

Spirit of the Redeemer



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH, NASHVILLE, TENN.

December 2017

Confessing Christ – December Commemorations

In the Lutheran Church we remember with thanksgiving saints from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Church history. Their recognition has nothing to do with their own worthiness before God, but rather with what God accomplished through them. According to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, there are three benefits to remembering the well-known saints who have gone before us: “First, we thank God for giving faithful servants to His Church. Second, through such remembrance our faith is strengthened as we see the mercy that God extended to His saints of old. Third, these saints are examples by which we may imitate both their faith and their holy living according to our calling in life” (*Lutheran Service Book*, p. xii).

In our Church Year the saints who were very closely associated with the life and ministry of Jesus are remembered as “feast” days. (See the accompanying article from the LCMS Worship Library.) Other saints listed in the Church Year are remembered as commemorations, usually on the day they died, their “heavenly birthday.”

On this particular year our midweek Advent service dates align with three saints who lived different vocations but each with a clear confession of Christ, the Savior. We remember Nicholas, Lucia, and Katharina.

The midweek Advent service schedule is as follows:

Confessing Christ – December Commemorations

Wed., December 6 – **Nicholas of Myra, *Pastor***
Text: John 3:16

Wed., December 13 – **Lucia, *Martyr***
Text: John 1:1-9

Wed., December 20 – **Katharina von Bora Luther, *Faithful Christian and Wife***
Text: 2 Corinthians 11:1-6; Ephesians 5:22-33

Services are at 7:00 p.m. There will be a meal provided each Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. After the last midweek service on December 20, Amy and I will again be hosting the congregation for a **hot cider and dessert reception** in the library. We greatly desire your attendance.

– *Pastor Young*

Title: Commemorations Questions and Answers

Category: Church Year

In addition to the list of Sundays and seasons (e.g., Advent, Nativity of Our Lord, etc.) that has always appeared in our church year calendars, there has also appeared a group of observances called "Minor Festivals" (e.g., Annunciation of Our Lord; St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist; etc.). These festivals typically include events in the life of Christ, as well as individuals who joined Christ in his earthly ministry. The list of Minor Festivals in *Lutheran Worship* included, however, several individuals who do not fall into this category (e.g., Martin Luther, C.F.W. Walther, St. Laurence). More properly, they belong in a category known as "commemorations."

Lutheran Service Book includes a significantly expanded calendar of commemorations. This calendar is separate from that of the Minor Festivals. The questions and answers that follow provide a more in-depth rationale for the observance of commemorations.

What are "commemorations"?

These are days set aside over the course of the year as opportunities to remember some of the Christian men and women who have gone before us in the faith. The dates for these commemorations are usually chosen to coincide with the earthly death of these faithful men and women, which is often referred to as their "heavenly birthday."

We honor the memory of these saints, not as those who are "dead and gone," but as those who are very much alive forevermore in Christ Jesus. We honor not what they did during their earthly life, but what God worked in and through them to his glory. We remember them by giving attention to the Word of God, which nurtured and sustained them in the faith on their pilgrimage from this life into the courts of heaven. Finally, we pray with thanksgiving to God in Christ for the mercy he has shown to his people of all times and places. As in all things in the church, these

commemorations resound to the praise and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why do we observe them?

First of all, we follow the example of Holy Scripture in remembering those whom God has called to be his own, in whom he has demonstrated his grace of forgiveness and his gift of life. We think especially of Hebrews 11, which commemorates many of those who lived by faith before the birth of the Savior. Another good example, taken from the Holy Gospels, is the woman who anointed Jesus prior to his death. Her faith and love, Jesus says, will be remembered wherever the Gospel is proclaimed (Matt. 26:13).

Second, our Lutheran Confessions also indicate a number of reasons for the commemoration of the saints (Augsburg Confession, Article 21). In doing so, we are given examples of the Christian faith and life, which God uses to strengthen our own faith and to encourage us in living according to his Word. In a similar way, when we remember examples of those who were called to repentance and forgiveness by the grace of God in Christ, we are reminded of his grace toward us and his forgiveness of our sins. In each of these ways, the saints who have gone before us become a kind of living "stained-glass windows" through whom the light of Christ now shines on us in a variety of shapes and colors. Finally, we give thanks to God for the gift of these faithful people, who served his church as pastors, teachers, confessors, and laity.

But aren't we all saints in God's sight?

Of course! Christ Jesus is our righteousness and holiness. In him, by grace through faith, all of us are saints, and we are perfect in his sight. It would be appropriate, in this respect, to remember everyone who has lived and died (and lives again) by faith in Christ--as we do, in a sense, on the Feast of All Saints (November 1).

