

For Unto Us a Child is Born . . .

Christmas is a Time When We Pause to Extend Love and Concern for One Another.



The Churches who share in the Grab N Go Lunches hosted at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in East Petersburg extend warm wishes to you and your loved ones, and invite you to worship with us at this joyous time of the year.

THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

Jesus' birth, known as the *nativity*, is described in the New Testament of the Bible. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give different accounts. It is from them that the nativity story is pieced together. Both accounts tell us that Jesus was born to a woman called Mary who was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter. The Gospels state that Mary was a virgin when she became pregnant. In Luke's account Mary was visited by an angel who brought the message that she would give birth to God's son. According to Matthew's account, Joseph was visited by an angel who persuaded him to marry Mary rather than send her away or expose her pregnancy.

Matthew tells us about some wise men who followed a star that led them to Jesus' birthplace and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Luke tells how shepherds were led to Bethlehem by an angel.

According to tradition, Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem shortly before Jesus' birth. Joseph had been ordered to take part in a census in his home town of Bethlehem. All Jewish people had to be counted so the Roman Emperor could determine how much money to collect from them in tax. Those who had moved away from their family homes, like Joseph, had to return to have their names entered in the Roman records. Joseph and Mary set off on the long, arduous 90-mile journey from Nazareth along the valley of the River Jordan, past Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Mary travelled on a donkey to conserve her energy for the birth.

But when they arrived in Bethlehem the local inn was already full with people returning for the census. The Innkeeper let them stay in the rock cave below his house which was used as a stable for his animals. It was here, next to the noise and filth of the animals, that Mary gave birth to her son and laid him in a manger

The first Christmas



The Gospels do not mention the date of Jesus' birth. It was not until the 4th century AD that Pope Julius I set 25th December as the date for Christmas. This was an attempt to Christianize the Pagan celebrations that already took place at this time of year. By 529, 25th December had become a civil holiday and by 567 the twelve days from 25th December to the Epiphany were public holidays.

Christmas is not only a Christian festival. The celebration has roots in the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, the festivals of the ancient Greeks, the beliefs of the Druids and the folk customs of Europe.

Contributing Churches

E.P. Mennonite Church

6297 Main Street, East Petersburg, PA 17520

717-569-9931 www.eastpetemc.org

E.P. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

1905 Broad Street, East Petersburg, PA 17520

717-569-1359 www.church@Zionep.org

Faith United Methodist Church

1290 Fruitville Pike, Lititz, PA 17543

717- 560-0321 www.FaithUMC.us

Grace EC Church

6067 Carpenter St. East Petersburg, PA 17520

717-569-0650 M_Ammerman@yahoo.com

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

700 Pleasure Rd. Lancaster, PA 17601

717-394-9607 www.stmatthewelc.com

Trinity United Church of Christ

2340 State Street, East Petersburg, PA 17520

717-569-1632 www.trinityeastpete.org

"Silent Night" has long been a staple of the holiday season, when the hauntingly beautiful carol can be heard almost everywhere you go. So it makes sense that it is, in fact, the most recorded Christmas song in history. According to *Time*, as of 2014, there had been over 733 different versions of "Silent Night" copyrighted since 1978—and more continue to pop up every year!



Advent

Advent is the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus and begins on Sunday nearest to 30th November. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *adventus* meaning *coming*. Traditionally it is a penitential season but is no longer kept with the strictness of Lent and Christians are no longer required to fast.

Advent wreaths are popular especially in churches. They are made with fir branches and four candles. A candle is lit each Sunday during Advent.



ADVENT STUDY at Zion

On the Mondays of Advent, I invite everyone to join me for an Advent Study. The study will be in person **only** at the church at 10:00 am in the narthex. At 7:00 pm the study will be in person at church in the narthex **and** on zoom. We will reflect on four readings from the Old and New Testaments and the messages they have for us. Lutherans have a long history of reading the scriptures and hearing God's call to serve our neighbor in need. In this series we will see how our offerings are fulfilling God's call through his holy word to bring hope, healing, and new life to four people. These are people we will never meet and places we cannot easily go, but because of the generosity of all us together, we are there through our missionaries to bring people the gospel, the love of Christ and the help they need to have hope for a new life. As we prepare for our Lord's coming this Advent let's study together so that we are ready to live out our new life in Christ with joyous purpose, unrelenting faithfulness, and glad anticipation as we pray, "Come Lord Jesus, come."

Pastor Pamela J. Carnes
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, E. P.

November 29	Jeremiah 33 14-16
Hear Charity's story	
December 6	Luke 1:67-79
Hear Hala's story	
December 13	Luke 3:1-11
Hear Ellie Puente's story	
December 20	Luke 1: 14b-43
Hear 15-year-old Leyla' story	

THE GOLDEN BOX

The story goes that some time ago a mother punished her 5-year-old daughter for wasting a roll of expensive gold wrapping paper. Money was tight and she became even more upset when the child used the gold paper to decorate a box to put under the Christmas tree. Nevertheless, the little girl brought the gift box to her mother the next morning and said, "This is for you, Momma."

The mother was embarrassed by her earlier over reaction, but her anger flared again when she opened the box and found it was empty. She spoke to her daughter in a harsh manner. "Don't you know, young lady, when you give someone a present there's supposed to be something inside the package?"

The little daughter had tears in her eyes and said, "Oh, Momma, it's not empty! I blew kisses into it until it was full."

The mother was crushed. She fell on her knees and put her arms around her little girl, and she begged her forgiveness for her thoughtless anger.

An accident took the life of the child only a short time later, and it is told that the mother kept that gold box by her bed for all the years of her life. Whenever she was discouraged or faced difficult problems, she would open the box and take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there.



