

THE ST. JOHN NEWS

December 2023

The Songs of Christmas...from the Bible Focus for Advent and Christmas

Have you ever had a song stuck in your head? Where did that song come from? You likely heard the song recently. Or the song was attached to a memory that called the tune back to your mind. What we experience of music is mostly what we have learned. Few are caught coming up with their own tunes or lyrics. But, what about our earliest ancestors? Did Adam and Eve know how to sing? Did Eve hum a lullaby to Cain as she rocked him to sleep? Was Noah chanting a tune while constructing the ark?

Of course, we cannot possibly know what the music was like thousands of years ago. The Bible does tell us that the great-great-great-grandson of Cain, whose name was Jubal, was the “father of all those who play the lyre and pipe” (Genesis 4:21). Instruments were made fairly early on in the world’s history. It would not likely take long for words to be added to those tunes. Music and lyrics would become a common way of giving thanks and praise to God, as is demonstrated in the ancient hymn book of the Israelites we know well as the book of Psalms.

Without the ability to record music, the only trace of songs from the past would be the instruments and the words written for the songs. As is typical of songs today, the songs of the past were written in poetic form. When one finds poetry in ancient literature, a safe assumption would be that those words were often put to music. That is what we can find throughout the Bible, the genre of poetry that would likely be put to music and thus be called songs. The poetic nature of songs would be why certain portions of the Bible have been designated as songs, such as the song of Moses (Exodus 15:1–18), the song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:1–31), Hannah’s song (1 Samuel 2:1–10), and the Song of Solomon (Song of Songs 1–8).

Knowing that Biblical figures have utilized songs as part of their lives and worship, it is only natural that the story of Jesus’ birth would spark so many songs and hymns. The most famous of those come from the Bible itself. This Advent season, we will explore the songs that are directly inspired by the events surrounding Jesus’ birth. These songs will call from the past the prophecies of the Biblical ancients and we shall see anew how the Lord God fulfills his greatest promise of them all, to send his only-begotten Son to us for our salvation. The birth of Jesus Christ is truly worthy of unlimited songs, and the ones recorded in the Bible are the best of them all.

The songs that will be visited are:

- The Song of Mary, also known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55);
- The Song of Zechariah, also known as the Benedictus (Luke 1:67–80);
- The Song of Simeon, also known as the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29–32); and
- The Song of the Angels, also known as the Gloria in Excelsis (Luke 2:14).

We are blessed to have received the liturgy of the church handed down throughout the centuries, for included in those liturgical services are those Christmas hymns and songs. We will enjoy variations of them throughout the Advent season as we anticipate with Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, the Angels, and all the people of God the glorious incarnation and birth of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that you are able to join us regularly throughout this season of preparation as we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:1). As we well know from other times of preparation, when the work is done, the celebration can begin and can be enjoyed. So it is with the joyous festival of Christmas!

The Lord bless you with peace and joy this Advent and Christmas season!

In Christ’s service,

Pastor Caithamer

Let Us Pray

Hempel -grandson of Harold Hempel, Brett Velander-cousin of the Kindts'

For Peace and Comfort: Anne, John., James and family at the death of husband and step-father Rod Wright, the family and friends of Patty at her death

For Strength, Hope, and Peace: Wanda -mother of Nancy

For Healing and Recovery: Joan, Judy, Jim-brother of Karla, Kaylianna -great granddaughter of Bob & Joan, Robin, Karla, Charlene, Brian, Teresa-godchild of Bob & Joan, Barbara -family friend of Bob & Joan, John, Hendricks -grandson of Dan & Joanie, Maria, Merv, Rebecca -daughter of Marvin & Esther, Roy - father of Anne, Todd

For Successful Treatments: Kevin, Susan, Dan, Nancy, Barb, Luke, Earl, Linda, Jeanette, Nancy

For our Military: Nick, Nick, Andy, Brandon, Zachary, David

For our Missionaries: Pastor Randrianasolo Dembiniana Havanjanakary and the Madagascar Lutheran Seminary, Pastor Magnus Bengston and Lielsalaca Lutheran Church in Latvia, Pastor Obot Ite and the Lutheran Mission in Kingston, Jamaica



