



Grace and peace to you,

The season of Advent is here. From the Latin word, *adventus*, which literally means, coming, we set this four-week period apart from the rest of year as a time of active waiting (anticipation) for the arrival of Jesus the Christ. The purpose of the season is preparation of our hearts, focus on our faith and contemplation of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and promise to return.

From what we know, the first Advent season was celebrated in Spain as early as 380 with the central purpose being a time to prepare for Epiphany (Jan 6) and the Baptism of our Lord. Then, in the 5th century we hear about a practice of Advent in northern France. It began on the Feast of St. Martin (Nov. 11) through to the Nativity of Jesus (Dec. 25). In the 6th century the season of Advent was officially recognized, and it was taught that Christians should fast three days a week during this period from mid-Nov. to late Dec. Fasting quickly became to primary way Christians honored the Advent Season.

The tradition of celebrating Advent spread far and wide although, by the 8th century, it moved from being a church liturgical celebration to an at-home time of spiritual discipline, with fasting and abstinence being the core practices. Over time the duration and practices of Advent changed to the observance of Advent beginning four Sundays prior to Dec. 24. Fasting remained popular for centuries, but eventually faded away in most areas.

It would be German Lutherans that would bring about a reimagining of the Advent season with the introduction of the Advent Wreath with its four candles and Advent Calendars. Martin Luther will also gain renown for reportedly being the first person to bring an evergreen tree into his home and decorating it with Christians symbols as a way to celebrate the Advent season. Still a time meant to prepare our hearts, focus on faith and contemplate Jesus, Lutheran practice added physical items to help mark the time leading up to the Nativity of our Lord on Dec. 24. It would be Dec. 25-Jan 6 that Christians celebrated the Christmas season with parties, presents and elaborate meals.

Each year we struggle to hold on to the Advent Season as a time separate from the Christmas festivities. It may seem that a period of waiting and holy preparation does not have room amidst the expectations of our current culture (within the church and without). We certainly know that Advent has taken on many forms over the centuries and it subject to the desires of God's people as we go about our day-to-day lives.

I would ask that you consider what practices or opportunities would best create the space you desire to prepare your hearts, focus on your faith and contemplate the arrival of Jesus into this world, both past and promised return. What would it look like for you to settle into this season beyond an hour on Sunday. Perhaps that is not helpful for you at this time. Or, perhaps, you might find renewal and hope through taking time each day to read an advent devotional, open an advent calendar and read the scripture listed for the day (this kind do still exist, although I know the candy and toy ones are fun!). What would it look like to light your advent wreath as you have your cup of morning coffee or tea and just sit in silence for 5min and listen for the Spirit to speak.

I hope that our services on Sunday will provide some respite this season. I pray that, no matter how you choose to honor this season, you find great joy in the birth of Jesus who has freed you from sin and death and crowned you with righteousness and clothed you with grace. Amen. - Peace, Pastor Krista



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Special points of interest

- Bishop's Letter on last page—*great read!*
- Council Report pg. 3



MOUNTAIN VALLEY PRESCHOOL



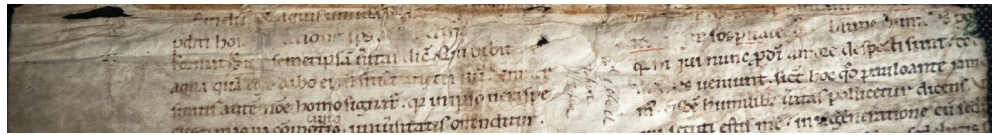
Mountain Valley
Preschool

Where a Love for Learning is Created

Updates to events are communicated through Constant Contact and an email list of families and friends, if you are not on this list but would like to be included please let Pastor Krista know.

AA
Will meet Thursdays and Sundays in Luther's Lounge weekly at 7 pm
Ogle Street entrance

GIRL SCOUTS
The Girl Scouts Leaders meet the 3rd Thursday of each month



THIRSTY FOR THEOLOGY

Thirsty for Theology will gather around the parsonage fire pit or inside depending on weather at 7pm on Thursday, December 7th at the Parsonage. This is a space to share faith and fellowship. We'll take a break in January and gather again in February.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The Monday Ladies Bible Study will not be meeting during the month of December. We will resume our study in January. If you have any questions, please reach out to Vivian Waid.

