him.

That's the main thing to remember. God is always where God needs to be. And when we are where God is, then we are where we need to be!

So never mind the Christmas store. Mine the story instead. Let's get off the Merry-Christmas-Go-Around and make our way to Bethlehem. It's where Christmas begins.

Love, peace, and joy! ~Pastor Markus

Pastor's Discretionary Fund (Pastoral Care Fund)



The pastor's discretionary fund is a designated fund made available to the pastor to distribute for emergency financial aid.

This fund is especially important considering the events of the past few years and the uncertainty going forward.

Please consider making a special offering designated for the discretionary fund. Every donation will make a positive difference as we take care of our community.



Council Highlights

Funny how in December we have the shortest day of the year, but also the longest council meeting of the year! I want to thank everyone for their contributions to our last meeting and for their work on council throughout the year. It really is a joy to work with and for our community here at Glory Lutheran and I encourage all of you to consider serving on council or one of our other committees. You can contact Rhonda Berg or Donna Dawson (nominations@glorylutheran.ca) or talk to any council member for more information.

As I mentioned last month, we are hoping to proceed with the building of a garage for secure storage and servicing of our lawn, snow removal, and other equipment. We will likely be launching a fundraising campaign for this venture in the new year. If you are interested in making a contribution before the end of 2023, you may want to consider allocating a donation to our capital fund.

I recently attended a Synod meeting led by Pastor Prema Samuel. Pastor Prema talked about the Synod Convention coming up in Camrose on June 5 to 8, 2024. Every ELCIC member church in Alberta can nominate people to attend this Convention. In addition to our active and retired rostered leaders, Glory can send a youth delegate and a lay delegate. It is also possible to attend as a visitor. If you are interested in participating as a delegate or visitor, please let us know. More information can be found at the Alberta Synod website: ABT Synod Convention 2024 – Synod of Alberta & The Territories (albertasynod.ca)

At the upcoming convention in 2024, Bishop Larry Kochendorfer will be stepping down as Bishop and a new Bishop will be elected. Leading up to this, Bishop Larry is asking congregational councils and parishioners to engage in a discernment process and participate in some exercises that have been designed by Deacon Dr. Faith Nostbakken and Rev. David Saude. We are asked to submit responses from these exercises to the Synod by

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March 4, 2024. Council will be setting aside some time at our meeting in February to complete one of these exercises. We will also be scheduling a session for congregation members interested in participating in the discernment process. This will likely take place after one of our services in February, so please keep this in mind.

Please also keep in mind that our Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 4, 2024 after the morning service. There will be a short break for coffee and snacks and we will again be providing online access for those participating from home. More details will be provided in our January newsletter.

I wish you all a joyous and blessed Christmas season!

Rose Schlegl
Council.chair@glorylutheran.ca



The graphic features a teal background with white and red accents. At the top center is the church logo: "GLORY" in a large serif font with a cross inside the letter 'O', and "LUTHERAN CHURCH" in a smaller sans-serif font below it. To the right of the logo is a red and white megaphone icon. The main title "ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING" is written in large, bold, white, all-caps sans-serif font across the center. Below the title, the date "February 4, 2024" is displayed in white text inside a teal rectangular box. At the bottom, the meeting details "THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CHURCH AFTER SUNDAY WORSHIP (APPROX. 12:00PM)" are written in white, all-caps sans-serif font. A second red and white megaphone icon is located in the bottom left corner. White decorative lines curve around the top and bottom edges of the graphic.

GLORY
LUTHERAN CHURCH

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

February 4, 2024

THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT
THE CHURCH AFTER
SUNDAY WORSHIP
(APPROX. 12:00PM)

Our *Spiritual* Journey

A Message from Pastor Nickel

“PEACE” IS a PART of OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY.

And you may say -- *Yeah, sounds good -- everyone is for peace.*

But then, I like the words in a Church Banner on a wall that said:

MAY THE PEACE OF CHRIST DISTURB YOU PROFOUNDLY!

Why? – Because peace is not easy; peace takes work, and prayer.

Peace is not just an absence of war or conflict. It takes conscious effort.

And peace sometimes needs us to “think-outside-the-box”, to look anew.

In today’s world, it seems easy to see the opposite of peace. 1) Over 45 nations and peoples are at war or conflict. 2) People and their computers are being employed to try to divide their part of the world into many groups of “us” -- and “them”. 3) Confrontation seems to be preferred over consensus or “compromise” or “working together” by some leaders.

The Bible in contrast speaks of peace. **God brought a new kind of peace** to us through Jesus’ coming to earth in love for us – for you and me -- and we like to look to the time of Jesus’ birth, as a time for peace.

But **also, Jesus spoke of peace in the world** regularly, worked for peace [“Let those who are without sin cast the first stone”...], and told of “peace which passes all understanding”. He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” and invited his people to *work* for peace. That is **a call to be *pro-active!*** Pro-active **may mean disturbing our comfort zone** and speaking for peace, perhaps with a relative or friend, or representative of government.

People are seriously working for peace today including:

- + **Russians** who left Russia rather than fight in Putin’s war on Ukraine. Some of those Russians have created groups to work in Russia, often as exiles, for an end to that war.
- + **South African leaders** were willing to say apartheid must end and fought for it, and their development of “Truth and Reconciliation” helped bring apartheid to an end!
- + **Canada** is recognizing and changing from prejudices against native peoples and toward reconciliation and understanding. Did you know it was not until the mid-1990s that Canadian Native Peoples were for the first time

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able to take part in and be recognized in our Remembrance Day Services like they are today. People worked years toward that!

