



# The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church  
250 Woodside Road, Riverside, Illinois 60546 \* (708) 442-5250  
“Faith Active in Love”  
[www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org](http://www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org)

Volume 47

December 2025

Issue 12

We are called together by the Holy Spirit around Word and Sacraments to glorify God the Father, creator of all things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust God to nurture lives of faith and hope, as we serve and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

## Images for the Season of Advent

### Advent and Christmas at Sts. Peter and Paul



Fourth Sunday of Advent  
December 21st  
10:15 a.m., Liturgy of Holy Communion

Christmas Eve  
7:15 p.m., Festival Liturgy of  
Holy Communion with Candlelight

Christmas Day  
at Ascension Lutheran Church  
400 Nuttall Road in Riverside  
10:00 a.m. Lessons and Carols  
with Holy Communion  
(No liturgy here on Christmas Day)

### Holiday Office Hours

Monday and Tuesday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>  
9 am til noon.  
Monday and Tuesday, December 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>  
9 am til noon.

A vision from the prophet Isaiah places natural enemies of the animal world next to each other in a peaceable kingdom. This vision has been rendered by artists and proclaimed by preachers. Hurting and destroying others is forbidden. The weak and powerless, the poor and sorrowful will have God as their advocate and deliverer. For at least the four weeks of Advent, the church sets this hopeful vision and divine promise next to stories of war and conflict, demands for privilege, and muffled cries of the poor and powerless.

The prophetic readings from Isaiah during Advent speak strongly about peace to our world. Peace is not simply the absence of war, but the intentional act of beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. God does not want us to learn the trade of war any more. Advent tunes our ears to God's dangerous call to serve as peacemakers. The psalmist's centuries-old prayer is still relevant today: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6). We enlarge the psalmist's vision and pray for the peace of the whole world.

In the second readings proclaimed this season, God's alarm clock wakes us to the urgency of repentance. God's promised coming offers hope amidst all the alarming news of the world. Romans 15:13 serves as a type of benediction for the Sundays in Advent as we celebrate the hopes and fears of all the ages in the coming of Jesus Christ. Sometimes it seems as though God's coming is delayed or ineffective, but we are counseled to be patient and wait on God's promises in hopeful expectation. In this season we do not pretend that Jesus has not yet come. We already claim the promises that are ours in the power of Christ's death and resurrection. We watch in confidence for the one who came, who comes among us each time we gather around Word and Sacrament, and who draws us into God's final coming to make all things new.

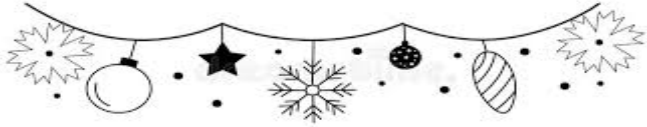
In the gospel readings, hopeful people are urged to be ready for God's unexpected appearances according to God's own time. A surprising voice in the wilderness again calls all people to a new appraisal of their lives and openness to the Holy One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and a cleansing fire. John, the whistle-blower on unholy lives, is jailed for pointing to Jesus as the one who brings good news to all people. It is good news that will become the song of the angels and that will be on the lips and in the hearts of those forgiven and healed by this Savior. All of this points to the Christ who is Emmanuel, God with us. We know him as the promised one who came among us, who continues to be with us, and who opens up all of God's future as a promise in which we can hope.

—continued on next page...

It is an eye-opening experience to be in Israel during Advent. There are no Christmas decorations or the pressure to buy presents. One has only the great promises of Advent. Perhaps this suggests that we should avoid muting the strong, sober messages of Advent with cultural Christmas decorations. The Advent readings talk about peace challenging our war-making. The Biblical message points us to the great needs of the poor, disadvantaged, and powerless who need more than once-a-year Christmas caroling or a few coins in the Salvation Army kettles. Advent points us to radical repentance and realistic hope that transform our expectations and the way we live in the world. Starting with the Advent readings, how might we express this season artistically? Advent might look very different from many of the commercial decorations that are commonplace during December. How might our visual images speak as surprising and challenging voices in the wilderness? How might we picture hope opening up a promising future?