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Each Saturday @ 9am the men gather at Little Si Restaurant in North Bend for breakfast and Bible Study. The Study focuses on the readings for the upcoming Sunday worship. Reach out to Dave Spurling or Ed Benson for details.

Thank you to Courtney, Erica and Rosemary for helping lead our Fruit of the Spirit Intergenerational Bible Study following worship in Sept.-Nov.



Thank you to Marlin for leading our study of Romans 6-8. The group is completing their study on Wednesday, Dec. 6th. Our Wednesday study group will take a break.



COUNCIL REPORT

Greetings from your council.

Our income in September was \$16,963. Our expenditures for September were \$21,792 which included an annual liability insurance payment of \$8,719. This is a loss of \$4,829. At the end of the month we had \$41,800 in our checking account.

On November 12 we held our annual congregational meeting. We had a quorum and approved changes to our constitution, the 2024 budget, the 2024 council members, and our new welcoming statement. Included in the constitutional changes was a change in our quorum from 40 members to 30% of our active members. With our current membership of 83 the quorum will be 25 members. We also changed the size of council from a range of 12 to 16 to a range of 7 to 12.

Since we have 8 council members that will continue through 2024 and there were no nominations for new council members we did not elect any new members. The 2024 council members will be Jack Boller, Inge Burnside, Tom Burnside, John Keiser, Marlin Olson, Rick Rodriguez, Paul Ritzenthaler, and Dave Spurling. We will elect a new executive team at our December meeting.

We approved the following new welcoming statement that identifies who we are as a church:

In the shadow of Mount Si sits a small country church, wonderfully illuminated by the light of God. We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person with all your complexities, gifts, questions, and challenges. Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world. We believe our mission is to serve, reach out and grow in grace.

ALL are welcome to join us in this quest.

We will start using this in our bulletin and other church information documents.

Jack Boller

Grace and peace to you,

At our annual meeting on November 12, Lisa Sampson, our Personnel Chair, announced that the Congregational Council approved my sabbatical request for 2024. I am grateful this congregation offers a sabbatical option after five years of ministry. It is hard for me to believe, but Dec. 2023 I begin my 7th year serving as your Pastor. I will leave for the Belize Mission Trip on April 3rd and move directly into my sabbatical time when I return. I will return to the office on Wednesday, July 17th and be in worship on Sunday, July 21st. A sabbatical team is being formed to offer leadership while I am away. The clergy of our cluster are working on a plan to offer pastoral leadership while I am away. Please look for additional information as we near this sabbatical time. I'll share more about my plans for my time away in the Feb. Newsletter. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me or Lisa S. Thank you all for this opportunity to rest, refresh and refocus!

Peace,

Pastor Krista



DECEMBER SUNDAY LESSONS

December 3rd

First Lesson:
Galatians 3:23-39
Narrative Text:
Isaiah 40:1-11

December 10th

First Lesson:
Psalm 126
Narrative Text:
Jeremiah 33:10-18

December 17th

Christmas Play/Pageant
First Lesson: NA
Narrative Text:
NA

December 24th - am

First Lesson:
Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Narrative Text:
Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

December 24th - pm

Lessons TBD

December 31st

First Lesson:
Narrative Text:
Mark 1:1-20

There will be a special education hour for all ages on Dec. 10th following worship, we will take a break from intergenerational ed time until January 7. There will still be fellowship time following worship.



Quilters Group

Quilters meet on Monday mornings in the quilting room.



The Sunday flower chart is in the Fellowship Hall outside of the library.

You are welcome to sign-up for a Sunday to provide one vase of flowers for the altar.

Did you take photos of an event with Mt Si that you would be willing to have used in our newsletters or other promotional purposes? Short videos are also appreciated. Please send to Kathleen at:

mtsi.assistant@gmail.com

All of our children and youth are invited for a fun-filled Christmas Party with food, games, crafts, prizes and more. Friends are most welcome to attend!



Sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20FoF49ADAB2BA2FB6-46477703-children>

Women's Christmas Gathering Saturday, December 16th 2-4pm

We will spend time in prayer, scripture, song, meditation and fellowship as we explore the theme, "Simply Still." This program is designed to create space to connect with our Lord Jesus in the midst of such a busy season. If you are able, please bring a light appetizer to share. Sign-ups can be found in the Fellowship Hall or Narthex. Please reach out to Pastor or Courtney with questions. You are more than welcome to invite friends, neighbors and family! All ages welcome.