Nevertheless, among this vast cloud of witnesses with which we are surrounded, it is also helpful to remember the particular and personal details of certain individuals. To do so reflects the personal care and attention that God gives to each of His dear children, as well as the ways in which he blesses each of us in particular and personal ways. What is more, in the history of the church, as in Holy Scripture, there are those whom God raises up—not according to merit, but according to his mercy—to serve his people in very special ways. Examples include Abraham and Moses in the Old Testament and Mary and John the Baptizer in the New Testament. In the long history of the church since the time of the apostles, we would certainly include Dr. Martin Luther as an outstanding servant of the Gospel.

In every case, it is important to remember that when we honor the memory of the saints we are thereby honoring the Lord and God and Savior of us all, who called these men and women to be his own. He redeemed them and sanctified them, and he blessed them to serve to the glory of his name for the benefit of others.

What is the difference between "commemorations" and saints' days ["feasts"]?

There are some saints in particular whose lives on earth are so closely connected with the earthly life and ministry of Jesus that their stories are literally part of the Gospel itself. Along with Mary and John the Baptizer, mentioned above, perhaps the most obvious examples would be the apostles and evangelists. In the history of the church, including the history of our Lutheran Church, the commemorations of these saints have been observed with special distinction—always to the praise and glory of Christ Jesus and His Gospel. These days are really treated as "Feasts of Christ," that is to say, as days when we remember, celebrate, and give thanks for the life that our Lord Jesus Christ lived for us in the flesh. For these reasons, it is appropriate to observe these "Feasts" with the Sacrament of the Altar, in which the Word-made-flesh draws close to us and gives himself to us in much the same way that he came and lived among the apostles and other disciples in the New Testament.

By contrast, the commemorations of other saints from the Old Testament and throughout the

history of the church on earth are normally observed in daily prayer within the family, in the Christian day school, in the chapels of our colleges and seminaries, and in parishes where it is possible to gather for Matins or Vespers during the week. In *Lutheran Service Book*, the calendar of these commemorations are found on pages xii and xiii, while the calendar of Sundays and Seasons and the Feasts of Christ are found on pages x and xi.

What are the benefits of observing the commemorations?

The purpose of the commemorations is to focus the hearts and minds of those who observe them on Christ Jesus and his Gospel. Following the examples of Holy Scripture and the guidance of our Lutheran Confessions, these commemorations serve the helpful purpose of teaching the Christian faith and life and encouraging the praise and thanksgiving of God in Christ. At the same time, by giving this appropriate attention to the saints who have gone before us, we discourage inappropriate and superstitious ways of remembering them. Instead, we give thanks to God for demonstrating his mercy through them, a practice which our Lutheran Confessions call "truly worthwhile" (Apology to the Augsburg Confession, XXI, 36).



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Growing In Christ Sunday School

December 2017

Advent 1 – 12/3

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Matthew 28:19

God Sends the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-21

Today's Sunday School lesson taught the children that at Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to His Church (Acts 2:1–21). Now, through Word and Sacrament, God gives us His Holy Spirit to create and sustain saving faith in Jesus. Ask the children to tell you about what happened at Pentecost. Ask them when they received the Holy Spirit (in Baptism). **Law** I sin when I believe that I can understand and trust in God on my own. **Gospel** By the power and work of the Holy Spirit through His Word, the Spirit grants me faith in Jesus and empowers me to will and do that which is good and God pleasing.

Advent 2 – 12/10

There is no other name . . . by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Peter and John Heal the Lame Man Acts 3

In Sunday School today, the children learned how each of us is like the lame beggar as we stand before God (Acts 3). Yet through the Means of Grace, God's Word and Sacraments, God bestows on us what Christ accomplished on the cross: forgiveness of sins. In your family discussions, talk about what it means to have the "forgiveness of sins." **Law** Disability and illness are physical symptoms of sin in the world. **Gospel** Through His Son, God gives me forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation – the cure for all sin.

Advent 3 – 12/17

[Forgive] as the Lord has forgiven you. Colossians 3:13

God's Servant Stephen Acts 6-7

In learning the story of Stephen (Acts 6–7), the first martyr, the children in Sunday School learned how we are crushed by and enraged at the accusations of God's Law, but the Gospel comes to bring peace and quietness with the forgiveness of our sins. Talk with your children and point out that in church we hear from the pastor the same Word of God that Stephen preached: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." **Law** Sin brings disorder and chaos. **Gospel** Christ brings order

and control to the chaos of my sin with His grace and mercy.

Advent 4 – 12/24

No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:3

Philip and the Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40

In Sunday School today, the children learned that as Jesus came to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26–40), He comes to us in our weakness, for we cannot by our own reason or strength come to Him. In your family faith talks, discuss how the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us, keeping us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. **Law** Trusting in my sinful reason, I cannot understand the need for or the work of Christ. **Gospel** God grants me faith through His Word and Sacrament so that I trust in His Son, Jesus, as my Savior.

