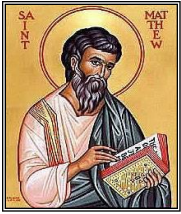


# St. Matthew's Messenger

Advent/Christmas 2009



## *From the Pastor's Desk*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Advent is the lost season of the church's liturgical year. While there are churches which faithfully observe Advent, it has been displaced by cultural and commercial "Christmas", which now begins, at some business establishments, even before Halloween! What's worse is that many churches have succumbed to this cultural trend, thus diminishing, or missing altogether, the theological significance, coherence, depth and beauty of the Advent season.

Advent has an interesting history as a major season of the church year. It is rich in themes relating to the history of salvation from the great prophets up to the First Coming of Jesus in Bethlehem and his Second Coming at the end of time. All of the themes of Advent have their roots in pre-Christian pagan End-of-year, New Year, Winter Solstice, Harvest Festival customs. These include: the liturgical interplay between light and darkness (Advent candles, Christmas tree lights, Candle Light Services), the traditions of harvest festivals, end-of-year feasting, hanging of greens (Advent wreaths, garland and Christmas trees), gift-giving and the veneration of the dead (November 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, All Saints' and All Souls' Days).

These customs were practiced by the pre-Christian pagans of Europe during the harvest months of November and December. Daylight was short. Fire in the darkness represented the sunlight of spring which would again start the growth process of nature. The end-of-year feasting and gift-giving were celebrations of the harvest bounty and an act of hope for next year's crop. The hanging of greens was a reminder that the green new life of nature would return after the death and dormancy of winter. The end of the year was a natural time to remember the end of human life and, therefore, a time to commemorate the dead.

The conversion of pagan culture into a Christian culture was begun under Pope Leo the Great (400-461). Advent as a pre-Christmas season began evolving during his papacy. The word "advent" comes from two Latin words "ad veniens" which, in Roman mythology, pertained to the coming of a Roman god to his or here temple. The church picked up the Latin word "adventus" (in English "advent") and began applying it to Christ's coming in the past, present and future. Our current four week season of Advent is a synthesis of themes from the six week *adventus* before Epiphany baptisms of ancient Gaul (modern France) and the two week pre-Christmas season of Roman. (The synthesis was initiated by the Frankish emperor Charlemagne (747-814) for the unity of the church's liturgy.)

There is a short, but tightly packed, prayer from the western liturgy which sums up all the great and powerful themes of Advent. "Lord, our God, help us to prepare for the coming of Christ your Son. May he find us waiting, eager in joyful prayer." Prepare...wait...eagerly...joyfully...hopefully...the coming of Christ! These are the great themes of Advent.

There is a threefold sense of Christ's coming: past, present and future. Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem and fulfilled his vocation as Messiah on Calvary on the cross over two thousand years ago. He continues to offer himself to the world in every present moment in the church's ministry of Word and Sacrament. He will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. Advent embraces all three aspects of Jesus' coming. In the meantime we live our lives prayerfully, hopefully and eagerly awaiting Christ's entry into our lives – knowing and trusting that it is his desire and will to enter the hearts of every person. Advent is not a somber penitential season like Lent. Rather, it is a season imbued with joyful expectation of Christ's coming.

