

# The First Word

Volume 16, Issue 3

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL — HELENA, MONTANA

December, 2014

Seek FIRST His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

## Special December/January Dates

Cookie Exchange.....	Dec. 6 1-3 p.m.
Second Sunday of Advent.....	Dec. 7
Women's Christmas Event.....	Dec. 11
Third Sunday of Advent.....	Dec. 14 Thrivent Coffee Hour
First Lutheran School.....	Dec. 19 Christmas Program
Fourth Sunday of Advent.....	Dec. 21 First Day of Winter
Christmas Eve.....	Dec. 24
Christmas Day.....	Dec. 25
New Year's Eve/Watch Night...	Dec. 31
New Year's Day.....	Jan. 1
The Epiphany of our Lord.....	Jan. 6



For the grace of  
God has appeared,  
bringing salvation  
for all people.

Titus 2:11, ESV

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## With humble and thankful hearts

Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, which marks the likely spot of Jesus' birth, has a four-foot-high entrance. Throughout the centuries, the height of the entrance has been lowered twice: once to prevent looting and once to keep out camel- and horse-riders.

Because visitors must bow as they enter, this has become known as the Door of Humility. It's a reminder of the reverent, submissive posture our hearts should take as we approach our newborn Lord and Savior. It's also a reminder that Jesus is

the narrow door (Luke 13:24) — the only path to eternal life.

As you worship this Christmas season, whether or not you're physically able to kneel, enter Jesus' presence with a humble and thankful heart. He alone deserves our reverence because he alone is able to save.



## Mary, did you know?

Mark Lowry, who wrote the lyrics to the Christmas song "Mary, Did You Know?" says he's always been amazed by Mary's silence at the cross, as her son was being crucified. Maybe she was remembering back to that first Christmas, he wonders, when she counted Jesus' fingers and toes.

"I wonder if she realized then that those were the same fingers that had scooped out the oceans and formed the seas. I wonder if she realized those were the same feet that had walked on streets of

gold and been worshiped by angels. Those little lips were the same lips that had spoken the world into existence. When Mary kissed her little baby, she wasn't just kissing another baby; she was kissing the face of God."

Mary silently watched her son die 33 years later, Lowry notes — not just for the world but also for his own mother. "The baby boy she had delivered on that first Christmas was now on a cross delivering her."

## In all things, God works for the good ...

Even amid increased secularization, God makes the core Christmas message known. Take, for example, the story of a "winter pageant" a mother attended at her son's grade school. Songs of reindeer, snow and Santa included one titled "Christmas Love," in which the youngest performers held up letters as the song progressed: "C," "H," etc.

When a little girl unknowingly held her "M" upside down, the older kids snickered and the adult audience smiled accept-

ingly. But as the song drew to a close and all the letters were revealed, surprised recognition struck the Christians in the room.

"CHRISTWAS LOVE," read the string of student-borne letters. God's truth had penetrated the human clutter and confusion around Christmas — as it has power to do throughout our lives: "Christ was love." And of course, He still is.

# Do you have room for Him? — from your Board of Stewardship

“And she gave birth to her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7). As these familiar words are read every Christmas, we repeat them in our minds. Having heard them so often, we know them by heart. And every year pastors try to come up with novel thoughts about an age-old story. Sadly, as much as we love to hear the story, we too often put it out of our thoughts as soon as we put up the calendar for the new year. Like the infamous innkeeper, we cannot find room for the newborn Baby.

We are creatures of habit, and it seems that it’s quite difficult to change old habits, most of them not very beneficial. If we keep our focus on that simple message, though, we might be able to create new habits. Instead of hurriedly scanning our devotions for the day, we might make it a habit to



remind ourselves that it is God Himself speaking to us through His word. Instead of uttering a quick, “Morning. How are you?” we might actually take a few minutes to wait for the answer and offer encouragement, and maybe even pray with a colleague, a friend or a family member. Instead of setting our own schedules, we might ask God to teach us to number our days so that we can go ahead in His wisdom (Psalm 90:12).

