



The Good Shepherd's Voice

December, 2024

Newsletter from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School



Short Stories that
Speak Volumes
for Our Lives

The Perfect Pearl

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45,46)

Have you found the perfect Christmas gift for that special someone yet? If so, what makes it perfect? Is it perfect because it's unique, like handcrafted pottery? Is it perfect because it fits the personality of the individual for who you bought it, like a plaid shirt for the lumberjack in your family?

What if you find the perfect gift only to discover that it's beyond your budget? Would you sell your car, your house, everything you own to obtain THE perfect gift?

Jesus once told a parable about a pearl-dealer whose goal was to find the perfect pearl. When he found it, he sold all that he owned so he could buy his treasured find.

The perfect pearl represents the Gospel message of salvation found in the Bible. This message is perfect because it tells us everything we need to know for this life and the next. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and deserve God's eternal punishment in hell.

The Bible also says that Jesus came to take that punishment—like your next-door neighbor paying for the fire damage that your hastily strung Christmas lights did to her house. Because of Jesus, our sins are paid for and forgiven!

This message is not only perfect; it's one of a kind. There are plenty of places you can look for the answers to life's questions, but the only place you'll find the perfect pearl is in the Bible. We would be glad to share with you the treasure that God has for us in his Word.

The Bible appears to be like any other book, but within there is a precious message that exceeds everything we've known. It's like the person who pries open a dull clamshell and finds a glowing pearl nestled within that's worth more than any other.

A pearl in a clamshell! That's often how God works. He comes to us in unlikely places to give us His love. Could that be illustrated any more beautifully than it is at Christmas? At Christmas, the Son of God, our Savior, was born in a barn!

And then this Jesus willingly gave up his life on the cross to pay for our sins and win us a place in heaven. This Gospel message is God's priceless, perfect Gift for us!



December Birthdays

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 2) Peter Danielsen
Roxann Dashner | 10) Graham Peters
15) Brayden Tolzman
Al Weiland
Eva Weiland | 28) Scott Davis
Gary Heiman |
| 5) Sue Danielsen | | 29) Karla Melke |
| 6) Joe Grant
Chris Ryun | 18) Lauren Schuler | 30) Ash Skibba |
| 7) Iva Bannerman | 23) Kirsten Metzger | 31) Kelli Spees |

December Wedding Anniversaries

27) Tyler and Deirdra Timm (7)



Advent Soup Supper and Worship Services

Join us Thursdays

(Dec. 5, Dec. 12 , Dec 14) at 5:30 PM

for soup suppers served by volunteer
groups followed by a 6:30 PM
Advent Worship Service!

Church Decorating



After service on Sunday,
December 1st

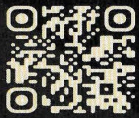


WHAT IS THE BEST GIFT YOU HAVE EVER RECEIVED?

A gift given in love can be more valuable than the price. Is peace, joy, and hope more valuable than gold? In the manger, we see a treasure that God has given to us.

Consider the message of Christmas this season: Jesus, our Savior, was born. God delivered on his promise so that we can receive eternal life in heaven. This gift grants us with peace.

No matter what this year has brought, Christmas is a reminder that you're loved and not alone. We'd love to celebrate with you.



Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to discover the gift of God!

YOU'RE INVITED
CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH US!



Christmas Eve

Tuesday, December 24
6:30 PM

Christmas Day

Wednesday, December 25
9:00 AM

10611 State Hwy. 13 S
Wisconsin Rapids, WI

lgoodshepherd.org

Christmas Digital Evangelism

Please pick up as many flyers as you need to personally invite our community to worship with us for Christmas.

