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"Nazareth, did you Know?"

This Advent, I wonder about the community Mary and Joseph knew and were nurtured in before the birth of Jesus. The dynamics of the Nazareth community and Synagogue?

How that community rejoiced with Joseph and Mary when they announced that they would join their lives together as one.

I wonder how things changed when it was discovered that Mary was with child? If Mary and Joseph prayed for those who turned away from them?

Was the length of time Mary spent with her aunt Elizabeth, in the hill country, enough for them to accept Mary as she was, still a person deserving of respect and dignity, despite (or especially because) she was with child outside of the covenant of marriage. Did the broader community notice Mary and Joseph's faith in God's provision sustaining their hope and joy despite the improper circumstances?

And then the mandatory census disrupted everyone's lives. If you were living in the town of your family's heritage. I imagine, one would need to make room in your home to accommodate uncles' families and cousins who would have to come 'home' to be counted in the census.

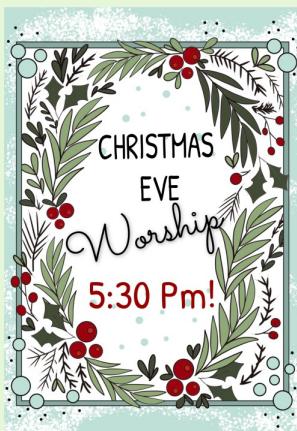
It is a familiar detail of Joseph and Mary's story that Joseph was required by the "decree from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered", to travel to "Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David."

The narrative suggests that that village was overwhelmed, no relative to stay with and no room in the inn. Yet they were offered the comfort of a stable, in consideration of Mary's being with child and near delivery.

This Advent, I wonder about the community Mary and Joseph knew and were nurtured in before the birth of Jesus, and returned to with toddler Jesus after their exodus from Egypt, inspired in part by an article titled "The Urgent Need For Small Churches".

Thom S. Rainer, author of "Autopsy of a Deceased Church" focuses in this article on the significant contributions small churches have made to life in small towns, and that the need is as great as ever for relational connection found in small congregations.

"This is not a nostalgic problem – it's a missional crisis. . . these are



precisely the places where the Gospel can transform lives through personal connection and presence."

"In a culture that often feels impersonal and transactional, smaller congregations provide what sociologists call 'high-tough' community. People know one another by name. They notice when someone is missing. They share meals, burdens, and celebrations together."

"Jesus built His church on relationships, not programs. In smaller churches, evangelism is personal, discipleship is intentional, and pastoral care happens naturally through proximity. The intimacy of small-church life mirrors the early church more closely than many other models."

It is easy for me to imagine Mary and Joseph's faith was nurtured in such a place, and they had understood grace for the politics without losing sight of the promises and real support God provides and fosters through community gathered around, and for, the real presence of God. May we continue to kindle the warmth of our faith life and invite those outside to share in the hope and joy, peace and love, we receive through mutual relationship with God.

Pastor Kurt



On Christmas Eve, the sanctuary will again be filled with the bright red foliage of poinsettias. We need your help in providing these plants. To order a poinsettia, please complete the form below, enclose your check or cash (\$11.00) and either bring it to the church or mail it in.

Checks should be made out to First Lutheran for \$11.00

The deadline for ordering is noon on Monday, December 8th.

Poinsettias may be taken home after the 5:30pm Service on Christmas Eve.

Name _____

Phone _____

Poinsettia (s) ____ \$11.00/each (Check payable to First Lutheran)

Given in honor of _____

Given in memory of _____



Our Annual Children's Christmas Program will be held during worship service December 14th, 2025.

Chihoni Update!

The staff at Chihoni is over the moon about the recent progress! Everyone is looking forward to finally being able to see patients and provide the care that is the whole point of building the hospital! Dr. Bon, Miriam, and Sele are back from a two-week shopping spree in Dar es Salaam, comparing prices and looking for the best deals. At least three quarters of the required equipment has been purchased, and has been delivered to the Chihoni Medical Center (CMC).

In the words of Miriam Mugo, Director of Nursing and Education: "We are delighted to share the exciting progress at Chihoni Medical Center. Thanks to your generous support, we have now purchased a significant portion of the essential medical equipment needed as we prepare for our phased opening in January.....Your contributions have played a vital role in turning this dream into reality, and we are truly grateful."



