



**ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**206 N. Court Street ~ P.O. Box 763**  
**AuGres, MI 48703-0763**



*Newsletter*

**e-mail address ~ [office@stjohnaugres.com](mailto:office@stjohnaugres.com)**

**web site ~ [www.stjohnaugres.org](http://www.stjohnaugres.org)**

**2023** Article for December 2023 Newsletter

“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son” Galatians 4:4

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus. What is often called “The Giving Season” is quickly approaching. People will search the internet and scurry through stores and spend and shop for gifts to give their loved ones. This is a fine custom. Have you ever wondered how it all got started?

“Christmas giving” began when people wanted to share the joy that they knew because of God’s gift of His Son. Because God had opened heaven to send His Son, people who had received the free and undeserved gift of forgiveness and eternal life through Christ wanted to share that joy and love with others. This is also, by the way, why St. Nicholas did what he did!

Please take a moment to consider just how and what it was that God gave in Christ. God gave, not to His relatives and friends, or to those who had been nice, not naughty, but to those whom sin had made His enemies. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8.)” God did not give to the deserving, or to those who could give back to Him in return. Secondly, God gave His all, His whole self, what He loved most, His sinless Son, to come to earth, die for us, and then conquer death to open a way for us to be forgiven and freed to live forever in heaven. How far God’s giving exceeds our attempts to be generous!

It’s a season of giving, and that’s great! But please remember that it’s not our giving that makes Christmas, it’s God’s giving of His Son that we celebrate. Whether we give or receive a lot of gifts, it’s still a “great Christmas” when we remember God’s gift to us. That’s what we’re celebrating, and that’s what moves us to be generous, not just to friends and relatives and those who can repay us with a gift, but to those who need our love and support. It’s also what moves us to come to worship and receive His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation!

May the Lord bless our celebration of the gift of Jesus’ God’s Son!

In Him,

Pastor Ted Voll



## SOUP SUPPERS

### **Advent Soup Suppers**

Please join us on December 6 & 20 at 5:00pm.

Thanks to Sheri Colby, Carol Britt & Diana Pendred for being hostesses for these two events.



### **Ladies Christmas Luncheon**

*All ladies are invited to the luncheon at Ali's Up North on Tuesday, December 12, at 1:00pm.*

*The cost is \$15 which includes dessert & tax. A sign-up sheet is in the multi-purpose room where you will select your menu for that day.*

*Instead of exchanging fits, you may bring a monetary gift for Evergreen Lutheran School, inner city Detroit.*

*Deadline to sign up is December 4.*



CHRISTMAS



PROGRAM

## "In a Manger"

The children's Christmas Worship Service is  
December 17, at 9:00am.

Come as we all participate in this special service.  
A Happy Birthday Jesus cake to be  
enjoyed by all during coffee hour.

**Children's Christmas Service:** The Children's Christmas service, "Away in a Manger", will be held on December 17, with all children welcome to participate. The Children will be preparing during the coming Sundays for their portions of the service. Contact Roxanne Klein with any questions.

The Children's Church will not be meeting on December 24 or December 31. Children's church will then resume in January.



Please let the office know if your winter address has changed, when you are leaving for warmer climates and approximately when you will return so I can mail the newsletter accordingly. Safe travels! Cheryl

# St. John Lutheran Au Gres Phone Directory 2022



If there are any additions  
or corrections, please let  
the parish office know.

Thanks!



Join us as we gather with Pastor & Linda Cordts and the residents for  
Hymn Sing-along  
with Bible Lesson & Prayer  
at Eden Fields Assisted Living in Standish  
(front lobby - sitting area)  
Sunday, December 17, at 1:00pm

They love music so come and sing unto our Lord with them.  
All are invited to share the love of Christ with the residents.



## Missions of the Month for 2024

JANUARY	-	Right to Life of Michigan & Michigan Lutherans for Life
FEBRUARY	-	Lutheran Hour Ministries
MARCH	-	Harbor Lights Pregnancy Center
APRIL	-	Lutheran Heritage Foundation
MAY	-	Orphan Grain Train
JUNE	-	God' Children Haiti (Ann Hume, Missionary)
JULY	-	Can Council
AUGUST	-	Closet Exchange
SEPTEMBER	-	Lutheran Special Education Ministries
OCTOBER	-	Lutheran Bible Translators
NOVEMBER	-	Wellspring
DECEMBER	-	Gideon's International

Approved by voters on November 12, 2023

# Paul Reede, Top Contributor

## Friends who like the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

THE CHRISTIAN USE OF YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE. ✎

ITS POINT ✎ : As your tree points heavenward, let it remind you that Jesus came from heaven on the first Christmas to be your Savior so that you could go to heaven.

