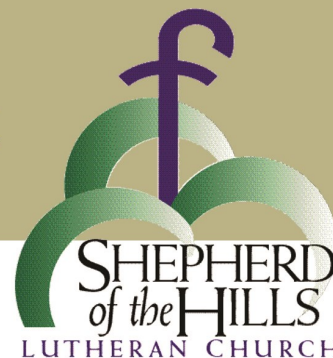


Shepherd's Voice



December 2023

“Why Wait?”

By Pastor Yolanda Denson-Byers

Beloveds:

I can hardly believe that December is upon us and at the end of this month I will have been your pastor for the last six months! I hope you know how much I love you and how proud I am to be your pastor. The radical spirit of welcome in this place, lights me up every time I think of you!

I am so excited to celebrate my first CHRISTmas with each of you. For me, December is a special time of the year as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ.

This year, our Advent theme will be “Why Wait: Meeting Jesus Right Now.” Starting the last Sunday in November, we will engage four topics: Come Now (Nov 26), Comfort Now (Dec 3), Lament Now (Dec 10), and Peace Now (Dec 17).

Together, we will imagine what it means to dwell in the now - and the not yet now - as we remind ourselves that Jesus is always with us, while at the same time living in the anticipation of his birthday, on Christmas Day, and his return at his second coming in glory!

We have so many exciting events upcoming to include our Christmas Tea (Dec 3), Children's Christmas Program - A Mixed Up Christmas Pageant (Dec. 10), as well as a plethora of worship options for you and your family on Christmas Eve (Dec. 24 - 9:30am, 3pm, 5pm). Be advised that I am planning to wear a fancy hat, gloves, and a tea dress. I have never attended a Christmas Tea and I am bursting with excitement; I hope you will join us for this festive occasion.

It is my hope that as we keep the CHRIST in CHRISTmas, we will remember to slow down, spend less, and share more time with friends and family. It is so easy to get caught up in the consumerism of the CHRISTmas season, to overspend our budgets, and max out our credit cards. I want to encourage you to try something new this year and make precious memories that will last a lifetime, while forsaking the overspending that leads to stress and anxiety for the rest of the year.

Pastor's Message continued on page 2

**Shepherd of the Hills
Lutheran Church
500 Blake Road South
Edina, MN 55343
(952) 935-3457**

Staff:

Senior Pastor	Rev. Dr. Yolanda Denson-Byers
Associate Pastor	Rev. Sherri Otto
Music Director	Patti Arntz
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

Church Council Members / Officers:

President	Chris Polston
Vice President	Steve Hanneman
Treasurer	Johanna Olson
Financial Secretary	Fred Jensen
Secretary	Kim Kelly
Serve	Nancy Shaeffer
Worship & Music	Karen Hofstad
Building & Facilities	Peter Barott
Learn	Lyn Kopperud
Communications	Joe Palmersheim
Care	Brittany Roeser
LMCC	Open
Evaluation	Open

Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:

Shawn Wacholz	11
Pastor Yolanda Denson-Byers	12
Pastor Sherri Otto	13
Blair Prax	17

Shepherd Online!

Pr. Yolanda Denson-Byers	pastoryolanda@sothchurch.com
Pr. Sherri Otto	sherri.otto@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Blair Prax	blair.prax@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com

Office Hours:

Summer office hours:

Monday-Thursday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Pastor Yolanda's office hours:

Monday, 9:30-5:30 (home office);

Tuesday-Thursday, 9:30-5:30 (SOTH);

Friday in Sabbath.

Pastor Sheri's office hours:

Monday-Thursday 9:00 am -5:00 pm (SOTH);

Friday in Sabbath

Pastor's Message continued from page 1

Here at Shepherd of the Hills, we invite all people to join us in the Advent/Christmas celebrations. Please take a moment to pray about who you can invite - and bring - to worship this December. We promise to be kind, welcoming, friendly and helpful. Perhaps our family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and loved ones will catch a glimpse of the one we call Immanuel - God with us.