- + **Look closely at conflicts -- often there are many sides to a conflict.** Israel/Hamas is not just one against another. Each side has allies with their own agendas and special interests. Both “sides” include dozens of views on war-related issues. Then add those who are not involved or aligned, but live in the midst of fighting and killing. When we express opinions about that or other conflicts, are we considering ALL factors?

Jesus tells us to be very wise. That includes: +Not getting sucked into taking sides by propaganda; +Take time to really explore the issues. For example, Israel and Palestinians fought 50 years ago. For decades, they have not seriously talked together to try to really resolve their simmering differences and issues **that need to be worked on!**

Jesus calls us to work and pray for peace and justice. Who knows what will happen when we try, and when we encourage others to try?

Think of **Ireland and England’s “The Troubles”** that went on for generations until people tried new ways to find peace and justice.

+A person from Lethbridge AB helped develop groups of people on both sides who came together and learned about each other, and *they* helped create Northern Ireland’s “Good Friday Agreement” for peace.

Individuals and groups who are willing **to stand up for peace and talk about “lowering conflict levels”** find common ground to discuss peace, and bring people together to learn about one another. When we know more about the “other” person, we are usually less likely to see them as “other” and less willing to be in conflict with them. **As God loves us, so we are called to love others – and to help others to love one another.**

Jesus looks at what people do, their good deeds and practices, with oil burning in a lamp, and said, “Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” [Matt.5:16]

So for us, can you pray for, speak for, and **work for peace and justice** in the world, perhaps with your neighbor or relatives? Jesus said that we need to be ready, that the time is now. **Pray about it; pray for peace.**

Together in Christ,
Gary Nickel



Thank You

Your generous Reverse Advent Calendar gifts of food, cleaning items and extra shopping bags and gift cards were joyously received by the volunteers at the Strathcona Food Bank! Thank you for sharing with our community.

*For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.
Deuteronomy 15:11 RSV*



Thank you

to those who have volunteered to be part of the Social Ministry Team (coffee/tea/snacks on Sunday mornings).

You are very much appreciated!

Please contact Pat or the church office if you are interested in helping with this ministry. Thank you, as well, to those of you who have been leaving snacks in the Glory kitchen for use on Sunday mornings!

This is very thoughtful and helpful.



Thank You!
 to the creative and hard-
 working team who
 decorated the sanctuary
 and narthex for the
 Christmas season.



Season's Greetings

from your Church Council Nominating Committee:
Donna Dawson (congregational representative)
Rhonda Berg (Council)
Rose Schlegl (Council Chair)



We look forward to the new year and ask you to prayerfully consider bringing your wisdom, skills, strength, and talent to Council in 2024.

There are also opportunities to help in areas such as music, education, congregational life and outreach.

It is said, “Many hands make light work”

We have many helping hands at Glory and invite everyone to participate in our great mission to glorify and honor God.

RIDE SHARING IS CARING



We're looking at possibly setting up another team of volunteers to provide rides to individuals who may have difficulty getting to church. Although our services are live streamed, we're aware that not everyone is connected to the technology required in order to attend worship from home. Even those who are able to do so may want to attend services in person on occasion.

If you think you might occasionally be able to provide a lift to and from church for another parishioner, please let us know and provide the name of the area you live in (email glory.office@glorylutheran.ca).

Similarly, if you think you would make use of such a service, let us know your name and the area you live in. If we have enough volunteers, we may be able to match up drivers and riders.

If you would like to bring flowers for a Sunday morning, there is a sign-up sheet on the door of our storage/elec./mech. room in the Narthex, or you may sign up on the online form found on our website under the Worship menu and then Service Tasks.

HONOR AND
REMEMBER WITH
**ALTAR
FLOWERS**



What's Happening

GLORY



LUTHERAN CHURCH

DATES TO REMEMBER

- December 3-24** Advent Sunday Services 10:30am
- December 17** Glory 50 Plus Christmas Dinner @ Broadmoor - 12:30pm
- December 24** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 4:00pm
In-person and online
- December 24** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service w/ Communion 7:00pm
In-person only, will not be live-streamed
- December 25** Christmas Day Worship with Holy Communion 10:30am
In-person only, will not be live-streamed
- Tuesdays** Praise Band Rehearsal 7:00pm
- Thursdays** Confirmation 6:30pm (except during Christmas school break)
Choir 7:30pm
- 2nd Thursdays** Worship at Strathcona Care - Monthly 10:15am
- Last Thursdays** Worship at Hardisty Care Centre - Monthly 10:00am
- Sundays** Worship 10:30 am (Communion 2nd & 4th Sundays)

No Sunday School on long weekends or during Christmas school break.

Tuesday - Friday, 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Please note that Heidi may be working from home.
Email and phone calls will continue to be answered during office hours. Please call the office if you would like to visit the church.



22577 Hwy 16,
Sherwood Park, Alberta,
T8A 4T7



Phone: 780.416.9594 E-mail: glory.office@glorylutheran.ca
Pastor Markus Wilhelm E-mail: pastormarkus@glorylutheran.ca
Check out our Website: www.glorylutheran.ca