Advent and Christmas Events

Fri, Dec 1	5:30pm — 7:30pm	Advent Family Night
Sat, Dec 2	8:00am — 12:00pm	Cookie Walk
	9:00am	Church Decorating
Wed, Dec 6	3:30pm & 7:15pm	Advent Midweek 1 and Dinner
Tues, Dec 12	6:30pm	Day School Christmas Program
Wed, Dec 13	3:30pm & 7:15pm	Advent Midweek 2 and Dinner
Sun, Dec 17	9:45am	Sunday School Christmas Program
Wed, Dec 20	3:30pm & 7:15pm	Advent Midweek 3 and Dinner
Sun, Dec 24	9:00am	Divine Service—4th Sunday in Advent
	3:00pm	Christmas Eve Family Service
	5:00pm	Christmas Eve Family Service
	10:00pm	Lessons and Carols Candlelight Service
Mon, Dec 25	10:00am	Christmas Day Communion Service*
Sun, Dec 31	7:15pm	New Year's Eve Divine Service

Please note: There will be no Wednesday evening service on December 27th!

Advent Midweek Services Theme and Readings

The Songs of Christmas...from the Bible

Advent Midweek 1	December 6, 2023	The Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55)
Advent Midweek 2	December 13, 2023	The Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:67-80)
Advent Midweek 3	December 20, 2023	The Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32)

The Young Adults Group will be having a Christmas party on December 14th at the Leaf Residence starting at 6:00pm. There will be food, devotion, and a gift exchange. All who are between the ages of 18-40 are welcome. Please bring a gift totaling no more than \$15. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Sara.

Family Advent Night— All St. John Families are invited to begin their Christmas preparations by joining us for Family Advent Night on Friday, December 1st, from 5:30-7:30pm. We will have a pizza dinner, crafts for kids, devotions, singing of Christmas carols and cookie decorating. Please sign up on the bulletin board outside the Fellowship Hall.



Sunday School Christmas Program

The Christmas Program will be presented by the Preschool - 8th grade children on Sunday, December 17th during the Sunday School hour. They will practice during Sunday School on December 3rd and 10th. They will also be practicing the songs during the openings leading up to the program. We look forward to their message!



Christmas Program

Day School Christmas Program

Come join us Tuesday, December 12th at 6:30pm in the gym as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.



Christmas Break

The School will be closed for Christmas break Dec. 21st - Jan. 3rd. The Church Office will closed Dec. 25th - Jan. 1st



December Music Notes



Thanksgiving, Advent & Christmas

Thanksgiving is past, but my thankfulness continues!

Thank you to all who “showered” me with cards on the 19th. Your appreciation and support is most meaningful.

Thank you to all who took part in and attended the Hymn Festival. The tremendous resources of talent within in our congregation were on full display. The enthusiastic singing by all who attended (including our Sunday School/Day School youngsters) was wonderful to experience.

Thank you to all who are regular and faithful members of our musical ensembles – Alleluia Ringers, Mixed and Men’s Choirs, and Instrumentalists. Thanks also to those who contribute in other ways – filing and logging music into our database, recording and distributing our services and events, and spreading the good word about our musical life together here.

Thank you to all who sing the Lord’s praises in the congregation week after week.

As we commence another year in the life of our Church, I hope that there are some of you who can be encouraged to join our ensembles. We are in need of at least one more additional handbell ringer. Our singing choirs are absolutely in need of both men and women. I can assure you of good fellowship, fun, comfortable chairs, and a very warm welcome!

Advent begins on Sunday, December 3rd, and continues right up into December 24th. The fourth Sunday of Advent will be observed in the morning on the 24th, and then Christmas Eve will be celebrated with two (mostly identical) Family Services at 3:00 & 5:00 pm. Christmas Lessons & Carols will be sung at 10:00 pm on the 24th, and there will of course be more celebrations on Christmas Day.

Sunday, December 3	Handbells	8:00am (& 10:45am Prelude)
	Men’s Choir	10:45am (10:00am rehearsal)
Sunday, December 10	Instrumental Prelude and Offering	
Sunday, December 17	Mixed Choir	8:00am
	Sunday School Christmas Program	
	12:00 Christmas Eve instrumentalist practice	

Music for Christmas Eve will include many familiar carols, with handbells, choirs, and instrumentalists helping bring forth the joy of this most Festive celebration.

Soli Deo Gloria,
Keith

Save the Date — Christmas Caroling Sunday December 17th

Please join us to go Christmas Caroling to some of our members. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall at 3:30pm and carpool from there. We look forward to caroling with you.



Wednesday Night Advent Dinners

We will be having Advent Dinners in between services on Wed. Dec. 6th, Wed. Dec. 13th, and Wed. Dec. 20th. Please check your bulletins for more information about meals being served.