Christmas 1 / Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus – 12/31

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17

The Conversion of Paul Acts 9:1-31

Today in Sunday School, the children studied "The Conversion of Paul" and learned that as God did with Paul, so God does with us. Through the Law, we are crushed by the weight of our sin and are helpless. As God revived Paul through Ananias (Acts 9:1–31), He revives us through our pastors with the proclamation of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments granting forgiveness, life, and salvation to all who believe. Talk to your children about how the Sacraments and God's Word revive you so that you may live as God's child. **Law** Because I am a sinner, I fail to stand up for Christ in the world, and I fear persecution. **Gospel** As a member of Christ's Body, the Church, I receive God's love and forgiveness in Christ and am strengthened in faith through His Word and Sacraments to live as His child, reflecting His love to the world.

Advent Meals

December 6, 13, & 20 @ 6pm
Evening Prayer @ 7pm

Sign up in the library if you are able to provide a meal.

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

Preface

CHIEF ARTICLES OF FAITH

Article I

God

Our churches teach with common consent that the decree of the Council of Nicaea about the unity of the divine essence and the three persons is true. It is to be believed without any doubt. God is one divine essence who is eternal, without a body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. He is the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible [Nehemiah 9:6]. Yet there are three persons, the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit [Matthew 28:19]. These three persons are of the same essence and power. Our churches use the term *person* as the Fathers have used it. We use it to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

Our churches condemn all heresies [Titus 3:10-11] that arose against this article, such as the Manichaeans, who assumed that there are two “principles,” one Good and the other Evil. They also condemn the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Muslims, and all heresies such as these. Our churches also condemn the Samosatenes, old and new, who contend that God is but one person. Through sophistry they impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Spirit are not distinct persons. They say that *Word* signifies a spoken word, and *Spirit* signifies motion created in things.

Article II

Original Sin

Our churches teach that since the fall of Adam [Romans 5:12], all who are naturally born are born with sin [Psalm 51:5], that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin, called concupiscence. Concupiscence is a disease and original vice that is truly sin. It damns and brings eternal death on those who are not born anew through Baptism and the Holy Spirit [John 3:5].

For the Month
of December

Children's Christmas Program

December 10 @ 4pm

Redeemer's Christmas Open House

Following the Children's Program

(Program Practice will be held at 9am on
Saturday, December 9th.)

Our churches condemn the Pelagians and others who deny that original depravity is sin, thus obscuring the glory of Christ's merit and benefits. Pelagians argue that a person can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

Article III

The Son of God

Our churches teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God [John 1:14], assumed the human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. So there are two natures—the divine and the human—inseparably joined in one person. There is one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. He did this to reconcile the Father to us and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of mankind [John 1:29].

He also descended into hell, and truly rose again on the third day. Afterward, He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. There He forever reigns and has dominion over all creatures. He sanctifies those who believe in Him, by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and make them alive. He defends them against the devil and the power of sin.

The same Christ will openly come again to judge the living and the dead, and so forth, according to the Apostles' Creed.

Article IV

Justification

Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4[3:21-26; 4:5]).

Article V

The Ministry

So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given [John 20:22]. He works faith, when and where it pleases God [John 3:8], in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ's sake.

Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that through their own preparations and works the Holy Spirit comes to them without the external Word.

[The *CHIEF ARTICLES OF FAITH*, as presented in the Augsburg Confession, will continue to be included in the newsletter over next few months.]

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Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML)

Christmas Open House
Tuesday, December 12
7pm

Where's George?

December 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 5 Men's work Evening (Christmas Tree)	2 9 Work Day (decorate)
3 First Sunday in Advent OutReach Sunday 9:15 Education Hour 10:30 Divine Service Door Offering Voters' Assembly (Budget & Council Slate) Confirmation Choir	4 8 AA	5	6 6 Supper 7 Advent Service	7	8	9 9 Children's Christmas Program Practice
10 Second Sunday in Advent 9:15 Education Hour 10:30 Divine Service Confirmation Choir 4 Children's Christmas Program & Redeemer's Open House	11 8 AA	12 7 LWML Christmas Open House	13 5 Confirmation 6 Supper 7 Advent Service	14	15	16
17 Third Sunday in Advent 9:15 Education Hour 10:30 Divine Service Confirmation Choir	18 8 AA	19 6:30 Council	20 6 Supper 7 Advent Service	21 <i>St. Thomas, Apostle</i>	22	23
24 Fourth Sunday in Advent / The Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas Eve) 9:15 Education Hour 10:30 Divine Service 5 Divine Service	25 The Nativity of Our Lord (Christmas Day) 10 Divine Service	26 <i>St. Steven, Martyr</i>	27 <i>St. John, Apostle and Evangelist</i>	28 <i>The Holy Innocents, Martyrs</i>	29	30
31 First Sunday after Christmas 9:15 Education Hour 10:30 Divine Service LWML Mite Collection <i>Eve of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus</i>						

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