What other good habits could we establish if we focused on “our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for [our] sake[s] He became poor, so that [we] by His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9)?

Never in Scripture do we read of Jesus turning anyone away because He was too busy (and we would say He was); He had someplace he needed to be (and He did), or He was too tired (and Scripture tells us that Jesus grew weary). No. He always had room for that person who needed Him, just as He has room for each of us with our needs and sorrows and joys.

Do you have room? By His grace, God will warm our cold hearts and give us the desire to be His stewards with room in our day to serve Him; room in our finances to give what is needed, and room in our lives for Him to work His will in, and through, us.

# Walking in the light

Each of us was made by God, and some of us grew tall. Others stood in the wind, their branches bent, and fell.

Those of us who walk in the light must help the ones in darkness up. For that’s what life is all about. And love is all there is to life.

Each of us was made by God beautiful in His mind’s eye. Those of us who turned out sound should look across our shoulders once and help the weak ones to their feet. It only takes an outstretched hand.

— Rod McKuen



**A LOOK**  
*At Our Budget*

A report from your Board of Finance

	<u>Oct. 2014</u>	<u>FY 2015 Y-T-D</u>
Income	\$49,736.23	\$179,048.62
Expense	\$50,396.60	\$178,273.02
Gain/Loss	(\$ 660.37)	\$ 775.60

**The First Word**

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First Lutheran Church  
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(406)442-5367

**DECEMBER**

Rev. Larry A. Miller.....	<i>Pastor</i>
Rev. Jason Toombs.....	<i>Associate Pastor</i>
Linda Fromm.....	<i>Editor</i>
Susan McCormack.....	<i>Calendar/Servant Schedule</i>
Volunteer Staff.....	<i>Collation</i>

**Deadline for the January/February First Word is Wed., January 7. Place articles in the First Word box in the church office or e-mail them to: [fozziehoot1917@bresnan.net](mailto:fozziehoot1917@bresnan.net).**

# “We are the Reason!”

Since the first Christmas life has become so much **larger...**

because it must finally include Him whom the manger held,  
but the universe cannot contain.

The **miracle** of the little face  
that had seen the fall of Lucifer ...

The **wonder** of the tiny lips  
that had called to Adam ...

The **mystery** of the small hands  
which one had set the stars and planets in the firmament ...



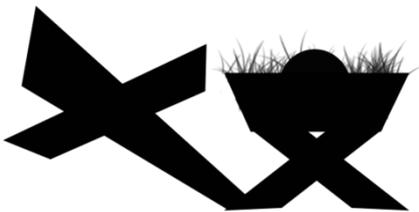
Here is the measure of our **smallness** before Christmas,  
and our **greatness** after Christmas ...

We suddenly realize that He has made us **Very Important PersonS** ...

We are the Reason for **His Coming** ...

We are the Reason for **His Staying**, and ...

We are the Reason for **His Dying and Rising again** ...



*We were the reason that He gave His life  
We were the reason that He suffered and died  
To a world that was lost He gave all He could give  
To show us the reason to live!*

(Christian Rock Group “Avalon”)

This Advent and Christmas, take a peek into the manger and seek your Savior ...

Who became so little for us ...  
that through a Cross  
and Open Tomb,  
and by faith ...

we may be made **Great!**

*Joyous Blessings to you and yours  
as we celebrate **His and our** Season!*

**Pas+or & Shari Miller**



# Advent & Christmas Worship!



\* **Advent Midweek Services** ~ Wednesdays at 12:10 and 6:30 p.m.



## The Light of the World

December 3

December 10

December 17

\* **Advent Sunday Services** ~ Sundays at 8:15 and 11:00 a.m.

November 30 • **Guest Proclaimer:**  
**Missionary David Warner**

December 7 • **An Announcement from the Wilderness**

December 14 • **An Announcement from Our Lord**

December 21 • **An Announcement to a Virgin**

\* **Children's Christmas Service** ~ Sunday, December 14, 11:00 a.m.

