

REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH
LCMS

STAR



DECEMBER 2020 PUBLICATION
VOLUME 13 ISSUE 12

Redeemer **Reflection** Newsletter

Loving People To Christ

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REDEEMER REFLECTION

*From the Intentional
Interim Pastor's
Desk...*

STAR

by Reverend Carl Bassett,
Intentional Interim Pastor

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born king of the Jews?' For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.'"

Matthew 2:1-2

Dear Family,

As Christmas approaches, no doubt you'll see images and references to the *Star* throughout the holiday season. The *star* served one purpose: it signaled the birth of Jesus and pointed people to Him. In other words, you and I are called to follow the *Star*—His name is Jesus!!

You know, in Holy Scripture we read there were only a handful of people who followed the *star* that announced the birth of our Lord and Savior. For



hundreds of years this event had been talked about, shared, and passed down from generation to generation. Yet as the event unfolded, and the *star* illuminated the sky for all to see, only a few made the journey to come face to face with Emmanuel—did you

know that Hebrew name means God with us? And indeed, He is!

The *star* was bright. People *had* to notice as it lit the sky. It stood out—it was different. It signaled the moment when Heaven reached down and gave the greatest Gift to the world. Did you ever wonder why only a few recognized the greatness that was happening and began walking toward Him? I'm certain that this *star* was a conversation piece; I believe people gathered outside and gazed at it, no doubt some even danced under its brightness. Kids played under its light. Oh yes, when Heaven meets Earth, people do take notice!

But why did so few come to welcome this Holy Baby? Were they too busy tending to their own flock? Were they tied up with their own family? Were they simply focused on their calendar and getting their to-do list done? Was it too

far to travel and too much of an effort? *"Had I seen that star, I would have gone and worshiped and even brought Jesus some gifts too,"* some might have arrogantly said. *And then it hit me.* As I wondered why so many people did not follow the *star*, I'm reminded that often we take our focus off of Jesus, and place it on others who are not following Him. Folks, when you point to others, you can't point to *THE star and THE Savior!*

But still, two thousand-plus years later, Jesus calls you and me to be Light. You are the Light of the World. You are asked to point to Jesus. Never



forget that our job is to shine bright and when we do, people will take notice. You know, when

people come face to face with Jesus, it's His business to change their heart, it's Jesus who is their Savior and it's Jesus who is their Hope. It's His responsibility to change their heart, not ours. Our job is to follow the *Star*, shine bright, and continually point to the Savior.

As we enter this Advent and Christmas season, celebrating our Savior's birth, marked with the appearance of the holy, bright *Star* that shone in the northern sky centuries ago, as part of our preparations, why not consider the following questions:

- ✧ What distractions do you allow that keep you from pointing to Jesus?
- ✧ When do you feel your "light" is its brightest?

- ✧ How do use your talents to point to and honor God?

May our Heavenly Father help us respond to the greatest Christmas Gift of all that we've ever received, by answering in a God-pleasing way!

Have a blessed and merry Christmas! May His Holy Star shine in your hearts and minds!

Pastor Bassett

MOBILE FOOD PANTRY AND GIVEAWAY

The former Community Care Day in partnership with Trinity Lutheran Church over the past few years has shifted into a monthly event. It will now be a Mobile Food Pantry, and each month we'll have an additional giveaway item. In December this year, we are asking for hats, scarves, gloves, and mittens in all sizes as the specialty items. The need is great in our community, and this is a way we can help with the very real need of food for this month.

If you'd like to volunteer to get involved with these fourth-Saturday-of-the-month opportunities to serve our community, please contact the office at 517-750-3100.

Items needed for giveaways will be communicated each month, and non-perishable food items **may be put in the bin in the narthex.**

Thank you all for being so generous during these unusual times.



DECEMBER

Emma Kestner	12/01
Sharon Rumohr	12/01
Brennen Schnebelt	12/01
Evelyne Jones	12/02
Bill Bartlett	12/03
Matthew Mogle	12/06
Robin Ellison	12/07
Debra Moyer	12/07
Russ Jean	12/08
Dorothy Thomas	12/09
Leah Heffner	12/10
Bill Mantek	12/11
Marvel Jones	12/12
Nyla Arvy	12/14
Carol Faris	12/14
Debbie Rockwell	12/14
Janie Boyle	12/17
LynnEtte Mueller	12/17
Tom Polzien	12/17
John Smith	12/17
Kaylee Hoyt	12/19
Ellie Hoyt	12/19
Juli Smith	12/22
Art Knueppel	12/23
Jim Seidzik	12/24
Jesus	12/25
Carol Rose	12/25

POINTERS

by Kimber Walsh, Family Life Educator

One of the most wondrous parts of the Christmas account, which we don't talk about nearly enough, is the star. It's truly amazing because it came out of nowhere, it shone brighter than any other star, and it showed the exact location of the Savior newly born. It pointed the wisemen and the shepherds to Christ. I actually like the star so much that I played it a couple of times in a Christmas pageant. (Really!)

