



New Era Lutheran Church

December 2021 Newsletter

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New Era Lutheran Church
3455 New Era Road
Muscataine, IA 52761
Sunday School: 9:30 am (Sept-May)
Worship Services: 10:30 am

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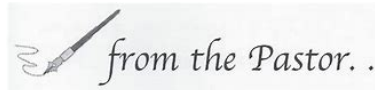
Building Rental –

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Bulletin & Newsletter– Joan Dietrich

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Bulletin - Items due by Wednesday night
each week
Newsletter Items due by the 20th of the
month

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Dear beloved in Christ,

Welcome to Advent. As the world around us picks up the pace of going through each day, God beckons us to breathe and be still. As we rush from Thanksgiving to Christmas as if in a race to see who will reach the end of the preparations first, God beckons us to wait. To watch. To wonder. In those small moments, the Holy Spirit whispers God's promise to you *I am bringing love to you in a new way.*

As we resume much of our pre-COVID routines, it is really challenging to be still and sit in God's promise to you. Perhaps you feel an inkling of guilt at sitting still and reading a devotion when there's So. Much. To. Do. If you do, you're not alone. Perhaps you would rather open your favorite book or watch a favorite show at the end of the day. If you do, you're not alone.

And still, the Holy Spirit persists in drawing you closer to God's heart, to show you even as God promises to come in the flesh of Jesus Christ, God is already with you because of Christ's resurrection. The Holy Spirit persists in nudging you to put down the TV remote or your favorite novel and ponder where God can be seen and heard in your day. Where have you felt God's love for you? Where do you need to see God's love and hope in your day today?

As we anticipate the birth of our Savior, we cling to the promise of Christ already in our life. This is a mysterious promise and a powerful promise. God's love for you is faithful and attentive. God knows you need signs of God's gracious hope in your life so God never stops showing you glimpses of love and hope.

Where are you looking this Advent?
What does your heart need to see this Advent?

During Advent, God invites us to slow down and watch for Christ. Watch with hope-filled expectancy and see Christ's grace in your life. Watch with wide eyed wonderment. This hope of Christ draws us closer to God and gives us courage to live as disciples in the mystery that Christ lives today and will come again.

This Advent, New Era offers opportunities for you to have intentional time reading, hearing, seeing, and talking about where Christ is in your life and what this season of Advent might mean for you. Each Sunday morning as we gather for worship, we will light the candles on the Advent wreath as we anticipate God's extraordinary promise to live among us in the flesh.

Perhaps God beckons you to watch and wonder as you walk outside, pray, read your Bible, or share in conversation with friends and family. Wherever you look for Advent this year, I pray you see glimpses of God's surprising grace. I pray you are fed and nourished by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. And I pray you experience the hope of God whose light shines in our darkness.

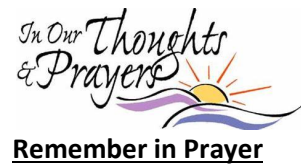
"The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before ... What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes

past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God's [back] fade in the distance. So, stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold.

Wonder. There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing. For now, stay. Wait. Something is on the horizon." ~Jan Richardson

Watching and wondering with you,

Pastor Kirsten



Randy Meador, Amy Wilson, Kay Ely, June Weber, Emogene Sorgenfrey, Nathan Hadley, Jay Schackle, family & loved ones of Kenny Parish, Paul Kemper, Martha Collins-Mollway and family and loved ones who are in need of prayer support.

