

E-News for the Week of Sunday, December 27

Including Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Thursday, December 24: Christmas Eve

6:00 p.m.

Readings

Isaiah 9:6-7

Luke 2:1-20

Participants

Celebrant: Pr. Nancy Wright

Altar Guild: Julie Valliere

Organist: Ann Gnagey

Lectors: Lucy Beck and Mousa Ishaq

Ushers: Doug Dreibelbis, Jim Wilhite, and Richard Butz

Greeters: Kris and Mousa Ishaq

Friday, December 25: Christmas Day

10:00 a.m.

Readings

Isaiah 52:7-10

Psalm 98

Hebrews 1:1-4

John 1:1-14

Participants

Pastor: Pr. Nancy Wright

Lector: Kathe Bruno

Liturgical Assistant: Kathe Bruno

Organist: Ann Gnagey

Sunday, December 27

Readings

Isaiah 9:2-7

Micah 5:2-5a

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 2:1-12

Matthew 2:13-23

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52

Participants

Celebrant: Pr. Nancy Wright

Altar Guild: Kris and Mousa Ishaq

Communion Assistant: Johanna White

Lectors: Lucy Beck and Denise Puisto

Liturgical Assistant: TBA

Organist: Ann Gnagey

Greeters: Kris and Mousa Ishaq

Ushers: Doug Dreibelbis and Harriet Richards

Upcoming Week

Wednesday, 12/23

6:15 p.m. Choir

7:15 p.m. Bells

Thursday, 12/24: Christmas Eve

6:00 p.m. Worship Service

9:30 p.m. St. Timothy (rental)

Friday, 12/25: Christmas Day

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

Sunday, 12/27

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

Wednesday, 12/30

6:15 p.m. Contemporary

7:15 p.m. Bells

NOTE: The office will be closed the week of Monday, December 28th-January 1st.

Click [HERE](#) for a long-range calendar.

Holiday Service Schedule

Thursday, December 24

6:00 p.m. Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with Carols

Friday, December 25

10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Worship Service with Holy Communion and Sermon

Upcoming Birthdays

12/24 George Qubrosi

12/26 Kristin Peterson-Ishaq

12/26 Niam Qubrosi

12/28 Elizabeth Brackett

12/28 Gudny Rivers

12/30 Bill Harrison

12/30 Nathan Lombardi

Pastor's Message

Dear Ascension Parishioners,

The Christmas message from Bishop Dr. Munib Younan, Bishop of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land, speaks of the profound meaning of the message of the Prince of Peace to the troubles in the world today. Let us be attentive to the comments I excerpted below, as we await the celebration of the birth of Christ.

—Pr. Nancy

At Christmastime, we do not care to hear the voice of John the Baptist, for example, who calls to us from the wilderness: “Repent!” and “Prepare the way of the Lord!” and “Make his paths straight!” Such prophetic announcements seem to get in the way of our festivities. We don’t want anyone or anything to disturb our Christmas feasts and our Christmas joy.

However, the disturbing voice of John the Baptist is also a much-needed part of the Christmas story, because even as people across the world are decorating their homes with lights, a cloud of darkness has settled over us. The threat of terror and war is felt in nearly every place around the globe—in Paris, in Beirut, in Mali, in Nigeria, in San Bernardino and other places. Refugees are fleeing violence and persecution in great numbers. Wars and rumors of wars are coming to nations which were once on good terms. Extremists are finding a voice and even followers in every religion. Here in the Middle East, many Christians are feeling squeezed from every side of the divide.

It is clear that John the Baptist's prophetic words are for us today. Nations need to repent. Politicians need to change their ways. Humanity must turn back to God. The path to peace, justice, and equality must be made straight – not only through goodwill and good feelings, but through good policy and good governments.

This year, we receive the announcement of Jesus' birth as exactly the kind of disturbing, prophetic news the world desperately needs. We take comfort in knowing the baby Jesus was born at night, when darkness ruled the earth. And we rejoice that the light of Jesus Christ still shines brightly from the heart of Palestine, giving Christians everywhere hope and strength.

--- Bishop Dr. Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land

Christmas and Epiphany

We will continue to celebrate Christmas until Epiphany, January 6. Pr. John Lemkul will preach and celebrate on Jan. 10 with a focus on Epiphany, which will conclude our Christmas celebrations.

Study Leave

Pr. Nancy is on a week's study leave (Jan. 6 to 15th), for the third course in the Doctorate of Ministry program. During that time Kelli Tylenda, council president, is "in charge" with pastoral backup. Pr. Nancy can be reached by her cell phone 347-525-4060.

Daily Advent Reflections*

Wednesday, 12/23

Before you speak today, ask yourself: are these words kind, necessary and true? Would I say them with Jesus in the room?

Thursday, 12/24: Christmas Eve

Remake an old lullaby with God words (e.g. Twinkle Twinkle Little God). Sing it all day long. Teach it to a child.

Friday, 12/25: Christmas Day

Sing carols at the top of your lungs. Now go piano, piano, pianissimo.
Is it enough. You are enough. You have enough

Saturday, 12/26

(There is no passage today, only an image of the baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph. Perhaps you can find a picture of a baby around your home somewhere to reflect upon. Ponder his or her newness.)

Sunday, 12/27

Make your home a silent retreat today, and your home-mates with you. Without screens and speaking, what do you hear?

Monday, 12/28

Imagine your soul is a baby that won't stop crying. Hush, shush, rock and sign for as long as it takes to quiet her.

