

# TIDINGS OF HOPE

## DECEMBER 2021



HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
LADYSMITH, WISCONSIN

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# Tidings of Hope

Information & Inspiration

December 2021

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## **Advent from Joseph's Eyes**

By Pastor Christopher Martin

As the years pass, I have come to have a great appreciation, and even love, for the season of Advent. While it seems that the world around us wants to get a head start on Christmas earlier and earlier each year, I appreciate how Advent, in what is such a busy time of the year, forces Christians to slow down, tune out everything we're hearing in our world, and draw our focus on the Word that points us to the promised comings of Jesus: His coming in the manger in Bethlehem, His coming to us today through the Word and the Sacraments, and in His promised coming on the Last Day. As we take the time to gather for worship and around God's Word in our daily lives this Advent season, I'd like to take a few moments to draw your attention to one of my favorite Advent and Christmas narratives from the Gospels:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus." (Matthew 1:18-25)

This account focuses on Joseph. When Matthew first introduces us to him, Joseph is a man who seems confident that he has his life all planned out. He's established in his career path as a carpenter. He's betrothed to Mary, and is preparing his home so that she can fully become his wife. It seems that he knows exactly what's his future holds, until he received some earth-shattering news. Mary is expecting a child, and Joseph knows that he is not the father. But then, Mary has an unbelievable story for Joseph to explain her pregnancy: the child in her womb is not the result of an adulterous affair, but the child in her womb was conceived in her by the power of the Holy Spirit, because this child is the Son of God, the promised Savior. While we know that Mary is declaring to Joseph the Word of the Lord in its truth and purity, Joseph, based on his experience in the everyday world, doesn't believe it at first. Instead, Joseph believes what his eyes see, that Mary has been unfaithful to him.

So now, Joseph is faced with a choice. He can turn Mary in for the sin of adultery, which would result in Mary being stoned to death. Or, Joseph could seek to divorce her quietly, in the hopes that this entire thing will blow over and someday, he might be able to pick up the pieces of his shattered heart, and move on with his life. Either way, it seems that at this point, Joseph's Advent story is destined to end in heartbreak and pain. But, that's not where God leaves Joseph, is it?

As Joseph is sleeping, God sends an angel to declare the truth: Joseph has no reason to fear to take Mary as his wife. The child in her womb is indeed from the Holy Spirit, and he is to give the child the name Jesus, because this child will save His people from their sins. And from that moment, Joseph's life changes once again. He will resume his original plans of preparing his home, taking Mary to be his wife, and they will become the earthly parents of this child, Jesus, our Savior. It still wasn't quite what Joseph had originally planned when we met him, but we discover what God intended for Joseph's life was much different. In the end, Joseph will play an important role in the plan of salvation by serving as the guardian of the Savior, Jesus.

So what does Joseph's Advent story have to do with you and me, as we approach Advent and Christmas in 2021? It's been over 2,000 years since these events first took place. Yet, despite the world in which we live being much different, you and I can still relate

to Joseph quite well. As we look back, we all had plans for our lives when this calendar year began. You had things you expected to have happen to you, and many of us have experienced a kick in the gut in one way or another. COVID continues to be an ongoing concern. There's ongoing political and social unrest in our country. Your situation at work perhaps didn't play out the way you had hoped. Our health, or the health of someone we love, took a turn we didn't expect. An important relationship in your life became strained, or is broken, perhaps beyond repair. You might be struggling in your marriage or with your children. Many of us have lost loved ones to death, and during the holiday season, we struggle to pick up the pieces and move on with life in the midst of our grief. Many of us are worried about what things like supply chain issues, inflation and rising fuel costs are going to do to our already stretched budgets. For these, and for countless other reasons, many of us are struggling as we enter this season where our world wants us to be all about joy and happiness, finding it in things like gift-giving or warm wishes.