All these readings stir up a new vision of a world in which God comes among us. Will we allow our imaginations to lead us toward a vision for what all this means for our congregation and our life in the community and world? During these December days, the world tries to define Christmas in a way that mutes the Advent message. The church has both the opportunity and the responsibility to proclaim that Advent is not a wet blanket on festivity, but rather a house-cleaning that prepares us to celebrate what God has given the world in Jesus Christ. That is what gives hope and joy to the world.

*Reprinted from Words for Worship, copyright 2004 Augsburg Fortress.  
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## Disturb Us

Disturb us, Lord, when  
We are too well pleased with ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we have dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when  
With the abundance of things we possess  
We have lost our thirst  
For the waters of life;  
Having fallen in love with life,  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision  
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,  
To venture on wider seas  
Where storms will show your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.

We ask You to push back  
The horizons of our hopes;  
And to push into the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

*—ascribed to Sir Francis Drake (1577)*

## Pour Us out like Unending Love (1 Kings 17: 8-24; Mark 12: 38-44)

Where are you now, Elijah?  
Where are the jars of meal and the jugs of oil  
that will not run out of resources?  
Where are you now among the widows  
desperate with fear and hunger;  
where are you now among the children  
who must struggle just for survival;  
where are you now, Elijah,  
among the homeless and the helpless of the world?

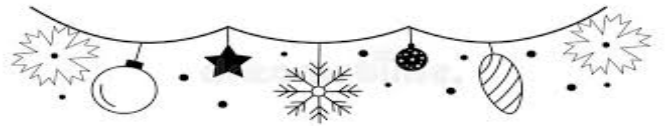
Were you there with the disciples, Elijah,  
watching gifts go into the treasury,  
watching a lonely widow sacrifice  
all that she had for living,  
watching her place her life and future  
in the hands of God?

I see where you are, Jesus:  
I see you laying down your life for others,  
I see you giving your body to be broken,  
I see God in you, holding back nothing –  
holding back nothing like  
a sacrificing widow,  
holding back nothing like  
a jug of poured oil –  
I see God who is willing to give everything  
for the sake of the salvation of the world.

I hear your call to us, as God called Elijah,  
to go to the sad and despairing;  
I see you showing us, as you showed  
your disciples,  
the sacrifices made by the caring;  
I hear you calling us to be part of giving  
all that we are  
for the sake of your future,  
all that we have  
for your love for the world.

O, pour us out, God, Holy Giver.  
Pour us out, like unending love.

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An electronic copy of this newsletter is  
posted at our website  
and can be accessed at:  
[www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org](http://www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org).

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*Michael Teolis Singers presents*

## **Echoes of Christmastide**

Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
7:30 p.m.

First United Methodist Church  
324 N. Oak Park Avenue  
Oak Park, IL 60302  
Handicap Accessible

Online tickets at [www.MTSingers.org](http://www.MTSingers.org)

\$25 general admission

\$20 seniors/students

**Tickets at the door**

\$30 general admission

\$25 seniors/students

Please join the Michael Teolis Singers as we present our Grande Finale concert. Yes, after 18 seasons MTS will be signing off with its final concert: "Echoes of Christmastide." As always, the audience will be treated to the group's usual array of familiar sounds of the season, as well as some unique musical surprises. For this concert, the Maestro is reprising several pieces that "echo" the fun, spirit, and delight from their past holiday programs.

*Our parish musician David Richards along with  
Beverly Tarbox perform with the choir.*



## **Lutheran World Relief Sends Thanks...**

Dear People of Sts. Peter and Paul,

Thank you for your most recent gift of \$1,000 to help bring basic supplies and hope to vulnerable all over the world. It was a pleasure to be with you all this past year during Lent. I hope the process of finding your next pastor is going well. You will be in my prayers in the months ahead.

