

Council minutes were not available at the time of printing.

Letters of Thanks

Appreciation from the Lutheran Disaster Assistance fund, Fund Chairman Dave Brauhn, was extended to West Prairie for the donation of \$500.00.

Sola Publishing expressed gratitude for West Prairie's donation of \$500

Winter Schedule of Understanding Grief & Loss

Sponsored by Hospice of North Iowa
January 21, 28,
February 4, 11, 18, 25

All sessions are from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at 232 2nd Street SE, Mason City. Please call 1-800-297-4719 or 641-428-6208 to pre-register.

1. White Christmas
2. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
3. Joy to the World
4. Away in a Manger
5. What Child is This?
6. O Come, All Ye Faithful
7. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Advent Adventure

Next Sunday, December 3 is the date for the annual Advent Adventure. We need your help in preparing the church proper for the Advent and Christmas season, and to pack boxes of needed items for Crisis Intervention. And . . . Saving the best for last . . . A potluck dinner!!!

Sunday School Christmas program

The annual Christmas program has not yet set a date — watch for announcement in Sunday bulletin. "What Child is This?" will feature all Sunday School youth, plus a surprise cast member!

Name that Christmas Carol

1. Bleached Yule
2. Arrival time: 2400 hrs., weather: cloudless
3. Delight for this planet
4. Far off in a feeder
5. Query regarding identity of descendant
6. Loyal followers advance
7. Give attention to the melodious celestial beings

DECEMBER 2017

West Prairie Lutheran Church

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"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:10b-11)

Christmas is a celebration of our Savior's birth. He is the Savior for all people because all people need this Savior. That was His reason for coming to us. That is the reason for us to celebrate Him. Perhaps the most famous statement in the Bible is Jesus' explanation of why God sent Him to earth. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16) Eternal life is found only in the person of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. He is truly God and truly man.

God loves you and I so much that He came to earth as a human so that you and I could get to know Him and learn to trust Him and love Him back. God became one of us, a human being, so that we could understand what He is really like, so that we could understand His love and our need for Him. Don't let this Christmas season pass us by without considering what it means from God's perspective, not just our own. It is truly a time to celebrate God's goodness!

See you in church!
Pastor Steve Bang

Continued on page 3

DECEMBER**USHERS:** Bill & Rita Schutter**LECTIONARY:**

Paris Reimann

ACOLYTE:

Paris Reimann

ALTAR:

Jan & Julie Reimann

ALTAR FLOWERS:

Jill Holland

NAOMI CIRCLE:

12/6—6 p.m. Eat Out

SARAH CIRCLE:

12/6—6 p.m. Branding Iron

WOW:1 p.m. Christmas program,
fill goody bags for shut-ins**CHURCH COUNCIL:**12/13 at Lanette's after car-
oling @ Forest Plaza &
Good Sam**BIBLE STUDY CLUB:**12/7— 6 p.m. @ Sister's
(Leland café). Call Phyllis
at 581-4553 for info or ride.**FELLOWSHIP SERVERS:**12/3—Lisa Durby, LeAnn
Peterson12/10—Helen Finer, Jan &
Julie Reimann12/17—Shirley Hanson,
Whitli Bromeland

12/24—No fellowship

12/31—Tammy Holland,
Sharon Holland**BIRTHDAYS**

3 — Julia Holland

7 — Veronica Maas

8 — Helen Stohr

9 — Lisa Ruby

14 — Jayme Charlson

15 — Bryon Holst

21 — JW Berryhill

29 — Haley Schutter

*Happy Anniversary***DECEMBER 19****Merle & Blanche Durby**

Your beliefs become
your thoughts,
Your thoughts become
your words,
Your words become
your actions,
Your actions become
your habits,
Your habits become
your values,
Your values become
your destiny.

*Mahatma Gandhi***Advent — Blue or Purple Paraments?**

What is the “proper” color of Advent – blue or purple? Purple was the long-standing color used by Lutheran congregations through most of the 20th century. The purple of Advent and of Lent served two purposes – emphasizing the royalty of Christ, as kings in western culture over the centuries were often adorned with purple garments. And, purple has a penitential nature to it, inviting introspection and repentance on behalf of the believer.

