



"IT IS OUR MISSION, AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD AND COMMAND TO GROW IN HIS WORD, TO GATHER AROUND HIS WORD, AND TO GO WITH HIS WORD."

A time to

Countdown

If you haven't been following the hype and hysteria, here's the gist of it: The entire world is going to end on December 21st.

The hype is all based on an ancient Mayan "long count" calendar. The theory goes something like this: The Mayan calendar works on cycle of 5,126 years. On December 21st, that cycle is coming to an end. The only logical explanation is to assume that the world will, too. Let the countdown begin!

Not convinced? That's a good thing. We know that the future is only known to our Lord, and is firmly in his hands. We know our Savior's words that *no one* can predict the day or hour of Christ's return. We understand his call to be ready all the time.

So let your December hold a different kind of countdown. The Advent wreath is a wonderful model.

Advent wreaths have been used for centuries by Christians (you can find a nice one at the local Christian bookstore, online, or even at major retail stores). The wreath is usually a simple circle of evergreens, with four colored candles around the edge and a white candle—the Christ candle—in the cen-

ter.

Starting four weeks before Christmas, as you sit down as a family to read God's Word after dinner or before bed, you light a candle (the first week you light one candle, the second week you light two, etc.). Seeing a little more light each week is a reminder that we're getting closer and closer to Christmas. On Christmas Day, the Christ Candle is finally lit—a glowing reminder that God's Son came into the world at the first Christmas, and still comes to us in his Word and Sacraments.

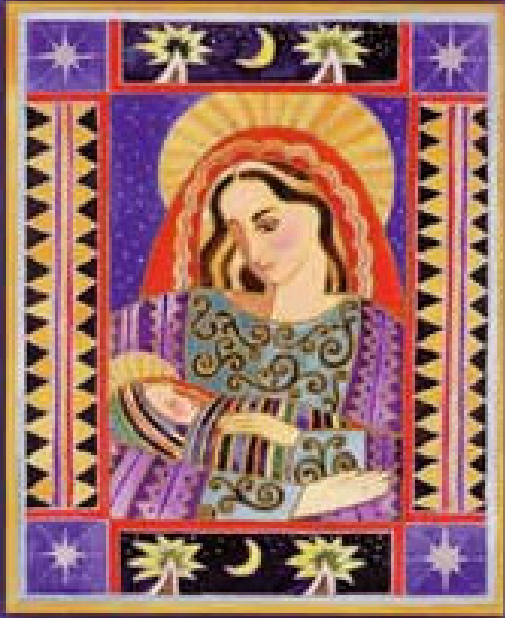
What's the point of "counting down" like that? In the busyness of December, it reminds us what we're looking forward to. These days aren't just a mad-dash towards present-time. It's a time to prepare our hearts and minds to understand the most impossible and wonderful of mysteries: the eternal God who made the heavens actually became one of us, a little babe in his mother's arms. God chose to know our sufferings, temptations, wants and needs in order to be our Savior. It's a reminder that God's Son didn't come to end this world, but to begin an entirely new era in which full and free forgiveness would be proclaimed to the



ends of the earth.

In the pages of this month's newsletter, you'll see more opportunities to consider this: special services, rehearsals for Christmas, Bible classes and more. I pray that some of those are blessings to you, not simply *more things* on a crowded schedule. And in all you do this month, may our Lord grant you the knowledge that God used all of human history to count down to the day when he'd bring a Savior into this world for you and me.

The Birth of Jesus is Announced



Christmas for Kids 2012

On Saturday, Dec. 15th, Shining Mountains is hosting "Christmas for Kids." The 90-minute program includes a Bible story and lesson, crafts, and music time.

The event is open to three year olds up to sixth graders. Bring along a friend with you! The focus of this year's VBS is the angel's annunciation to Mary that she'd be the mother of the Son of God. We marvel at God's amazing plan to save us, and are inspired by the wonderful response of faith from Mary.

