

The Focus

December 2023



Advent: Waiting and Pondering

In a world in which Hallmark began to show Christmas movies daily on October 20 and stores replaced Halloween decorations with Christmas decorations, the Church can seem to be out of touch with the observance of Advent. To some people it might appear to be a “bah humbug” sort of idea. Why in the Church of all places, is there a call to hold back on Christmas?

I think back to 36 years ago when I was pregnant. We learned that I was pregnant in September. By December, I was pretty excited about how we would be celebrating Christmas next year with a baby! I really didn't want to be waiting for June to roll around for this happy occasion...but we had a lot to do in the meantime. Where would the baby sleep? What did I need to do to help ensure the baby's wellness? What in the world did I know about taking care of a newborn...and a child...and a teenager? There were things to do and many things to ponder.

One of my favorite verses in the Gospel of Luke's account of the birth of Jesus comes after the shepherds appear at the manger, telling Joseph and Mary that they had been told the good news by a glorious chorus of angels. Luke 2: 19 reads, “But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.”

When do we take the time to ponder the real mystery and glory of God becoming one of us? As people of faith on Christmas Eve, we bask in the beauty and glory of God's wondrous love. However, in the hustle and bustle of a 21st century Christmas there is rarely time to ponder.

That's what Advent is all about. Traditionally four weeks, this year Advent is cut short by the Fourth Sunday of Advent falling on Christmas Eve. I've just recently learned that there is a movement within the Church, already carried out in some congregations, to make Advent seven weeks long. While I am not advocating for a seven-week Advent, I do urge us all to use the four weeks/this year three weeks to truly ponder the reality of what God has done in sending

Jesus into the world. What difference does Jesus make in our daily lives and in our understanding of the world around and the future that God opens to us? That's a lot to ponder!

Through worship, music, fellowship, education and service, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church provides a variety of events and resources to help you prepare for a truly meaningful Christmas. I hope that you will join in strengthening our community of faith by being together at the Advent Soup Supper on Saturday, December 2 at 6:15. I invite you to attend one or both of the community concerts in which our choir will be participating on Sunday afternoon, December 10. And I especially invite you to participate in the Quiet Christmas on Sunday, December 17 at 4:00 that will be a time to ponder the wonder of God's presence in our lives. Quiet Christmas is a chance for all of us to step away from our many activities to take time to ponder this wondrous event as Mary did.

I hope to see you often during this holy month of December, the advent of our Lord.

Pastor Martha



December Worship Schedule

Because Christmas Eve and New Years Eve fall on Sunday this year, we are making a few adjustments to our worship schedule. Be sure to take note of the times of our worship services on these holidays.

Saturday, December 23 10:00 am Breakfast at the Manger; No evening service

Sunday, December 24 10:00 am Breakfast at the Manger; No other morning service

Christmas Eve Services – 4:30 pm especially for children; 7:00 pm and 11:00 pm

Saturday, December 30 5:30 pm Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion

Sunday, December 31 10:00 am Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion



Quiet Christmas Sunday, December 17 4:00 pm

This year, we are offering a special worship opportunity for all who would like to step away from busyness, the lights, the shopping, the movies, the baking, the eating, and all that our Christmas has come to include. Take some time to ponder... what is this love of God that came to us in Jesus? How does Jesus' birth in this world make a difference for each of us and for this entire broken world? Join us for prayer, song, and reflection that will bring calm and offer a refocus as the holiday draws near.