Let the unpacking begin! Looking forward to seeing furnished rooms, one by one. But more items are needed.

For the latest from Chihoni and more photos, go to the IHP website at <https://www.ihptz.org>. The IHP yearly newsletter is posted at the bottom of the page, and the monthly updates can be found on the IHP Monthly Update tab.

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Unloading the purchases from Dar es Salaam

Our \$12,670 Choices in Mission contribution this year helped make this purchase. The team at Chihoni is confident that as the January "soft opening" approaches, the key items still needed will be in place. As the headline of Paula's November Update proclaims: "We are thankful for all our faithful donors."

Giving Made Easy

First Lutheran has generated a QR Code to make giving even easier.

On your iPhone or Android phone or tablet, open the built-in camera app. Point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears on your Android phone or tablet. Follow the instructions on the screen to finish.

All previous forms of giving are still available. This is just 1 more option.



NOTICE: Annual Budget Meeting Notice

First Lutheran's Annual Budget Meeting will be held on Sunday, December 14, 2025, immediately following the worship service.

We strongly encourage all members to attend, as we must meet our quorum to pass the 2026 Budget, elect new council members, and vote on proposed adjustments to the agreement with UCC.

Online worship service are always available!

At any time if you would like to watch our online service that is streamed live every Sunday, please use the link below

<https://www.facebook.com/1stlutherannewton>

Also, follow us on facebook at First Lutheran Church-Newton

A Christmas Prayer: The True Gift

*Dear Lord,
You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ — who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.*

In the glorious name of Christ, we pray.

Amen.



The Angels' Song in Three Words

On the very first Christmas Eve, frightened shepherds were suddenly surrounded by light and music. A choir of angels filled the night sky, singing: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14, KJV).

Nineteenth-century pastor Charles Kingsley reflected on how those three simple words — glory, peace, and good will — still capture the meaning of Jesus’ birth and the hope it brings.

Glory.

God’s glory isn’t shown in dazzling displays of power but in humility and mercy. The baby in the manger revealed God’s greatness by stooping low, forgiving, and showing love.

Peace.

True peace is more than the absence of conflict. It comes when we follow God’s example of selflessness, giving up pride and selfish ambition to live in harmony with one another.

Good will.

God’s good will toward us is a gift that transforms our lives. Through Jesus, God invites us out of selfishness and sin into a life marked by love, kindness, and community.

The angels’ song wasn’t meant only for shepherds long ago. It still sings to us today, calling each of us to live in glory, peace, and good will.

Special dates & times

- * Setting up Christmas Decore December 7, 2025
- * Children's Program, Annual Budget meeting Christmas Walk 3pm December 14, 2025
- * First Day of Winter, December 21, 2025
- * Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21, 2025
- * Christmas Eve Service 5:30 pm, December 24, 2025
- * Christmas Day, December 25, 2025
- * New Year's Eve, December 31, 2025

Intergenerational Sunday School
Pastor Kurt is leading a Sunday morning intergenerational faith formation Sunday School in the

Fellowship hall at 8:30.

Sunday School includes activities and games. We will be focusing on the epistle lessons for the week. So mark your calendars now and be ready to dive into a new journey with these epic books of the bible written to instruct, encourage and guide us in our faith.



Ava Sumpter 12/01
Suzanne Von Seggern 12/07
Barbara Wilcox 12/08
Lynette Marvelli 12/16
Thomas Hayden 12/26
Robert Sandquist 12/26
Craig Peterson 12/27

If you are interested in making a donation to the Salvation Army Food Pantry here are some items needed:

Shelf Stable Milk, Soups, Spaghetti Sauce, Hamburger and Tuna Helper, Mac & Cheese, Baked Beans, Boxed Potatoes, Any Canned Fruits

If you have any questions about food donations, please give us a call at (641) 792-6131!

There is also a basket located in the Narthex here at 1st Lutheran for you to place your donations in.