The connection of Lent is easy to make. But penitence in Advent? Yes, then too. However, blue highlights the expectant nature of Advent as in the color of a clear pre-dawn sky as the sun rises in the east. We then use this color as expectation and anticipation of the dawning of Christ's birth. It also distinguishes the season from Lent.

The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. A wreath which encircles the candles, or circular garland, is a symbol of eternity and unending love. One candle is lit each Sunday of the Advent season.

Each candle color represents a specific element of spiritual readying for the celebration of Christmas. The first blue candle is the Prophecy candle or candle of hope. The second is called the Bethlehem candle or the candle of preparation. The rose-colored candle is lit on the third Sunday and is named the Shepherd candle or candle of joy. It represents a shift in the season away from repentance and toward celebration. The fourth blue candle is called the Angel candle or candle of love. The Christ candle in the center of the wreath is white representing purity and light and is lit on Christmas. All those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior are washed of their sins and made whiter than snow.

Focusing on the colors of Advent in the weeks leading up to Christmas is a great way keep Christ in the center of Christmas and to teach children the true meaning of Christmas.

Christmas in Bethlehem today

As you might imagine, Christmas in Bethlehem where Jesus was born, is a major event. Celebrations stretch out from December through January as multiple denominations hold processions and services, most of which are in keeping with the traditions of the Holy Land. Millions of people pay homage to one of the most revered places by Christians.

The festivities in the city itself are somewhat similar to the celebrations in Europe and North America, where the streets are illuminated with lights, plays are performed and Christmas markets are seen everywhere. One interesting fact is the market of 'Christkindmarkt Bethlehem' which is a world-famous marketplace, a concept adopted from the German Christmas holiday markets. It features more than 150 artisans during the weeks of revelries. There are large number of customs and rituals which characterize the festival of Christmas, which are usually not cele-

brated in other countries.

Another custom is the parade which takes place on Christmas Eve. The procession is headed by galloping horsemen alongside the police. A man follows the team riding on a black pony or mare, carrying a cross. He is then followed by the churchmen and the government executives. The procession enters the Church of the Nativity (of which parts date back to 327 A.D.), where an image of the Holy Child is placed. Visitors enter the Church later which leads into a cave, where a silver star suggests the birth place of Jesus Christ.

Once a part of Israel, Bethlehem was handed over to the Palestinians in 1995 per the Oslo Peace Accords. It is one of the oldest cities in world with records indicating inhabitants going back to 2000 B.C. It is located on the West Bank of the Jordan River and a short drive from Israel. With a population of upwards of 25,000, approximately 40 percent are Christians.

The history and legends of the candy cane

The historical truth about the Christmas candy cane is that in 1919, a fellow by the name of Bob McCormack began making candy canes to sell to local citizens of Albany, Georgia, eventually becoming one of the world's leading candy cane companies by the name of Bob's Candies.

However, I find the legend much more memorable . . . A ban on public displays of Christianity in the 18th century led to children not learning the truth and joy of Christmas. One man who was a candy maker, wished he could share in the love of the Christ Child. He prayed to find a way to offer children a gift that would communicate the real story of Christmas.

His prayer led to an idea—the candy cane.

He chose to make the candy shaped like a **shepherd's staff** indicating that Jesus is the good shepherd and His "sheep" would hear His voice and follow Him.

The shepherd's staff upside down is a "J" which stands for Jesus. The candy maker chose a hard candy to remind the children that Jesus is our "rock." The red stripes remind us of Jesus' blood shed for us by His crucifixion while the white represents His purity, His holiness.

The sweetness and fragrance of the candy cane is peppermint which was similar to hyssop that was used for sacrifice and purification in the Old Testament. It also reminds us of the spices the Wise Men brought when they visited the Baby Jesus.

While eating the candy cane, it is often broken, meant as a reminder that Jesus' body was broken when He was crucified. And last, the candy cane is meant to be given as a gift to remind us of the love of Jesus and our gift of salvation.

The legend of the Candy Cane has led to several Christmas stories by several authors.