New Worship Assistance Needed

We are very much in need of additional people to help with the worship services at Our Redeemer! As our congregation returns to multiple worship services, we need additional communion assistants, lectors, ushers, greeters, gift bearers and worship assistants. These roles take place during the worship service. Some of them require arriving ahead of the scheduled service while some take place only during the worship service itself. Our Redeemer has wonderful volunteers, but some of the long-time volunteers are no longer available due to life changes. [We are especially in need of communion assistants at the 4:30 p.m. service on Christmas Eve. Perhaps you could give it a try!] Please prayerfully consider whether God might be calling you to try something new in order to support the worship life of our community. If you are willing to give it a try, please email Elaine at orlc@comcast.net or speak with one of the pastors. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Christmas Gifts That Make a Difference

Thank you!! The Service and Outreach Committee thanks everyone who took tags to purchase gifts for children, youth and families in need through Glade Run and Washington County Children and Youth Services. Please return your gifts (unwrapped) to Our Redeemer no later than **Sunday, December 3**. Place them on the table in the Narthex (Lobby) with the tag attached. If you would like to give a gift but did not get a tag, Children and Youth Services reports that they can always use wrapping paper, large gift bags, large canvas bags such as you can buy at TJ Maxx, Lego sets, and hair and nail products. You are welcome to add these and other appropriate gifts to the table!

Money for the ELCA Good Gifts should be paid to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. Please indicate on the check ELCA Good Gifts and the animal(s) that you are purchasing.

Thank you for your generosity in helping our neighbors near and far.



Advent Soup Supper

This annual event will be held on **Saturday, December 2 at 6:15pm**. The event will include games and activities for everyone. Everyone is welcomed!



Breakfast at the Manger

**Saturday, Dec. 23
10am**

**Sunday, Dec. 24
10am**

Help is needed as we welcome the community to this wonderful event!



Breakfast at the Manger

Gather with us for food and fellowship on **Saturday, December 23 at 10am or Sunday, December 24 at 10am** as we hear the story of "The Noisy Night"! This year, this event will take place twice, so that we have capacity to invite friends, Noah's Ark families, and community members. Church members may attend either day, and are encouraged to provide an item for breakfast on one or both days - breakfast breads (no peanuts; label for other nuts), fruit, cereal, and yogurt are good options! Help is needed for decoration/set-up on Thursday, December 21, and with food set up/clean up on the days of the events. Plan to sign up by Monday, December 18 .

Christmas Decorations

Name _____
As you wish your name to appear in the bulletin

Phone Number _____

I wish to donate # _____ Poinsettia(s) **Donation: \$10.00 each**

I wish to donate \$ _____ to use where needed to decorate

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Given in memory of / honor of / celebration of / thanksgiving for
(please circle one)



Print clearly

Please place this form and your donation in an envelope and mail it to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 105 Gateshead Drive, McMurray PA 15317-3101 or drop it in the offering plate in the back of the church or in the church office. If you have any questions, call the church office at 724-941-7467.

DEADLINE: December 15.

Our Redeemer Call Committee

In keeping with Our Redeemer's Constitution, seven members have been elected by the church council to serve as the call committee and begin the work to call our congregation's next senior pastor. The committee will convene an initial training meeting in the coming weeks with Pr. Peter Asplin, assistant to the bishop of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod. Members of the committee are:

Sara Casile, Brian Casper, Laura Culp, Alison D'Addieco, Garrett Langley, Gary Milavec and Tim Prex

We look forward to serving in this capacity to do this important work for our church.

In Christ,

Alison D'Addieco, chair

Dining Divas Holiday Lunch – Tuesday, December 5 at 12:30 pm – at Atria's in McMurray

Reservations are closed. If you would like to be on the waiting list, notify the church office.

Pub Theology

All adults are welcome to join in great fellowship and lively conversation around topics of interest in our daily lives each month at the Voodoo Brewing Company in Houston, PA. Although we normally meet on the 4th Tuesday, the next gathering will be on **Thursday, December 28, at 7:00 pm**. Mark your calendar and plan to join us!



Decorating Date

Help is needed following the 11am service on **Sunday, December 17** to decorate the church for Christmas! Work is available for folks of all ages and skill levels; those able to climb ladders are especially needed for decorating the sanctuary trees. A pizza lunch will be provided. And, mark your calendars - help will be needed again on **Saturday, January 6 at 10am** to put everything away.