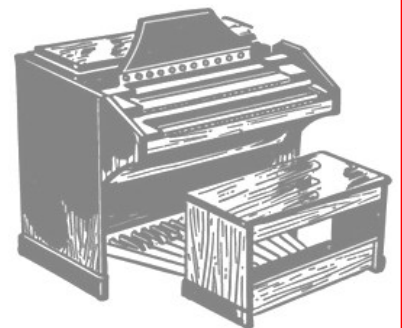
Other ways to spread the word concerning the *Best Gift Ever – the Gift of God*:

- Use the QR code found on the flyer to see the landing page (includes our pastors video, our Christmas schedule, and a link to our church website) and share it with family and friends!
- Interact with the Christmas ad when it appears on our church's Facebook news feed by liking it, commenting on it and sharing it!

May the Lord bless our efforts to share the good news with great joy!

ORGAN FUND

The organ committee has reported on the need for a new organ. As explained, the current one no longer has parts available to either repair or replace. So our best option is to nurse it along. The congregation approved a purchase (up to \$55,000) *when the funds are available*. We have some monies already donated for this cause, but will be accepting donations to this fund. You may mark your regular envelopes for this use or fill out a yellow envelope with your gift. Thank you!





"News from Your School"

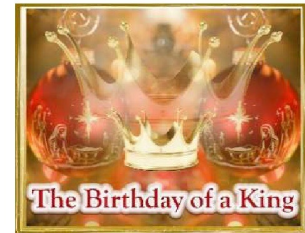
December 2024

Email: 1goodshepherdschool@gmail.com

Merry Christmas

Christmas is a time for looking forward. We look forward to reviewing Jesus coming as a baby to live a perfect life and die for our sins. We look forward to that baby coming back as the Son of God on the last day to take us to be with Him in heaven. And most of us look forward to celebrating Christmas with family, cookies, and presents. Finally, we look forward to starting a new year in January focused on Jesus and learning more about him.

We invite you to look forward to all these things by joining us for 2 Christmas services! The first is the preschool Christmas program on Friday, Dec. 20 at noon. The second is the Christmas Eve service done mostly by the children on Dec. 24 at 6:30 pm. The theme is the Birthday of a King. Come join us in celebrating the birthday of Jesus!



If you are wondering how you can support our school this Christmas, one way is by donating something from our Amazon Wishlist. All items that are on the list would be used immediately in the classroom. You can scan the QR Code (right) or go to this link if the Spirit moves you:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/NK08ICXTWUIX?ref=wl_share

To view our School Google Calendar, go to <https://shorturl.at/voct4>.



Events for this month:

- 3K/4K Christmas Program: Friday, December 20 at noon
- Children's Christmas Eve Service: Tuesday, December 24 at 6:30 pm
- Christmas Break: December 25-Jan. 5, School resumes on Jan. 6

On the following page is a support option for parents and caregivers of children to help you be better at parenting and create stronger relationships with your children. It is Christ centered and only \$10 to view the courses. If you need other mental health supports, Christian Family Solutions (CFS) that is providing these classes is a fantastic option to reach out to for help.

*May God grant you a Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year! See you in church!
Miss Cook and Mrs. Irwin*



Strengthening Parent-Child Connections

AN ONLINE COURSE FOR CAREGIVERS FROM
CHRISTIAN FAMILY SOLUTIONS

In this course, parents learn practical strategies to shift the focus from correction to connection, leading to stronger family bonds and fewer behavioral issues at home and at school.

- Practical evidence-based guidance from a Certified Parent Peer Specialist
- Backed by biblical principles
- 4 video lessons to be completed at your own pace

Teachers and educators can view the course for free using code **CFS1965!**

Support your students by sharing with their families. Give parents code **StrongerFamilies** to access the course for \$10.

Questions? Email Angela Glaeske at aglaeske@wlcfs.org.

Scan to access & share >



cfslearning.org



Christmas has us skipping to the Gospel-God's full and free mercies in Jesus Christ! What a gift God has given: freedom from guilt and shame, free to serve Him in grace, without rules.



Seems too good to be true. But 66 books of the Bible all repeat the same glorious announcement: Our gracious God's Gift for you was planned and purchased by Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. It is no wonder Christians love to give a hearty "Merry Christmas!" throughout December, the month we celebrate His birth.