In a very real sense, each of us, as human beings, has been given a golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children, family, friends and GOD. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold.

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Author's name provided by Steve Connolly 03-11-15



Poinsettias have been a symbol of Christmas for over a century.

These beautiful red and green flowering plants have been associated with Christmas for over 100 years. Back in 1828, the American minister to Mexico, **Joel R. Poinsett**, brought a poinsettia home to America from his post down south. Getting their name from Poinsett, the plants gained popularity in the U.S. after stores in New York began to sell them at Christmas in 1870 and by the 20th century, "they were a [universal symbol of the holiday](#)," according to [History.com](#)



Christmas Eve Services
4:00 and 7:00 pm
December 24, 2021



St Matthew Lutheran Church
700 Pleasure Rd, Lancaster



We are across from Catholic High.
Plenty of street parking on Pleasure and Fountain.



For Online Options
visit Zionep.com

Christmas Eve Service

7:00 PM, December 24, 2021

All Are Welcome!

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

1905 Broad Street, East Peterburg

Why do we hang Christmas stockings?

The tradition came about thanks to a [legend](#) that states the generous Turkish bishop St. Nicholas helped a set of three poor sisters avoid a life of indentured servitude by paying for their dowries. For three nights, the bishop threw gold down their chimney, which landed in their stockings hung by their fireplace to dry. Now we carry on the tradition by hanging stockings to fill with gifts and small treats.



A REFLECTION FROM TRINITY U.C.C., EAST PETERSBURG

The Rev. Dr. Christopher M. Rankin, Pastor

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we turn to the beloved Mary's song (The Magnificat). She gives praise to God for all that God has done for her: ***My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid; For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; because He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.*** (Luke 1:47-49)

The song then moves to what God is doing through Mary as she prepares to give birth to the Christ child: ***And His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear Him. He has shown might with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and has exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.*** (Luke 1:50-55)

As we move closer to the birth of the Christ child, Mary is seen as a model of faith. We join in her song and give praise to God who blesses us and then uses us to be a blessing to others. The true joy of Christmas is that God has come to us in the flesh, to be with us in the midst of our joys and sorrows, and use us to be vessels of hope, peace, joy, and love. We continue to wait and prepare for the coming of the Christ child. Are we really ready for Christ to be born in us as we live in a time full of division, strife, anxiety, and despair? Let us turn our eyes to the work of God in our midst in these final days of preparation.

We are called to join Mary in singing our songs of praise to a God who enters our lives as we face our current challenges. I offer the words of a beautiful poem that has been put to music:

***Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign.***

***Worship the Godhead, Love incarnate, Love divine;
Worship we our Jesus, but where-with for sacred sign?***

***Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine;
Love to God and all men, love for plea and gift and sign.***

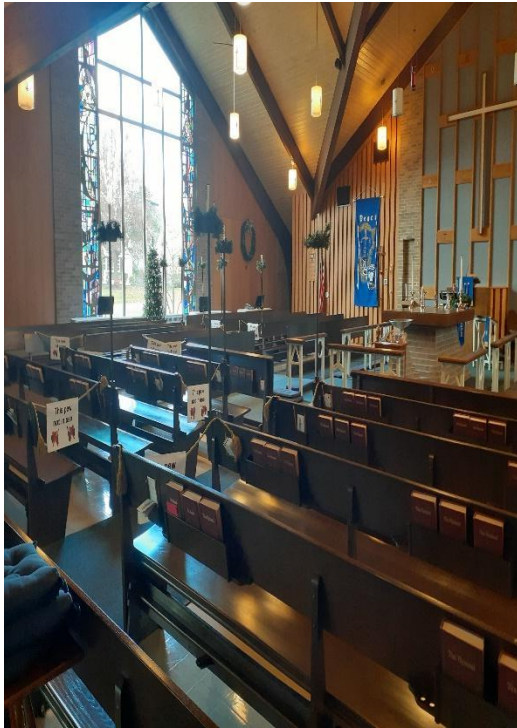
(By Christina Rossetti, 1885)



Christmas Eve Services
December 24th
We will have three in-person services this year.
2:30 p.m. --Traditional Service with Holy Communion
6:30 p.m. ---Family Service
10:30 p.m. --Traditional Service with Holy Communion

December 26 – 10:30 AM Lessons and Carols

Also From Trinity UCC . . .





Christmas Reflections

Every year since I can remember, I have heard and then later read the words from Luke 2:1-20 at Christmas Eve worship. By the time of the Christmas Eve service, I had read this gospel about twenty times. I shared it with the homebound members I communed at their residences. I could almost recite the words without looking at the text. It is such a beautiful text with a powerful and life-changing message. However, it is a message that is so familiar to us that we might miss its message. It is the message the angels delivered to the shepherds in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night. “Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

Only God can send good news of great joy for everyone, because God knows we all need it. God also wants everyone to have this good news of great joy, because God knows all of us and I **mean all of us** need a Savior. None of us by ourselves can have a right relationship with God. That is why Jesus’ coming is so important for all of us. He is the one whose ministry and mission is to place each and all of us in right relationship with God. The good news and great joy for all of us is that God acts on our behalf through our Lord Jesus to bring us into right relationship with God. It is God’s gift of mercy and love for each and all of us. There is no merit involved here, no earning by our deeds what God gifts to us through Jesus our Savior and Lord. We simply receive him, and in receiving him we receive the gift of faith. All this comes to all of us, in the love, grace, mercy and compassion of God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Please join us as we greet with great joy, gladness, and love our Savior and Lord, Jesus. The good news, the best news for all of us. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Pastor Pamela Carnes

Interim Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, East Petersburg





**We Welcome All to Worship with Us at Christmas and
at Services throughout the Coming Year.**

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