Christian symbol

POINSETTIA — This shrub, native to Mexico, is at the heart of legend about a poor girl who wanted to bring Baby Jesus a gift one Christmas Eve. As she walked to church, she gathered a bouquet of weeds — which Jesus miraculously transformed into lovely red flowers. Thus the poinsettia (named for Joel Poinsett, the U.S. ambassador to Mexico who first brought the plant to America) is known in Mexico as la flor de la Nochebuena (flower of the Holy Night). The poinsettia is also an ideal Christmas symbol because its leaves turn red when deprived of sunlight and its flowers (the red inner buds) bloom in December.



Christmas Walk

Sunday,
December 14th, 2025
3:00Pm

Come along as we explore Newton's charming downtown churches. Experience the nativity story, enjoy Christmas carols at every stop, and join in heartfelt prayers.

Participating Churches and Order of Procession;
(Feel free to join anytime throughout the route)

First Lutheran, Congregational UCC,
First Christian, First Methodist,
United Presbyterian, First Presbyterian,
& St. Stephen's Episcopal.

Please call (641)792-3934
for more information

Bible Quiz

Who told Mary that her child would be called "the Son of the Most High"?

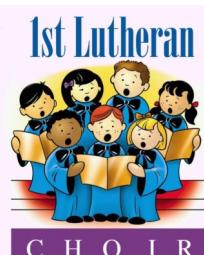
- A. Zechariah
- B. Gabriel
- C. Simeon
- D. Joseph

Answer on pg. 2



Christmas Eve choir practice will resume Sunday, December 7th at 8:30 am because we will be decorating after church .

December 14th and 21st we'll head up to the balcony after fellowship time for a quick run through the music on those Sundays.



Christmas Card treasures

Turn old Christmas cards into beautiful keepsake ornaments! It's a fun, simple way to give new life to cards you've received and add a handmade touch to your tree.

What you need:

- Christmas cards
- Scissors
- Glue
- Circle pattern (cut from cardboard or trace around object)
- Hole punch
- Yarn or ribbon
- Glitter (optional)

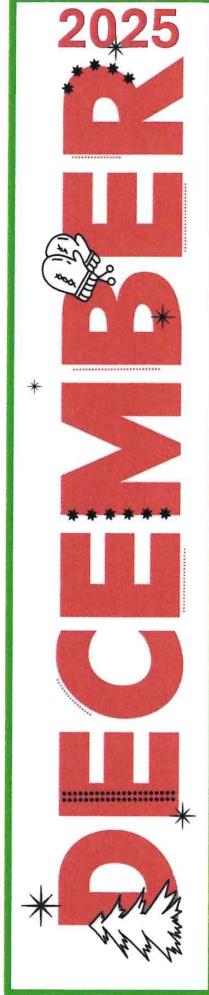


What you do:

1. Trace a circle onto two Christmas cards.
2. Cut out the circles and glue the backs together.
3. Decorate the edges with glitter or ribbon for extra sparkle.
4. Punch a hole at the top and thread yarn or ribbon through to hang.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.
— James 1:17 (NIV)

First
LUTHERAN



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 PEO Lunch 11:30 am-3:30 pm	2 No Property Meeting	3	4	5	6
	7 Intergenerational Bible Study 8:30 am Worship Service 9:30 am	8 <i>All Poinsettia Order forms turned in by Noon</i>	9	10	11	12
	14 Intergenerational Bible Study 8:30 am Worship Service/Children's Program 9:30 am Budget Meeting (Following Worship Service) Christmas Walk 3:00 pm	15	16 Lots Cr. 9:30 am	17	18	19
	21 Intergenerational Bible Study 8:30 am Worship Service 9:30 am	22	23	24 <i>Merry CHRISTMAS</i> Christmas Eve Service 5:30 pm	26	27
	28 Intergenerational Bible Study 8:30 am Worship Service 9:30 am	29	30	31 <i>Happy New Year</i> New Year's Eve		

December Choices in Mission—Red Kettle Collection

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

309 EAST THIRD STREET
NORTH
NEWTON, IOWA
50208

**Watch Past and Live
services !**

newtonfirstlutheran.org
&
(on Facebook at)
First Lutheran Church-
Newton

CHRISTMAS
EVE
Worship
5:30 Pm!

Sunday Morning
Worship
9:30 am.

Coffee Hour
10:30am

