



## From Pastor David

### A Year Following Jesus with Luke

*"I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received." -Luke 1:4*

We head into Christmas told we should be feeling joy, but we feel the heaviness of so many concerns. The heavy word is: continue. The COVID pandemic, after nearly 2 years, continues to swell. Violence, mass tragedies and unrest continue to dominate the news. Injustice and inequity continue to be our reality. And the individual, personal burdens we each carry continue to weigh us down: weary. We've struggled to keep our faith bright, and our spiritual vibrancy has dimmed. To the heavy words "continue" and "weary" we also add "dimming."

We need to rekindle the dimming glow in our hearts. And this is exactly what Christmas is! Christmas is the news that Jesus has come to our weary, dim world to bring hope, light, and joy. But it's not Christmas itself that helps us, for Christmas comes and goes. We need a help that continues after Christmas has gone and as we continue our weary lives again in January. So what we really need is not Christmas, but the Jesus who came at Christmas. He is the Light who brings help, hope and joy. And the good news is that Jesus continues with us! Jesus comes to be "God with us" (Emmanuel) and continues to go with us in our lives.

This year we're not going to just hear the story of Christmas. We're committing to continue to hear the whole story of Jesus! We're starting at Christmas and hearing Jesus' birth story. But then we'll continue throughout all of next year and keep hearing the story of Jesus' life.

So, starting in December, we're going to read through the Gospel of Luke, passage by passage, each Sunday. The messages will be a bit different, as we'll dig deeper into the readings and unpack their meanings. My messages will be reading, commentary and life applications (not your traditional, 3-point sermons).

I've chosen Luke because he is a non-Jew who is writing to non-Jews (like us!). He is rooted in Greek and Roman culture (like us!). He is a doctor and therefore looks at things from a detail

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### Monthly Church Events

<b>Dec 1</b>	4:00pm - Confirmation 5:30pm - Dinner 6:15pm - Grow Groups, Echo, Hope Moves & Youth Group 7:30pm - Sanctify Rehearsal
<b>Dec 2</b>	10:00am - Book Club 12:00pm - Sarah Circle
<b>Dec 3</b>	8:00am - Grow Group
<b>Dec 5</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> 10:00am - In-person and online Worship Service
<b>Dec 6</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men, Quilters and Prayer Knitters
<b>Dec 8</b>	10:00am - Birchwood 4:00pm - Confirmation 5:30pm - Dinner 6:15pm - Hope Moves, Echo & Youth Group 7:30pm - Sanctify Rehearsal
<b>Dec 10</b>	8:00am - Grow Group
<b>Dec 12</b>	10:00am - In-person and online Worship Service 2:00pm - Hope Moves
<b>Dec 13</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men, Quilters and Prayer Knitters
<b>Dec 15</b>	11:00am - Romeos & Juilets 4:00pm - Confirmation 5:30pm - Dinner 6:15pm - Echo & Youth Group 7:30pm - Sanctify Rehearsal

## Pastor David Cont.

and historical perspective (like us!). He never met Jesus, but believes passionately in the truth of the Gospel (like us!). Luke has done the work to provide a carefully researched and reliable account of Jesus' spiritual biography (we want this, too!). Luke wants his readers "to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received" (that's us!). I think we will have a great time following Jesus with Luke!

We are committing to walk with Jesus for a year with Luke. This will help us rekindle our dimming spirits, reconnect with our primary calling to discipleship, and focus on Jesus. Yes, a year is a long time. But by continuing to read through Luke, we will continue to see Jesus, and then we will continue our lives with hope and joy. Discipleship is about daily living, and only a sustained focus on Jesus will bring the transformation we desperately need.

So, we begin at the beginning. Luke starts his gospel with a prolonged Christmas story. This will be our reading for Christmas. We'll spend significant time in Luke 1, which we normally gloss over in our speed to get to "The Christmas Story" in Luke 2. But we're following Luke, who starts us off in Chapter 1. So, we'll begin there. But then we'll continue!

Merry Christmas!