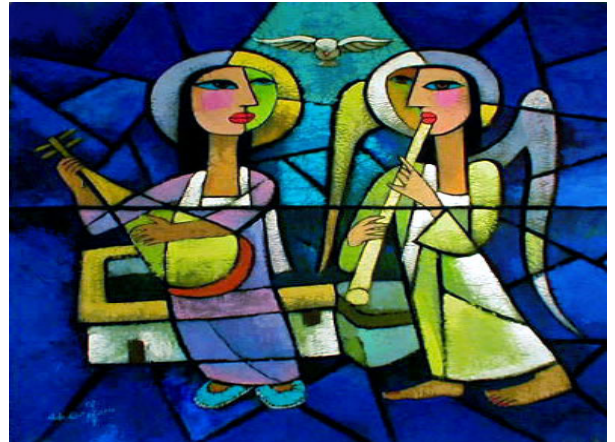
Grace and Peace,

*Rev. Tim Krick*

*Senior Advisor, Congregational Engagement*



*Give us courage, O God, to face the fears and insecurities with which we build walls between ourselves and others. Give us the wisdom and patience to work at better understanding the people whom you surround us with. Let our words and actions incarnate your love.*



*Glory to God in the Highest by He Qi.*



Chorus Zora

presents

*"Christmas Is A-Comin'"*

**Free** holiday concert

Guest appearance by:

Lincoln Middle School Chorus, Berwyn

**Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>  
3:00 p.m.**

Trinity Lutheran Church  
5106 N. LaCrosse  
Chicago

For further information  
call 773-545-7300

Free will donation to benefit Chorus Zora  
and the Lincoln Middle School Chorus

## DECEMBER

Dec. 1: Ludmilla Kovalsky	Dec. 14: Ruth Bakalich
Dec. 2: Elaine Haase	Audrey Bucz
Dec. 3: Lavinia Myers	Ann Pennino
Dec. 4: Eric Kostelny	Dec. 16: Robert Barcik
Dec. 5: Carrie Boike	Nickolas Ritacco
Walter Cudecki	Dec. 17: Ann Kmet
Ann Head	Mary Jo Meyers
Dec. 6: Fred Kuzel	Dec. 19: Martin Tornil
Dec. 10: Edward Sefara	Dec. 26: Shirley Kostelny
Dec. 11: Kristian Kubo	Mary Sasuta
Claire Watkiss	Dec. 27: Steven Mendel
Dec. 12: Betty Force	Dec. 29: Darina Miko
Dec. 13: Vera Borysek	Dec. 31: Grace Tapak

### Birthdays and Anniversaries

December 4, 2004: Lee and Emily Drahos  
December 28, 2002: Gerald and Beverly Tarbox

### Riverside Holiday Stroll

Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 6-9 p.m.

Get into the spirit of the season by attending the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Riverside Holiday Stroll. Pictures with Santa, horse drawn rides and caroling are amongst the activities planned that evening.

### Memorial Flowers

Nov. 24<sup>th</sup>: In loving memory of beloved mother and grandmother +Anna Stastny+ on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death by remembering daughter Audrey Bucz, grandson Brian Bucz, and granddaughter Adrienne Gana.



If you would like to order a poinsettia to help decorate the chancel of the sanctuary for the Christmas liturgies, a sign-up sheet is posted in the dining hall. You may also contact the church office to place your order. The cost per plant is \$17. The deadline for payment and sign-up is Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>.

### October 2025

#### Current, Benevolence and Freewill Offering

Budgeted Offering: \$2,615.00

Date	Offering
10/5	\$1,792.00
10/12	\$ 928.00
10/19	\$1,090.00
10/26	\$1,441.00

## Memorials and Honorariums

### ✦ For the Church ✦

Deb and Dave Bark, Ken and Pam Wood, Mike Wood, Sue and Larry Kusch and their families, in loving memory of +Shirley Wood+ for all the wonderful Christmas memories.

In memory of mother and grandmother +Anna Stastny+ on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death by remembering daughter Audrey Bucz, grandson Brian Bucz, and granddaughter Adrienne Gana.

Saturday Morning Big Book Study (*facility usage*).

A Christmas memorial by the Hassel and Gavac Families in loving memory of +Sam+ and +Anne Gavac+, +Paul Gavac+, +Pavel+ and +Zuzanna Gavac+, +Pavel+ and +Zuzanna Hluchy+, +John Hluchy+, +Joe Hassel+, +Joe+ and +Betty Hassel+.