Special dates

- *Second Sunday of Advent, December 5, 2021*
- *Third Sunday of Advent, December 12, 2021*
- *Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19, 2021*
- *First day of winter, December 21, 2021*
- *Christmas Eve, December 24, 2021*
- *Christmas Day, December 25, 2021*
- *New Year's Eve/Watch Night, December 31, 2021*

DECEMBER



Birthdays

1 – Peggy Miller
4 – Zoe Lee
8 – Amaya Lee
18 – Rachelle Gladwell
Harris
20 – Lynne Leacox
25 – Shirley McDaniel
30 – Janice Lichtenwald
30 – Wiladene Yankee

Anniversaries

30 – William & Mary Maxson
Turner

*May the good Lord continue to shower
you with happiness, good fortune,
prosperity and good health all the days
of your life.
Happy Birthday and Anniversary!*

December

Ushers – Need Ushers

Alter Guild – Need Alter Guild

Readers

12/5 Becki Petersen
12/12 Gianna & Ada Kurz
12/19
12/26

Flowers

Fellowship Hostesses

12/5 Advent Potluck
12/12 Carolyn Leach, Lynn Bendt
12/19 Janet Kindler, Anderson's
12/26 Shirley McDaniel, Nancy Henke

Advent @ New Era 2021

Devotions for adults



1. Devotions will be available through Augsburg Fortress. This year's devotions are called *Heaven & Nature Sing*. *Heaven and Nature Sing* includes daily devotions based on our scripture readings we hear in worship. In addition to devotions, the book offers household blessings and prayers to enrich your preparations and celebrations. These devotions extend through Christmas into Epiphany. *Large print devotion books are available*
2. Advent calendar for your fridge: This calendar offers one word to focus on each day of Advent, such as *anticipate, look, breathe, hope*. It is a simple and hopefully effective way to slow down and focus our hearts and minds on the promise of Emmanuel. Children can also take part in these!

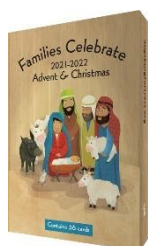
Devotions for families & children

1. Make your own Advent wreath: We will provide green clay, a tea light candle, birthday candles, and weekly prayers for little hands to help make an Advent wreath and participate in lighting a birthday candle each week. This could be done alongside your family's Advent wreath.



December - Children's Christmas Program – TBD

2. *Families Celebrate Advent & Christmas* is a colorful deck of cards that is full of rituals, prayers and reflections. Endlessly flexible for busy schedules, you can create a new after-meal ritual, use them as decorations, or carry them on the go. Explore the entire season from Advent to Christmas through Epiphany.



Advent Event: Sunday, December 5th

after worship & congregational meeting

After the congregational meeting (see notice in the newsletter), we will gather for a potluck lunch in the fellowship hall. We will have a craft for all ages to enjoy. Anyone who would like, is invited for a Hanging of The Greens worship service after the craft.

Tuesday night "Soup Suppers with Jesus"

You are invited to join us for a soup supper on Tuesday nights during Advent. We will gather to eat at 6:00 and then enjoy prayer, Bible Study, & conversation following the dinner. The Bible Study and conversation will focus on the Advent themes of hope, love, joy, and peace.

Good Gifts

The ELCA offers congregations a fun and effective way to make a difference as we seek to diminish world hunger and poverty. Good gifts offer alternative Christmas gifts that "grow the church, fight hunger and transform lives" (elca.org/goodgifts). They offer 50 items for individuals or congregations to purchase such as animals, school supplies, Bibles, or food. Children and confirmation students will be offered a piggy bank to collect and bring back loose change from home. Each week, we will also offer an opportunity to collect loose change in addition to

our regular offering. All money collected will go toward purchasing an item or multiple items that the Sunday school and confirmation students will choose. We will also decorate a tree with Good Gifts ornaments. Each ornament has an item that could be purchased. Take the ornament home and purchase the item as a way of carrying God's love and generosity to our neighbors across the world.

Children's Christmas program

Once again, our children will share the good news of Jesus Christ with us during worship. The date is to be announced but will take place during worship. Please thank Lynne Leacox for her leadership and ministry with our children.

Christmas Eve worship

Christmas Eve worship at New Era will be at 7:00 pm on December 24th. Because there may be many children present & much singing, we recommend masks are worn.

