



## December 3, 2023 1st Sunday of Advent

### The Advent Wreath

In Advent this year, we will be focusing on the symbol of the Advent wreath and the colors of the season. The Christmas Tree will make its appearance in the sanctuary but will be without all the decorations in keeping with the more ancient tradition. Both the wreath and the tree use everlasting greenery and growing light to hint at the life and presence of God in the midst of the winter darkness and human sin. When you are tempted to focus on the absences or the negatives, pray to be enlightened by God through the symbols that are present. Ask what you might learn from the experience.



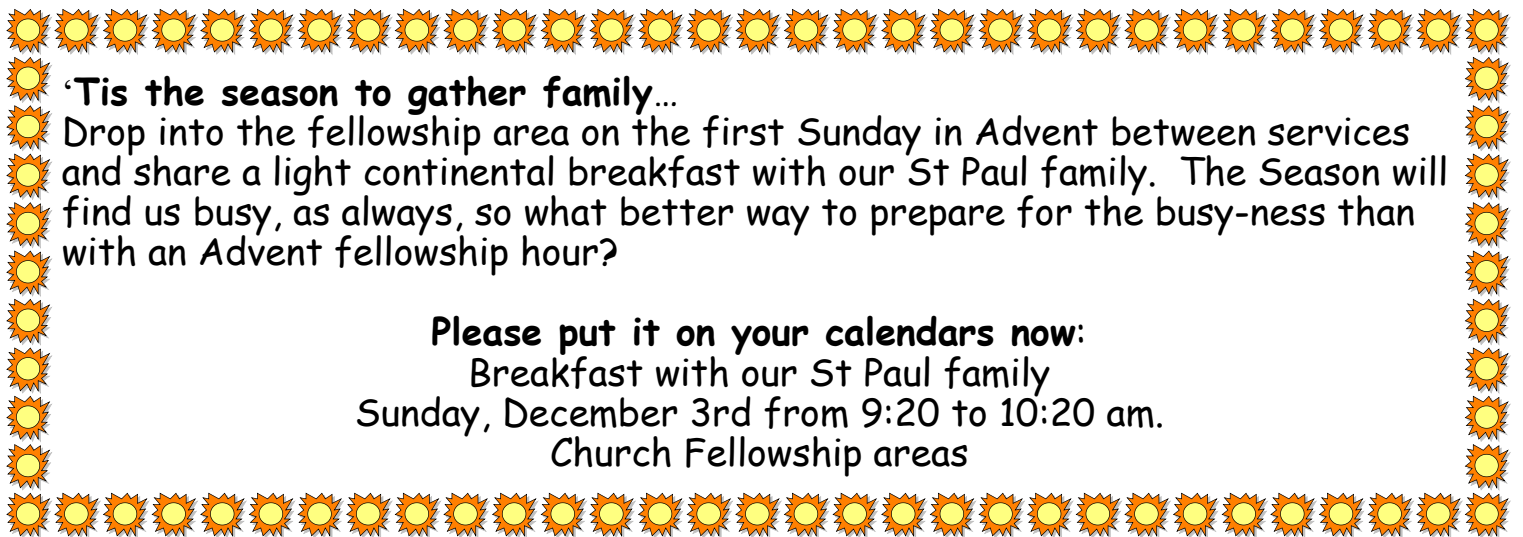
The concept of the Advent wreath originated among German Lutherans in the 16th century. Research by Prof. Haemig of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, points to Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881), a Protestant pastor in Germany as the inventor of the modern Advent wreath. In response to the children at the mission school he founded asking if Christmas had arrived yet, Wichern built a large wooden ring (made out of an old cartwheel) with 20 small red and 4 large white candles. A small candle was lit successively every day during Advent to mark the "hope" for Christmas. On Sundays, a large white candle was lit amidst the fresh evergreen boughs. Protestant churches in Germany incorporated it into their communal prayer and the wreath evolved into the 4-candle one most often used today.

In earlier times Advent was a period of fasting during which people's thoughts were directed to the expected (second) coming of Christ. Advent is meant to be a time of stilling, simplifying, purifying from sin, and preparing, represented in the Indigo candles and evergreen drapings. In them, see the winter nighttime sky and promise of spring. The practice of fasting helped stretch the oft times dwindling food stores. The Christian Church has always waited for the feast of Christmas to celebrate the fullness of the Incarnation Good News, and then does so for 12 days (the symbolic number of abundance and fullness) with lit trees, food, and goodies. How are these ideas expressed in your Advent and Christmas practices?