\* **Christmas Eve** ~ December 24

Family Worship – 3:00 p.m. Candlelight and

Carols – 5:00 & 7:00 p.m. Candlelight and

Communion – 11:00 p.m.



\* **Christmas Day Worship** ~ December 25 – 10:00 a.m.



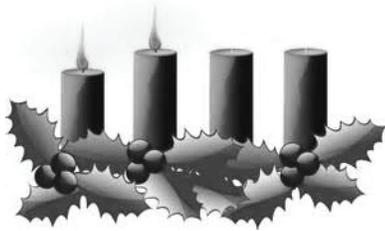
## O Come, Let Us Adore Him!



## New church year brings its own seasons

—from Pastor Toombs

We have only recently turned the church year calendar and we soon will pass through three different church seasons: Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. If you blink, it seems that the church year is flying by at an extremely accelerated pace.



**Advent** is the season of anticipated waiting for the coming King—we wait for Christ. We know that Christ has come in the past and that He will come again on the last day. But as the nights start growing longer and the days grow shorter, we wait for “The Light of the World” to appear.

Our mid-week services will be focusing on “The Light of the World” as we wait for Christ’s second coming, just as those in Israel waited for His first appearance. The light will soon dawn and the darkness has no choice but to be exposed and to disappear. The darkness can’t stand the light, and is soon exposed for the false messages it proclaims: “Hide your sins in me.” “You’re your own god.”

But you’re not your own god. God has taken on flesh and has been born of the virgin for you. We celebrate this in the season of **Christmas**. “The Light of the World” has dawned and scattered the darkness. The darkness tries to overcome Him, but that’s getting ahead of ourselves because we’re in the Christmas season and not Holy Week.

Christmas is the time to celebrate Christ’s birth. We celebrate by coming to church where His candle is lit upon the Advent wreath and we sing the wonderful songs about Jesus’ birth in the city of David, Bethlehem. We also hear of the angels coming to shepherds in the field, the deceit of King Herod, the fleeing to Jerusalem and the return to Nazareth.



But we often overlook the first shedding of blood for His people, the circumcision and naming of Jesus. Jesus was a Jew and, according to the Jewish

covenant, He was circumcised on the eighth day, celebrated on January 1. The shedding of blood was for His people, as His blood is the sacrifice that counts before God. The angels proclaimed the lowly birth of “The Light of the World” to the Jewish shepherds.



And when the Magi brought their gifts, “The Light of the World” has also now shown upon the Gentiles. Jesus Christ came to redeem all people, both Jew and Gentile.

Christ’s light shines through His signs: at His Baptism, as the voice of the Father is heard and the Holy Spirit appears as a dove; the confession of Peter: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry and the calling of the disciples. These are what are reflected upon during the season of **Epiphany** as “The Light of the World” is now in the world, healing diseases and forgiving the sins of His people.

## Thrivent Action Team info available December 14

Thrivent Financial Chapter 30515 will sponsor the beverages and sweet treats for coffee time between services on Sunday, December 14, to thank all those who have served on the chapter board or organized, worked at, or supported events for which the chapter has provided matching funds since Thrivent Financial for Lutherans was formed in 2002 as a merger between Lutheran Brotherhood and Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL).

As reported in the November 2014 issue of this newsletter, the chapter system will no longer be in place after December 31, 2014, but Thrivent has put into place a new system called Thrivent Action Teams, for which funding help is available, though through a different means than it has been to this point.

During the coffee hour, printed materials will be available to help further explain the new Action Team concept.

We will try to answer your questions at that time, and for questions we cannot address, we’ll contact Thrivent’s fraternal office to obtain an answer for you.

If you, your board or committee has an idea for a fundraiser or a service project, please plan to attend to determine if your project might qualify for funding help under the new Action Team system.

## CPH introduces new *Lutheran Bible Companion*

Immerse yourself in historical, archaeological, theological and biblical knowledge with the new, two-volume *Lutheran Bible Companion* (hardback, 2,304 total pages).

