

Amazing!News

DECEMBER // 2021



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A homegrown faith

BY TIM BROWN

In my home office, directly behind my writing desk, you'll find a massive Bible that holds much more than Scripture. Inside are the handwritten notes, quips and quick thoughts of my grandmother, my great-grandmother, my great-great-grandmother and various other relatives.

My religious devotion rests upon not only Scripture but also the people who penned these notes of faith for their family, a faith found less in sanctuaries than around my grandmother's Singer sewing machine and my great-grandfather's Chevy.

Our own blessed Martin Luther deeply understood this familial exchange of faith. Luther's ideas on messy grace fit quite well with his notion that theology is a from-the-ground-up exercise for Christians, modeled on the day-to-day work and family life of ordinary people.

Most mornings in the Luther home, you would find the whole family gathered around the dining table for devotions. Martin and Katie and their six children would all study the catechism together,

learning from one another. Luther saw this as both a particular responsibility and a particular opportunity for a family.

The parent in me knows that this catechism study was no Norman Rockwell painting. Children are noisy. Parents are temperamental. Toddlers are distracting and distractable. The scene wasn't pristine—no family gathering is.

But Luther saw real benefit in the family learning the catechism together. It would be easy and, I think, ill-advised to romanticize the Luther family. All households have dust in the corners, yelling in the halls and moments of ill temper. But the catechism reminds us, as it surely did Luther, that love and forgiveness are part of the faith-formation process.

Unique for its era and still instructive today, the Luthers' approach grew not only from the Scriptures themselves but also from the intentional interactions of their family, gathered around words of faith.

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The people of Israel had been waiting so long for a messiah. This Advent, the four Wednesday's before Christmas, we will be having Advent services at 12 PM and 7:30 PM around the theme, "Prepare the Royal Highway" looking at how they and we prepare for the coming Lord. And we also have been waiting so long for things to be something other than the craziness we have experienced the past twenty months. Come, Return to the Stable, plan to join us for Christmas Eve services Thursday, December 23rd at 7 PM, Friday, December 24th at 2, 4, 8 and 11 PM, and Saturday, Christmas Day at 10:00 AM as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Lord who is with us on all the detours of life. Come, Return to the Stable with us at Zoar, and be amazed!

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

December 1 – Advent I mid-week worship *Highway Under Construction* **12 PM & 7:30 PM**

December 3 – 7 PM Advent Lessons & Carols Concert **7 PM**

December 8 – Advent II mid-week worship *God's Positioning System* **12 PM & 7:30 PM**

December 10 – Christmas Concert **7 PM**

December 12 – Family Christmas Program *Symbols of Christmas* **11 AM**

December 8 – Advent III mid-week worship *Standing at the Crossroads* **12 PM & 7:30 PM**

December 19 – Blue Christmas Service **2 PM**

December 22 – Advent IV mid-week worship *Detour Ahead* **12 PM & 7:30 PM**

December 23 – Christmas Eve Eve worship **7 PM**

December 24 – Christmas Eve "family worship" **2 & 4 PM**

Christmas Eve "festival worship" **8 & 11 PM**

December 25 – Christmas Day worship **10 AM**

** regularly scheduled worship resumes Christmas Day, December 25th at 6 PM*





from
Pastor Paul
Senior Pastor
pastorpaul@zoarlutheran.com

Grace and Peace from God our Father and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our nephew is in the military; have I told you that before? He had an, interesting, high school career, but because of amazing, dedicated encouragement by his parents, recruitment officer, and so many who care about him, he graduated, did great at boot camp, and went to work serving his country. He's been in quite a few years now, and has been deployed in many places including Iraq and Hawaii.

Because he is often deployed so far away, when he is able to come home, it is a big deal! Lots of times it is around the holidays, so we need to begin planning schedules and getting ready weeks before he actually gets here so that we can see him. Sometimes, with it being around holiday times, we actually get to celebrate with him! Other times, we are scrambling just to see him for a few hours before he heads to his next thing. And as wonderful as it is seeing him, it is also sad that he has to leave us so soon.

Advent is like that. We know that Christmas is coming, and we start way ahead (sometimes, if we go by the display isles in the stores months and months ahead) to make our preparations. We try to figure out the holiday schedules and sometimes get frustrated how difficult it is to carve out time with the ones we love. We sometimes get so focused on all there is to do to prepare for Christmas that Advent can just seem like a blur. And when we finally get to Christmas, somehow, even after all the rush, it is wonderful and sad that it is gone so soon.