ITS LIGHT ✎ : Jesus, the light of the world, came as the Bible says to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He is your light!

ITS DECORATIONS ✎ : These should remind you of the beauty of everlasting life , God's gift to you.

IF YOU HAVE A STAR ON TOP ✎ : Let it remind you that the light of God's Word leads you to Jesus as the star led the wise men.

IF YOU HAVE AN ANGEL AT THE TOP: Let it remind you of the message of the Angel. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord"

AN "EVERGREEN TREE" ✎ :Evergreen trees are always green. This should remind you of the fact that the gift of life Jesus came to give is everlasting.

A PLACE FOR GIFTS ✎ : Christmas gifts around the tree are proper if they remind both the giver and the receiver of God's great Christmas gift. The Bible says, "The gift of God is eternal life." and "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

YOUR TREE WILL DIE ✎ : Cut off from nourishment, the needles will soon begin to fall. Let this remind you that those whose faith is not regularly watered with the Word of God will eventually become spiritually dead.

Explain this to your family and children and add to their Christmas understanding and joy.



*Please join our church family & visitors  
alike after worship on Sundays for coffee hour,  
fellowship & snacks.*

*If you wish to donate/help serve for  
the month of December, please sign up in the  
fellowship hall or contact our December hostess,*

*Pat Metzger 989-861-4734.*

## JUST WONDERING – 372

Just wondering about Christ and Christmas.

The essence of this JW has been gathering steam for a number of years. I am weary. I am weary of being encouraged to “*keep Christ in Christmas.*” And now, I see exhortations on Facebook to “*keep Christ in Christmas.*” I have recently seen billboards and lawn signs giving the same message, “*keep Christ in Christmas.*”

AS IF I—OR YOU—COULD KEEP HIM OUT!

Christ IS Christmas. Christmas IS Christ.

I do recognize that the aforementioned exhortations are well meant by well-meaning Christian folks. They want me and all of us to keep the proper spiritual perspective about this most celebrative of observances--the birth of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, Wonderful Counselor, the Son of God.

But the question for me is how do I recognize the Christ of Christmas not just on December 25th, but every day God gives me? I can't do anything to “keep” Christ in Christmas—he's already and always there. How do I live now in that faith?

There are the traditional things of Christmas that draw me closer to the Christ of Christmas: lights, gift-giving and receiving, candles, carols, reconnection to others through cards and letters and festive meals—including Holy Communion on Christmas Eve. *Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king.*

But, following all of this glorious activity, if it truly makes a difference (that's what those who tell me to “*keep Christ in Christmas*” are really wanting,) how does the Christ of Christmas manifest himself in me and in the world through me? How does the earth, or better yet, how do I, one of his professed followers, recognize and receive the Christ, the Anointed One and act on his earthly presence?

The answer will always be found in how I respond to him. Do I see him in my neighbor; in the poor ones around me; in the prisoner; in the enemy; in the sick and dying; in the homeless ones; in those in line at the soup kitchen; in those who are grieving...and then not only seeing him there, but reaching out to him there—in them as if he were my guest for Christmas dinner? I've got work to do.

I can't keep Christ in Christmas—he's there to stay. But I must work on seeing him where ever he is and loving and serving him there.

Pastor Kirk Havel, Ret., December 11, 2016; [havelkj@aol.com](mailto:havelkj@aol.com)

*Thanks to Rick & Jill Gehring for sharing the Just Wondering Word*

# Not My Regular Advent: Look for the Blessings

4 min read

By [Carolyn Bira](#) • December 8, 2021

The spiritual exercise of participating in Advent has been with the Christian church for over 1,500 years. In that respect, we're joining a long line of adherents to Advent celebrations. I'll be honest with you: Advent hasn't been a deeply rooted practice in my life. Growing up, we never missed church on Sunday and my parents were adamant about attendance at Worship and Christian education. But attending Advent services and lighting an Advent wreath for each passing week wasn't a part of my upbringing. Then I did a crazy thing; I married a pastor. Suddenly, attendance at Advent services was a must. And I didn't enjoy it. Church in the evenings is difficult with toddlers. My girls just didn't know how to sit quietly for anything that happened after 6 p.m. So dragging them to church on Wednesday evenings was just that—a drag. Now, Advent is very much a part of my life. As a practicing member of the Visual Faith community, I now experience an element of creativity and joy in what was once a chore. Then this year brought an entirely new wrinkle to the page.