If that's all that we have, and that is the place where we're going to find our joy and peace, then we're going to be disappointed! That is why instead of trying to find our peace and joy in things in our world, I want to encourage you to slow down in our rush to get to Christmas, and make worship during Advent a priority for you and your family, especially if you haven't been to in person worship for some time. Set aside everything in your mind that is distracting you from what God would accomplish through His Word when you are here in this place, whether that's a squabble with another church member, a bad experience you had in the past, grief that is unbearable, or whatever it is that wants to pull your attention away from Jesus and His life-giving Word we proclaim this time of the year. Just come, set all of those distractions and concerns in your life off to the side for a while, and listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit as you hear and ponder the Word of the Lord that we hear during Advent.

That Word you hear this season may perhaps challenge you a bit. It might call you to change. Perhaps, you might be called to take a closer look at your own life, and the sin within it, and take some steps to root it out from your daily life. God's Word you hear this Advent season will also call us to find ways to reach out to our neighbors, and take a bold step in joining Jesus on His mission of

redemption as you build relationships with people who aren't here, or engage in conversation with people you already know in your daily life. Perhaps, this Advent, God may be calling you to embrace some sort of change, knowing that just as God had other plans for Joseph in his life, God also has plans for your life, too.

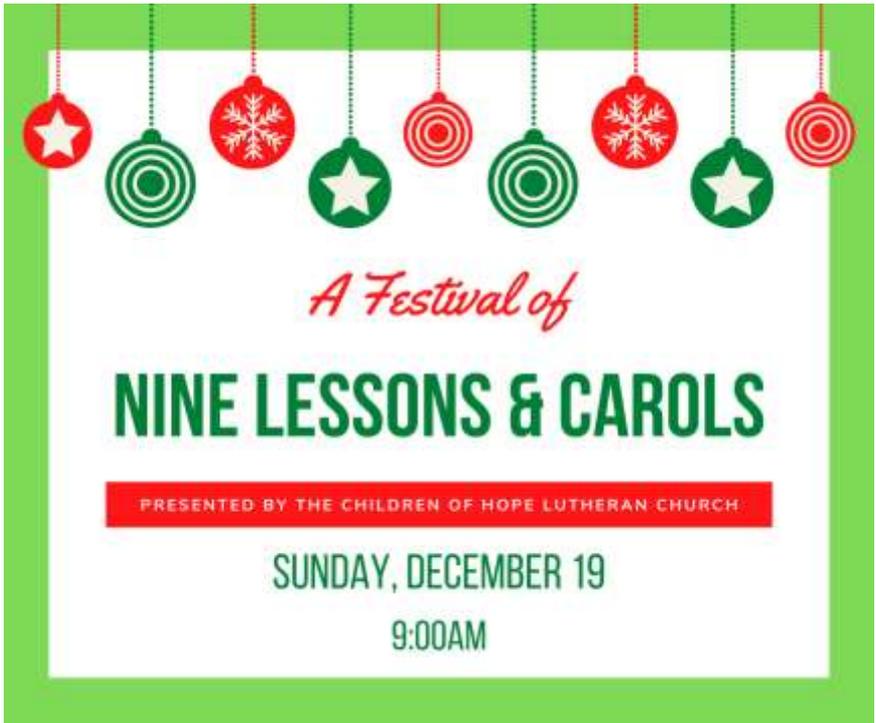
Doing all of these things doesn't mean that the struggles you are dealing with will magically disappear. But what this means is that, just as we see with Joseph, God's plans for you, and for our congregation, might be even bigger than we could ever come up with on our own. It won't always be easy going about the work of listening and being open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God that calls us to center our entire lives in Jesus Christ, our coming Savior, but the eternal rewards we will receive are an inner peace and joy that the world cannot give.

As we go through our Advent journey this year, I look forward to having you join us for worship in church as we listen to God's Word, rejoice in the good news our Savior is born in Bethlehem, and look for ways that we can share the joy of Christmas with others in our world.

## Christmas Eve Worship Friday, December 24



4:00pm & 9:00pm  
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service  
Worship with Holy Communion



The children of Hope Lutheran Church will present their Christmas program, "A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols" on Sunday, December 19 at the 9:00am worship service. Rehearsals will take place during the Sunday School hour on Sundays, December 5 & 12. If you have questions, please contact Chris Holtebeck (920-277-3979 or [ckholtebeck@gmail.com](mailto:ckholtebeck@gmail.com)).