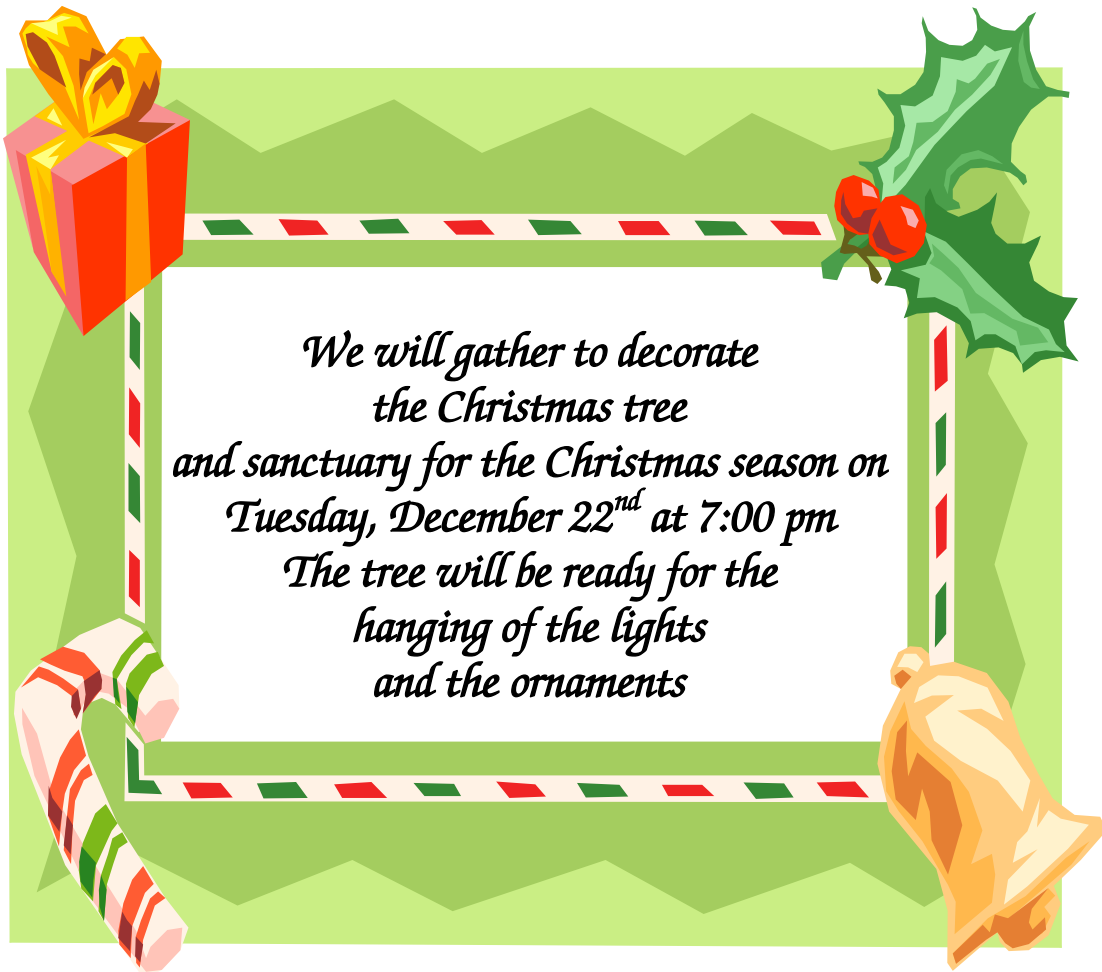
Finally, Advent is not only a four week season in preparation for Christmas but a perpetual disposition of the Christian life. We are continually waiting for the coming of Christ into our lives. Advent cannot be isolated from Christmas, nor can Christmas be separated from the Paschal mystery of Holy week. Our seasonal rituals are not nostalgia for lifeless past events, but a spiral through which the church unfolds the entire mystery of Christ's saving acts. The liturgy actualizes the past in the present to bring about the future.

I urge each family and individual of St. Matthew's to observe the season of Advent in your homes. Say the prayers which accompany your wreath. Light the candles of your wreath each week.. Meditate upon the great themes which are discussed in this article. I assure you that you will develop a deeper appreciation for Advent and Christmas and, indeed, the Paschal mystery. Prepare your hearts for this joyful season. May Christ come to us all quickly!

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Mathsen †

## Joy to the World!!





*Come One, Come All!*



St. Matthew's Lutheran Church's

***CHRISTMAS PARTY!!!***

Saturday, December 12, 2009

6 – 9 pm

Admission:

A Freewill Offering for  
The Southern Seminary Children

*Food, Raffles, Music, Dancing & Karaoke with a DJ  
Meet our special visitor from the North Pole!!!!*

*Contact the office to let us know what you are bringing:  
Meat/Casserole, Vegetable/Salad, Dessert, or Dinner rolls*

Cash Bar: \$2 for Beer/Wine and \$1 for Soda

***Don't miss out on a great time!***



*For more information, call the church office at:  
949 - 3577*



# On the lighter side. . .

What did Adam say to his girlfriend on December 24th?  
'It's Christmas! Eve.'

## The 3 stages of man:

- 1) He believes in Santa Claus.
- 2) He doesn't believe in Santa Claus.
- 3) He is Santa Claus.