God's gift comes with no strings attached, ready to freely enjoy and use, batteries included as they say. His Word called me to faith. His Word moves me to live. By God's Gift, Christ lives in me. And the life I now live right now I live by faith in Him, the Word-made-flesh, Immanuel. Jesus is the One who loved me and gave Himself for me.

How does God's mercy affect our mouths? Our minds? God urges us to encourage one another. He reminds us to speak and act as those who are going to be standing before

the throne of Jesus one day. The Jesus in the Manger is the One who came to set us free. Galatians 5. Our freedom means God paid off the consequences of our naughty minds and mouths, our rebellious actions. The Bible reveals that there will be judgment without mercy placed on those who do not trust in Jesus for their safety. Christmas reminds us that believers have no need to fear that day we stand before Him. As God says repeatedly in His Word, His mercy triumphs over judgment. 1 John 5.

God's greatest blessing to the world is His Gift, Jesus Christ. Ephesians 3. As we pause in busy-ness, God-willing we will consider the goodness of God to us every minute of every hour, every day, not just year to year. Of what does Christmas remind us? Giving, of course.

It's on every street corner and advert as we scroll our phones, right? Of course, that is what Christmas is all about. But it is not FIRST about our gifts. It is about God's gifting us His one and only Son. Romans 11. The Lord's generosity prompts the Christian similarly to respond. We have already received life from God who actually is The Life. It is no wonder that we thank God by returning our time, our skills, our resources. And we wrap all of those gifts in His gift-wrap of grace and peace.

Every day is a time to reflect on all that God has given and a time to thank Him, to share His generous gift and care for others. Christ's gracious and faithful care challenges us all. He left the glories of heaven to remove our sin debt. He enables us to do the good He has planned. When those plans all come together, we praise His faithfulness. And the times we fail to do the good we ought to do, we praise Him for faithful mercies as well. Psalm 41

How about we take the time, make the time, to read one of the four Gospels before Christmas day. That way we read about how Jesus went about "doing good." Then we can ask ourselves if we are doing the same. Psalm 9:1. It is not about if others are doing good, it's not about us talking and talking. it is all about how do I show my thanks back to Jesus for all the good He first did for me

and then gave to?



Let's keep challenging ourselves to like those first-followers of baby Jesus. He blessed Joseph and Mary with Himself. God's mercies multiplied out to shepherds, then to Magi, then to disciples, then out to the world. His Word continues to bless us today removed from the first Christmas by continents and oceans and centuries. The

Word is the power-pack that continues to work. Hebrews 13. Let's continue to learn about the blessings of God's saving work on our behalf.

As we make use of the Word's joyful confidence in Jesus. Temporary griefs may shade the glory of

EVERY DAY
God thinks of you.
Psalms 68:19

EVERY HOUR
God looks after you.
2 Thessalonians 3:3

EVERY MINUTE
God cares for you.
1 Peter 5:7

-because-
EVERY SECOND
He loves you.
Jeremiah 31:3



His cross for a bit. But as the Gospel shines through, the Holy Spirit heals and strengthens. God does that for those who trust Him, for believers like Abraham, Isaiah, Joseph and Mary, the Magi. Philippians 2:13. Let us continue to carry out whatever God places before us. Let's encourage and lift up others before God's throne of grace. His Word will help them in their time of need.

At this moment, Good Shepherd church and school has a challenge, a need for gifts. To be clear, God does not need our gifts. Our congregation relies on weekly offerings since that is how we carry out our annual ministries. God knows all about our needs and wants in greater detail than

we can imagine. God has also already given His answer.

Our attendance in worship and online shows we are listening. John 8. Let's remain amazed at the wonder of God's Christmas Gift. I am reminded of one group of poor Christians in another country. They couldn't stop talking about Jesus and His family of faith. A visiting missionary told us about their giving. He had told them he was not trying to order them around against their will. But by bringing in other Christian's enthusiasm as a stimulus to their love, he was hoping to bring the best out of them. In one sermon he said, "You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ. Rich as He was, He gave it all away for us—in one stroke Christ became poor and we became rich."