Congregational Meeting

New Era Lutheran will hold a congregational meeting after worship on December 5th. Per our constitution, notice will be given two weeks in advance at worship, through email, and this newsletter. We need to meet and vote on repairs that are needed for our building in the basement and the sanctuary windows. An outline of the work that is needed and the proposed cost to the congregation will be made available two weeks before the meeting.

New Era

Poinsettia Orders



A sign-up sheet is in the back of the church for ordering poinsettias. Please sign up as soon as possible as the due date is Monday, Nov. 29. Poinsettias will be delivered Dec. 23.

Angel Tree Tags



Angel tree tags are available at the back of the church. There are 20 available tags. If more are needed, please

stop by the Salvation Army Building at 1000 Oregon St, Muscatine. Do not wrap the gifts. Take unwrapped gifts back to the Salvation Army Building by Friday, Dec. 3rd, definitely no later than Mon., Dec. 6. If there are left over tags, please take back to the Salvation Army Building on Dec. 3.

Red Kettle Campaign



The Salvation Army is seeking bell ringers for the Red Kettle Campaign. To volunteer, call the Salvation Army at 563-263-8272 or sign up at <https://www.registertoring.com>.

Altar Guild

Nov – Shirley Petersen
Dec – ??

Ushers

Paul & Ann Mayes
??

Readers

Nov 21 Dan Petersen
Nov 28 Joyce Rudbeck
Dec 5 Becki Petersen
Gianna & Ada
Dec 12 Kurz
Dec 19
Dec 26

Flowers

Joyce Rudbeck

Fellowship Hostesses

Nov 28 Janet Kindler, Gloria Batteau
Dec 5* Potluck
Dec 12 Carolyn Leach, Lynn Bendt
Dec 19 Janet Kindler, Anderson's
Dec 26 Shirley McDaniel, Nancy Henke

*Sign-up sheet for Potluck is located in back of church.

If only ...



There are many of you ... who think to yourselves: "If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!"

Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time, you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. ... Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself.—Martin Luther

A season of waiting

Our oven recently bit the dust, and the needed replacement part is no longer manufactured. Due to an appliance shortage, we had to wait eight weeks for a new oven! Yet even amid inconvenience, I see God's purpose. We were thankful to have a grill and slow cookers in the meantime. We creatively attempted to cook favorite meals in different ways. And though we craved anything baked in an oven — cookies, casseroles, even chicken nuggets — we realized that waiting eight weeks for an oven isn't truly a trying time.

Many of us wait for much greater milestones and miracles: physical healing, the return of a prodigal child, an end to financial struggles. Paul offers us hope as we wait: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had" (Romans 15:5, NIV).

When you're in a season of waiting — including Advent! — consider what you're thankful for and what you crave. Tell God how you're feeling and ask for endurance while you wait.—Janna Firestone



Joy amid suffering

Only Matthew records the holy family's "flight into Egypt," linking Advent with Lent and Christmas with Good Friday. In an article titled "Joy to the World/Pain in the World," James I. Cook expresses gratitude that Matthew documents the slaughter of the innocents: "I turn to it again and again, when someone I know loses a loved one at the height of the Christmas season. It helps me — and I hope it helps them — to remember that theirs are not the first tears to fall on Christmas; to recall that there has never been a Christmas of pure peace and happiness; [to recognize] that 'joy to the world' has always been sung to the accompaniment of much 'pain in the world.'"

—adapted from *Homiletics*

"All the Christmas presents in the world are worth nothing without the presence of Christ."—

David Jeremiah

* * *

"There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the Incarnation."

—Madeleine L'Engle

* * *

"God goes to those who have time to hear him — and so on this cloudless night he went to simple shepherds."—Max Lucado

A shoot brings life

Last year, Israeli scientists harvested dates from seeds that had been dormant about 2,000 years. The seeds, recovered during archaeological digs, were nurtured in incubators and several thrived. One (named Methuselah!) became a 10-foot-tall palm tree.