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Yolanda



GIVING: Thank you for your generosity to SOTH!
There are many ways to give:
TEXT "GIVE" to 844-503-1571
MAIL: 500 Blake Road South, Edina, MN 55343
Place your gift in the offering plate at church.
SCAN the QR Code



MUSIC AT SHEPHERD Celebrating Advent and Christmas

The Advent and Christmas season is in full swing and there are many opportunities for SOTH musicians to share their talents. We are looking for instrumentalists to join us on Christmas Eve at either the 3:00 or 5:00 services. Please contact Patti at patti.arnitz@sothchurch.com if you are interested in participating.

The Festival Choir will be meeting on Wednesdays, December 6, 13 and 20 at 5:30. On Sunday, December 17th, the Festival Choir will be presenting a Lessons and Carols service.

CHRISTMAS HYMN SING December 31, 2023

On Sunday, December 31st, we will have a hymn sing as we lift up our voices during the joyous Christmas season. We will sing as many of your chosen hymns as time will allow. We look forward to sharing this special service with you!!

Please email Pastor Sherri your song of choice. (sherri.otto@sothchurch.com)

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT SHEPHERD

The Season of Advent marks the beginning of the Church Year. Traditionally, advent is the four Sundays before Christmas where we wait for the coming of Christ. Advent is not a part of the Christmas season but rather it is a time that we prepare our hearts for the coming King. In fact, the word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus* which means coming.

Now during these four Sundays of Advent, that is to say the four Sundays before Christmas, we are preparing our hearts for the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the newborn King, the arrival that happened 2000 years ago and we're also preparing for the coming of Jesus in the future. Therefore, Advent is a season of waiting.

However, in this series we are asking, “why wait?” Of course we know, theologically, there is “already” and “not yet.” What would it look like if we leaned into the “already?” Jesus is here.

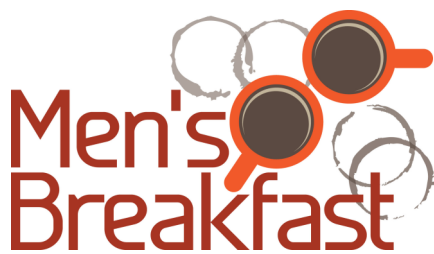


WORD ON WEDNESDAYS!

10:00 am and 6:30 pm

10:00 am: Come for Bible study, coffee, and fellowship! The Wednesday morning group meets at 9:30 am for coffee, treats and fellowship before they begin a Bible study. The Bible study begins at 10:00 am and is based on the following Sunday's sermon text. All are welcome.

6:30 pm: Meet at SOTH for weekly Bible Study, led by Pastor Wade. Each week, we will discuss readings from the coming Sunday's Worship. No prep – just come & walk together in the Word!



MEN'S BREAKFAST

Saturday, December 9 at 8:30 am

SOTH will host a men's breakfast at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, December 9. Sign up at the Welcome desk before Dec. 7. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Wade at 612-716-6707.



LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

December 17, 2022

5:00pm

Christmas may not always be a “merry” time for people, especially when there has been a loss in your life. Loss of a job, loss of community, loss of a loved one can all become too heavy of a burden to

carry alone when everyone around you is filled with holiday cheer. Many of us have faced such losses and our fear, anxiety and loneliness remain high. Please join us on Sunday, December 17th at 5:00 pm for a special service. This service is filled with music, prayer and a time for silent reflection, to allow you to grieve and to hope as we await the birth of Jesus. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Sherri at sherri.otto@sothchurch.com or 612-251-1342.

DECORATE THE CHURCH FOR CHRISTMAS

Saturday, December 2

at 9:00 am

Save the date! We will decorate the church for Advent/Christmas on Saturday, December 2 at 9:00 am. Many hands make light work so come for as long or as little as you have time available. You can count on a really fun morning with a great group of people as we transform our church for the holiday season! Don't miss it! We are also looking for a few more volunteers to help set up the Christmas trees on Friday morning, December 1. Please contact Blair Prax at the church if you are available to help.



CHRISTMAS TEA

Sunday, December 3

2:00 pm

Start the Holidays on a joyous note at our annual Christmas Tea! On Sunday, December 3 our table hostesses will have transformed Good Shepherd Hall into a lovely display of Yule creativity. Our entertainment is by Overdressed Duo. Tickets are \$8.00.