Then he noted that they begged his team to let them share in this good that was being done for God's people. This missionary reported that the Lord worked in them in an unexpected, glorious way. He said they gave themselves first to the LORD and then to missionary team before they gave their money. This is what God wants.

Such godly attitudes happen when God's family of faith remembers what sinners deserve and what sinners who trust in Jesus receive. 2 Corinthians 8. God's Gift is truly amazing. Without our knowledge, permission, consent or begging, Jesus stepped into human history. Without even an inviting whisper from our own dead rotting souls, Jesus came at the right time, His time, to save His people from their sins. This time is even called "Christ's Time" or "Christ-mas". Think about that. Malachi 3. How does one begin to say "thank You" to such a generous God for the Gift of His Son?

We all know that if each of our families could give an additional twenty into their offerings for a month, any debt-fears would scatter away like snowflakes in the wind. But some of us don't have even an extra twenty every week. God knows.

We all know that just like the first Christmas, some of us have very little to return to the Lord. God knows. We all know that Jesus only had a borrowed feedbox for His bed and blanket to keep Him warm and safe. God knew that too.

We all know Jesus enabled some to worship Him in person, carrying surprise gifts of worship.

What do we all do with what we all know? If we have little, we still have Jesus. 2 Corinthians 9.

So let's come to His manger. Bring a friend or three along with you. Worship the amazing Gift of God, His Son, as often as He enables you to come. The history of Christmas demonstrates how the God who keeps His Word, actually does keep His Word. Jesus is fully aware our challenges in life. Christmas turns each challenge to a God-planned opportunity to let our faith shine even brighter. From my family to you and yours, Merry Christmas!

Alive in Jesus!
Pastor T





A **Cookie Walk** sponsored by the Ladies Group will take place on **Sunday, December 8, 2024**. Cookies will be available by the dozen. You can select a variety of cookies to make your cookie package. (No more than 6 of one variety of cookies please.) Containers will be provided, or you can bring your own container.

This is a freewill event. That means **you set the price**. Please consider what baked items cost in a bakery and that the Ladies Group will use the proceeds to support mission work and special needs of Good Shepherd as you set a price. You do not need to pre-order. Simply show up on December 8th and select your cookies.

If you are not able to be there on the 8th and would like cookies, contact Kathy Lee (k.lee.rn@charter.net or 715-423-3891) and let her know how many dozen cookies you would like. A variety of cookies will be selected for you.



The Ladies Group also thanks all who purchased gifts for the Angel Tree. Your support is greatly appreciated!

St. Paul's in Wisconsin Rapids is again offering Christmas for Kids

Saturday, December 7, 2024 9:00-11:45AM

Kids will hear about the real Christmas story and enjoy songs, crafts, snacks, and fun. For ages 3-10 year. Babysitting provided.

For more information and to register:

<https://www.stpaulswr.org/page/180007258/180119261/Christmas-for-Kids>

Come celebrate the Savior's birth



Planning Some Newsletter Distribution Changes: March 2024

Starting with the March edition, many printed newsletters will no longer be sent out via USPS mail. If you enjoy reading and learning on paper about our ministries and activities here at Good Shepherd, please share your email address if you have one. If you do not an email, please share your home address and/or the address of a friend you would like to receive one.

Either email office@1goodshepherd.org, or call or or send us a note. Blessings!

Parish Nurse Notes

Christmas will be here soon. Don't allow gift buying, baking, and decorating to cause you to ignore your spiritual health. From the Latin word for "coming", Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation for the coming of Christ both in the past in His incarnation as the baby Jesus, but also in the future with His promised second coming as Christ Triumphant. Use Advent as a time of preparation to strengthen your spiritual health. This can be done with the use of an advent wreath, but you do not need to own an advent wreath to prepare for Christmas or strengthen your spiritual health. You can follow the pattern of hope, peace, joy, love, and light.