## Blue Christmas

There are those in our midst who have not experienced 2023 as a year of favor, and some who struggle to find joy in the season of wonder. Some of us are grieving recent losses, others are carrying deep wounds from past hurts or broken relationships, and many are separated from loved ones by time or miles or fear of sickness. We want to gather as a faith community in prayerful support of each other, to pray for those unable to pray, and to be a loving presence when the world seems cold. We will hold a Blue Christmas service from 5:15-6:00 p.m. on Monday, December 18. Through a series of reflective readings, songs, candle lightings, and prayers of intention, we will be reminded of God's incarnational love and healing power. All are welcome. This year, we will have tea and cookies in the Fellowship Hall until 6:30. You will be invited to share a story of a loved one, if you like. Your RSVP is always appreciated to help with our planning (call 319.462-4841 or 319.389-6153 by 12/17). Peace to your hearts as you consider joining us for this prayer experience.



### 'Tis the season to gather family...

Drop into the fellowship area on the first Sunday in Advent between services and share a light continental breakfast with our St Paul family. The Season will find us busy, as always, so what better way to prepare for the busy-ness than with an Advent fellowship hour?

**Please put it on your calendars now:**  
Breakfast with our St Paul family  
Sunday, December 3rd from 9:20 to 10:20 am.  
Church Fellowship areas

### Pounds for the Pantry

Time is winding down, so please give!! It's the time of the year that more people are in need of food. This year, the challenge is being issued to our entire community of Anamosa called "The Pounds for the Pantry Challenge" the program is open to any business, church or organization that would like to participate. We have until December 31st to bring food items to church and there will be a box or cart there for you to put them in. Your goods will be delivered to HACAP or, if you prefer, you are welcome to take your donations to HACAP yourself, but be sure to tell them you are donating on behalf of St Paul Lutheran Church.



### For Christmas Eve, the church will once again be decorated with white poinsettias.

If you would like to order a poinsettia to help beautify the sanctuary:  
Sign the paper that is on the table in the back of the church.  
Indicate who the poinsettia is in honor of or in memory of.  
Put cash or a check made out to **St. Paul Lutheran Church** in the envelope that is attached to the paper. Poinsettias are \$18.

Deadline for ordering is **Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>.**



## Tree Walk Cafe'

The Tree Walk will be December 8, 9 and 10 this year at the Lawrence Community Center. St Paul is in charge of the food stand there and help is needed. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board with the time slots needed. Also, the hospitality committee will be making calls for volunteers. If you have questions, call Deb Hardersen @ 319-480-3603.

The tree pictured is what St Paul did last year. If you would like to design and decorate the tree this year, notify Kathy in the church office by Dec. 5.



## Two new prayer opportunities at St Paul led by Pastor Rodney!

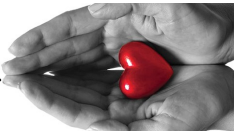
**Drumming Circle:** Join others in the church chapel from 5:30-6:30 pm the last Monday of the month for drum prayer (see dates below). 10 hand drums are available, first come, first to choose. We will begin with sharing gratuities and intentions, then drum, ending with a drum wash to those who wish it.

Drumming is a form of contemplative prayer that invites us to be present to the Heartbeat of God. As we listen to and feel the drums, we experience the One pulse that gives rise to all the rhythms and energies of life. It is actually from the feminine energy of the divine that drumming emerges, and men drum to draw themselves from the head into the heart, seeking harmony.

**Upcoming dates for 2024 will be: Mondays, Jan. 29, Feb. 26, March 25, April 29, May 27**

Create some intentional time for Focused Communal Silence (Meditation) - The benefits of meditation are real, but it is often difficult to make room for silence in our lives. Communal accountability can help uphold the commitment. Join with others in the St Paul Church on Monday and/or Thursday mornings, 6:30-7:00 a.m. for Meditation Prayer. We will pray out loud the Welcoming Prayer, have 21 minutes of silent meditation, then close with the Cantic of Simeon.

Hospitality



A huge and heartfelt thank you from the Hospitality Committee for all the delicious salads and desserts that have been so graciously provided for the funerals we've had this year. God sent many hands to make light work and each and every one was so very much appreciated. It's so comforting to feel how well our church family comes together to provide support.

Thank you...  
Hospitality Committee


## COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS SING

December 17 | 3 PM Soup Supper  
4PM Christmas service and songs

Apostolic of Anamosa Church  
9527 Hwy 151

Join us for a wonderful night of song  
and supper! We will celebrate with  
Christmas carols and a mass choir. If  
interested in participating in the  
mass choir, please contact  
Melody Norton (319)743-5545

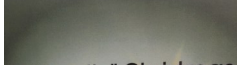




## Youth Christmas Program

### Wednesday, December 13th @ 7:20pm

Join a cow, a camel, a dove, a donkey, and a sheep as they explain what gifts they brought the son of God on the very first Christmas. Come and hear the children & youth share the Christmas Story through word and song. We will have cupcakes and ice cream immediately following the Christmas Program.





New hymnals have been purchased, replacing the old LBW hymnals. We are grateful for memorial funds that were used to purchase the new hymnals. If you are interested in having a green LBW hymnal for personal use, they are available in the library.



This years noisy offering will go toward the service opportunities and gatherings thru our youth program for 2024. So let's prepare for very noisy offerings during services starting on December 3rd thru the 24th.

## The letter to the early Christian community in Ephesus/modern Turkey 1:3-14 NIV

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.*

The author of this letter, writing in the latter part of the first century, borrows most of his content from the earlier letter to the Colossians. Both letters stand in the tradition of Paul. It is in Ephesians that we hear the Church first referred to as “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” in an attempt to inspire unity among the various Christian communities throughout the Mediterranean region.

The reading today begins to explain how the Church is the fulfillment of God’s plan. In the author’s mind, there is no distinction between the action of Holy Spirit in the world and the structure referred to as “Church.” The hymn, spoken in this proclamation, could very well have been a part of the first baptismal rituals of the Christian community. It recounts in lofty and eloquent phrases, the purpose and effects of baptism.

If we pay attention, we see in the first few lines that **baptism is our response** to God who has chosen us from the beginning of time to be saved (without blemish and holy). God desires to be one with us and in the action of baptism, this relationship is given a public character; it overcomes the separation and dis-order of original sin and re-orders the baptized person towards God within the believing community. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, as well as the ongoing creative actions of Holy Spirit, serve as testimony to God’s love and grace for us.

The last two paragraphs use the pronouns “we” and “you” referring to the Jews and the Gentiles, respectively. The author, writing in the persona of Paul, claims the Jewish tradition and their unique role as the Chosen People for the glory of God. The Jews were the first to hope in a Christ, and some of them were the first to hope in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. Now, according to the author, the Gentiles have also heard the gospel (good news) of Christ, been given the gift of Holy Spirit, and been claimed as possessions of God through baptism in faith. These things too are for the eternal glory of God and make all people heirs to heaven with the Jews.

## Psalm 15

*LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.*

## Gospel: John 1:1–5, 14a

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

The evangelist named John was writing late in the first century to his community of Jesus followers living near Ephesus (modern day Turkey) after they had been separated from the Jewish faith community. Families had been split over beliefs; pain ran deep. His purpose in writing was to bolster their resolve in following Jesus by presenting Him as the fulfillment of the Jewish expectations for a Messiah/Christ. John’s starting point was much different than Luke’s or Matthew’s because he focused more on Jesus’ divinity and less on Jesus’ humanity. In John’s story, Jesus’ birth to human parents in a stable, etc. is not important to him; it is all assumed. What is important is that Jesus, the proclaimed Messiah, was with God {read Yahweh, Father, Elohim, El Shaddai or any of the Jewish names for the one God} from the beginning of creation. Jesus was *Logos*, the *Word of God* waiting to be spoken into human form in time. And this Word that was spoken again and again was **life**. This life was light to the human race. Adam (earth beings) were created as light and given a divine attribute: free will. Through choices, Adam

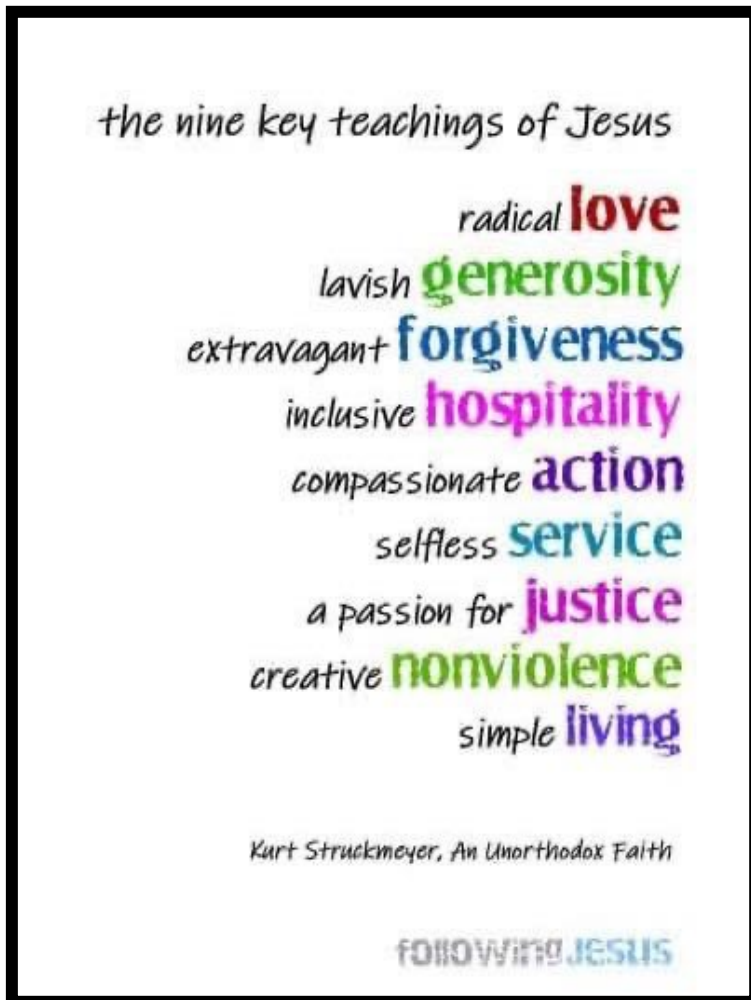
brought sin, division, and darkness upon humanity. Jesus was spoken into the world to be light once again, to initiate the reign of God anew, and to show people how to overcome the darkness of sin and disobedience. This was Jesus' mission for all time, according to John, and John the Baptist was born to herald the coming of the light found in Jesus.

The hymn found at the beginning of John's gospel praises God for creation, for Jesus the Word, and for the grace that emanates from his having been in the world. John the gospel writer puts an exclamation point on his proclamation by saying boldly that indeed Jesus has fully revealed the Father and the Father's original will when He created humans.

John's hymn is appropriate because he tells us, and all who have heard this passage for the last 1900 years, that we no longer have to wait for the presence of God in our world. God was here in the human presence of Jesus, and God continues to be with us in the grace that Christ extends through Holy Spirit. We who gather in his name are his body alive in the world.

#### Taking It Home:

- What image of God do you hold? Whom or what do you picture in your mind when you pray?
- Teens: Today, consciously say, "Thank you God" for ten things, people, opportunities, events, etc. Do it until thanking God is a habit.
- How do you respond to this question, "Where is your God NOW?"
- The beginning of John's gospel is filled with lofty theological ideas. Read the first chapter again and try to decipher the "good news." Does it help to think of Jesus as the "new Adam?" What is the significance of saying, "God intended to send Jesus from the beginning of time...?"
- What have you been predestined for?



## Please Pray for the Following

(Why people want prayers isn't important, *the prayers are!*)

We pray for all who need healing, strength or comfort especially Frankie McDonnell (grandson of Betty Hunter), Donna Lytle (cousin of Betty Hunter), and the families of Rose Hubler Flaig and Mary Carol Lambertsen as they grieve the loss of their loved one. For peace in our nation & world, for safety in our schools and communities and for those seeking a safe home. To add a name call or email Kathy at 319-462-4841/[stpaulanamosa@gmail.com](mailto:stpaulanamosa@gmail.com). Names will be listed for 4 weeks and may be renewed.

### Next Week December 10th Readings

*Matthew 1:18-25*

*Luke 1:26-38 The Promised birth of Jesus, the Savior*

**GriefShare** is available upon request. Please contact Nancy Douglas if interested 319-551-3358.

**AA meets** in the lower level of the CE building on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm.

**Jones County Food Bank:** Help is always needed at the Jones County Community Food Bank - food and funds have fallen critically low. For the last few months, the number of families and individuals requesting foods has been increasing and the shelves are almost bare. Funds are also being diminished by the demands of purchasing food at higher prices.