In Advent, we remember that Christmas didn't just spring upon us; that a savior giving his life wasn't a happenstance. God so loved the world...you know the rest. God had a plan to save a dying world from sin, and that plan didn't begin on Easter morning, or in the tomb, or on the cross, or even in a stable. Hundreds of years before the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "for unto us a Son is born, unto us a Son is given." God's plan of saving you and me began long ago, and there was A LOT of waiting, and planning, and frustration and joy and sorrow and joy again.

On Christmas, if we can pause in our rushing for the tiniest moment, that joy and wonder (and sadness and hope) break into our lives; reminding us that God doesn't wait until you or I have it all together. God comes into the messiness of our lives to give us the same message we give our nephew, "You are loved; you are precious; it is so good to be with you."

May the hope of the coming Christ be yours this Advent.
Peace, Pastor Paul

**"Be silent, all people,
before the Lord;
for he has roused
himself from his holy
dwelling"**
Zechariah 2:13

DECEMBER YOUTH UPDATE

December 5 – Advent Workshop 9:45 - 10:45 AM

December 12 – Youth and Family Christmas Program 11 AM
Service Sunday - Ornament Making 4 - 5 PM

December 19 – Winter Break - No SS
Youth Group Cooking Decorating 4 - 5 PM

December 26 – Merry Christmas! No SS or Youth Group

Advent Workshop

Sunday School Families are invited to join us **Sunday, December 5th** during the Sunday School hour to create advent wreaths. A fun craft project that will be used for years to come! Sign up is required to attend. Please check your weekly youth and children's ministry update on how to do so!

Youth and Family Christmas Program

Sunday, December 12th during the 11AM Worship Service we are planning a Youth and Family Christmas Program. If you are interested in participating, please contact ahoyles@zoarlutheran.com.

Service Sunday

Join us for youth group **Sunday, December 12th from 4 - 5 PM**. We will be making Christmas Ornaments to give to friends at local nursing homes.

Cookie Decorating

Join us for youth group **Sunday, December 19th from 4 - 5 PM**. We will be decorating prebaked Christmas Cookies to take home and enjoy! Come for fellowship, devotion time and a tasty treat to take home and share with the family



from
Amanda
Director of Youth Ministries
ahoyles@zoarlutheran.com

Greetings Zoar Family and Friends,

We made it! What a year it has been. Much like 2020, 2021 has presented its challenges and thrown many curve balls, yet we move forward observing the season of Advent with renewed hope. This month is full of fun ways to ring in the holiday season, from Advent wreath making to cookie decorating and FINALLY Christmas celebration. As we partake in the fun, we remember that moments like these are precious. This Advent season, take a second to look around to appreciate these blessings of fellowship and celebration, give your loved ones a HUGE hug and let the love you have for one another inspire a new hope within us all so that we may live as Christ calls us to: in LOVE.

Love & Peace,
Amanda Hoyles

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

Advent starts with narratives from the Gospel of Luke, which is surprisingly full of idiosyncratic details. Luke, for example, prefers to use the title “Lord” (“Kyrios” in Greek) but in a way that makes us think of a benefactor and not a ruler. So let us pay close attention to how the writer Luke tells these stories. The following capsules have been adapted for local use from Sundays and Seasons.

DECEMBER 4/5 – ADVENT II: YOUR KINGDOM COME ON EARTH

John’s words tell us to examine our own lives and the world around us. We should not be complacent in the face of injustice but instead, seek forgiveness and strive for lives that bear fruit according to God’s vision for the world. God will not settle for the way things are, and God’s salvation will be made known in the one who is to come: Jesus.

DECEMBER 11/12 – ADVENT III: NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL

The crowds keep following John the Baptist, even when he raises the bar on them: John invites them to turn away from the old life and toward God’s new life. But John has even better news: The Messiah is indeed coming, one who will not only call people to high expectations but also enable that faithful living. At our eleven o’clock service, children of the Sunday School will present a Christmas program.

DECEMBER 18/19 – ADVENT IV: BEING RECOGNIZED, ENCOUNTERING CHRIST

After the annunciation, Luke writes that Mary travels to visit Elizabeth, who gives this unmarried pregnant girl a haven and the first glimpse of what it means to be the mother of the Savior. The encounter is full of mystery and grace: the mystery of new life and the grace of recognizing each other as Spirit-filled mothers.

DECEMBER 24– CHRISTMAS EVE: SALVATION TO ALL

In Bethlehem, God’s power is revealed in weakness, and the people who count include even the migrant laborers keeping watch over their flocks by night. So what does it mean that when God takes a census, all the people of the world matter as much as any citizen of the empire?