Horticulturists joked about marketing "dates that Jesus ate," but there's another scriptural connection. Isaiah 11, a traditional Advent reading, prophesies: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (verse 1, NRSV). Jesus is the tender shoot that emerged from the humble peasant origins of Jesse, father of King David. From a dynasty that went dormant due to Israel's sins sprouted a mighty tree, who will someday usher in a reign of peace (see verses 6-7).

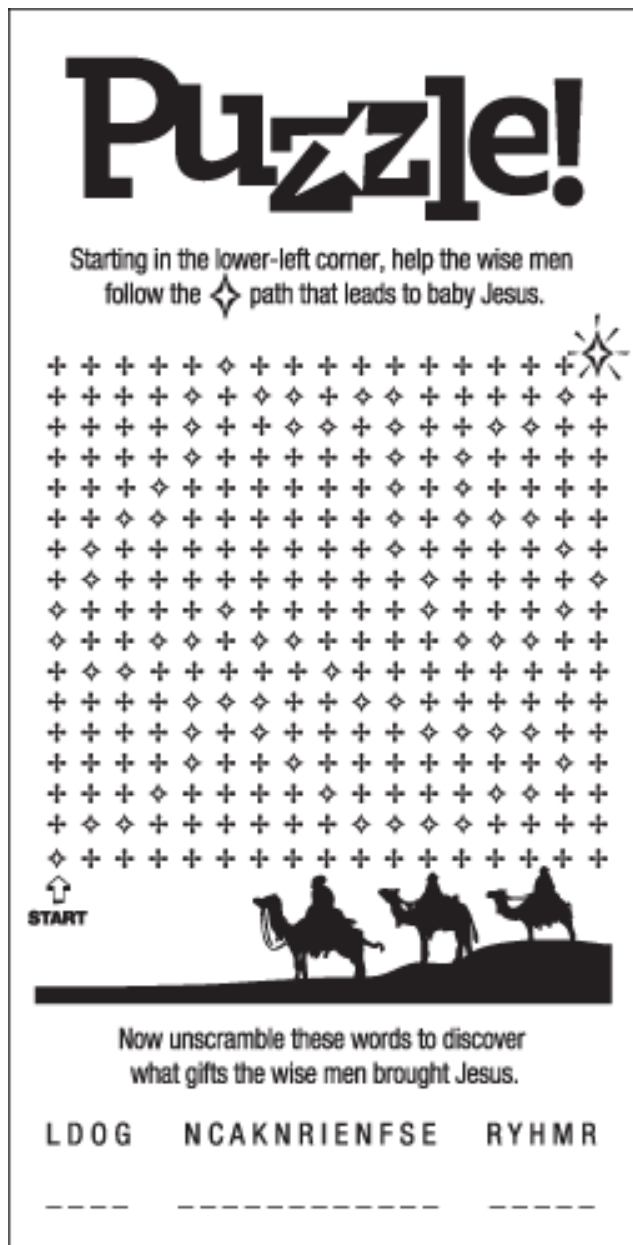
Some people and churches celebrate Christmas with a Jesse Tree, remembering how God sent Jesus to sprout life out of death and bring new hope and joy to the world.—adapted from *The Wired Word*

The greatest gift-giver

When we give each other Christmas presents in [God's] name, let us remember that he has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans — and all that lives and moves upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused. And to save us from our own foolishness, from all our sins, he came down to earth and gave us himself.—Sigrid Undset

Puzzle!

Starting in the lower-left corner, help the wise men follow the star path that leads to baby Jesus.



Answer: gold, frankincense, myrrh

The example of Mary

"We must look to Mary's example to know how to deal with the glorious impossibilities of God," writes Calvin Miller in *The Christ of Christmas*. "Look how she turned the world upside down by making one simple statement."

Jesus surely could have come to earth without Mary's aid. But God seems to prefer partnering with people to accomplish miracles such as salvation and healing. So God chooses Mary to carry the Savior. Later, Jesus often declares people's own faith crucial to their healing. And today, God works justice through us, not apart from us.

God doesn't force us into collaboration. Yet, notes Miller, "God needs only a little of our agreement in order to work mighty wonders." Like Mary's humble assent: "I am the Lord's servant. ... May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38, NIV). And like yours — for whatever partnership God invites you into. God will do the heavy lifting, for certain, but he hopes you'll say yes.

From "The Stable of Bethlehem"

'Twas not a palace proud and fair he chose for
his first home;
No dazzling pile of grandeur rare, with pillar'd
hall and dome;
Oh no! a stable, rude and poor, received him at
his birth;
And thus was born, unknown, obscure, the Lord
of heaven and earth. ...
Come to your Savior's lowly bed, ye vain and
proud of heart!
And learn with bowed and humbled head the
lesson 'twill impart;
'Twill teach you not to prize too high the riches
vain of earth —
But to lay up in God's bright sky treasures of
truer worth. ...

—Rosanna Leprohon (1829-1879)

Remember to reach out

For many people, the holidays bring sorrow, grief and stress. If you're hurting, turn to Jesus and his power. Learn from the woman who, desperate to be healed, reached out to touch the edge of Jesus' robe and was immediately cured.

Sometimes we think our healing process will be so exhaustive that we hesitate to take the first step. Or we doubt that Jesus still performs miracles. Amid your pain, have you reached out? Have you dared to touch Jesus' robe? He is there, waiting to say: "Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" (Mark 5:34, NIV).—Julie Lee

Bible Quiz



In Matthew's genealogy, which woman is not mentioned as Jesus' ancestor?

- A. Tamar
- B. Rahab
- C. Mary
- D. Ruth
- E. Sarah
- F. Bathsheba

Answer: E (See Matthew 1:1-17.)

How to keep Christmas

Inspirational author Wilferd Peterson pondered ways to "best keep Christmas" and "defeat the little bit of Scrooge in all of us." After reading his suggestions, add your own!

- By following the Star ... to stand again in awe and wonder before the Babe in the manger.
- By rediscovering the faith and simplicity of a little child.

- By being still and listening to the angels sing within our hearts.
- By quietly evaluating our lives according to the Master's standards as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount.
- By resolving to give ourselves away to others.
- By using the light of Christmas to guide us through ... the coming year.

Savoring simplicity

Clare of Assisi, who lived in the 1200s, founded the Poor Clares, a community of simplicity and service. "O holy poverty," she wrote, "to those who possess and desire you, God promises the kingdom of heaven and offers ... blessed life!"

These ancient words still ring true. We can't serve both God and money, says Jesus, adding that it's a matter of the heart. But before selling your house, consider small steps for embracing simplicity and blessing: Trade an afternoon of shopping for coffee with a friend who's struggling. For guests, prepare a pot of chili rather than a multicourse meal. Donate good-quality items you're not using.

Living simply is challenging, especially at the holidays, but the rewards are simply amazing. "The challenge of simplicity is a magnet to the human spirit," writes Dale Evans Rogers. "Much of the beauty of Christmas lies in its challenge to look further, deeper, until we find its secret in the heart of God."

Christian symbol



EVERGREEN—These trees, which keep their green leaves year-round, are symbolic of Christmas, eternal life and God's everlasting love. In the Bible, evergreen trees are called the "cedars of Lebanon,"

suggesting growth (Psalm 92:12), height (Amos 2:9), fragrance (Hosea 14:6) and steadfast faith.

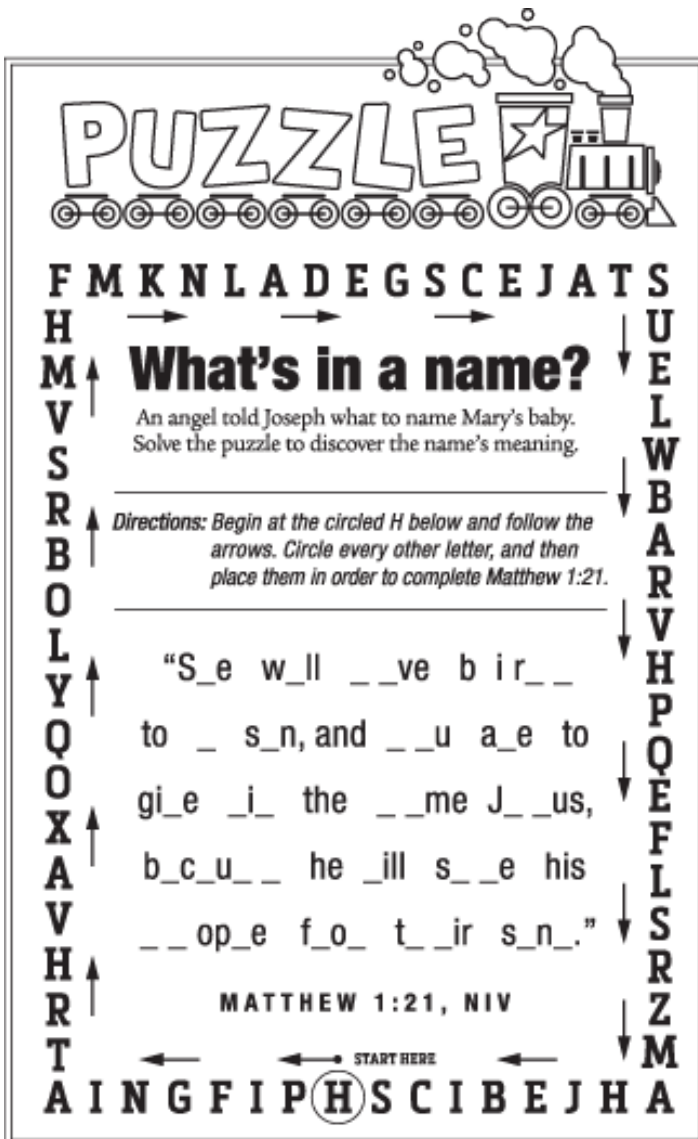


Recipe Corner

Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cake

- 1 pkg spice cake mix
- 1 can solid packed pumpkin
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 C water
- 1 C semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 C semi-sweet chocolate chips melted (optional)

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour 12-cup bundt pan.
2. Combine cake mix, pumpkin, eggs, and water in large bowl. Beat 1 to 2 minutes until well blended. Stir in chocolate chips. Pour into prepared pan.
3. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until toothpick inserted near center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes; then invert on wire rack to cool completely. Drizzle melted chocolate over cooled cake. Makes 12 servings.





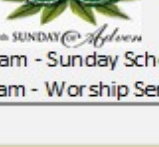
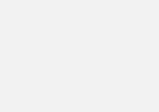






Answer: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21, NIV

December 2021



November '21							January '22						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6							1
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
28	29	30					23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28  2ND SUNDAY @ Advent 9:30 am - Sunday School 10:30 am - Worship Service Advent Event following Worship	29	30  6 pm - "Soup Supper with Jesus" Bible Study following	1	2 	3	4
5  3RD SUNDAY @ Advent 9:30 am - Sunday School 10:30 am - Worship Service Advent Event following Worship	6	7 9 am - Sewing group meets at church. 6 pm - "Soup Supper with Jesus" Bible Study following	8 9:00 am - Care & Concern, meet at McDonald's	9	10	11
12  4TH SUNDAY @ Advent 9:30 am - Sunday School 10:30 am - Worship Service	13	14 6 pm - "Soup Supper with Jesus" Bible Study following	15	16	17	18
19  5TH SUNDAY @ Advent 9:30 am - Sunday School 10:30 am - Worship Service	20	21  6 pm - "Soup Supper with Jesus" Bible Study following	22	23	24  Christmas Eve 7 pm - Christmas Eve Service	25 Pastor - Vacation 
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
Pastor - Vacation						
9:30 am - Sunday School 10:30 am - Worship Service						
2	3					