Pastor David

### Christmas Eve:

4:30pm - Worship Service (also on Zoom)

11:30pm - Candle Light Service

### Christmas Day:

Office Closed

### Dec. 26

10:00am - Klezmer Christmas (see article)

<b>Dec 17</b>	8:00am - Grow Group 2:00pm - Unload Food Truck
<b>Dec 18</b>	6:00am - Set up 8:00am - Community Care
<b>Dec 19</b>	10:00am - In-person and online Worship Service
<b>Dec 20</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men, Quilters and Prayer Knitters
<b>Dec 21</b>	10:00am - Rebecca Circle
<b>Dec 22</b>	4:00pm - Confirmation 5:30pm - Dinner 6:15pm - Hope Moves, Echo & Youth Group 7:30pm - Sanctify Rehearsal
<b>Dec 24</b>	Office Closed 4:30pm - Worship Service 11:30pm - Candle Light Service
<b>Dec 25</b>	Office Closed Merry Christmas
<b>Dec 26</b>	10:00am - Klezmer Christmas In-person and online Worship Service
<b>Dec 27</b>	8:00am - Monday Morning Men, Quilters and Prayer Knitters
<b>Dec 28</b>	Christmas Camp
<b>Dec 29</b>	Christmas Camp 7:00pm - College Night
<b>Dec 30</b>	Christmas Camp
<b>Dec 31</b>	Office Closed Happy New Year



## Hope Moves - Addiction

Please join us Wednesday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m for a workshop on the topic of addiction, learning ways we can make a difference. How can we help people recovering from addiction and re-entering society? Then on Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup> we have invited the women of MN Teen Challenge, along with their families, to join us for a Christmas Party at 2:00 P.m. These women are spending the holiday separated from their families, and this is an opportunity for us to show them the love of the season. We will have games, crafts, snacks, sing Christmas songs – even a visit from Santa. UMW women have been asked to contribute gifts, this is in place of the Emma Norton gifts we normally give. A list of items can be found on the board by the Fellowship Hall. We need others willing to help with the crafts, games, and snacks. We will have a lunch after service on the 12<sup>th</sup> for those who are able to help set-up and participate in the party. If you have any questions about the workshop or are interested in helping with the party, please reach out to Teresa Gruber, Marilee Leonard, or Reese Werner.

UMW women have been asked to contribute gifts, this is in place of the Emma Norton gifts we normally give. A list of items can be found on the board by the Fellowship Hall. There are 38 women + 3 staff expected - could fluctuate by a couple. We have a devotional book for each already. We have 9-10 afghans. We could still use 30 nice items. Items should be in a gift bag – no tissue needed. Please have the items to the church by Saturday December 11<sup>th</sup>.

Here are some ideas: Slippers/socks Scarves Mittens Prayer shawls Afghans Winter hat Colored pencils/Markers Water colors/brushes Small crafts Sketch pad Journal Christian Books

## Klezmer Christmas

Our God is a God of variety and creativity. We only have to look at creation to see the plethora of different species that inhabit our world. From animals, plants, bacteria and, of course, human life, God's breadth of work is astounding.

As humans, we mirror this divine creative flair. We do our best to create from the materials we have available. Whether we are using paints, lumber or a word processor; humans are constantly creating. Maybe the most widespread form of this creativity is music. Everyone loves some type of music. And again, the variety is incredible. Every culture boasts their own form of music, and as we travel through Advent and Christmas with Luke, I thought it would be important to get a better grasp of some of the historical details that affected daily life in the first century. As such, each week, our Generational Bridge portion of the service will address some of these details so that we can better understand Luke's reality and context.

Music was certainly a large part of Jewish worship in the time of Luke. In fact, the Psalms remain at the literal center of our Bibles today! We wanted to bring in a taste of that music for our Christmas celebration on Sunday Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>. Now, it is not possible to dig up some ancient instruments and play them in our worship service. But it is possible to find a band that plays Klezmer music.

"Klezmer" is a combination of Hebrew words that refers to musical instruments: a vessel (kley) and a melody (zemer). While Klezmer music has its roots in Jewish culture, it has taken on aspects of jazz, folk and even big band. Klezmer music also reflects different parts of the world including Russian and Eastern European influences.

We want to encourage you to celebrate "The Coming" this year with a new musical and cultural experience. On Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> we will be welcoming the Twin Cities Klezmer Collective to Forest Hills!