THE PATTERNS WE LIVE BY

By Pastor Sherri Otto

My dad always told us that he was busier being retired than when he was working. But the difference was, he was doing the things that he loved! My dad, Harvey, died in 2002, doing one of the many things that made him happy... helping others by working in the fields and driving a tractor. My mom did not know that on that day, their anniversary, that dad would not be coming home.

It was a few years later that we cleaned out the basement of my parent's home. We got a dumpster and filled it up with lots of things that mom and dad had accumulated over the years. Many things were thrown away but there were several treasures that we came upon. I knew my dad had gotten into woodworking but didn't know what he had created and tried until that day.

One of his creations was this... a puzzle that when you took the pieces out, spelled JESUS.

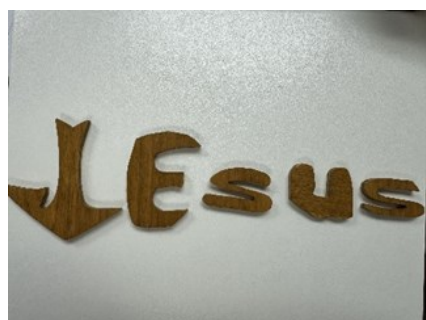
My dad had made several of these, along with a pattern that he used to create them. I love this puzzle as it reminds me that when things may not be making sense, when the world seems a little crazy, when you can't see the important thing that is right in front of you, you take these 5 letters and spell out Jesus.

I love the fact that the J looks like an anchor. That Jesus is truly an anchor for us in times of trouble, in times of doubt, in times of grief and in times when this boat we call life, needs to be settled down.

And I love that just as the letters are surrounded by a heart that has no beginning or end. For we too are surrounded by the everlasting love of God found in Jesus Christ.

As we are encompassed this season with all the decorations of Christmas, all the lights, the gifts, the music and the movies, may we be anchored in Jesus, the Christ-child, remembering that Jesus' love surrounds each one of us and never lets us go.

In peace and love,
Pastor Sherri



IMPORTANT DATES!

December:

- Dec. 2 Christmas Decorating
- Dec. 3 Christmas Tea
- Dec. 9 Christmas Program Rehearsal
Men's Breakfast
- Dec. 10 Children's Christmas Program
- Dec. 13 Wed night caroling
- Dec. 17 Lessons & Carols Service
Longest Night Service
- Dec. 24 9:30 Morning Worship
Christmas Eve Worship at
3:00 & 5:00 pm
- Dec. 31 Hymn Sing in Worship

SOTH BOOK CLUB

Book club at SOTH is open to all. Please feel free to join us. Please contact Alyssa Barott for questions or more information (apbarott@gmail.com)

Book Club Schedules

Sun., December 10 at 4:00 pm at SOTH
"Under the Whispering Door"
by TJ Klune

Children, Youth & Family

WEDNESDAY NIGHT

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

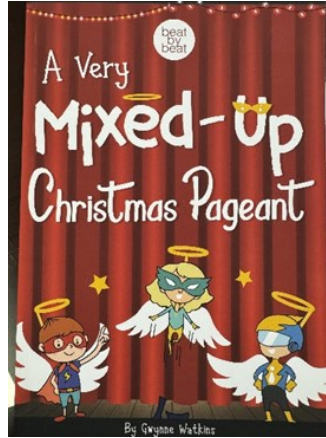
5:30-6:20 pm Adult Choir
6:30-7:30 pm WoW
Adult Bible Study
6:30-7:30 pm Confirmation
(6th-8th Grade)
7:30-8:30 pm Senior High

SOTH TELEVISION MINISTRY

An abbreviated version of SOTH's Sunday morning worship services will be telecast on Comcast Channel 14 and CenturyLink Channel 8110. Sundays - 9:30 p.m., Wednesday - 3:00 p.m., Thursday - 8:30 p.m. Special thanks to Tasha Denson-Byers, our multi-media specialist who edits the video and submits it for presentation to the community.