Washington Festival Chorale

Our Redeemer Lutheran will host the Washington Festival Chorale on **Sunday, December 10 at 3pm** for their concert "An American Christmas." The ORLC chancel choir will also be featured at this concert. Tickets are \$10 for adults; children under 16 are free. Tickets are available for sale at the door.

Advent Choir Festival

On **Sunday, December 10 at 5pm**, an Advent Choir Festival will be held at Center Presbyterian Church (255 Center Church Rd, McMurray). Celebrate the season with the musical gifts of choirs from Our Redeemer, Center Presbyterian, Laboratory Presbyterian, and Trinity United Methodist .

Crossroads Confirmation

Crossroads Confirmation will meet on **Sunday, December 3 from 6:30pm - 8pm**. Students are also invited to attend Youth Group from 4:30-6:15pm, and then stay for class.

Youth Group

All 7th-12th graders are invited to join Pastor Kerri for Youth Group on **Sunday, December 3 from 4:30-6:15pm**. We'll make and eat dinner together (holiday feast!) and play games. Crossroads students should plan to stay for class at 6:30pm. Sign up on the bulletin board or [online](#).

Family Friday

K-6th graders and families: bring your dinner and join us for Family Friday on **Friday, December 8 at 5:30pm** in the Social Hall. We'll tell the Christmas story together with a pick-up pageant, and say farewell to our friends Anusha and Jena. Sign up on the bulletin board or [online](#).



ELCA Youth Gathering News

Next summer the ELCA Youth Gathering will be held July 16-20 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Students currently in 8th-12th grades are eligible to attend, and young adults age 18-35 are eligible to attend a parallel event. More information is available on the ELCA Gathering website: <https://www.elca.church/gathering>. Youth interested in attending the 2024 Gathering need to contact Pastor Kerri; young adults will register separately.

Annual Congregational Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 14 at 10:00am**. Copies of the annual report will be available the weekend of January 6 and 7. All Committee Reports are due into the church office no later than December 29. Included on the agenda for the annual meeting is Election of Council Members, approval of the 2024 budget and updates to the congregation constitution.

Growing in God

There will be no Growing in God classes on December 24 or December 31.

Office Schedule

The church office will be closed on Monday, December 25, Tuesday, December 26, and Monday, January 1. Noah's Ark Preschool will be on break from December 21 through January 1.

Snow/Bad Weather Policy

When a winter weather event occurs or when the weather forecast predicts a snow event to take place during the time of scheduled worship, the Senior Pastor and Council President will make a decision regarding the cancellation of one or more worship services. While the goal is to never cancel a worship service, the safety of our staff and worshippers will be kept in mind. If a decision is made to cancel one or more worship services, the congregation will be notified via Constant Contact (the congregational email). Notice will also be posted on the website and Facebook.

Advent Adventures

We learned about the original Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra at our Advent Adventures event on November 26. We heard a story, assembled goodie bags to surprise a family member on December 6, wrote and decorated Christmas cards to send through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, made paper chains to count down to Christmas, and played a bean bag game to remember the generosity and kindness of Saint Nicholas!



All Saints Day 2023

We give thanks for all our faithful departed and the witness we see in their faithful lives, especially those who have died since last All Saints Day:

**In Memoriam
November 1, 2022 – November 1, 2023**

Susan L. Beeson
+
Carol J. Butler
+
Ronald V. Kilgore
+

Bob Anderson	Ann George	Kathleen Scaglione
George Andrewson, Sr.	George Hildebrand	Mario Scaglione
Joseph Andy	Dawn Howe	Don Smith
Marjorie Appleton	Evelyn Humphrey	Bernard Solo
Jamie Benson	Linda Levernigh	Donna Stafford
Helen Bosak	Gordon Ley	Jeanette Steffick
Rowena Brightbill	Marilyn Locher	Jean Tengeres
Mike Burke	Ruth Marston	Greg Thomas
Doug Bush	Rose McCarthy	Barb Van Lehn
Ellen Deutsch	Margaret Moran	Pauline Vick
George Elias	Marjorie Norton	Billie D. Ward
Kay Engman	Tracy Perles	Denise Scott Wible
Martha Fecher	Dave Provenzano	Paul Wilson
Ken Foberg	Mary Rhone	Frank J. Yocca
	Frank Rively	

And all of our loved ones whom we name in our hearts.