If you use an advent wreath, *the first candle you light is called the "Prophecy" or "hope" candle.* Use the first week of Advent to read and study some prophecies. **Genesis 3:14-15, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, and Isaiah 11:1-10** are prophecies that point to the hope of a Savior. These 4 verses are just a few of the prophecies found in the Bible. Can you find more prophecies that provide hope? Include those in your personal Bible study. Remember this is the hope candle and prophecies provide hope.

During the *second week of Advent, the "Bethlehem" or "peace" candle* is lit if you are using an advent wreath. All of us can focus on the peace gained through the Christmas events that took place in Bethlehem. Read **Micah 5:2** and see that Bethlehem was identified as the place the Savior would be born. Read verses that emphasize peace and reconciliation such as **Isaiah 9:6, Luke 2:14 and John 14:27**. As you study these verses, consider what this peace means in your life.

The *third Advent candle is pink. It is the "Shepherd" or "joy" candle.* Read **Luke 2:8-20** to recall the account of the shepherds in the Christmas story. Beyond sharing the shepherds' joy of that first Christmas, we also have joy knowing Jesus is our Good Shepherd. Read and study **John 10:11-18**. Consider how Jesus is different than a hired man? What does Jesus mean by "I know My sheep" (John 10:14), that He is "known by" (John 10:14) His sheep, that God "the Father knows" (John 10:15) Him, and that He "knows the Father" (John 10:15)?

During the *fourth week of Advent, the "Angel" or "love" candle* is lit. The Angel candle symbolizes our confidence that we will join the angels in heaven on the last day. **Mark 13:26,27** says, "Then you will see the Son of Man coming on clouds with great power and glory. At that time, he will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of the sky." During the lighting of the Love Candle, passages from the Bible that emphasize love, such as **John 3:16-17 or 1 John 4:9-11**, may be read. These verses highlight God's love for humanity and the call for believers to love one another.

The *final candle is in the center of the wreath. It is the "Christ" candle.* With five candles burning we now have a lot of light. In **John 1:1-14** we hear Jesus referred to many times as our "light." Here are some verses from the Psalms to study as you focus on the light of Christ. **Psalm 4:6, Psalm 18:28, Psalm 27:1, Psalm 56:13, Psalm 89:15, and Psalm 119:105**. The discussion of light does not end there. Here are some more verses: **Isaiah 2:5, Isaiah 60:19, John 8:12, and John 12:46**.

As you prepare for Christmas, maintain your spiritual health. Take time to study God's word. May your Advent season and Christmas be full of hope, peace, joy, love, and light.

Blessed Christmas,
Kathy Lee, RN



Financial Secretary Report

Thru October 2024

October Attendance Summary for current and previous years

	2021	2022	2023	2024
# weeks	5	5	5	4
Average Sunday	66	80	80	89
Avg Sunday On-Line	80	37	54	51
Total Attendance	878	698	813	654
Average Mid-Week	11	16	15	11
Avg Midweek On-line	19	15	14	13
Total Avg Weekly:	165	140	163	164

On Line numbers = # of computers watching X 1.65

Planned Giving & Income through October for current and previous Fiscal Years

Planned Giving & Other Income	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Unified Budget Envelopes	\$90,011.95	\$109,653.57	\$114,880.94	\$87,217.63
On-line Offerings	13,394.67	15,939.38	11,718.00	18,686.00
Spec Services Envelopes	5.00	10.00	0.00	10.00
Initial Offering Envelopes	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00
Plate	1,548.02	1,596.14	2,017.55	1,929.27
Other Income/Gifts	3,173.34	2,066.97	42.00	65.00
Bank Account Interest	16.27	132.26	134.57	253.13
Actual YTD Total	\$108,149.25	\$129,403.32	\$128,793.06	\$108,166.03
Actual YTD vs Prior YTD	-----	\$21,254.07	(\$610.26)	(\$20,627.03)
Planned YTD Total	\$117,882.00	\$118,206.00	\$124,410.00	\$129,533.33
Changed Plan vs Prior Yr	-----	\$324.00	\$6,204.00	\$5,123.33
Actual YTD vs Plan YTD	(\$9,732.75)	\$11,197.32	\$4,383.06	(\$21,367.30)