Back in October, I was invited to speak at an Advent tradition practiced in many of our congregations known as *Advent by Candlelight*. In these events, always scheduled during the first week of Advent, women gather to take a moment to remember what the season is all about, preparing them to focus on the Christ Child rather than what cookies to bake. Usually, food is served, songs are sung, and someone speaks about what's coming in the four weeks that follow. But the Advent by Candlelight that I was invited to speak at this year was truly a different experience for me. This event took place at a Franklin Avenue Mission in the heart of one of the most challenging neighborhoods in Flint. What is now known as the Flint Mission Network is comprised of Franklin Avenue Mission, York Avenue Mission, The Luke Clinic, and Mercy House. These four ministries reach hundreds of people in the Flint area. This was the first time all of the ministries (except for the Luke Clinic) were all together at the same time. It was exciting to have everyone gathered together as one community/body.



The attendees were people I didn't know at all, made up of women who don't have homes but survive in abandoned buildings, walk the streets, struggle with addictions, and live lives I could only imagine.

As I prayed through the writing of this talk, God helped me realize that no matter where you live, He is still God.

He still brings **Hope** into a world that seems hopeless, for His





hope is pure and true.

He still brings Peace to a people who seem bound to chaos, violence, and fear.

He still brings Joy to a world filled with sorrow and struggle.

He still brings Love where it seems in short supply. Those are the words of Advent, and they are still powerful and useful no matter your circumstance.

The ladies who attended need to hear the name of Jesus every day, just like I do. They need to hear that

the Infant we celebrate will hang upon a cross for the sins of us all and that their lives are 100% redeemable.

God provided abundant blessings throughout the process of getting ready for this precious time with some dear women. He has given me talented and dedicated friends, sisters in Christ, who have given more than they were asked. The words *Look for the Blessings* quickly became the theme for the talk because God provides when asked. As soon as that was settled, I called Pat Maier and asked this very busy woman if she would design a logo. I had her amazing drawing in my email less than 12 hours later. I turned it into a stamp, and we were off!



Before I agreed to do this presentation, I contacted my best friend, Melody Schwieger, and asked if she would create a tag project for everyone to work on during the event that would follow them throughout the season. She immediately said "yes" and began to make the project happen. Along with the tags, the participants received a bag filled with washi tape, scrapbook paper, digi paper, glue, colored pencils and all the items you would need to make this devotional device a reality.

I also have to admit that handing this project to women who live in poverty and a place about which I know very little seemed a somewhat tone-deaf. But handing them something of beauty that will walk with them throughout Advent was appropriate, for they too deserve to think on things like peace and love. They too deserve to know that God brings joy and hope into this dark world.

So advent has taken on a new meaning this year as God has blessed me with a chance to look for His blessings in the midst of our lives here. Blessings come in strange packages sometimes, but He is faithfully showing us that He is indeed a God of HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE - for all of us.

## About the Author

Carolyn Bira is a wife, mother, grandmother, and retired Director of Christian Education. She and her husband, Cliff, served Holy Cross, Flushing for 36 years and both retired in May. They have two accomplished daughters, two remarkable sons-in-law, and five beautiful grandchildren. Bira spends her time writing Bible study material (primarily for Visual Faith Ministry), and leading Bible studies. She has been a speaker for numerous events, conferences, and seminars, and enjoys sharing the depths of the Scriptures the most.



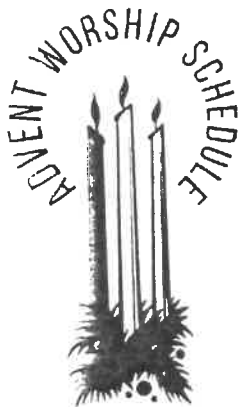
Thank you! Pastors Voll and Winter are most grateful to serve the people of St. John Lutheran, Au Gres. Thank you for your kind and generous gift for Pastor appreciation!



## December Mission of the Month Gideons International

Gideons International is an Evangelical Christian association for men founded in 1899 in Janesville, Wisconsin. Their primary activity, along with their wives in the Auxiliary, is "encouraging each other to do the work of the Lord". They are most recognized for distributing copies of scripture free of charge, paid for by freewill offerings from local churches and from members themselves. This Bible distribution is a worldwide enterprise taking place in around 200 countries, territories and possessions. These copies are printed in over 108 languages. In addition to their well-known hotel room Bibles, they also distribute Bibles to members of the military, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, MPs and students.

Please join us for Advent Worship  
on the following dates:



Advent I ~ December 6, 6:30pm  
"Put on the Light" Romans 13:11-14

Advent II ~ December 13, 5:00pm  
"Many Lights Are Brighter...Together"

Advent III ~ December 20, 6:30pm  
"A Light with a Special Purpose:  
Romans 1:1-17"

**NEED A PASTOR?** During the Pastoral vacancy, Pastor Bill Winter (989-329-0164) and Pastor Ted Voll (989-980-1750) will be providing spiritual care for the Congregation. If you need to talk to a Pastor, please do not hesitate to call them.