+

Rest eternal grant them, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.



Noah's Ark Preschool

Another holiday season! Doesn't it seem like they come and go so quickly? It's funny how they come at the same time every year but still somehow sneak up on us. I need more time to plan, more time to think about how to be "perfect." I remember being a young mom and feeling so much guilt over all the things I wasn't doing with my children, I felt I wasn't teaching them enough or doing enough activities. My house wasn't clean enough, they didn't get to bed early enough or eat well enough, I worried that I was failing them. Now that they are mostly grown, I realize how little they needed and how grateful I am that I spent time simply being with them. It's easy to get caught up in the anxiety of creating picture-perfect moments, and measuring up to social media standards, but it's the quiet moments just spent listening and loving that leave a lasting impact. As we head into another holiday season, I am trying to remember that I am enough without being perfect and I hope you know that you are too!

Miss Heidi



New Member Class

Interested in Joining Our Redeemer? Maybe you would just like to learn more about the congregation? There will be a new members class held on January 28 from 1 to 3 PM. The class will also be available for people who would simply like to know more about the congregation. Please let us know if you would like to participate in this class. New members will be received on February 3 or 4. To let us know of your interest please contact the church office at orlc@comcast.net or talk with one of the pastors.

Member News

Newly Baptized

On November 5, we welcomed Evelyn Noel Dye, daughter of Zachariah Martin Dye and Allyson Noel Hepler through the Sacrament of Baptism.

On November 18, we welcomed Holly Elise Rutkowski, daughter of Michael and Kelly Rutkowski and granddaughter of Dave and Tina Borra through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Welcome children of God!

United in Marriage

Kristina Mahin Lunney and Steven Raymond Hvozdoch were married on October 31, 2023 with a ceremony at their home. The Rev. John F. Yedlicka officiated.

Nora Alexandra Barczak and Nicholas Lee Shuman were married at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church on November 5, 2023. The Rev. Kerri Clark officiated.

Congratulations!

Rest in Peace

Ella Spagnolo died on November 9, 2023. Her funeral and burial took place on November 18 at Jefferson Memorial Park. Ella had been a member of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church since March 22, 1964. She is survived by her son, Aaron. Rest eternal grant her, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon her. Amen.

Donations for City Mission & Blessings in a Backpack

The Service and Outreach Committee continues to collect everyday items that are needed by families in our area.

The **City Mission** reports needing all kinds of food, but particularly spaghetti sauce, noodles, cereal, canned meats, peanut butter and jelly, Ramen noodles, and diapers (sizes 4, 5, 6). The City Mission also is happy to receive gloves, mittens, and hats throughout the winter.

Blessings in a Backpack serving Ringgold Elementary School North is in need of microwavable cups of Chef Boyardee and mac and cheese style pastas, applesauce or fruit cups/squeeze pouches, and snack size boxes of raisins.

They are currently packing for approx. 110 kids each week and are appreciative of the continued support of our church.

Volunteer Opportunity with Food Helpers (Washington County Food Bank)

Due to the positive response, we've scheduled another ORLC day at Food Helpers in Southpointe. Join us on Tuesday January 16th (snow date January 18th if needed) from 10am-noon at the CNX building at Southpointe to pack some bags of nutritious snacks for elementary students in Washington County as part of the Little Moochi program. This program promotes healthy eating habits in kids through nutritious snacks and the Little Moochi app developed by CMU. Please sign up on the bulletin board or [online](#) by January 11th so that the list can be provided to CNX Security prior to the holiday weekend. Contact Jaymi Moody with any questions: shawnandjaymi@verizon.net



Faithful Filmgoers

Faithful Filmgoers will meet **Friday evening, December 15** for our next film outing. Movie, theater, and time to be determined. Email Steve D'Addieco at stevendaddieco@gmail.com to be put on his email list.