DECEMBER 25/26– CHRISTMAS I: BECOMING WHO WE WERE INTENDED TO BE

We celebrate that Jesus has come among us to free us from sin and restore human nature’s dignity. As God’s children, it is never too soon to begin the work of ministry. The scriptures help us recognize that each one of us is called through our baptism. As we answer it, we become who God intends us to be.



from
Omaldo

Cantor

operez@zoarlutheran.com

Advent is a thrilling time, a time of joyful anticipation and exciting preparation. “Prepare a royal highway; the King of Kings is here!” the hymn says. Advent is a time to reimagine the future, not as a continuation of the same, but as God’s time. “Let every hill and valley, a level road appear!” Advent is a time to see the clear evidence of how God’s grace, justice, and love are slowly—but inexorably—melting away the status quo of neglect, apathy, and disillusion in our world! “Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God’s word!” Advent is a time of promise: “Do not fear, I will be with you!” says the Lord: “straw like gold shall shine, a barn shall harbor heaven, and a stall become a shrine.”

Dear Friends, we want to invite you to join us in exploring the thrill of Advent. In addition to our weekend worship, we will gather twice each Wednesday during Advent to sing, watch, pray, and especially, to delight in God’s steadfastness: “Surely it is God who saves me, I shall trust and have no fear. For the Lord defends and shields me, and his saving help is near.”

In addition to our weekend and mid-week worship opportunities, please join us in the excitement of the season: at our Christmas concert, on Friday, December 10, at seven-thirty, Zoar’s ensembles and guests will make music and sing “in praises for the child by whose descent among us the worlds are reconciled.”

Peace and Joy,
Omaldo



Z O A R C A L E N D A R O F E V E N T S H I G H L I G H T S

DECEMBER // 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 8AM Bible Study 12PM Worship 3PM Rachel Circle 3:30PM AL 2 6:30PM Confirmation 7:30PM Worship	2	3 1PM Zoar Book Club 7PM Advent - Lessons & Carols	4 8AM Nativity Set-up 6PM Worship
5 ADVENT II 8:30, 11AM Worship 9:45AM Sunday School & Advent Workshop	6 6PM Property Comm. 7PM Social Min	7 9AM Quilters 3:14PM Prayer w/ Staff 6PM Comms Comm. 7PM LLL Comm.	8 8AM Bible Study 12PM Worship 6:30PM Confirmation 7:30PM Worship 7:30PM YAYA	9	10 8AM Men's Breakfast 1PM Solo Again 7PM Christmas Concert	11 Feed Our Family Distribution 6PM Worship
12 ADVENT III 8:30, 11AM Worship 9:45AM Sunday School 11AM Family Program 4PM Youth Group	13	14 9AM Quilters 3:14PM Prayer w/ Staff 7PM Stewardship	15 8AM Bible Study 12PM Worship 6:30PM Confirmation 7:30PM Worship	16 9:15AM Naomi Circle	17	18 10AM Prayer Partners 6PM Worship
19 ADVENT IV 8:30, 11AM Worship 2PM Blue Christmas Service 4PM Youth Group	20	21 9AM Quilters 3:14PM Prayer w/ Staff 7PM Council Mtg	22 8AM Bible Study 12PM Worship 1:30PM AL 1 7:30PM Worship	23 7PM Christmas Eve Eve Worship	24 2PM Worship 4PM Worship 8PM Worship 11PM Worship	25 10AM Worship 6PM Worship
26 8:30, 11AM Worship	27 Church Closed	28 3:14PM Prayer w/ Staff	29	30	31	

for a complete list of events, please check the Z-Blast for weekly announcements

ZOAR STAFF

Senior Pastor: Paul Reichert
 Cantor: Omaldo Perez
 Director of Youth Ministry: Amanda Hoyles

Administrative Manager: Jen Milligan
 Secretary: Suzanne Delaney
 Custodian: Paul Cannon

OUR 85+ MEMBER DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

December 3 Liz Kaczor
 December 5 Arlene Knapp
 December 18 Esther Speck
 December 28 Ann Lieder
 December 29 Jane St. John

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WE WISH TO THANK OUR SPONSORS

Would you like to place a birthday announcement, congratulatory message, or advertisement in the Zoar monthly newsletter? Send an email to communications@zoarlutheran.com for pricing and availability.

Deadline is the 2nd of the preceding month!



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CURRENT RESIDENT OR:

Pr. Paul Reichert
Senior Pastor

Worship Times:
Saturday: 6 PM
Sunday: 8:30 & 11 AM
Sunday School: 9:45 AM

Be
AmaZed!



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**"In him was life, and the life was the
light of all people. The light shines in
the darkness, and the darkness did
not overcome it."**

— John 1:4-5