December E.A.T. Night – El Rancho Grande, Monday, December 11th, All Day
Bring in the flyer or show an electronic copy to make sure that 20% of the proceeds will be donated to St. John Lutheran School. Gift card and alcohol sales are excluded. Flyers are available on the narthex table and on the school website. *El Rancho Grande is located in Savoy, behind Aldi.



Hat & Mitten Tree — Bring in new hats, mittens, gloves and scarves, in any size and hang on the tree in the fellowship hall or by the school office. Items will be collected through Friday, Dec. 15.

All items will be donated to local charities.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Chris | 24 Ellie, Ruby, Karla, Christy, Lindsay, Logan |
| 2 Joan, Kim, Ellen, Noelle, Zara | 25 Barry, Wendy |
| 3 Nicholas | 26 Sandy, Christian, Jessy |
| 6 Jackson, Jesse, Cyndy | 27 Eileen, Rory |
| 7 Cheryl, Paul, Joyce, Elizabeth, Holly, Lydia | 29 Larry, Mariah, Ryan, Terry, Makenzie, Steve |
| 8 Starley, Jim, Rick, Cindy, Jeanette | 30 Anna, Harold, Shirley, Aman |
| 9 Heath, Gary, Kayson | 31 Rachel |
| 10 Larry, Russell, Barb | |
| 11 Mark, Jeff, Miles | |
| 12 Robert, Megan, Natalie, Bob, Charlie, Merv, Josh | |
| 13 Liam, Susan, Nathan, Aidan | |
| 14 Bryce, Jeff, Linda, Lola, Camilla, Noah | |
| 15 Carol | |
| 16 Ethan, Mark, Vicki, Chris | |
| 17 Cole, Ann | |
| 18 Cynthia, Kate, Mark, Joy Lou | |
| 19 Lindsey, Mechell | |
| 20 Kelsi, Abby, Neal, Dee | |
| 21 Eric, Ryan, Dan, Dan | |
| 22 Lee, Amanda, Christian | |
| 23 Steve | |

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 4 John & Bonnie (47); Norm & Karla (22) | 27 Charles & Sharon (54) |
| 8 Jim & Jennifer (11) | 29 Trent & Leah (33) |
| 9 Timm & Patty (29) | 30 Andy & Susan (33) |
| 21 David & Debra (21) | |
| 22 Michael & Britta (11) | |



Youth Group News — Youth join us for two

Christmas activities! On Friday, Dec. 1 we have the opportunity to help with the Family Advent night, supervising fun activities and modeling enthusiasm for hymn singing and pizza eating. On Friday, Dec. 8, we will have our Christmas Party from 6-9pm at the church. Even if you have never come to youth group, join us! Bring a friend! All kids 6th-12th grade are welcome.

St. John Athletics

Boys Basketball Home Games

Tuesday, Dec. 5 – vs. IPA, 6p
 Monday, Dec. 4 – vs. Trinity, Danville, 6p
 Saturday, Dec. 16 – Round Robin vs. Trinity Danville/Trinity Bloomington, 10a
 Monday, Dec. 18 – vs. Countryside, 6p
 GO RAMS!





December/January Deadlines

Please send in all bulletin information for the months of December and January as well as Newsletter information for January into the church office by December 12th. Deadlines will be moved up to ensure everything is completed on time. Thank you.

DECEMBER

The shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." Luke 2:15

2023

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 <p>Church Office 359-1123</p> <p>School Office 359-1714</p>					1 5:30 Family Advent Night	2 8:00 Cookie Walk 9:00 Church Decorating																																																																																																		
3 1st Sunday in Advent New Member Sunday 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion	4	5 10:00 Adult Bible Class 5:15 Fellowship Board 6:30 School Board	6 8:10 Chapel 3:30 Advent Service 5:45 Midweek School 7:15 Advent Service	7 6:00 Mixed & Men's Choirs	8 6:00 Youth Group Christmas Party	9																																																																																																		
10 2nd Sunday in Advent 8:00 Holy Communion 9:30 Adult Bible Class, Sunday School 10:45 Holy Communion 1:00 Voter's Budget	11 All Day - E.A.T. Night @ El Rancho Grande	12 6:30 School Christmas Program Newsletter Deadline	13 8:10 Chapel 10:00 Adult Bible Class 3:30 Advent Service 5:45 Midweek School 7:15 Advent Service	14 7:00 Men's Prayer Breakfast @ Sammy's 6:00 Young Adults Christmas Party	15	16																																																																																																		
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