To register you child or friend, speak to Pastor Seifert or visit the web page, where you'll find an online registration form. You'll see a link to the page when you visit www.shiningmountains.org.

Christmas for Kids runs from 10:30-12pm. If you're dropping off your child for Christmas Eve rehearsal at 9am that morning, they can simply stay through Christmas for Kids.

women's ministries

What Have the Ladies Been Up To?

Mini-Retreat: On November 3rd, fourteen ladies met together and had a brainstorming session. We discussed strengths and weaknesses of our group and started talking about future plans.

Blanket Night: Ten ladies and several children put their hands together and quickly created six blankets to be delivered to an orphanage in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa. If you would like to contribute other supplies such as: would be coloring books, crayons, powdered Pedialyte, toys, etc. There is a complete list of needs on the bulletin in the narthex.

Missions: Central African Medical Mission (CAMM) is the mission project chosen for this year. The ladies will be sending \$200 to be used for supplies. If you would like to contribute towards this mission, please put it in the offering by December 16th with CAMM in the other category.

New Teams: Starting in January, there will be three teams within Women's Fellowship. They are the Events, Care and Service Teams. . The Events team will help in planning fellowship activities throughout the year. The Care team will be involved with care and nurturing, such as correspondence and missions. Items involved with beautifying worship (flowers, paraments, banners) will handled by the Service team. Please take some time to prayerfully consider which groups you would like to serve in. This is the time to get involved and help define how the groups will function

Vacuum: It was decided to invest in a vacuum to help with the cleaning of the church.

tis the season

Advent Party

After church on December 2nd, you're invited to join us as we celebrate our annual Advent party.

Activities include:

- ☞ Congregational potluck
- ☞ Decorating of the Christmas tree
- ☞ A gift exchange
- ☞ Games

If you're able, please consider bringing a dish to pass.

If you'd like to take part in the gift exchange, please bring a gift that's less than \$5 in value and, if applicable, label the gift with the type of recipient intended (e.g., *man, child, infant, etc.*). Please use some good taste as you choose your gifts, keeping in mind that we're all there to have a good time!

There will be some craft time for the kids as well.

The Advent party usually wraps up around 1:30 or 2, but you're welcome to come for as much time as you're able. Join us for a chance to get to know each other better, get our sanctuary ready for our Christmas celebrations, and have a little fun!

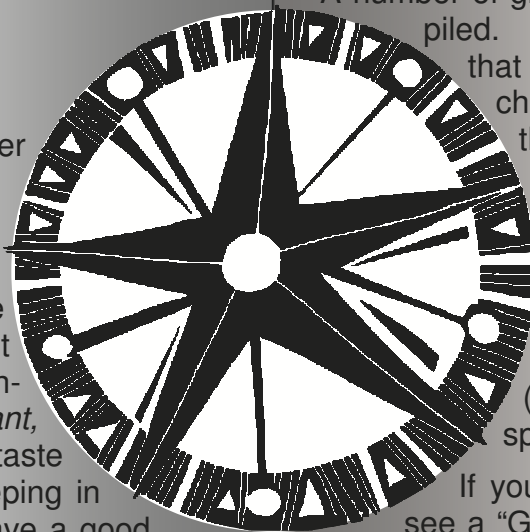
Gifts for Jesus

One of SMLC's Christmas Traditions has been "Gifts for Jesus." As we celebrate Christ's birth by giving gifts of love to the special people in our lives, it's a chance to do a little something special for our church home out of love for our Savior.

A number of gift suggestions have been compiled. They tend to be "little things" that we can use around our church—items that don't fall into the regular budget, wish list items, or items that we consume a lot of in our day-to-day operations. There are items in different price ranges: from a book of stamps (less than \$10) to a case of copy paper (about \$50) to a cash gift for a special wish-list item.

If you wish to take part, you'll soon see a "Gifts for Jesus" display go up on a bulletin board in our entryway. Simply choose the gift you'd like to support. Depending on the gift you choose, you can either purchase it and place it under the Christmas tree in our sanctuary, or give a donation of the value in an envelope which can also be placed at the tree.