### The History of Christmas Trees

from the *Old Farmer's 2025 Almanac*

#### The First Christmas Tree

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition. However, the first American Christmas tree can be credited to a Hessian soldier by the name of Henrick Roddmore, who was captured at the Battle of Bennington (Vermont) in 1776. He then went to work on the farm of Samuel Denslow in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, where for the next 14 years he put up and decorated Christmas trees in the Denslow family home.

The first Christmas tree retail lot was established in 1851 by a Pennsylvanian named Mark Carr, who hauled two ox sleds loaded with Christmas trees from the Catskill Mountains to the sidewalks of New York City.

On December 22, 1882, Edward Johnson, an associate of Thomas Edison, created the first string of Christmas tree lights. They were first sold in New York City.

#### Christmas Trees in the White House

The first president to set up a Christmas tree in the White House was Franklin Pierce in 1859. There's some dispute over whether this was officially a White House Christmas tree. In 1889, Benjamin Harrison placed a Christmas tree in the Second Floor Oval Room. Some consider this to be the first official White House Christmas tree.

The first president to establish the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on the White House lawn was Calvin Coolidge.

In 1895, Grover and Frances Cleveland were the first to use the electric Christmas lights on a presidential Christmas tree. (Previously, candles were used.)

In 1961, Jacqueline Kennedy started the tradition of a decorative theme for the White House Christmas tree. (Her first theme was "The Nutcracker".)

—published by *Yankee Publishing Incorporated*  
Dublin, New Hampshire and *The Navigator Ministry*

## DECEMBER WORSHIP SERVERS

### December 7<sup>th</sup>:

Greeter: Staci Harden  
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss  
Lector: John Broussard  
Live Stream: Charles Matthies  
Usher: Rafael Martinez

### December 14<sup>th</sup>:

Greeters: Walter and Judith Cudecki  
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies  
Lector: Philip Painter  
Live Stream: Fred Kuzel  
Usher: Walter Cudecki

### December 21<sup>st</sup>:

Greeters: John and Shirley Kostelny  
Assisting Minister: John Broussard  
Lectors: Paul and Carrie Watkiss  
Live Stream: Charles Matthies  
Usher: John Kostelny

### Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>:

Greeters: Philip and Linda Painter  
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels  
Lector: Beverly Tarbox  
Live Stream: Paul Watkiss  
Usher: George Valek

### December 28<sup>th</sup>:

Greeter: Karyn Bute  
Assisting Minister: Tom Myers  
Lector: Joanne Sefara  
Live Stream: John Broussard  
Usher: Janet Broussard

**Sacristan and Altar Care:**  
Fred Kuzel

## Oplatky

*Oplatky*, a traditional wafer used at Christmastime in Central and Eastern European countries, is available throughout the season of Advent. A donation of \$1.50 per package (½ dozen) is appreciated. The *oplatky* is available on a table near the kitchen serving window or through the church office during the week.



*Interim Pastor Ken Johnson, Karen Rouleau, David Richards and the members of the Congregation Council at Sts. Peter and Paul wish everyone a very blessed Christmas and a joyous, peaceful and healthy New Year.*

## JANUARY WORSHIP SERVERS

### January 4<sup>th</sup>:

Greeters: Edward and Joanne Sefara  
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss  
Lector: Aiden Altavilla  
Live Stream: Fred Kuzel  
Usher: John Kostelny

### January 11<sup>th</sup>:

Greeters: Walter and Judith Cudecki  
Assisting Minister: Beverly Tarbox  
Lector: Kristine Boike  
Live Stream: Charles Matthies  
Usher: Walter Cudecki

### January 18<sup>th</sup>:

Greeter: Carrie Watkiss  
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies  
Lector: George Valek  
Live Stream: Paul Watkiss  
Usher: Rafael Martinez

### January 25<sup>th</sup>:

Greeters: John and Shirley Kostelny  
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels  
Lector: Fred Kuzel  
Live Stream: John Broussard  
Usher: Janet Broussard