2023 CONTRIBUTIONS

All contributions for the year 2023 need to be received in the church office by noon on Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023 in order to be entered on 2023 giving statements. Any contributions received after this time will be posted on 2024 statements.



Children's Christmas program December 10th at 9:30am

What happens when kids show up to perform a traditional Christmas Pageant... in their Halloween costumes? Join us on Sunday, December 10th as the cast improvise their way through the story of Jesus' birth in a hilarious and heartfelt way, connecting Biblical figures with modern day superheroes, villains and more! In the end, everyone learns that perhaps being a little bit "mixed-up" is something we can all rejoice in!

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY NOTES

Sat., Dec. 9 from 9:30-11:00 am

Christmas Program Rehearsal

Sun., Dec. 10 at 9:30 am

Christmas Program

Wed., Dec. 13 at 6:30 pm

Caroling for 6th-12th graders

Hot chocolate and cookies to follow!

Wed., Dec. 27

No programs



CALVARY CORNER

By Pastor Wade Wacholz

“LIRS appreciates Calvary’s gift and continuing support to offer welcome and hope to New Americans.” Beth Nelson Chase, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, & “I have very fond memories of Calvary, it was the church where I preached my first sermon ever.” Pastor Dave Wangaard, LIRS.

“We, as a church, are very grateful to the Lord for your generous gift, and overwhelmed by your love for us!” – Pastor Daniel Gao of West Metro Chinese Church

“Today I opened an unassuming envelope from Calvary Lutheran Church. I had no idea that inside, I’d find incredible news of your gift to Our Saviour’s Housing. Thank you for giving us the honor of being part of Calvary’s Legacy.” - Mike Huffman, Executive Director of Our Saviour’s Housing.,

“Lutheran Mideast Development is humbled and aware of our shared calling to faithfulness.” Rev. Dr. John Snider

“Thank you, again & again, for your generous gift to LSS as part of the holy closure of your congregation.” Pastor Kathryn Tiede, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.

“Your congregation and staff have been so supportive and welcoming, we are truly touched by your support.” Girls Scout Troop 16883

“Thank you for the congregation’s generous donation to underwrite our Team’s Mission. That you quoted it brought tears to my eyes. Thank you!” - Edina Robotics Foundation, “The Green Machine.”

“What a beautiful thing for you to do” - Harley, Willa, Aria, Hazel, Zella, Nora, Liesel, Molly, Paige, Britta, Isabel, Myra, Lola, Mia, Belle, Mia (yes 2!), Catherine and Amelia, Girl Scout Troop 18512 .

A beautiful thing indeed. There have been more notes and emails and calls of thanksgiving than we can print here. We just concluded the annual celebration of Thanksgiving and I cannot think of a better time for you all to hear how your generosity is reverberating out from our former home on Antrim Road. The gratitude is real and the impact of the generosity of Calvary’s people is reaching out all over our communities and across the world. It fills my heart.

Gratitude is a powerful word from God, a powerful demonstration of the Spirit’s movement – powerful enough to turn mourning to joy, sorrow to gladness.

I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. Jeremiah 31:13

Jeremiah wrote these words, for a people who had left home, about the promise of redemption. As we turn to our season of Advent expectation, we can lean on that promise – a Redeemer comes, bringing comfort, gladness, joy to us all. We can all be grateful for this gift. It is a beautiful thing.

~ Pastor Wade

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
500 Blake Road South
Edina, MN 55343

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Glory to God

in the highest,
and on earth peace,
good will toward all.

Luke 2:14

You're Invited to
Celebrate the Christmas Season
at Shepherd of the Hills

Sunday Worship at 9:30 a.m.

December 3	9:30 am	Advent Worship
December 10	9:30 am	Christmas Worship led by our children
December 17	9:30 am	Lessons & Carols Service
December 24	9:30 am	Christmas Eve Morning Worship
December 24	3:00 pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
	5:00 pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
December 31	9:30 am	Christmas hymn sing

Christmas is a season of welcoming ...
Welcoming the Christ child, welcoming family
and welcoming friends.

Join us this season as we give thanks
for gift of God's love
and celebrate this promise.