## Call Committee Update:

The committee has been evaluating the candidate list to determine the best few candidates to take to the next step in the selection process. The committee is meeting November 29 to complete its ranking and determine the action plan for further information gathering and interviews. A special voters meeting will be scheduled to select the final candidate for the call.

The Vacancy pastors are doing a great job of supporting us during this period. Please keep the pastors and the Call Committee in your prayers as we seek the Holy Spirit's guidance.



**TO THE GLORY OF GOD** the church received the following gift in memory of Jane Grusecki.

For the Property Maintenance Fund by:  
Charlie & Cheryl Appold

THE SYMPATHY OF THE CONGREGATION  
Goes out to the families of:

Vicky Lopez who went home to her Lord on November 17. Her memorial service was held here on November 20 with a luncheon following.

Arnold (Tad) Dewald who went home to his Lord on November 17.

Daniel James VanLandeghem who went home to his Lord on November 27.

Visitation at Buresh Funeral Home, AuGres.  
Interment Lindwood Cemetery, AuGres.  
Luncheon following.



### Blood Drive St. John Lutheran Church

206 N. Court Street, Au Gres

**Tuesday, December 19, 2023  
12:00 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.**

To schedule an appointment, log on to [RedCrossBlood.org](https://RedCrossBlood.org) (sponsor code: Au Gres) or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767)

Come to donate and be entered in a drawing for a holiday gift basket, courtesy of St. John Ladies Aid!

Streamline your donation experience and save up to 15 minutes by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass](https://RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass) to complete your pre-donation reading and health history questions on the day of your appointment.



Make a Legendary Impact! Come give Dec. 18 thru Jan. 5 for NEW long-sleeved Red Cross Tee, Ltd qty!



**Schedule your blood donation appointment today!**

1-800-RED CROSS | [RedCrossBlood.org](https://RedCrossBlood.org) | Download the Blood Donor App



Chad Harley Bender has transferred to Zion Lutheran Church in Auburn. We pray Chad and his family will be happy in their new church home.

**+St. John Lutheran AuGres+  
Church Activites for December 2023**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 *** ***	2 *** ***
3 Worship/HC 9am Confirmation/Bible Class 10:15am	4 WOW Bible Study 10am	5 *** ***	6 Soup Supper 5pm Advent I Worship 6:30pm	7 *** ***	8 *** ***	9 *** ***
10 Worship 9am Blood Pressure Clinic 10:15am Children's Dress Rehearsal 10:15am	11 WOW Bible Study 10am	12 Ladies Luncheon Ali's Up North 1pm	13 Advent II Worship 5:00pm Note the time change	14 *** ***	15 *** ***	16 *** ***
17 Children's Christmas Worship 9am Confirmation/Bible Class 10:15am	18 WOW Bible Study 10am	19 Red Cross Blood Drive noon - 4:45pm	20 Soup Supper 5pm Advent III Worship 6:30pm	21 Elder's Meeting 6pm Church Council 7pm	22 *** ***	23 *** ***
24/31 Worship/HC 9am Candlelight Worship/HC 6:30pm Worship/HC 9am	25 *** ***	26 *** ***	27 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	28 *** ***	29 *** ***	30 *** ***

# JESUS is the REASON for the SEASON

The shopping, the spending, the giving, the getting,  
the hustling and bustling, who was I forgetting?

Aunt Mabel? My neighbors? The twins or my pastor?  
If I forgot them it would be disaster!

I got in my car to go back to the store.  
pulled out my list and checked it once more.

A nativity scene on a lawn caught my eye.  
I paused for a moment, then started to cry.

I suddenly knew who it was I had missed.  
The one who should always be first on my list.

If only I'd stopped for a moment to reason,  
I'd have seen it was JESUS the heart of the season.



Saturday Worship 4:00pm  
(Memorial Day – Labor Day)

Sunday Worship 9:00am

Sunday Bible Study 10:15am

Monday WOW 10:00am  
(Women of the Word)  
Bible Study

**L**oving  
**I**nvolving  
**G**rowing  
**H**onoring  
**T**eaching

## Mission Statement

“The mission of St. John Lutheran Church is to make the love of Christ known within the church, the community, and the world through preaching, teaching, reaching out to the community, and spreading the Word of God to all people.”



ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH  
206 NORTH COURT STREET  
P. O. BOX 763  
AU GRES, MICHIGAN 48703-0763