Tuesday, 12/29

Take a break from your smartphone today. Leave it off, and at home. With every urge to check it, breathe deep and reach out for Jesus.

Wednesday, 12/30

Cook and eat dinner in candlelight and silence tonight, with someone you love. What can you learn about each other without speaking?

Thursday, 12/31

Pray a doodle prayer—draw people instead of writing names, and surround them with lines suggesting light, and other symbols.

Friday, 1/1

Walk a labyrinth today, if you have one nearby, or walk an imaginary one in living room or yard. You are a new creation.

*Shared from an Advent calendar prepared by Rev. Molly Phinney Baskette (Keynote speaker from the 2015 New England Synod Assembly)

Sunday School News

Children

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL on December 27 or January 3.

Adults

The class is reading Pope Francis I Encyclical Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home. Anyone can join at any time; you can purchase a book from Pr. Nancy or read the Encyclical on line for free. No class preparation is needed, as we read aloud and discuss each paragraph. Adult classes are currently on break, but will resume on Sunday, January 17.

HARK! IMPORTANT UPCOMING NEWS AND EVENTS

Coming Soon: Beat the Winter Blahs

Mark the evening of **January 30, 2016** on your calendars. That's the date that you will have an opportunity to celebrate a little Scandinavian flavor here in Vermont. You will not only enjoy an evening of fun, laughter and wonderful food, but you'll be supporting Lutheran World Relief at the same time. This event will take place in the Ascension Social Hall and open to ALC members, their families and friends. There will be no charge but you will be given an opportunity to help pay for the festivities and make a donation to a very important cause. We thank Thrivent for their generous support of this event.

In true Scandinavian tradition there will be exciting entertainment and plenty of delicious food including, but not limited to, lutefisk. Come and enjoy some of your favorites or discover some food you've never tasted.

Look for a signup sheet in early January, but **what we're looking for now are a few volunteers to help with planning and food preparation**. If interested, or if you have question, contact one of the following:

Kris Peterson-Ishaq and Mousa Ishaq at mkishaq@comcast.net

France Leblanc at france316@hotmail.com

Jake Hansen at organic343@hotmail.com

Quilt top kits available

If you would like to help make mission quilts for Lutheran World Relief but cannot join us on the first and/or third Thursday or the month at church, you can assemble quilt tops at home. There are kits that consist of cut fabric squares (11" x 11") along with directions. Let Karen Martin know if you are interested.

Pastor's Piano Policy

Ascension received a piano, gratis, from a family in Montpelier and paid to have it moved to ALC through funds originally given by Lynne Dapice. Thank you Lynne. We have the joy of the piano for parishioners (including children) who wish to enjoy playing while at church or taking piano lessons; as well as for public performances and regular teaching. Daimon Ferrante, the composer and piano instructor who rents space from ALC to teach, is personally paying for ongoing tuning. He asks that the piano not be moved, as it upsets the tuning (it is not a young piano). Also, when children play, under gentle supervision of their parents or teachers, they are welcome! We are all respectful of others in the building, who may be praying, worshiping, practicing, talking, etc. Closing doors and making sure the sound system (above the piano) is turned on or off depending on whether the sanctuary practice or service needs to be heard in the fellowship hall, will all help. Let the music sound!

Men's Breakfast

There will be no Men's Breakfast for the month of December. Worry not, Men of Ascension, we will continue in January!

ELCA World Hunger Matching Funds Challenge

Until **December 31, 2015**, friends of ELCA World Hunger are challenging one another with a \$150,000 match. Gifts received by December 31 can help meet the match. To take advantage of this match, please give online at www.ELCA.org/WorldHunger

COFFEE HOUR NEEDS YOU!!!

Thank you for the great response to the new Coffee Hour sign-up sheet. If you were unable to sign up for a week or two, please check out the list hanging on the bulletin board in the fellowship room. There are several empty dates to be filled in yet. Coffee Hour is fun for members but also a very important time for us to greet visitors and new members. We often joke about coffee, food and Lutherans going together as a natural....and they do....so please sign up for Coffee Hour and let's continue this wonderful tradition. Also, the Coffee Can (to defray costs) is on the table to help pay for the coffee. Thanks.

See Beth Dreibelbis with questions.

Church Mouse

The Mouse is available by email on a quarterly basis. But you can tell the office if you prefer to have the Mouse mailed to you. There are always extra copies of the Mouse on the table in the Fellowship Hall. A sheet next to the copies gives spaces for you to sign your name if you wish the Mouse to be mailed to you in future.

Additional News and Opportunities

Meals on Wheels Job Opening

Meals on Wheels is looking for a cook to assist in meal preparation at the St. James Episcopal site in Essex Junction. Hours are 6:30-11:30 a.m. Monday-Friday. No professional experience is required, but

you should at the very least be a good home cook, know your way around a kitchen, and possess the abilities to learn quickly and work well with others. Contact Patti to apply at 878-8786.

Tai Chi at Ascension!

Tai Chi for All Generations, **Wednesdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m.** with Elizabeth Wirls

Classes are ongoing and everyone is welcome to come as you are, whenever you wish. All generations are welcome! Please note that we have decided to offer these classes on a "pay as you can" basis. That way everyone who is interested will be able to join us! For more information, see the attached brochure and feel free to contact Elizabeth in the church office, 862-8866

[CLICK HERE](#) for full brochure.

Tai Chi will break for the holidays soon. **There will be no classes on December 23rd, 30th, or January 6th.**