In Our Prayers

We lift up the following members of our congregation so that they may be strengthened by our prayers of intercession:

Sally Lowery Ferko, Brian Casper, Clint Langley, Carol Brandyberry, Lori Gajdowski, Chris Decker, Jen Barbati, Gary McGaffic, Randy Stonemark, and Mandy Jarosh.

We remember those friends and family members who have asked for our prayers:

Kerwin Broman, Mike Engman, Kayden Spencer, Marcy Raeford, Nancy Lyons, Nancy Adams, Robert Ruppel, Kevin Ruppel, Lydia Damoose, Lisa Kilgore, Laura Norton, Anthony Santaguida, Margaret “Peggy” Stopko, Judy Concannon, Ray Keisling, Dan Stimmel, Tamara Brister, Wendy Brosky, Heidi Garner, Janice Poole, and Nester Miskow.

We remember those who grieve:

The family and friends of Ella Spagnolo.

The most recently added names appear at the beginning of the list and will remain for three months. You may add names, remove a name, or ask for renewal by submitting your request in writing and placing it in the offering plate, drop off in the church office, or submit by email to orlc@comcast.net.

Stewardship— How Are We Doing?

Year to Date as of October 2023

	This Year			Last Year		
	Current	Building	Total	Current	Building	Total
Income	\$388,704	\$43,583	\$432,287	\$391,243	\$48,733	\$439,976
Expenses	\$362,048		\$362,048	\$384,241		\$384,241
Surplus (deficit)	\$26,656	\$43,583	\$70,239	\$7,002	\$48,733	\$55,735
Surplus (deficit)			\$70,239			\$55,735

Other Outreach Offerings	Year to Date
Abiding Missions	\$900
City Mission	\$428
City Mission Food Pantry	\$199
ELCA World Hunger	\$4,425
ELCA Disaster Relief DOM	\$1,032
ELCA Disaster Relief Intl	\$895
Lutheran World Relief	\$305
	\$8,184