I was recently at a baptism at another church, and the pastor was talking about the role that parents have in pointing their children to Christ throughout all of their lives. Then he referenced Deuteronomy 6 (v.6-9), one of my favorite verses, which says:

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

That means everything that we do in life is to be about pointing our children to Christ. And when we aren't pointing our children to Him, we ought to be pointing others to Him.

At age three, my daughter is already pretty good at pointing me to Christ daily. We're playing follow-the-leader and she says, "Mama, Jesus is our leader, right?!" "That's right." And when she goes to bed at night a little nervous about the darkness, "You and Jesus will keep me safe, right?" "Yes, sweetheart." I'm always humbled when she points

me to Jesus (and often a little embarrassed, if I'm honest, that she recognizes opportunities I might have missed). But the beauty of being in relationships with one another is that the Holy Spirit can use each one of us to point the others to Christ in the ordinary.

The star teaches us to point to Christ



too. We probably never thought that we could learn something from the

star of Christmas, but here it is setting an example for us of what we are to do each and every day.

TOPIC FOR JANUARY

The writing prompt for January is *Fresh*. The *Reflection* newsletter is meant to help us reflect and share our Lord through the daily life and actions of His people, particularly with our activities and worship services here at Redeemer.

Please consider sharing personal stories of how you have seen or felt God working in your life, especially during these unusual circumstances associated with our time of "sheltering-in-place" during this pandemic. A *fresh* perspective can help each one of us view life through someone else's eyes. The more open we are to the thoughts and feelings of others, the more easily we can find new and more meaningful ways to serve those around us.

Articles on the topics of Family, Prayer, and Outreach are always welcome, as are other aspects of the Christian life. Please also share situations that can or have influenced your faith and how we can worship Him with and through our lives in this time and place.

Send articles, information, and/or photos to bennitt49@yahoo.com, by the 15th of each month, to be included in the following month's newsletter. This is the most easily accessed means of getting your information to me, especially now. All submissions are appreciated and prayerfully considered.

THE IMMORTAL NICHOLAS: A Book Review



by Peggy Bennitt

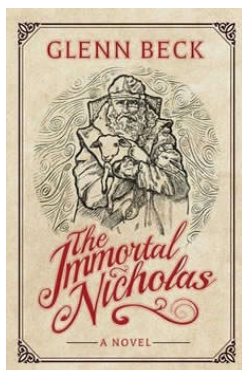
"That impossibly bright star, which had first appeared at a time of great sadness and anger in his life, would usher in a new era of joy and celebration...For when that star returned to the heavens, the Lord would return from the heavens to the earth."

Glenn Beck

Have you ever tried to imagine what the wisemen might have thought when they discovered a new star in the sky? In Glenn Beck's *The Immortal Nicholas*, a wonderful retelling of how Santa Claus (or "St. Nicholas") actually came about, we meet the three wisemen and get their scholarly take on the newly discovered star and the ancient foretelling of this phenomena.

The Immortal Nicholas is a complex yet simple story of learning to trust, love, and hope in someone far greater than ourselves. It leads us through the legendary life of Angios, or Nicholas, who traveled through his world, existing as best he could for hundreds of years, meeting shepherds and kings along the way. As we walk alongside Angios, we witness the shaping of a man's heart and the saving soul of a saint in the works. An historical

Christmas journey with a unique viewpoint.



"His role was to teach men and women to give—and to give them all what Angios himself had always needed: Hope." Glenn Beck, *The Immortal Nicholas*.

This book was a gift to me from my daughter several years ago. As I read it, I was amazed at the way the author wove history and cultures together to make a wonder-evoking story of the making of a saint and a legend. What a wonderful Christmas gift to refocus on the true journey to faith in Jesus! I highly recommend it for a distinctive gift for someone special.

SUNDAY SERVICES LIVE-STREAMED EVERY SUNDAY

Redeemer Lutheran Church now offers live-streamed Sunday services each week at 10:30 a.m. View them online through the **Worship Tab** on our website. Archived services are also available every Monday through the website.



☺ **Thursdays, Ongoing: Bethel Bible Study.** This series will meet every Thursday evening from **6:30-9:00 p.m.**, throughout the normal school year.

☺ **Wednesday, December 2: Chancel Guild.** Beginning at 10:00 a.m. We welcome new members at any time!

☺ **Thursday, December 10: LWML Women of Redeemer.** Beginning at 10:00 a.m. Meeting and Desserts.

☺ **Advent Services, Wednesdays, December 2, 9, and 16 at 6:30 p.m.**

☺ **Christmas Eve Services: Redeemer** will have three (3) services on Christmas Eve:

4:30 p.m.

6:30 p.m. service will be live-streamed

8:30 p.m.

CHRISTIAN CARE MINISTRY

by Nyla Arvy

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord you labor not in vain."

I Corinthians 15:58

If we look back over the months since March when our stay-at-home order was first issued, we can easily count many blessings our Lord has granted us. Sharing what we have with others is very gratifying, especially when we see how grateful they are as recipients of our gifting. Many of our Redeemer friends have stepped up to help by shopping for food items to share with others.

We extend sincere appreciation to all who donated grocery items for the Thanksgiving food boxes. Your generosity provided considerable amounts of food to eight of our Redeemer households.

NEW TO CHRISTIAN CARE MINISTRY

The recently established "Meal-a-Month" for two of our shut-ins has been very well received. For members who



would like to participate in the future, sign-up sheets will be posted soon in the narthex for the months of January, February and

March. This program gives opportunity to Redeemer members who would like to provide a delivered meal on an agreed upon date and time to these

dear Redeemer members. Specific details will be included on the sign-up sheets.



She Overcomes and Rises (SOAR) is a Jackson-area ministry that strives to have a positive impact on women survivors and the community. Also known as SOAR Café and Farms, the ministry is a place of healing and empowerment and one of the several ministries Redeemer supports through its mission budget.

The mission of SOAR is *"To make a way. A way to heal, empower, and employ women survivors of human trafficking, sexual abuse, and trauma. By providing safe and supportive housing, the opportunity for personal and financial independence, and a strong community of advocates and partners."*

The organization's vision is to become a self-sustaining residential and social enterprise, by setting as many women free of the bondages of slavery to addiction, emotional wounds, prison, and poverty, as God wills and allows.

The following is a recent update sent to Redeemer's Leadership Board as they worked through the 2021 Budget:

SOAR Residential Program

There is currently one resident at our rental property. This woman just completed the first 90 days of her two-year program and is making exceptional progress. She finished 90 meetings in 90 days and has an Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor. She is connected with community resources for attending church, counseling, nutrition, health care, dental care, and substance abuse treatment. She has reconnected with healthy family members and visits them regularly. Currently she is applying to a local college and has started attending supportive groups for job readiness and time management. Screening for the next resident is in process, with the hopes for her to begin her program in December 2020.

Renovations are in the final stages of the Brown Street home purchased for the ministry by a benevolent investor.



All new windows have been installed and the interior painting is completed. The estimated move-in for residents was mid-December with the plans of a Community Open House to be scheduled as soon as gatherings are safely possible.

Mentoring Program

With COVID-19 pressing in, mentoring women at the prison has not been permitted face-to-face. SOAR mentors continue to stay connected with their mentees through letters, phone calls, and the prison email system. There are currently 12 mentees who maintain regular contact with a mentor.

Community Group

SOAR's Community Group meets weekly on Monday evenings with face-to-face meetings and a Zoom option. During Michigan's "Stay-at-Home" period and now, the recent "Pause to Save Lives," the group meets virtually. Weekly attendance is between 12-18 women.

SOAR supported two community group women in the past months, enabling them and their children to move into their own apartments. Both of these women maintain employment in the community and are connected with other community resources.

If you are interested in learning more about the SOAR ministry, visit soarcafeandfarms.com. You can also request to be put on the monthly email newsletter by contacting Jennifer Coxon at jeni@soarcafeandfarms.com.





by Pastor Bassett

Let's Get to Know Our Awesome Staff at Redeemer!

Since I've been blessed to be your Intentional Interim Pastor these past five months, I want you to know what a very special blessing our staff is here at Redeemer!

All of you don't have the same privilege I do of working with them "in between Sundays," so I wanted you to know about all the great things they do for our Lord and you, God's Forever Family. Each month I'll be using our newsletter to help you get better acquainted with these talented, wonderful partners in ministry that serve you in this place: Office Manager, Director of Ministries, Director of Worship, and Family and Youth Facilitator.

First, let me share with you the duties of Heidi Gannon, our Office Manager.



Heidi is the voice and face of Redeemer during the week. She is the one that fields all the questions about our church and ministries, and properly and efficiently routes them to the Pastor,

leadership, and staff for action. She oversees all administrative matters, and provides valuable support and preparation for resources that support all our ministries here at Redeemer.

In addition to that large volume of work, she is Redeemer's Communications Resources Coordinator and Director, responsible for all communications from the church. She manages, updates, and coordinates the annual calendar of events with our Pastor and staff. She coordinates a complete system of the use of our building and grounds. Heidi manages and maintains our church website, and she assists our newsletter editor with the assembly and production of this important communication. She coordinates the scheduling and planning of ushers and readers for our worship services, and distributes schedules to those involved. With the cognizance and approval of the Pastor, Heidi handles all community assistance requests regarding our Care Ministry Fund to help individuals in Jackson who reach out to our church for help with food, utilities expenses, and assistance with rent, gas, and other essential items.

Quite a list for the person who serves in all these "behind-the-scenes" areas! In addition to all this, Heidi is an active, enthusiastic member of Redeemer who can always be counted upon to help with the ministries here. Please join me in expressing your thanks and appreciation to Heidi for all that she does to the glory of God at Redeemer and beyond! You are truly a blessing!

**NEXT MONTH, WE'LL GET TO KNOW
OUR DIRECTOR OF MINISTRIES,
CRAIG BRITTON!**

CORONAVIRUS DIARY #20: PLEASE, WAIT



by Kristin Rathje, one of our guest writers, shares selections and/or excerpts from her Blog, *Next Chapter*; used with permission.

(This article reflects Kristin's own experience with COVID 19 and suggestions for making safe choices during this pandemic.)

Note: I finished editing...right before Governor Whitmer announced new restrictions for Michigan... It just makes sense, friends. The numbers can't be denied. Please stay safe and stay well.

I've completed my ten days' isolation after my positive Covid-19 test, and my husband is almost done with his

fourteen day quarantine which resulted from my diagnosis. (He is still testing negative.)

After patiently abiding our sentences, we are tasting freedom, as it were. I've taken my first venture out of the house to the grocery store, and he has relocated his quarantine from the hotel where he was staying while I was contagious to the confines of our home that have now been deemed safe. You'd be amazed how little one needs to survive 10 days of Covid confinement—even a mild case pretty much obliterates the appetite and renders one exhausted. One can survive on a little chicken soup, hot tea,



cold medicine, sleep, and prayer—prayer that the case will be mild, that it won't spread to anyone else, and that recovery will come quickly and fully. And when recovery comes, one wants only to disinfect the whole house and give thanks that it's over.



That's where I am today, or that's where I *almost* am. Although I'm cleared to go out in public, I am not symptom-free. I've never had a fever, but I still have a lingering headache and some mild congestion. I am still sleeping 9-10 hours each night, and am trying to take it easy. I will continue to wear a mask everywhere I go, and I won't come within six feet of others, because although my case was indeed very mild and although the Health Department has said I'm not contagious, I am going to act with an abundance of caution because I wouldn't want anyone else to get this.

I mean, it wouldn't be the worst thing ever if someone got a case as mild as mine, but what we've learned from Covid is that it is unpredictable—some skate through fairly easily, like I did, but some spend months in the ICU. Some never come home...

But here's the thing, guys. I was being *very* careful. We still don't know how I was exposed. Every time I leave the house it is with a mask. Even then, I

stay six feet away. I go to work and to the grocery store. Period. I eat healthfully, I take my vitamins, and I wash my hands like it's my job. I did not know that I had been exposed, and you don't know either.

Right this minute, you could be Covid-19 positive. Health experts have been telling us this since last spring – they've said, "*assume you are carrying the virus and act accordingly.*" In other words, wear a mask to keep the virus to yourself, wash your hands so that you don't spread the virus to surfaces that you touch, and stay away from people, particularly people who are older or in some way health compromised... I know, I know—we are tired of this! We've been isolating in some way, shape, or form since March—March! This has been going on too long!



Certainly we deserve a break! What are we going to do, socially distance from one another forever?

No. It won't be forever. This is temporary.

If 2020 had an instructional goal, it would be this: Humans will learn how to wait...

We haven't had to practice waiting for a very long time...

Today, if I want to watch a show, I stream it whenever I want. I can pause

it to go to the bathroom, answer a phone call, or go get a snack. I don't have to wait for a show; the shows wait for me!

...A few days ago...we were still able to have a face-to-face visit with our granddaughters at the drop of a hat—we heard their voices, saw their faces, and laughed with them. We seldom have to wait long between such [visual/virtual] visits. But we might have to wait a while to have a visit in the flesh. It's just the right thing to do.

I am as upset as anyone else...I want to have everyone together. However, the absence of family gatherings is temporary.

Covid-19 has taken almost a quarter of a million American lives, and I don't want the next one to be my son or daughter or mother or brother. I want the opportunity to get together with *all* of the people that I love next summer or next Thanksgiving or next Christmas, and I am willing to wait.

This year? ...We can call; we can FaceTime; we can text. It's not the same as being in the same room, wrapping our arms around the ones we love and miss, but it has to suffice—temporarily.

All kinds of scientists have been working around the clock since January trying to create an immunization and they are very, very close. All we need to do is be patient, and wait.

We can do it. We can stay put, roast a turkey or grill some burgers at home, put on some music, and call each other up. We can tell each other that we're thankful to be alive, that we're thankful that we have people that we love so much, and that we're thankful that help is on the way.



We can plan our reunions and tell stories of holidays past. We can pass the time “together” until one day when we can be *together*.

That’s all we gotta do—just wait. We can do it. We are strong; we are resilient; we have the technology.



Will you join me in staying the course, staying at home, and waiting a little bit

longer to get together so that more of us will be here when it’s safe to do so?

Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.

Psalm 27:14

EVEN A SCOUNDREL

by Craig Britton, Director of Ministries

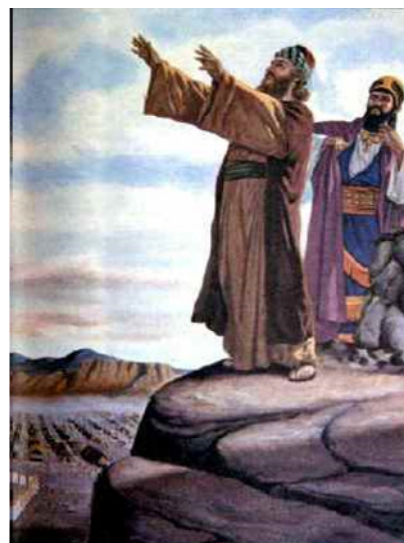
“O Little Town of Bethlehem,” “We Three Kings,” and “I Wonder as I Wander.” It’s that time of year again, and the familiar draws and holds us to those truths we cherish; those that give the reason not just for the season, but for all of life. The songs cited above either make direct reference or allusion to a guiding power. That of light, which leads those who search to their desired destination. “Do You Hear What I Hear” beckons with, “A star, a star shining in the night ...” The Advent/Christmas season is replete with such reminders.

Scripture not so much. At least as far as stars go. Just a couple. My favorite is

tucked away in an obscure declaration of a much confused and misguided “prophet” named Balaam. Way back in the book of Numbers, we find a worried pagan King and a Hebrew prophet “willing for the shilling.” Balak and Balaam. Boy, oh boy, those are wonderful names for a children’s book.

Balak, the King of Moab, is frightened because the movements of the people of Israel en route to the land of promise are causing some major worries for those who may oppose them. Israel has taken care of the Ammonites who were none too friendly or

supportive. Moab stands next in line. So, dear old King Balak gets creative. He convinces the prophet Balaam to curse his own people in the name of his own



God. Balaam clearly has his own paganism as he bows to gold instead of Yahweh.

But not so fast. Long story, short. Several times Balak tries and does get convinced to speak out against his people. But there’s just one problem. The LORD loves his flock, his tribe, his nation. And every time Balaam thinks of following the King’s prompt, God steps in and “reminds” him that he can only say what God gives him, *What the LORD speaks, that I will speak* (Numbers 24:13). I have a bit of a soft spot for

Balaam. I never have thought Balaam's heart was completely held in his own deceit.

But the final proclamation includes this rather cryptic reference—I wonder if even Balaam had any clue—*“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob,*



and a scepter shall rise out of Israel...and one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities” (Numbers 24:17a, 19). You see, Balaam's wasn't just a “local” promise of deliverance, but an ultimate one. In other words, it wouldn't be only Balak's opposition to the purpose of God that would be thwarted, but the one who inspired Balak's foolishness.

The star has risen, been seen from afar and followed. Followed to the place where promise meets fulfillment and joy and peace on earth. We love to sing it. We love to pass it on. God will have His say. Even through the mouth of a scoundrel.



Food for Thought:

STAR

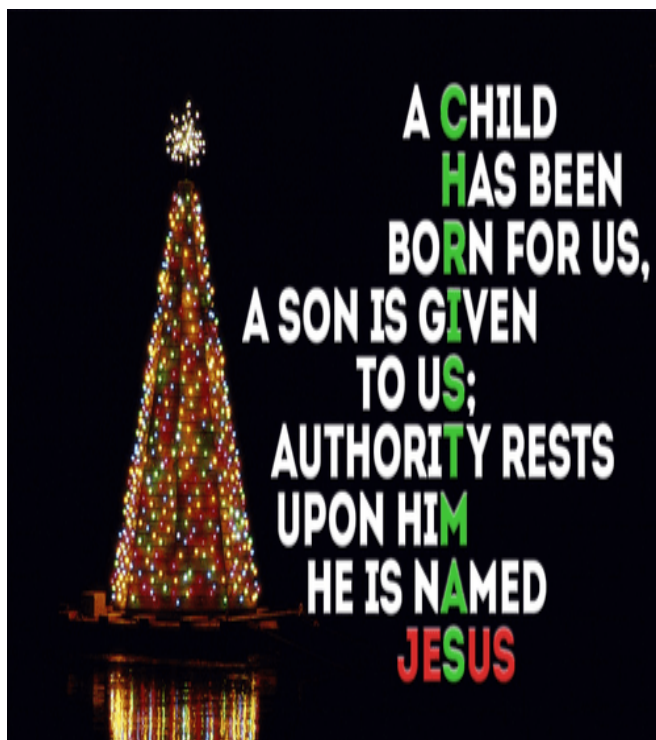
...and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Matthew 2:9b-10

BETHLEHEM

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2, KJV



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
December  2020		1 Hour of Prayer 7:15 a.m. Praise Team 7:00 p.m.	2 Chancel 10:00 a.m. Advent Service 6:30 p.m.  Advent	3	4	5 C—Denotes Communion Services
6 Divine Service 8:00 a.m. Adult & Children's Bible Classes 9:30 a.m.-10:15 a.m. Contemporary Service 10:30 a.m.	7	8 Hour of Prayer 7:15 a.m. Praise Team 7:00 p.m.	9 Quilters 9:00 a.m. Advent Service 6:30 p.m.  Advent	10 LWML—Women of Redeemer 10:00 a.m. Bethel Series 6:30 p.m.	11	12
13 Divine Service—C 8:00 a.m. Adult & Children's Bible Classes 9:30 a.m.-10:15 a.m. Contemporary Service—C 10:30 a.m.	14	15 Hour of Prayer 7:15 a.m. Praise Team 7:00 p.m. REFLECTION DEADLINE	16 Advent Service 6:30 p.m.  Advent	17 Bethel Series 6:30 p.m.	18	19
20 Divine Service 8:00 a.m. Adult & Children's Bible Classes 9:30 a.m.-10:15 a.m. Contemporary Service 10:30 a.m.	21	22 Hour of Prayer 7:15 a.m. Praise Team 7:00 p.m.	23 Quilters 9:00 a.m.	24 OFFICE CLOSED Christmas Eve Services: 4:30 p.m. 6:30 p.m. 8:30 p.m.	25 OFFICE CLOSED  HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Jesus!	26 Mobile Food Pantry @ Trinity 10:00-11:30 a.m.
27 Divine Service—C 8:00 a.m. Adult & Children's Bible Classes 9:30 a.m.-10:15 a.m. Contemporary Service—C 10:30 a.m.	28	29 Hour of Prayer 7:15 a.m. Praise Team 7:00 p.m.	30	31 OFFICE CLOSED 	DECEMBER 2020	