SAVE THE DATE !

Epiphany Bonfire

January 7

12pm @ the Burnsidés



Created to Be Me retreat at Camp Lutherwood



I had such a great time at Lutherwood! It was so much fun to hang out with other churches and play fun games. The food there was good and the people were so kind. I would definitely go there again!

Kelsey H.

Thanks! to Doug Johnson and Bobbi Cyr for organizing the November Youth Retreat at Camp Lutherwood.



Confirmation: story by Nellie Sampson

In Confirmation, we are learning about the Bible. We watch a video each time, and we write down our notes in a small journal. Some of the time we moved to a different room. Like the Library, Fellowship Hall, and the old Nursery. We usually have games and snacks like chips, candy, fruit, snacks, and trail mix. When we get "bored" there is a basket full of fidgets. And Judah is the MASTER at the fidget cube.



In Confirmation last week, we got the Footprints in the Sand poem. Kaelynn Judah, Austin, Kelsey, Jack, Pastor Krista and I all got the poems.

From that poem I learned that God is with you no matter what. And if you don't think you have a person to count on, you can always count on God.

Red Cross Blood Drive December 14th 10am to 3pm



An American Red Cross blood donation is a gift that doesn't cost a thing but can give hope for another holiday to patients in need. You can be a part of the magic of giving by [scheduling your next appointment!](#)

It's easy to get wrapped up in the mayhem of the holiday season. Why not take an hour of your time to remember what it's all about?

Blood Drive registration signups at: [Schedule a Blood, Platelet or Plasma Donation | American Red Cross \(redcrossblood.org\)](#)

The drive is open to the public and a spot can be reserved using the **sponsor code: MtSiLutheran.**

If you are interested in helping with this blood drive please reach out to Rick Rodriguez.

Confirmation continues to meet each Wednesday from 4:45-5:45pm unless otherwise noted due to school breaks, etc.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



Lauralee Ritzenthaler 4th
Joshua Stone 12th
Ed Benson 14th
Zowie Karren 14th
Jack Boller 20th
Kay Boyle 22nd
Michael Harding 22nd
Christopher Sampson 24th
Don Oster 26th
Haley Chase 30th
Nate Chase 30th

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES



Michael & Rosemary Hanson 15th
Abe & Mary Abrahamson 22nd

If we missed your birthday or anniversary, please reach out to the office so we can make the correction.

75th Anniversary planning

Next year, Mount Si Lutheran Church will celebrate 75 years of **Serving, Reaching Out, and Growing in Grace.**

The Anniversary Planning Team has met and the date for the celebration will be **Saturday, September 14, 2024.** There will be many opportunities for you to volunteer to help. Please prayerfully consider joining one or more of these sub-committees. It may seem early to be signing up, but we hope to have special events leading up to the September celebration and we will need your ideas as well as your help. If you have questions or suggestions for the upcoming events next year, please contact Sheila Rodriguez. You can call the church office for her contact info.

Bishop Shelley will be here to celebrate the 75th Anniversary

Next meeting: Mon., January 15, 2024 @ 11:00a.m.

Dec. 10, Jan 7, Jan 14 and Jan 21 we will explore the ROAR series and learn all about the brave, bold, unexpected and fearless followers of God throughout scripture. Each week we will dive into a different Biblical character and see how God used each of them to bring hope and promise to God's people.

**Be on your guard;
stand firm in the faith;
be courageous; be strong.**

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV)

ROAR

being bold in our faith



Intergenerational Bible Study
December 10, January 7,
January 14, January 21



St. Clare Episcopal Church Essentials Ministry

We will once again be providing hats, scarves, gloves and socks starting on December 13 at our monthly distribution at the Snoqualmie Valley Food Bank. We are finding our drive **in need of gloves or mittens** and hope you would share with Mt Si that we have a great need of gloves. We would welcome any donation of gloves ranging from the simple \$2-3 light gloves to those that are more protective for our unhoused clients. We are careful to provide them appropriately. **You may drop off gloves at Mt Si between now and the 12th.**

Thank you!