MINISTRY SCHEDULE/DECEMBER, 2023

	December 3, 2023		December 10, 2023		December 17, 2023		December 24, 2023			December 31, 2023
WORSHIP LEADER	9:00am	11:00am	9:00am	11:00am	9:00am	11:00am	4:30pm	7:00pm	11:00pm	10:00am
Acolyte	*	Isaac & Owen Hilderhoff	*	Jules & Reece Greco	*	Henry Binotto	*	Jaclyn Capezzuto	*	*
Lay Assistant	Kim Chupinka	Kim Maize	Laura Culp	Maegan Bregenser	Mark Harris	Lori Greene	X	Susan Loeser	Gary Milavec	Sally Ruppel
Lector	Jennifer Hewitt	Sarah Dagnal	Linda Nickles	Becky Long	Tim Prex	Karen Smith	X	Caroline Langley	Kim Maize	Carl Ruppel
Communion Assistant	Tina Borra	Barb Hrabar	Missy Bookhammer	Brenda Binotto	Tina Borra	Eliana Beck	Karen Glass	Missy Bookhammer	Maegan Bregenser	Eliana Beck
Communion Assistant	Karen Glass	Sue Lambert	Karen Glass	Lori Greene	Kim Chupinka	Jackie Beck	Linda Nickles	Debbie Healey Langley	Gerda Moul	Jackie Beck
Communion Assistant	Jennifer Hewitt	Becky Long	Keith Lowery	Sue Lambert	Garrett Langley	Brenda Binotto	Volunteer	Rochelle Koerbel	Carl Ruppel	Karen Glass
Communion Assistant	Susan Loeser	Carl Ruppel	Ruth Ann Lowery	Becky Long	Debbie Healey Langley	Barb Hrabar	Volunteer	Juliette Langley	Sally Ruppel	Heather Morelli
Communion Assistant	Phyllis Permar	Sally Ruppel	Linda Nickles	Heather Morelli	Susan Loeser	Susan O'Brien	Volunteer	Keith Lowery	Mohylyn Yocca	Linda Nickles
Communion Assistant	Trudy Wagner	Nancy Till	Phyllis Permar	Susan O'Brien	Phyllis Permar	Sally Ruppel	Volunteer	Ruth Ann Lowery	Olivia Yocca	Phyllis Permar
Greeter	Dianne Rigby	Becky Hilderhoff	Anne & Sophie Scher	Paula Reese	Dianne Rigby	Susan O'Brien	Linda Nickles	Karen Smith	Sebastian Yocca	Karla Lance
Usher	Dave Borra	Joe Maize	Drew Lance	Eric Reese	Clint Langley	Jacob Casper	Doug Meley	Mike Koerbel	Joe Maize	Jim Doughty
Usher	Ken Rigby	Max Rush	Karla Lance	Max Rush	Ken Rigby	Doug Meley	Volunteer	Clint Langley	John Yocca	Drew Lance
Gift Bearer	*	Owen Hilderhoff	Sophie Scher	Wynne Greco	Eliza and Norah Prex	Jack Binotto	*	Juliette Langley	Sebastian Yocca	*
Altar Guild	Tina Borra	Volunteer	Laura Culp	Sue Lambert	Tina Borra	Barb Hrabar	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Heather Morelli
Altar Guild	Susan Loeser	Volunteer	Susan Loeser	Volunteer	Volunteer	Sally Ruppel	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer
Lights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Garrett Langley	Garrett Langley	X
PowerPoint	Gary Milavec	Meredith Pomposelli	Dan & Sam Scher	Jennifer Hewitt	Gary Milavec	Rolf Otterness	X	Karen Glass	Xander King	Ryan Hettinger
Camera	X	Sam Mizia	X	Sam Mizia	X	Sam Mizia	X	Sam Mizia	X	Sam Mizia
Head Teller (Monday)	Gary Milavec		Judy Pilof		Carol Locher		(Wednesday, December 27) Dave Borra & Barb Schumacher			Susan Loeser
Council Teller (Monday)	Sue Lambert		Jennifer Hewitt		Council Volunteer		(Wednesday, December 27) Martha Rhone & Council Vol.			Jackie Beck

*Child volunteer(s) is requested.

X-not needed at this service

If you find that you cannot serve when scheduled, please contact the church office.

OUR REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

105 Gateshead Drive
McMurray, PA 15317-3101

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105 Gateshead Drive McMurray, PA 15317-3101
724-941-7467

WORSHIP SERVICES

SATURDAY 5:30 PM and SUNDAY 9:00 and 11:00 AM (live-streamed)
Online services are available through [facebook.com/ORLutheran](https://www.facebook.com/ORLutheran), YouTube
and the church's website.

GROWING IN GOD (Sept. - May), 10:00 AM, Age 3-Adults

THE REV. MARTHA CLEMENTSON, INTERIM PASTOR
443-699-9837, clementsonmartha@gmail.com

THE REV. KEVIN CLEMENTSON, INTERIM PASTOR
443-699-8534, kclementson@yahoo.com

THE REV. KERRI CLARK, PASTOR - 724-603-5589, rev.kerri.clark@gmail.com

HEIDI GARNER, DIRECTOR, NOAH'S ARK PRESCHOOL - 724-942-6699
noahspreschool@comcast.net

MARY HELEN BARR, MUSIC DIRECTOR - 412-780-3357 (cell)

ELAINE DOLCICH, OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

THE REV. JOHN F. YEDLICKA, PASTOR EMERITUS

Office 724-941-7467 Fax 724-941-3262

E-mail: orlc@comcast.net

Website: <https://www.OurRedeemer-peters.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ORLutheran>

YouTube: <https://tinivurl.com/ORLCyoutube>

OUR VISION

The vision of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church is to be a welcoming church where people of all ages and backgrounds will: encounter God in worship, experience Christian community, discover their God-given gifts, grow in faith, and be equipped for service and witness as we are sent out into God's world.