One of the items that will be on the tree—a new Hymnsoft program—calls for more explanation. You'll find that in the box below!



New Hymnsoft Software



Since Shining Mountains does not have many piano players, the worship for most of our services is generated by a computer program called Hymnsoft. While the decade-old software has served us well for some time, it's now quite "buggy" and out-of-date.

A new, completely rebuilt version of the software is due to be released from our publishing house in December. In addition to including more resources for worship, the new software has hymns that have been played in "live" (so the music sounds less *mechanical*) and real sampled organ and piano sounds that sound much more authentic. It also allows us the ability to edit music files and recording our own music that can be played back in worship. The software should be a giant step forward from what we're currently using—something that would be a noticeable blessing for us and our visitors in every service in which we don't have a live pianist.

I believe in + the Holy Christian Church +

In the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, we confess our faith in "the Holy Christian Church." Throughout our newsletters in 2012, we'll examine what this means. What is the Church? What is the difference between "the Church" and "churches"? What does it matter what church you belong to? What's going on among "Lutheran" churches? God's Word will guide our discussion as we talk about these questions.

Information on our bulletins, website and letterhead all proclaims that our church is part of the WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod). What does that mean?

Over the last two months, we've said that means we're united in faith—all our pastors and congregations subscribe to the same doctrinal statements about the truths of Scripture. It also means we have many problems and issues in common. There are struggles we face both as a Synod and as sinners that we always need to address.

It also means that we have partners. Quite a few of them. Across the country, we have nearly 400,000 brothers and sisters in Christ who confess the same faith we do. They're spread between 1300 congregations in all fifty states.

We join together in a Synod not simply because we share a faith. That common faith also means we share a mission: to proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus to those around us and to the ends of the earth, and to continue teaching people about the will of God and the life he calls us to here.

We support that work with our prayers and our financial gifts. Shining Mountains typically sends \$5,000-7,000 a year to our Synod. What do those funds go to support?

Worldwide missions

Across the world, the WELS supports 533 congregations and 132 preaching stations. Those groups serve almost 90,000 baptized members.

In the last few decades, the WELS has shifted towards an

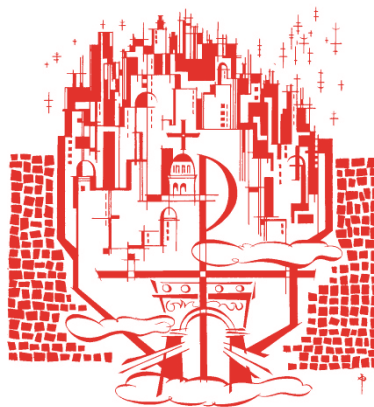
emphasis of not just sending our American missionaries elsewhere, but using those missionaries to train "national pastors"—men who have been born and raised in these foreign countries—to lead their own native congregations. God's blessed that work. Right now, the fruit of that work is 146 national pastors, 17 student pastors, 197 national evangelists, and almost 400 (!) Bible Institute or seminary students in mission fields around the world. We support work in mission fields like Malawi, Zambia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Albania, Bulgaria, Japan, Russia, Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, India, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. We've also begun using non-traditional means to get the Gospel into hostile countries that cannot be listed here, for security concerns.

Worker Training

We also work together to train the next generation of missionaries, pastors and teachers.

We do so through 25 Lutheran High schools, two ministerial preparatory high schools (in Watertown, WI and Saginaw, MI), a pastor and teacher training college (Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN) and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (Mequon, WI). These schools focus on doing what no one congregation could do well alone: train young men and women in Biblical theology, history and languages, and prepare them share God's Word at home and abroad.

We do this work together—but not simply with our brothers and sisters in faith. When we confess our faith in the Holy Christian Church, we're acknowledging that we can do none of this without the aid and blessing of the Holy Spirit. Through the Word preached here and throughout our church body, may the Lord continue to win many souls for the Kingdom of God.