Celebrate the Season in North Bend

Holly Days

AN OLD-FASHIONED DOWNTOWN FESTIVAL

BUDDY IS BACK

SEE NORTH BEND'S
RESIDENT ELF
DEC. 2ND 3-5PM
AT THE NORTH BEND
THEATRE VIA A
FREE FEATURE OF
ELF!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2ND
5:00-8:00PM

Bells of the Sound Christmas Concert

Sunday, December 17,
4pm
FREE to all
at **Saint Andrew's Lutheran
Church**
2650 148th Avenue SE, Bellevue

**Come enjoy an hour of beautiful
handbell music
by one of the nations top handbell
choirs (Bells of the Sound)
playing Christmas favorites.**

THE SPLENDOR OF HEAVEN

Saturday, December 16th at 7pm
*In the Sanctuary at Sammamish
Hills Lutheran Church*

*Music Presented by Sammamish Hills
Lutheran Church's Music Ministry Team
and Friends (Brilliant music scoring with
live Orchestra & Choir)*

*Also enjoy a bake sale with a variety of treats
and an Art Exhibit featuring the artwork of
SHLC congregation members*

DOORS OPEN AT 6:30 PM | \$10 ADMISSION
SAMMAMISH HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH
22818 SE 8TH STREET
SAMMAMISH, WA 98074

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS HARD FOR
THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE
HURTING. YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Blue Christmas

a gentle, contemplative worship service for
those who are carrying pain or loss during
this season of celebration

WED, DEC 20 - 7PM
MT SI LUTHERAN CHURCH
411 NE 8TH ST, NORTH BEND

WWW.MTSILUTHERAN.ORG



Please

**Make a gift online
through our website:**
[www.mtsilutheran.org/
onlinegiving](http://www.mtsilutheran.org/onlinegiving)

Thank you for your
continued generosity.

-Treasurer

Advent Begins December 3rd

Following worship
On December 3rd
We will put together Advent
wreaths, a special advent

devotional jar, crafts, and
learn more about the season
of Advent.

BISHOP'S LETTER

December 2023



We were in a car heading to the Sahara Desert. The weather was changing. I looked out the window and, seeing a dark mass in the distance, said to the driver, "Do you know what a tornado is?" He didn't respond. But in a few short moments, we skidded to a stop on the side of the road. There was no visibility, wind was swirling around us. Rain and sand and rocks were pelting the car. And then the car windows broke from the pressure of the storm. We were suddenly being blown around and all of us in the car were showered with rain and sand and rocks and glass. We huddled in our seats, shocked by the ferociousness of the weather around us and fearful of what was happening.

When I look at our world right now, I confess I feel much the same as I did on that day - like I'm huddling in my seat, shocked by the ferociousness of the wind and fearful of what is happening.

In our world, the climate continues to change and people and the very earth are suffering. We continue to harm this planet that God created for us and for all creatures and plants.

In our Holy Land, as I write this in the middle of November, we hear of Palestinian Christian families fleeing, children crying, hunger and desperation, churches being bombed and hospitals being attacked. In our Holy Land, we hear of violence against the Jewish people, kidnapping of children and old people, and the threat of death.

In our country, there are those who are conflating Christianity with patriotism, those who are moving against Democracy and towards authoritarianism, gun violence continues unabated, legislators refuse to do their work and instead look after their own best interests. There is continued racism in our institutions, polarization, refusal to listen to each other, and more.

In the ELCA, we forget that we are gathering for the sake of Jesus and for those desperate to hear God's Word of forgiveness, love, and grace. We try to prop up institutional ideas rather than living into the Spirit of Christ. We would rather live in the "what once was" rather than the advent of something beyond our imaginations (but not God's).

Truly, the storms seem strong and fierce.

And yet ... and yet ...

In this time, when we not only are living in these swirling squalls, we are called, as people of faith, to remember and trust how God has worked, and continues to work, in this world. We are called to tell the stories of God's faithfulness again. For in the beginning, through God's Word, chaos became the heavens and the earth. Later, Moses saw God in fire. In the story of Job, when Job questioned God's faithfulness, God replied, referring to the stars, 'Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion?' When Abraham fought the storm of sacrificing his son, God brought through the darkness a ram. When a country was occupied by Rome, power was held by a few, voices were silenced, and hope seemed fleeting, a young girl became pregnant and sang. A young couple sought shelter far from home.

In a night of storms, one star shone bright. In a world of desolation, a baby's cry was heard.

In this stormy time, in this time of deep shadows and unknowns, in this time of memory and hope, in this Advent and Christmas time, together we lift our voices in and sing:

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Dear Beloveds of God, I wish you Advent and Christmas blessings and hope.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee