



First Things ~ December, 2022

The Blessings of Belonging to a Liturgical Church

The Lutheran Church has always been a *liturgical* church. *Liturgical* means having organized worship.

The ENTIRE YEAR has organized worship. We follow the “church year” and its “seasons:”

- During ADVENT, four weeks in length, we prepare for Christ’s coming – how he came when he was born in Bethlehem, how he comes to us in Word and Sacrament today, and how he will come and take us to heaven on the last day.
- During the CHRISTMAS season, only twelve days in length, we celebrate God’s love for us, shown when he sent his Son to be a human being, to live a perfect life and die an innocent death to redeem us.
- During EPIPHANY, between three and six weeks in length, we celebrate how God’s glory is revealed in Jesus Christ his Son.
- During LENT, six weeks in length beginning on Ash Wednesday, we remember how Jesus suffered and died in our place.
- During the EASTER season, seven weeks in length, we celebrate how he rose from the dead, and how he now reigns as king.



Many thanks to the Altar Team for purchasing a set of Advent/Christmas banners

- During the PENTECOST season, six months in length, we remember how the Lord wants us to live as his children here on earth.

And on each Sunday of the “church year” we hear the same readings as many other Christian churches. On pages X – XXIII in the blue hymnal, you can see what readings we will hear each Sunday. This year is “Year A” when the theme of the day will be set by the Gospel Lesson, most of them taken from Matthew.

During this year, you will hear the major stories from Matthew’s Gospel. And I plan to base my messages (or sermons) on those Gospel Lessons. And the other readings that we hear – some from the Old Testament, some from the Epistles (or Letters) and some Psalms – we will have a full review of all the great teachings of the Bible.

EACH WORSHIP SERVICE is also organized. In pretty much every worship service:

1. We confess our sins and hear God’s promise of forgiveness
2. We hear God’s Word
3. We praise and thank the Lord
4. We review what we believe by speaking the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, or a portion of Luther’s Small Catechism
5. We pray, often finishing with the Lord’s Prayer
6. We receive God’s blessing

Many of us grew up using *The Lutheran Hymnal*, the hymnal what was published in 1941. The liturgy was pretty much the same each and every Sunday. The good part of that was that everyone knew the liturgy well. The not-so-good part of that was that it was easy for people to hear and speak the liturgy without thinking about it.

Christian Worship, the red hymnal that was published in 1993, kept that liturgy, calling it “The Common Service.” But the red hymnal also introduced us to other liturgies, like “The Service of Word and Sacrament” on page 26 and “The Service of the Word” on page 38. The red hymnal also introduced the “chanting” of psalms.

Special December Events

Sunday Worship with First Lutheran Children will take place on Sunday, December 18 at 9:00 AM

Christmas Eve Worship will take place on Saturday, December 24 at 6:30 PM

Christmas Day Worship will be on Sunday, December 25 at 9:00 AM

New Year’s Eve Worship will take place on Saturday, December 31 at 6:30 – No Communion, but there will be Communion on January 1

Christian Worship (II), the blue hymnal came out just a year ago in 2021. Just as the red hymnal contained many hymns that were not in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (e.g. *Amazing Grace* and *How Great Thou Art*), the blue hymnal contains many new hymns in addition to many old and cherished favorites. The blue hymnal retains “The Common Service” from the red hymnal (and *The Lutheran Hymnal*), using music that we are familiar with from the red hymnal and also new music.

In this “church year,” we will use the following liturgies:

- On the first Sunday of the month we will use “**The Service: Setting One**” – which includes Holy Communion – on page 154 of the blue hymnal.

- On the second Sunday of the month we will follow the service of “**Confession and Absolution**” on page 278 in the blue hymnal
- On the third Sunday of each month we will use “**The Service of Word and Sacrament**” (which includes Holy Communion) on page 26 in the red hymnal.
- On the fourth Sunday of the month we will use “**The Service of the Word**” from page 38 in the red hymnal
- Four times a year there is a fifth Sunday of the month. On those Sundays we will use a different form of worship such as “Morning Praise” from the red hymnal.

It is my prayer that by using four different liturgies regularly, our worship will be both familiar and fresh at the same time. In Africa I heard many a not-so-good sermon, preached by a well-meaning, but not well-prepared, lay preacher. Each time I heard such a sermon, I took comfort in knowing that even if the preacher did a terrible job, the people who attended worship still heard the big important truths of God’s Word in the Lutheran Liturgy.

All those who worship in Lutheran churches share that blessing – that in every worship service and throughout the year, they are hearing the important truths of God’s Word regularly and often.

December Area Events

Saturday, December 3 – Ladies Christmas Party with the theme *Merry Missions* will take place at St. John’s in Nodine, starting with a noon meal

Sunday, December 4 – Women’s Christmas Gala at St. John’s in Caledonia – *supper & program* – starting at 5:30 PM (Reservations are required, see announcement in entryway)

Sunday, December 11 – Mission Fest at St. John’s in Caledonia. WELS Board for World Missions Administrator Pastor Larry Schlomer will be preaching. The *worship service* is at 9:00 AM, followed by *mission presentation & brunch* at 10:00 AM

Sunday, December 11 – Christmas Concert at Luther High School will start at 2:00 PM

Board for Lay Ministry Update

Mark your calendars. The **annual meeting** will take place on **Sunday, January 29** after worship. We invite all members to attend. A proposed budget for 2023 will be available several weeks in advance. Members will be invited to give input to the Board for Lay Ministry in advance of the annual meeting.

Through the month of October, offerings and other income was **\$199,810**. Through the month of September, total expenses were **\$210,051**. So, the **deficit** for the year (through the month of October) is **\$10,241**.

Area WELS Update

Pastor Gregory Pope has accepted a call to serve Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Holmen. He will be installed on Sunday, December 11 at 5:30 PM.

Other area congregations which are vacant are Rock of Ages in Rochester, Our Savior's in Kasson. The Rochester multi-site congregation – called Resurrection and Life – is calling a third pastor.

December at First Lutheran

1. **Sunday Bible Study** will take place on December 4 & 11. Currently we are studying the different religions of the world. Bible Study will start again on January 8.
2. **CrossTalk** will have a lesson on December 4. They will practice for Christmas on December 11 and participate in our worship service on December 18. CrossTalk will resume again on January 8.
3. **Monday Bible Study** is in progress. We meet in the church fellowship hall on Mondays at 9:00 AM and are studying Paul's Epistle to the **Galatians**
4. **Confirmation Class** for 7th and 8th graders meets on Wednesdays at 6:30 PM
5. **Choir** rehearses on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM
6. **Women Of the Word (WOW)** - this Bible study group will resume in January
7. **Men's Bible Study** will meet resume in January as well
8. **First Women** will be meet again on Saturday, January 14 at 10:00 AM

God Bless, *Pastor Mark*

Mark Your Calendars

January 16-18, 2023 – WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership will take place in Chicago – check out all the events and presentations [HERE](#)

April 22, 2023 – WELS Coulee Women's Retreat will take place at Luther High School – check out more information [HERE](#)

May 22-25, 2023 – Bus Trip to Ark Encounter and Creation Museum – you can find more information in the church entryway

Advent – Come Lord Jesus

As King

As Judge

As Messiah

As Immanuel