Study the Bible in its fullest context—and the Apocrypha, too. With the Bible at the center and the *Lutheran Bible Companion* at hand, you can study the Bible for *all its worth*, including theological topics and literary features found in each book of the Bible and Apocrypha; significant

events, people and places found in detailed outlines and maps; biblical reflections from Lutheran theologians; 600+ color photos and art illustrating stories, daily life and landscapes.

Concordia Publishing House is offering the two-volume set at an introductory price of \$49.99 (retail price \$69.98). **The offer expires December 31, 2014.** For more information, go to: [cph.org/lbc](http://cph.org/lbc) or call (toll-free) 1(800)325-3040.



## December/January Birthdays!



### December 1

Jalyn Gardipee  
Lindsay McCarthy

### December 2

Michelle Anderson  
Scotty Rucker

### December 3

Marissa Lebahn  
Jacob Sparks

### December 4

Julie Eklund

### December 5

Tammi Gozelanski  
Pam Koenig

### December 6

Abigail Rose

### December 7

Charles Gozelanski III  
Calvin Rucker  
Jess Wareham

### December 9

Patricia Jacobs

### December 10

Keith Newmeyer

### December 14

Laura Bjerke  
Howard Davis

### December 15

Robert Wagner

### December 16

Marilyn Petek

### December 17

Megan Davis  
Peni Jo Jones

### December 18

Leona Boland  
Jocelyn Brown

### December 20

Ed Hartman  
Joan Nicholls

### December 21

Jeff Sparing

### December 21

Lynn Koch  
Gordon Stockstad

### December 22

Joyce Burgett

### December 24

Doug Gedrose

### December 25

Maynard Sternberg

### December 27

Chantel Duty

### December 28

Ninah Kerr

Sandra Meek

Nola Torgeson

### December 29

Danielle Blair

Raye Newmeyer

Sandee Riemann

### December 30

Richard Bridegroom

Donna Pare



### January 1

Betty Briese  
Jennifer Charles  
William Charles  
Ben Gregory

### January 2

Savannah McCormack

Mark Miner

### January 4

Robert Veach III

### January 7

Clarice Cook  
Peter Jones

### January 8

AJ Buhr  
Landon Gilbert  
Marlys Jarvis  
Jason Mercer

### January 9

Bob Summerer  
Marge Ulmer

### January 10

David Gunderson  
Jana Spaulding  
Audree Spurzem

### January 11

Sean Clinch  
Wally Smith

### January 12

Stephanie Giulio  
Augustus Hanson

### January 13

Rich Falconer  
Kristopher Koch

### January 14

Bernice Haycraft

### January 16

Matthew Bridegroom

### January 17

Trent Stefanik

### January 19

Cooper Brilz  
Steven Leitzke

### January 20

Bert Poor  
Kylee Gardipee

### January 21

Keith Lee

### January 22

Connor Koenig  
Audrey Mandera  
James McCormack  
Jayden Nachtsheim

### January 23

Lisa Peterson  
Torri Petz

### January 25

Wardeen Kuenzel  
Tara Mercer

### January 24

Patricia Martin  
Fran Sternberg

### January 26

Charles Gozelanski IV

Robin Sayler

### January 28

Gary Pemble

Joni Veach

Ryan Veach

### January 29

Susan Buhr

Lois Lebahn

### January 30

Matthew Shields

### January 31

Lauren Antonick

Brock Gardipee

Elmer Simon

Shilo Stefanik





# Happenings at First Lutheran School

### Pastors

Rev. Larry Miller & Rev. Jason Toombs

### Director

Denise Underwood



Children's Christmas Program

First Lutheran School's Christmas program, "A Christmas Alphabet," will be held Friday, December

19, at 10 a.m. with refreshments to follow! Please join us as we celebrate the birth of our Savior!