Planned Giving & Other Income for FY 2024/25 as of October 31, 2024

Planned Giving & Other Income	October	Fiscal YTD	**References**
Unified Budget Envelopes	\$19,978.48	\$87,217.63	Fiscal Yr Giving Plan \$388,600
On-line Offerings	3,796.00	18,686.00	
Spec Services Envelopes	10.00	10.00	Monthly Giving Plan \$32,383
Initial Offering Envelopes	0.00	5.00	
Plate	795.00	1,929.27	% of FY Complete (12 of 12 mos) 33.3%
Other Income/Gifts	-	65.00	
Bank Account Interest	61.95	253.13	% of FY Plan Given 27.8%
TOTAL GIVEN	\$24,641.43	\$108,166.03	
Less PayPal fees (note 1)	\$24,525.85	\$107,597.58	

Notes:

- 1) PayPal Fee: \$115.58 YTD: \$568.45
- 2) In-Kind Contributions: \$50.84
- 3) Organ contributions: Organ Fund - \$13,163, Memorials - \$21,134. Total - \$34,297

PLEASE NOTE THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS SHORTFALL!



Financial Secretary

Alan Shepard
Alan Shepard



GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

10611 Highway 13 South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494



Pastors: John T. Melke & Paul A. Tullberg
 Educator/Principal: Hannah E. Cook
 ECM Teacher/Director: Amanda Irwin

Web Site: 1goodshepherd.org
 Phone: 715-325-3355
 Email: 1goodshepherdchurch@gmail.com

December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Decorating 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9:00 AM Worship Service w/Communion 10:15 AM Bible Class and Sunday School	11:00 AM Coffee w/Christ 1:00 PM Pastors Circuit Mtg 6:30 PM Choir			5:50 PM Advent Supper 6:30 PM Worship Service	10:00 AM First John Study	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
9:00 AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Bible Class and Sunday School COOKIE WALK	11:00 AM Coffee w/Christ 2:00 PM Ladies Group 6:30 PM Choir	6:30 PM Church Council	6:30 Confirmation	5:50 PM Advent Supper 6:30 PM Worship Service	10:00 AM First John Study Newsletter Deadline	
15	6	17	18	19	20	21
9:00 AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Bible Class and Sunday School	11:00 AM Coffee w/Christ 6:30 PM Choir		6:30 Confirmation	5:50 PM Advent Supper 6:30 PM Worship Service w/Communion		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
9:00 AM Worship Service w/Communion 10:15 AM Bible Class and Sunday School	11:00 AM Coffee w/Christ 6:30 PM Choir	Christmas Eve 6:30 PM Worship Service Children's Service	Christmas Day 9:00 AM Worship Service w/Communion			
29	30	31				
9:00 AM Worship Service 10:15 AM Bible Class and Sunday School		New Year's Eve 6:30 PM Worship Service w/Communion			Watch Services: Sunday's on Solarus Channel 3 or Spectrum Ch 985 at 2:00 pm	Scrip Orders Due Dec. 1 Scrip Orders Delivered Dec. 8



Worship Schedule
Sunday Worship Service: 9:00 am
Bible Class: 10:15 am
Thursday Worship: 6:30 pm

Or Current Resident

Come and See! Go and Tell!
Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church
and School—WELS
10611 Highway 13 South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
Phone: 715-325-3355
www.lgoodshepherd.org
Pastor Paul A. Tullberg | Pastor John T. Melke
Principal Hannah E. Cook

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