They will introduce us to some new music that is actually very old. Invite friends and family to attend our Klezmer Christmas! And as we do, we remember that, as God's people, we are vessels for melody as well. We are the instruments that God uses to play the song of His gospel this Christmas season!

For the King, Pastor Andrew



## Youth Group

This Advent we are taking a new look at what Advent is all about. Typically, we use the Advent season as a time to tell the Christmas story and focus on remembering the birth of Jesus. In our new series, we will be challenged to not only anticipate Christmas Day and the birth of Jesus, but also anticipate His second coming, as we fully unwrap the definition of "Advent" and what the season is meant for.



This series on anticipating Jesus will go between what we expect to experience and focus on with the classic Christmas story and what more we can find when we begin to anticipate Jesus' return. We will be asked to examine our lives, our hearts, and our faith in considering if we are fully anticipating and seeking Jesus' return and if they are ready for it.

Week 1: Be Ready: We don't know when Jesus will return, but He calls us to be ready. Matthew 24:36–44

Week 2: Repent: Part of being ready is checking our hearts and making sure our lives are in line with Jesus. Matthew 3:1–12

Week 3: Don't Lose Faith: It can be easy to lose faith in Jesus and in the fact that Jesus will return. Matthew 11:2–6

Week 4: Remember: Remembering what Jesus has already done can help remind us why we seek His return. Matthew 1:18–25

Over Christmas break we will have a college game night on Dec 29th at 6pm. Taco Night will be an incredible night for all the teens centered around one of God's greatest gifts: Tacos!

Pastor Cassi

## Free Community Meals Wed. Nights 5:30pm

Dec. 1: Pancakes (UMM)

Dec. 8: Chicken soup & sandwiches (Amanda Lucas)

Dec. 15: Mac-and-Cheese with Chicken Tenders (Staff)

Dec. 22: Ham Balls (Lee & Tracy Hansen)

Dec. 29: No meal (Christmas Camp)

## Dec Birthdays

May your special day be blessed and filled with joy! If your birthday isn't listed, please call the office and let us know so we can add you to the list!

Lillian Truax 12/3

Marilee Leonard 12/3

Matthew Berglund 12/4

Lynn Ruter 12/7

Cathy Sanderson 12/8

Misty Thoen 12/9

Cassi Betker 12/11

Noah Bonsell 12/11

Donna Gustafson 12/19

Tracy Hansen 12/20



## Christmas Camp

Last year put a halt on many activities and ministries of our church. Like the schools, we did our best to move things online, but for most, this was just not a good option. Being together, in person, is a huge part of what our church does well. With that in mind, we want to bring back our Christmas Camp!

Christmas Camp has been a chance for us to cement the message of this season into the hearts and minds of kids in our community. During the limbo between Christmas Day and New Year's, kids are out of school, but parents are back to work or at least needing a bit of a break. This is where we come in.

We can put together an event full of activities and games, snacks and crafts, but most importantly, we can talk with kids about the true meaning of Christmas. We can make sure that their Christmas break is filled with more than toys and TV time. We have a great opportunity to bless the families of our community!

I know it is a busy season, but I also know, for our church, ministry is a priority. We choose to get up and make the harder choice. We choose to be selfless with our time and energy. We choose to hang around and engage with kids who might be obnoxious. We choose to serve. We know that when we do, we are truly serving the Lord Jesus himself.

Be a part of Christmas Camp! It will run from Tuesday Dec. 28 th through Thursday Dec. 30th. We need volunteers to supervise, help run activities, and overall be present for kids. If you feel prompted to get involved, contact Pastor Andrew or the office! Also, be on the lookout for more details to come.

For the King,

Pastor Andrew



## Christmas Food Drive - at Home Advent Wreath

This Christmas season we are taking a special collection for the food shelves in our community. Now through Dec. 31 bring in your pantry items and help us fill the shelves in the lobby with food.

One way to remember is to gather food during your daily devotional. You can print a wreath or cut a paper in a circle to represent the Advent wreath. Then place your food item around the wreath each day. At the end of the week you would have 5 or 6 items to drop off on Sunday. If you are online watching and can't make it in throughout the week you can call the office and someone will come pick them up for you.

Let's fill the shelves this Christmas!