

Christ the King Lutheran Church

499 Plaza Drive
Vestal, NY 13850

NOEL HALLELUJAH MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR
Noel Hallelujah Merry Christmas Happy New Year

Christ The King Lutheran Church 499 Plaza Drive Vestal NY 13850

Phone: 607-729-2688

Christ the King is Full of...

Hearts Loved By God
Hands to Serve All
Through Jesus Christ

We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation. We are called by Christ to care for, love, understand, and listen to each other, regardless of race, age, gender and gender identities, marital status, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientations, national origin, or economic status.

Staff

Pastor – AJ Striffler
pastoraj@ctkvestal.org
Church Administrator — Marsha Pulz
marsha@ctkvestal.org
Music Director – Jim Ford
jrfme2000@yahoo.com
Nursery Staff – Jane Davis
Sexton – Gary Robertson

Congregational Council

Co-President: Joe Brunt
Co-President: Carol Strano
Secretary: Rich Lindstrom
Treasurer: Randy Kerr
Debbie Doyle Jody Fiorentino
Dennis Chapman Tammy Gow
Todd Eames Kathy Leonard

Financial Secretary: Phil Roberts

Worship Schedule

Sundays:

Classic Worship at 9:00 AM
Education Hour at 10:10 AM
Progressive Worship at 11:15 AM

Wednesdays:

Coffee & Faith Talk at 1:00 PM
Dinner & Faith Talk at 5:30 PM

Find us online:

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HEARTS LOVED BY GOD · HANDS TO SERVE ALL · THROUGH JESUS CHRIST



499 PLAZA DRIVE, VESTAL NY 13850 | 607-729-2688

The Herald

DECEMBER 2017

*Come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel has come to you, O Israel!*

The one holy catholic and apostolic Church is now entering the beginning of a new liturgical year. The first season of that new year is Advent.

Advent is a season - a time - in the life-cycle and experience of the body of Christ. It is its own season, complete with themes, music, traditions, and reflections. As "Advent" means 'coming' in Latin, it prepares us To Wait For The Coming Of Messiah - the birth, or Nativity of Jesus - the Incarnation, - and the very powerful and ripe expectation that Jesus will come again.

Traditionally, the themes of Advent are Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. We, the Church, reflect on these from both sides of the story, and we search out ways to celebrate both what God has done and what God is doing in our lives, and in the world through us, as we continue to wait.

Likewise, we light candles and sing the great 'O Antiphons', petitioning God to come: O come, O come Emmanuel, and save us ... again ... from ourselves ... and let your salvation and your faithfulness be known in the world through us! Advent is a time of waiting with expectation - of longing in pregnant hope - for God to break in and reveal, and by nature of the revelation, to reverse. It is simultaneously a slow time and a time of heightened awareness.

The challenge, of course, is to celebrate Advent to the fullest and not rush to skip over it and turn it into something it isn't - i.e. Christmas. Christmas is another season in the life of the Church, the celebration of which has been creeping into our secular realities since October. The world may tell us it is time for Santa and lights and trees and decorations, but not as the Church. As the Church, we wait, we prepare, and we pray (SLOW CHURCH).

We light a candle and watch for Messiah, and we not only reflect on what it means that God has come, but we ask ourselves what it means, for us and for the world, when we ask God to come.

Stir up your power Lord Jesus, and come!

May your Advent journey prepare you for the true joy of Christmas!

Peace,
AJ



Sunday, December 17
10:00 AM

Worship and Christmas Pageant

Christmas Eve
5:30 PM

Candlelight Worship Service
with Holy Communion

Christmas Day
10:00 AM

Worship with Lessons and Carols
and Holy Communion

Journeying Through Advent in your Home

Make the seasons of Advent and Christmas a meaningful time in your home, using some of the ideas that follow.

Purchase or make an Advent wreath. Use blue candles for the Sundays and weeks of Advent. Replace the blue candles with new white candles on Christmas Eve. Add white votive candles in the center or around the outside of the wreath during the twelve days of Christmas. Or remove the Advent wreath on Christmas Eve and create a circle of white votive candles, adding one candle each day until Epiphany (January 6). Prayers to accompany the candle lighting are provided on this page. Make plans to gather daily, beginning on the first Sunday of Advent, for a time to reflect upon the gift of love God shared with all people. Continue this gathering throughout the twelve days of Christmas. Decide what kinds of things your daily gathering will include. Decide on a time, such as morning, evening, or mealtime, to meet. Suggested table prayers are provided here for gatherings that take place at mealtime. Decide who will light and snuff out the candles. Daily scripture readings drawn from year B of the Revised Common Lectionary and the Daily Lectionary prepared by the Consultation on Common Texts are listed on the next page. After the reading each day, take time to think about or discuss the passage, as well as any feelings or experiences that relate to the scripture reading. Reflections may also take the form of an art response (drawing, clay, painting) or journaling. Sing or read the words to an Advent or Christmas hymn and reflect upon the significance those words have for your life. Some hymns from Evangelical Lutheran Worship are suggested below under the "Hymns" heading.

Prayers to Accompany the Candle Lighting

Week 1/Advent 1

Lord Jesus, we do not lack any spiritual gift as we wait for your coming. Keep us awake and help us use our gifts to serve those who look for the dawn of your justice and mercy. Amen.

Week 2/Advent 2

God our shepherd, gather us as lambs in your arms. Forgive our sins so that we may rejoice in your coming. Amen.

Week 3/Advent 3

Lord Jesus, you continue to do great things for us. Give us your gift of peace as we await your coming. Amen.

Week 4/Advent 4

God our Savior, nothing is impossible for you. Prepare our hearts to rejoice in your glorious advent. Amen.

Week 5/Christmas

Lord God, may your Word become flesh through our lives so that we may see him in the fullness of his glory. Amen.

ELCA Good Gifts

ELCA Good Gifts provides more than 50 different gift-giving options that grow the church, fight hunger and transform lives. These gifts, starting at just \$10, provide direct support for the churchwide ministries of the ELCA.



Through Good Gifts, it's easy (and fun!) for your family to say "goodbye" to traditional gift-giving and "hello" to meaningful gifts that really make a difference in the world.

Catalogs are available on the table in the Café or visit the [ELCA Good Gifts](https://community.elca.org/elcagoodgifts) store (<https://community.elca.org/elcagoodgifts>) and print or order cards to tell loved ones about gifts given in their honor.

The Feast Day of St. Nicholas (December 6)

The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned. The prisons were so full of bishops, priests, and deacons, there was no room for the real criminals—murderers, thieves and robbers. After his release, Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra and was buried in his cathedral church, where a unique relic, called manna, formed in his grave. This liquid substance, said to have healing powers, fostered the growth of devotion to Nicholas. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration, St. Nicholas Day, December 6th (December 19 on the Julian Calendar).

Through the centuries many stories and legends have been told of St. Nicholas' life and deeds. These accounts help us understand his extraordinary character and why he is so beloved and revered as protector and helper of those in need.

Several stories tell of Nicholas and the sea. When he was young, Nicholas sought the holy by making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. There as he walked where Jesus walked, he sought to more deeply experience Jesus' life, passion, and resurrection. Returning by sea, a mighty storm threatened to wreck the ship. Nicholas calmly prayed. The terrified sailors were amazed when the wind and waves suddenly calmed, sparing them all. And so St. Nicholas is the patron of sailors and voyagers.

Other stories tell of Nicholas saving his people from famine, sparing the lives of those innocently accused, and much more. He did many kind and generous deeds in secret, expecting nothing in return. Within a century of his death he was celebrated as a saint. Today he is venerated in the East as wonder, or miracle worker and in the West as patron of a great variety of persons—children, mariners, bankers, pawn-brokers, scholars, orphans, laborers, travelers, merchants, judges, paupers, marriageable maidens, students, children, sailors, victims of judicial mistakes, captives, perfumers, even thieves and murderers! He is known as the friend and protector of all in trouble or need.

Through the centuries St. Nicholas has continued to be venerated by Catholics and Orthodox and honored by Protestants. By his example of generosity to those in need, especially children, St. Nicholas continues to be a model for the compassionate and generous life.

Widely celebrated in Europe, St. Nicholas' feast day, December 6th, kept alive the stories of his goodness and generosity. In Germany and Poland, boys dressed as bishops begged alms for the poor—and sometimes for themselves! In the Netherlands and Belgium, St. Nicholas arrived on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse on his gift-giving rounds. December 6th is still the main day for gift giving and merrymaking in much of Europe. For example, in the Netherlands St. Nicholas is celebrated on the 5th, the eve of the day, by sharing candies (thrown in the door), chocolate initial letters, small gifts, and riddles. Dutch children leave carrots and hay in their shoes for the saint's horse, hoping St. Nicholas will exchange them for small gifts. Simple gift-giving in early Advent helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.

Lots more fun and traditional information can be found at www.stnicholascenter.org.

The Themes of Advent - HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE

The first week of Advent is all about HOPE.

The book of Lamentations says, (3:21-24)

“But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
God’s mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in the Lord.”

How has God revealed Godself as hope to past peoples? How is God continuing to reveal Godself as hope to us?

For the second week in Advent, we focus on PEACE.

In John 14:27, Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” And, in John 20:19-21, Jesus says, “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’”

How has God revealed Godself as peace to past peoples? How is God continuing to reveal Godself as peace to us?

During the third week in Advent, we spend time thinking about JOY.

From Psalm 5:11, we hear these words,

“But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
so that those who love your name may exult in you.”

How has God revealed Godself as joy to past peoples? How is God continuing to call us to be people of joy?

In this final week of Advent, our attention is on LOVE.

The following Scripture verses may sound very familiar, so we will hear them twice. The first time is in the New Revised Standard Version. The second time you’ll be reading from the Message. Listen for the call to love in these words.

Matthew 22:36-40 says, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

“Teacher, which command in God’s Law is the most important?” Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.’ This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ These two commands are pegs; everything in God’s Law and the Prophets hangs from them.”

How does God reveal Godself to us through Scripture as Love? In what ways does that Love promise us transformation?

Call to Radical Generosity

Last year, we all approved a financial plan that included \$189,267 in spending, that would be primarily funded by the \$170,099 generosity of all of us. The remainder of the financing comes from a grant from the ELCA. We are projected to actually spend about \$186,000 this year. However, our total revenue from offerings is projected to be just under \$154,000. While that is an enormous sum of money and a showing of significant generosity, it still falls short, by about \$16,000, for financing our plan that was unanimously approved.

We can explore reasons for this revenue shortfall, and your leadership team is diligently pursuing those questions, the fact remains that we are projected to experience a significant deficit for 2017. Any causes we identify today could certainly help plan for next year, but, this year's solution is only up to all of us and our heeding of the Holy Spirit's call for Radical Generosity today. We are the only ones who can fulfill our collective commitment to finance our role in God's mission.

Coming Soon —The STIC Tree

Once again we are generously sharing God’s love as we support two families served by the Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC). The tree in the Entry Way will soon have tags for two very special local families we will be caring for this year. These families have physical struggles, emotional burdens and many other wounds seen and unseen. You are invited to take a tag off the tree and purchase the gift written on it. When returning the gift to the tree, please tape/secure the tag to the gift so that we can ensure each gift gets to the right recipient. Please return all gifts by Sunday, December 17. For more information or questions, please see Carol Strano or Joe Brunt.

Soup Kitchen

On Saturday, December 16, we will be serving our neighbors at the Soup Kitchen. Glazed ham, roasted potatoes, French green beans and cake are on the menu. If you would like to contribute to the meal, please sign up in the Entry Way or contact Todd Eames (hteames@gmail.com or text at 761-3744).

If you would like to help with preparation, serving, and /or cleanup, the Soup Kitchen is held at First United Methodist Church (corner of McKinley and Monroe) in Endicott. Preparation starts at 10:30 AM and the meal is served at noon.

Campus Ministry

Christ the King will be offering study space to Binghamton University college students during finals week, as part of our campus ministry outreach. Due to limited study space on campus, many students welcome having a quiet, safe space to study for finals.

Volunteers are needed to welcome students who come to study, and are asked to sign up for 3-hour time slots (3-6pm, 6-9pm, 9pm-midnight) on the following dates: Sunday, December 10, Monday, December 11, and Tuesday, December 12.

Volunteers are also needed to provide snacks (cookies, baked goods, bottled water, and fruit) to have available for students. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the Events Board in the Entrance Hall. If you have questions, please contact any member of the Campus Ministry Team (Joe and Kathy Brunt, Angie Crawford, Rich Lindstrom, or Carol Strano.)

Christmas Poinsettias

If you would like to purchase a poinsettia, forms are available at the Welcome Center. Poinsettias are **\$8 each** which should accompany the form when submitted. To order, place the form in the offering plate or call the office at 729-2688. The deadline for orders is **Sunday, December 10.**

Office Notes

The office will be closed from December 25, 2017 – January 1, 2018.

Annual reports for publication in the 2017 Annual Report are due in the office by Tuesday, December 19, 2017.