## **Adult Education & Fellowship Opportunities**

**Bible Study:** An adult Bible study meets each Sunday at 10:20am.

**Book Discussion:** This group will meet on Sunday, December 19 at 10:20am to discuss The Christmas Boutique by Jennifer Chiaverini.

**Men's Breakfast & Bible Study:** Men of Hope meet each Thursday at 7:00am the Ladysmith Family Restaurant for breakfast, fellowship and a study of the week's lectionary readings. All men of Hope are welcome!



## Hope Lutheran Church Women



**Christmas Party:** The HLCW will hold monthly meeting on Thursday, December 16 at 9:30am All women of Hope are welcome!

**Quilting:** The quilting group will NOT meet in December but quilt squares are available to be sewn at home. Questions? Contact Karen Skeels (715-452-5444).

### Operation Christmas Child

The Operation Christmas Child project is now complete at Hope Lutheran Church. Thank you to everyone who packed boxes and provided funds for shipping costs! Members of Hope packed 62 boxes, which will be distributed throughout the world to children who may never have received a Christmas gift before. In addition to the box of gifts, the children receive 12 lessons to teach them about Jesus Christ. We were able to track some of the boxes that we sent last year and discovered that they were received by children in Namibia, Columbia, and Chile. To learn more about Operation Christmas Child, visit the Samaritan's Purse website at [samaritanspurse.org](http://samaritanspurse.org).

### Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for 2022 will be available to be picked up on Sunday, December 12. If you cannot find your envelopes or if you did not use envelopes this year but wish to next year, please contact the church office.

### Community Christmas Dinner

St. John's Lutheran Church will be hosting a FREE Community Christmas Dinner for families in need and for those who will not be able to celebrate with family and friends. This event will be held on Christmas Day, December 25 from 11:00am-12:30pm at St. John's Lutheran Church (515 College Ave W). RSVPs are requested but not required. To RSVP, please call 715-532-5780.

## SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER 2021 COUNCIL & COMMITTEE ACTION

At their monthly meeting, the Church Council held discussion on the following topics:

1. Maintenance Position: Remains vacant. Property Committee proposed turning it into a salaried position. George Lawrence has been volunteering during this vacancy.
2. Proposed 2022 Budget: Brian Buchholz distributed the first draft of the 2022 budget. Brian requested that each committee review their line items carefully and let him know what adjustments need to be made.
3. Pastoral Review: A meeting was held on October 27 with Pastor Martin, Charlie Holtebeck, and Jer McEathron. The purpose of this meeting was to review the pastor's scheduling and time commitments. Minutes of this meeting are available in the church office.
4. Parish Agreement Review: A meeting was held with members of Glen Flora Lutheran to discuss issued that either GFLC or HLC has in their joint ministry. Items discussed were worship times, so that the pastor could be available to members of Hope after worship and the possibility of having a joint council meeting annually. It was agreed that the agreement should be reviewed and possibly updated next year. Minutes of this meeting are available in the church office.

The next meeting of the Church Council will take place on December 21 at 6:30pm.

**Adult Education & Fellowship:** Discussed obtaining faith-based movies for the church library. Planning college outreach for early December. Next meeting: December 1 at 1:00pm.

**Congregational Care & Outreach:** Would like to start a grief support group but have not been able to identify a trained leader. Revenue from the Farmer's Market booth will be distributed to Lighthouse, CareNet, Hope & Friends Backpack Food Program, and Power House Youth Center. Next meeting: December 7 at 4:00pm.

**Property:** Discussed updating the Fireside Room. Projects for 2022 include new windows for the offices, and airconditioning for the office and multi-purpose room. Voted to accept a bid for carpet cleaning from Bob's Carpet Cleaning.

**Social Ministries:** Local benevolence funds were designated for Buckets for Hunger and Shop with a Cop. Missions funds were designated for the Salvation Army and World Mission Prayer League. Next meeting: December 14 at 3:30pm.

**Stewardship & Finance:** Giving has been down slightly the last two months. Discussed the 2022 budget. Next meeting: December 14 at 5:30pm.

**Worship & Music:** Discussion was held regarding Sunday morning worship time. Some members would like more time with the pastor after the worship service. Next meeting: December 7 at 6:00pm.

**Youth Education:** The Christmas program will be held on December 19. Looking into bringing back Christmas caroling. Next meeting: December 1 at 5:00pm.



We will once again be using poinsettias to decorate the church for Christmas. If you would like to donate a plant, please complete the form and return it to the church office no later than Monday, December 20. Plants should be brought to the church by Thursday, December 23.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ # of plants: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory/honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Deadlines...**

Items for the weekly bulletin are due in the church office no later than noon on Wednesday. Items for the January newsletter are due in the church office by December 14.

The preferred method of submission is via email (hlcladysmith@gmail.com) or electronic file. Items may also be left in the office mailbox or dropped off at the office during office hours.

## **Change of Address and/or Phone Number?**

If you have had a change in address or phone number, please notify the church office of these changes. Also, in an effort to improve communication we are seeking email addresses for members of the congregation. If you would like to have your email address added to the list, please email the church office at hlcladysmith@gmail.com.

### **CHURCH STAFF**

Pastor	Rev. Christopher Martin
Church Secretary	Bonnie Billings
Maintenance	
Custodian	Rosemary Warwick
Choir Director	Heidi Jo Sovacool
Organists	Lisa Borman
	Karen Tappon
	Terry Wedwick

Hope Lutheran Church  
320 First St. S.  
P.O. Box 184  
Ladysmith, WI 54848  
Church Phone: 715-532-7739  
E-Mail Address: hlcladysmith@gmail.com  
Website: hlcladysmith.org



# DECEMBER

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Dawson Barber<br>Bill Kaul<br>Olyver Soviak       | <b>17</b> Amanda James<br>Taylor Sokolowski<br>Tyler Warwick           |
| <b>2</b> Jackie Culver                                     | <b>18</b> Dan Krisik<br>Doug Moore, Sr.<br>Adrianna Hanaman            |
| <b>3</b> Nicole Weber                                      | <b>19</b> Robbie LaBlonde                                              |
| <b>4</b> Danita Everett<br>Karen Skeels<br>Terry Wedwick   | <b>20</b> Alison Klawiter<br>Zachary Martin<br>Doug Thompson           |
| <b>5</b> Dylan Harka<br>Jake Nelson                        | <b>21</b> Jana Nyhagen                                                 |
| <b>6</b> Kaleb Segebrecht<br>JJ Titera                     | <b>22</b> Chad Kaul                                                    |
| <b>7</b> Joe Kesan<br>Melody Larson                        | <b>23</b> Mary Barker                                                  |
| <b>8</b> David Cooley<br>Lori Gorsegner<br>Jack Pederson   | <b>24</b> Kelsey Lemke-Howard<br>Jason Murray<br>Joyce Tomczak         |
| <b>9</b> Cadence Calkins<br>Hans Schultz                   | <b>26</b> Sharon Kaul<br>Yvonne Curik<br>Bill Rands<br>Dylan Stoneberg |
| <b>10</b> Braeden McMahon<br>Gary Nelson<br>Kathy Peterson | <b>27</b> Hazel Peterson                                               |
| <b>11</b> Mary Kauphusman<br>Ned Lindberg<br>Emma vanDoorn | <b>29</b> Max Bentley<br>Jeffrey DeWolf<br>Riley Vetterkind            |
| <b>12</b> Sally Anderson                                   | <b>30</b> Brian Curik<br>Jennifer Kienast<br>Christie McGinn           |
| <b>13</b> Priscilla Barber<br>Erik Nelson<br>Robin Tuma    | <b>31</b> Lisa Barfknecht<br>Brian Buchholz<br>Sawyer Solberg          |
| <b>14</b> Kylee Becker                                     |                                                                        |
| <b>15</b> Louise Boller                                    |                                                                        |

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>4</b> Eric & Carol Hillan     | <b>26</b> Charlie & Chris Holtebeck |
| <b>21</b> Eric & Sherry Pederson |                                     |