**Sacristan and Altar Care:**  
Fred Kuzel

## December Announcements

- ★ The 2026 offering envelopes will be ready for pick up the First Sunday of Advent, November 30<sup>th</sup> in the lower hallway adjacent to the dining hall. Please pick up envelopes for friends or relatives. If you would like to have your envelopes mailed to you, please contact Karen in the church office.
- ★ Financial donations made to the congregation must be received in the church office no later than Tuesday, December 30<sup>th</sup> in order to be included in your end of the year financial statement.
- ★ If you will be leaving the Chicago area during the winter months for warmer climates, please notify the church office before then so the monthly newsletter can be forwarded to your temporary residence or cancelled until you return. The congregation incurs a fee for each newsletter that is undeliverable. Stopped mail delivery to your permanent residence is considered “undeliverable” and returned to the church for a fee. Thank you for your assistance.
- ★ A reminder to the congregation, especially during the months of winter weather, that complimentary cab service is available on Sunday morning for rides to and from worship services. Please contact Blue Village Cab Company at (708) 583-6900 as early as possible to make arrangements for pick up. When arranging your pick-up, please remind the dispatcher that the ride is to be billed to account number #101755.



**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church  
250 Woodside Road  
Riverside, IL 60546

**Postage Guaranteed**

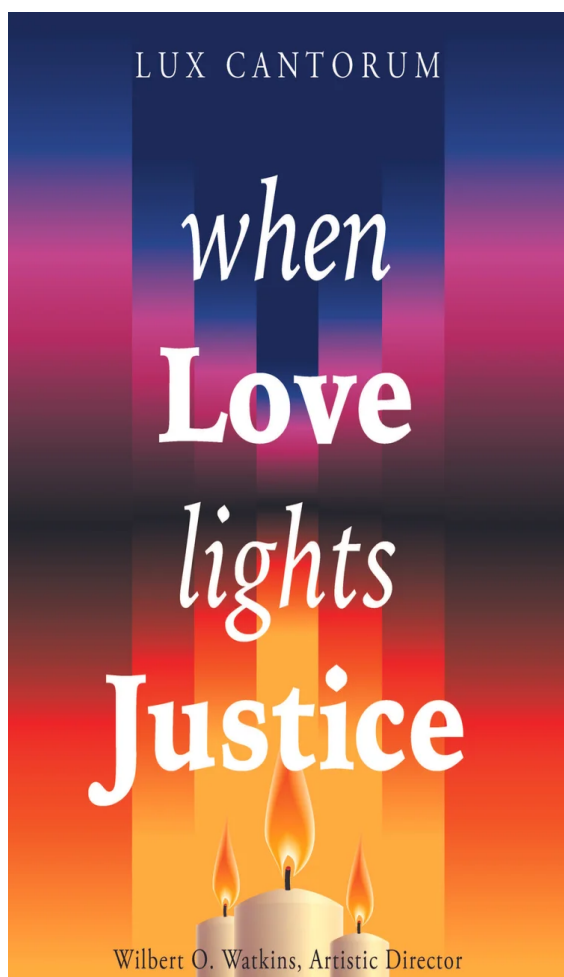
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Riverside, IL  
Permit No. 37

**DATED MATERIAL**

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**We explore the messages woven into our holiday observances to *accept one another, love all neighbors, and support what's fair and right for each of us*—and what it means to embody this responsibility throughout the year.**

Works by: Stephen DeCesare, Fahad Siadat, Kyle Pederson, Moaz Tsur, Elaine Hagenberg, Stacy Gibbs, Felix Mendlessohn, George Frideric Händel, and many others.



**December 5, 2025**

**7:30 PM**

Trinity Lutheran Church  
675 E. Algonquin Road  
Des Plaines, IL 60616

**December 7, 2025**

**4:00 PM**

Buchanan Chapel  
at Fourth Presbyterian Church  
126 West Chestnut Street  
Chicago, IL 60610

**December 13, 2025**

**7:30 PM**

Pilgrim Congregational Church  
460 Lake Street  
Oak Park, IL 60302

**December 17, 2025 –  
January 1, 2026**

An online version of the program will be available worldwide beginning Wednesday, December 17 through January 1, 2026.

Tickets for all performances including the online version are available at [luxcantorum.org](http://luxcantorum.org).