January	<i>I believe in the <u>Holy</u> Christian Church</i>	July	<i>Do denominations really matter?</i>
February	<i>I believe in the Holy <u>Christian</u> Church</i>	August	<i>"So what if they're not WELS?"</i>
March	<i>I believe in the Holy Christian <u>Church</u></i>	September	<i>What's going on among the Lutherans?</i>
April	<i>The joy of the Church</i>	October	<i>WELS: The confession we share</i>
May	<i>The mission of the Church</i>	November	<i>WELS: The challenges we share</i>
June	<i>Orthodox and Heterodox churches</i>	December	<i>WELS: The mission we share</i>

Bible Study



God promises us every blessing as we grow in His Word. Consider taking advantage of the following opportunities to study with your fellow believers:

SUNDAY MORNING: GALATIANS

Freedom in Christ

On Sunday, December 2nd, we'll begin an approximately six-week study of the book of Galatians. Do you ever wonder why our church takes doctrine so seriously? Have you struggled with what full forgiveness in Christ for every sin means when it comes to talking about right and wrong? Galatians digs deeply into the heart of the Gospel, truths about Christian freedom and more. Come join us!

IN-HOME MEMBER VISITS

"It's All About Jesus"

In January, members of Shining Mountains will be invited to take part in a home visit and Bible study. At the beginning of the New Year, you'll be contacted by a fellow member of Shining Mountains who will set up a time that works for you to have a basic Bible study on the mission we share, and give you some updates on the way we carry out that mission as a congregation.

These in-home studies will be taking place in congregations throughout our church body. Each of the lay-members who will be conducting the visits will have gone through the study together with Pastor at their own houses, as well as attended an additional training session. It's a wonderful way to start the year with a focus on God's love for us in Christ, a reminder of why we do what we do, and information on exactly what it is that we're doing. You can expect the visit and Bible study to take about 45 minutes.

Please keep these visits—and our ministry here—in your prayers, and warmly welcome your fellow members as they look to set up a chance to visit with you.

Building project update

Land Search, part ____?

With the Lord having moved most of the pieces into place, one of the last major hurdles for our building project has been the question of our future location. Over the past few years, SMLC has investigated nearly a dozen parcels of land in-depth.

Why does this take so long? Two cautionary tales come to mind. One local church purchased land on the corner of Oak and 27th, only to see their project set back and their costs increase dramatically due to unforeseen costs with the City. Another local church has had their massive project put on hold as the City Planning Dept. has sought to force them to put a major road through their planned campus—an unforeseen cost and disruption of their campus plan.

We'd like to avoid any problems like that! With thanks to many donated hours from Madison Engineering, we've uncovered some potential problems like that on most of the parcels we've investigated. While this is a long and frustrating process, it's important to get right the first time.

Currently, there are four properties that the Council has great optimism for. Their investigations on most of them are nearly complete. As long as their work doesn't turn up any last hidden surprises, the Council has expressed a desire to bring some options forward for the congregation's final consideration and voter action very early in 2013, Lord-willing. More information will be forthcoming, but don't hesitate to contact a member of the Council or Pastor Seifert with any questions.

Growing in Christ

Shining Mountains provides a Sunday School program to partner with parents in raising our children in the truth of God's Word. Each month, parents can look to this page of the newsletter and see their student's upcoming lessons, memory work, and updates about when the children will next sing in our worship services.

Date	Lower grades (Miss Newton)	Middle grades (Mrs. Giese)	Upper grades (Miss Blackstad)
12/2	God Gives His People Food <i>4th Petition Give us today our daily bread.</i>	Jesus and Nicodemus <i>John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.</i>	Jesus and Nicodemus <i>Luke 11:28 "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."</i>
12/9	God Gives the Ten Commandments <i>1 John 5:3 This is love for God: to obey his commandments.</i>	Jesus and the Woman of Samaria <i>Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.</i>	Jesus and the Woman of Samaria <i>Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God</i>
12/16	David and Goliath <i>Psalms 56:11 In God I trust.</i>	Rejected in Nazareth <i>Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.</i>	Rejected in Nazareth <i>Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.</i>
12/23	Christmas Eve Rehearsal for Sunday School kids and Adult Choir! <i>The Sunday School students taking part in Christmas Eve worship and the adult choir are asked to meet in the church building during the Bible study time to have a last rehearsal for Christmas Eve.</i>		
12/30	No Sunday School—Kids and adults meet together in the Sanctuary for a Family Bible Study hour at 9:30 am.		

Next Sunday School Singing Date:

Our Sunday School children take part with songs and readings in our Christmas Eve worship service on Monday, December 24th at

Serving Us in December *Thank you to those who served in November!*

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
12/2	P Agenten / J Kohler	Blackstad / Holte	Gustafson	Baker, L&V (12/3-12/8)
12/9	A Miller / L Alexander	Spalding	Spalding	Ballard (12/10-12/15)
12/16	J Lauersdorf / T Zulauf	open	Baker, E.	Giese (12/17-12/22)
12/23	J Becker / B Thiede	Spalding	Spalding	Gustafson (12/24-12/29)
12/30	S McGough / J McGough	open	open	TBA (12/31-1/5)

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Psalms 84:10

Ushers for Holiday Services

12/5 (Midweek Advent 1)	Gustafson / Gentry	12/24 (Christmas Eve)	D Pruitt / M Joecks
12/12 (Midweek Advent 2)	Newton / Hunziker	12/25 (Christmas Day)	J Thiede / D Thiede
12/19 (Midweek Advent 3)	Linn / Marozick		

December 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 8:30 Choir practice 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C. Noon: Advent party	3	4 6:45 pm Catechism Class	5 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Advent Worship	6 6:30 pm Church Council meeting	7	8
9 8:30 Choir practice 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship 11:45 Ladies Fellowship	10	11 6:45 pm Catechism Class	12 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Advent Worship	13	14	15 9-10:30 Christmas Eve Rehearsal 10:30-12 Christmas for Kids
16 8:30 Choir practice 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C.	17	18 6:45 pm Catechism Class	19 6:00 pm Soup Supper 7:00 pm Advent Worship	20	21	22
23 9:15 Christmas Eve Rehearsal (No Adult Bible study) 10:30 Worship	24 7:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 10:30 Christmas Day Worship w/ Holy Communion	26	27	28	29
30 9:30 Family Bible Hour 10:30 Worship	31					

Upcoming Messages

December is a time of prophecy and fulfillment! In Advent, we focus on God's promises for how the Word will come to us. At Christmas, we rejoice in Christ's long-promised incarnation! Special midweek services help set our hearts on what we're about to receive.

May the following schedule help you as you prepare for worship or look for opportunities to invite a friend!

Worship in December

Dec 2: Advent 1—Judgment is Coming, but God's Son comes with deliverance

Dec 9: Advent 2—Preparing to meet God means taking his Word to heart

Dec 16: Advent 3—God's call to repent is also a call to hear Good News!

Dec 23: Advent 4—Marvel at the salvation that comes for all people

Dec 30: The First Sunday after Christmas—The Son of God lives as mankind's brother

Special holiday services:

Midweek Advent services: We gather for worship on the first three Wednesday nights in December (Dec. 5, 12 & 19) for a time of peace and reflection as Christmas draws near. Join us for a soup supper at 6:00 pm and a devotional worship service at 7:00 pm as we focus on the Psalms of Advent.

Christmas Eve Carols and Candlelight: At 7:00pm on December 24th, we consider the coming glory of the Light of the World. Our children and choir take part in this special traditional service.

Christmas Day Worship: At 10:30 on Christmas Morning, we gather to celebrate the reality of Christ's birth and his living presence among us. (The Lord's Supper is offered at this service.)