First Lutheran School is selling Christmas wreaths again this year! The wreaths are Montana-made of fresh greens

with pine cones and large red bows.

For \$25, you can have one of these beautiful wreaths in your home! Pick up an order form in the school office TODAY!



Earn Cash for Our School!

Keep those **Box Tops for Education** coming! Our first mailing, sent in October, yielded \$270.70 for our school. We'll do our next mailing the end of February. This is an EASY way to help First Lutheran School raise money. Clip your box tops, save and paste them onto special Box Tops sheets available in the school office.

In **Miss Westerbuhr's class**, we have finally started our "Book It" program affiliated with Pizza Hut. My students will keep track of how many minutes they read each day. When they hit a targeted goal, each student will receive a gift certificate for a free pan pizza from Pizza Hut!

In **Mrs. Smith's class**, I am so excited to be teaching our students a technology class with our new tablets. We will be using them to work on the "Flat Stanley" book project. I will also be teaching them how to use the tablets properly when searching for information with Math, Science and Social Studies.



**YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US for Christmas and New Year's Services**

*Christmas Eve*  
3 p.m.

*Candlelight Services*  
5, 7 and 11 p.m.

*Christmas Morning*  
10 a.m.

*Sunday, December 28*  
One service—10 a.m.

*New Year's Eve*  
Supper at 5:30 p.m.  
Worship at 6:30 p.m.

### Teachers

Heather McIntosh,  
Heidi Westerbuhr, Stacy Smith,  
Donna Fischer & Melissa Mousel

In **Mrs. Mousel's 3 -and 4-year-old classes**, we continue to work on letter recognition and the sounds that each letter makes.

The kids are excited about the Math concepts we are learning: same/different; in/out and big/small, just to name a few.

In worship, we are talking about the birth of baby Jesus.

In **Mrs. Fischer's Prekindergarten classes**, we continue our trek through the alphabet. We are writing and sounding out the letters Ww, Jj and Cc.

Everyone is working hard on our Christmas program. We are learning our speaking parts and lots of songs. We love telling others about Jesus!



First Lutheran School has become high tech! Thanks to the generosity of a school family, we now have four tablets in our elementary classrooms.

In **Miss McIntosh's class**, our "Reading Around the World" program is now taking us to Berlin, Germany; Rome, Italy and Jerusalem!

We are enjoying the use of our new tablets to help us learn about "The Hebrew Kingdoms" on our Social Studies website.



A HUGE thank you again to all church and school families who helped make our **Silent Auction** successful. With the help of \$1,000 in matching funds from Thrivent Financial, our school raised over \$10,000!

First Lutheran Church  
2231 Broadway  
Helena, MT 59601

Phone: (406)442-5367  
Fax: (406)442-5285  
Web site: [www.firstlutheranhelena.org](http://www.firstlutheranhelena.org)  
E-mail: [firstlutheranchurch@bresnan.net](mailto:firstlutheranchurch@bresnan.net)

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH is a  
Congregation of The Lutheran Church-  
Missouri Synod

**THE MISSION of First Lutheran  
Church is "Sharing God's Word  
with Everyone, Everywhere!"**

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Tune in to—*The Lutheran Hour*—KAWZ 90.9 FM—Sundays at 8 a.m.; KCAP 1340 AM—Sundays at 9 a.m.  
"Woman to Woman"—105.3 KMTX FM—Sundays at 9:30 p.m.  
"Making a World of Difference"—Channel 11—Fridays at 5 p.m.

*Women's Christmas Event*

**AND WONDERS OF HIS LOVE!**

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH  
THURSDAY,  
DECEMBER 11, 2014  
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

- \* BIBLE STUDY
- \* CAROL SINGING
- \* GIFTS
- \* REFRESHMENTS

Bring a dozen cookies or a snack to share.

RIDES AND CHILD CARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST!  
LEAVE CONTACT INFORMATION WITH THE  
CHURCH OFFICE, 442-5367.

**WOMEN OF ALL AGES  
ARE INVITED!**