To donate money, checks may be written to Jones County Community Food Bank and mailed to 105 Broadway Place, Anamosa IA 52205. Items needed this week: Peas, pancake mix and syrup, canned tuna, Mac & Cheese and personal care items. **Please place items in the back of the church for collection by St. Paul volunteers OR call the Food Bank to make delivery arrangements (462-4343)**

**Recorded services are found on St. Paul website, YouTube page or Facebook page.**

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
Available 24 Hours  
Languages: English, Spanish  
800-273-8255

### Bread Bakers:

December: Sherri Evans  
3 Communion Eve Services: B&M Lubben  
January: Darla Algoe  
February: Valerie Lambertsen

### Deliver Food to Food Bank:

December: Myra Powell  
January: Barb Kleis  
February: Ralph & Sandy Andresen

### Tuesday, November 28

- \* 1:30pm Scripture Study
- \* 6:00pm Grief Support by request, call Nancy Douglas
- \* 7:00pm AA—LL CE Building

### Wednesday, November 29

- 8:00 am Men's Worship Group—CE Building
- 6-7:30 WD4

### \* 6:00pm Evening Service

Comm Prep: Paula Sisler  
Greeters: Summer Parks  
Readings/Prayers: Paula Sisler  
Comm Server: Jamie Hamblin  
PowerPoint: Myra Powell

### Sunday, December 3

#### \* 8:00 am Service

Comm Prep: Ed Gerst/Susan Koppenhaver  
Greeter: Ed Gerst/Susan Koppenhaver  
Readings/Prayers: Macen Garrett / Virginia Danielson  
Comm Server: Ed Gerst/Susan Koppenhaver  
PowerPoint: Kathy Brunssen  
Livestream: Skylar

#### \* 10:30am Service

Comm Prep: Ralph/Sandra Andresen  
Greeter: Gary/Carlene Vavricek  
Readings: Gary/Carlene Vavricek  
Prayers: Ralph Andresen  
Comm Server: Gary/Carlen150

e Vavricek

PowerPoint: Dean L.

### Wednesday, December 6

- 8:00 am Men's Worship Group—CE Building
- 6-7:30 WD4

### \* 6:00pm Evening Service

Comm Prep: Marlene Serbousek  
Greeters: Jamie Hamblin  
Readings/Prayers: Cathy/Jerry Crowe  
Comm Server: Cathy Crowe  
PowerPoint: Beth Hora

### Sunday, December 10

#### \* 8:00 am Service

Comm Prep: Jeff/Kristi Fortune  
Greeter: Tom Sabotta/Sherri Evans  
Readings/Prayers: Tom Sabotta  
Comm Server: Jeff/Kristi Fortune  
PowerPoint: Lois Ocenosak  
Livestream: Skylar

#### \* 10:30am Service

Comm Prep: Barb Wilson  
Greeter: Fred Austin Family  
Readings/Prayers: Amy Fuller Belding  
Comm Server: Amy Fuller Belding/Cathy Crowe  
PowerPoint: G/L Chrisman  
Livestream: Sebastian G.

### Tuesday, December 12

- \* 1:30pm Scripture Study
- \* 6:00pm Grief Support by request, call Nancy Douglas
- \* 7:00pm AA—LL CE Building

### Wednesday, December 13

- \* 8:00 am Men's Worship Group—CE Building

### \* 6:00pm Evening Service

Comm Prep: Ken/Pam Humpal  
Greeters: Ken/Pam Humpal  
Readings/Prayers: Barb Kleis  
Comm Server: Ken Humpal  
PowerPoint: Beth Hora

**Mailing Address:**  
**St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**103 East Cedar Street**  
**Anamosa, IA 52205**



## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Dec 3	'Tis the Season to gather family (continental breakfast 9:20-10:20 in Fellowship Hall)
Dec 8, 9, 10	Tree Walk Café @ LCC (sign up sheet posted in back of church)
Dec 11	All Leadership/Council Meeting 6:00 pm
Dec 13	Youth Christmas Program @ 7:20 pm
Dec 18	Blue Christmas 5:15-6:30 pm
Dec 21	The "Star" movie @ 6:30 pm
Dec 24	4th Sunday Advent 9:00 am Service Christmas Eve 3, 5, 7:30 Service
Dec 25	Christmas Day (office closed)