Q. Why was Santa's little helper depressed?  
A. Because he had low 'elf' esteem.

Q. How do Snowman travel around?  
A. By riding an icicle.

Q. Where do Snow-women like to dance?  
A. At Snowballs.

Q. What happened when Guy ate the Christmas decorations?  
A. He went down with tinsel-itis.

Q. What's Christmas called in England?  
A. Yule Britannia! (English Christmas Humour!)



*Visit the*



# WELCA

## Christmas Boutique!

**lovely ornaments, mugs,  
home baked goodies!**

**Every Sunday during Advent!**

# CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT ST. MATTHEW'S



Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>

*The Fourth Sunday in Advent*  
10:30 AM - Holy Eucharist

Thursday, December 24<sup>th</sup>

*Christmas Eve*  
8:00 PM - Festival Choral Eucharist  
with Candlelight Service

Friday, December 25<sup>th</sup>

*Christmas Day - The Nativity of our Lord*  
10:30 AM - Holy Eucharist

Sunday, December 27<sup>th</sup>

*Feast of the Holy Family*  
10:30 AM - Holy Eucharist

Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>

*The Epiphany of our Lord*  
10:30 AM - Holy Eucharist with the Procession of the Three Kings

# St. Matthew's Messenger

## St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

*A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

3 Carhart Avenue  
White Plains, NY 10605-1495

Church: 914 – 949 – 3577  
Fax: 914 – 946 – 1055

[www.St-Matthews-Lutheran.org](http://www.St-Matthews-Lutheran.org)

### Advent/Christmas 2009

#### **Pastor: The Rev. Eric A. Mathsen, S.T.S.**

Bill Currie, Debbie Hart, Joan Mohr, Deacons  
Music Director and Organist: Dr. Jean R. Boehler  
Director of Christian Education: Joan Mohr  
Administrative Assistant: Teresa Tomas  
Sexton: Marcos Montiel

### THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

#### **January 2010\***

Joann Abrahamsen  
Sharon Field  
Joan Mohr  
Bill Murphy

#### **January 2011\***

Bill Currie  
Mary Finnerty  
Susan Tedesco  
Christine Williams

#### **January 2012\***

Werner Faigle  
Patricia Gabriel  
Susan Millette  
Grant Schneider

✦ year term ends

### FLOWERS

Anyone wanting to have flowers on the altar for any Sunday during the year, please contact the Church Office at 949-3577. The cost of the two arrangements of flowers is \$50 for a Sunday. After the Eucharist the flowers are taken to members in the hospital or to members no longer able to attend in person.



### ***ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING***

The annual meeting will take place on January 31<sup>st</sup>, immediately following the 10:30 am Worship.

### ***YEAR-END GIVING***

Please keep in mind the possibility of giving a special end-of-the-year gift to St. Matthew's to assist with closing the year-end deficit anticipated at the 2009 annual meeting. Any such monetary gifts or gifts of stocks and bonds would be received with great thanksgiving. Any such gifts must be made by December 31<sup>st</sup>, in order to claim them for tax purposes.

### ***OFFERING ENVELOPES***

Offering envelopes will be available in Luther Hall following worship on December 20<sup>th</sup>. Please pick up your box of envelopes, as this will save the church a considerable amount in the cost of mailing. Members willing to deliver offering envelopes to relatives, friends or neighbors would be appreciated.

# Oktoberfest, 2009

*St. Matthew's held it's annual Oktoberfest on Oct. 24<sup>h</sup> in Luther Hall. There were many fun contests, good food, dancing and laughter!! The room was beautifully decorated with scenes from Old Bavaria!! We hope to see all of you again next year – and bring a friend!!!*



Mary Finnerty, Jim Wilson and Bill Murphy



Richard and Joan Hirsch



Bart & Ellie Utter and John & Millie West



Joann and Tony Abrahamsen



Susan, Ray and Edna Tedesco



Sally Lane, Mildred Johnson & Pr. Mathsen



The Williams Clan: Christine, Tracy, Abigail, Luke, Jeff and Gary



Baby Abigail had the most fun of all!  
What's in *her* mug?



Joan Mohr, Carol Nestor, Sharon Field and Shirley Anderson



Debbie Hart, Werner Faigle, Carole Nestor, Pr. Mathsen, Rosemarie Faigle



## *The Legend of the Christmas Stocking*

According to legend, the custom of hanging up stockings during Christmas began all the way back in the 4th century with St. Nicholas. The story told is about a nobleman who was once rich and powerful, but then came into hard times. Whether rich or poor, he was always kindly and generous to his fellow man.

His wife had passed away and he was left with a daughter who he loved very much, but could not provide her with a dowry. Without the dowry, she could not marry, which made them both very sad.

Nicholas heard of the troubles of the nobleman and one night, during the Christmas season, Nicholas threw a bag of gold through the man's window. The bag of gold landed in one of the girl's stockings that had been hung up to dry. The gold was just enough to be used as her dowry.

Since then, Children have hung their stockings up each Christmas Eve in the hope of finding treasure in them in the morning.

Another variation of the origin of this custom is related to Santa Claus. One Christmas Night, after visiting a house, he was going back up the chimney when several gold coins fell out of his pocket and landed inside the children's stockings which been placed by the fire to dry.

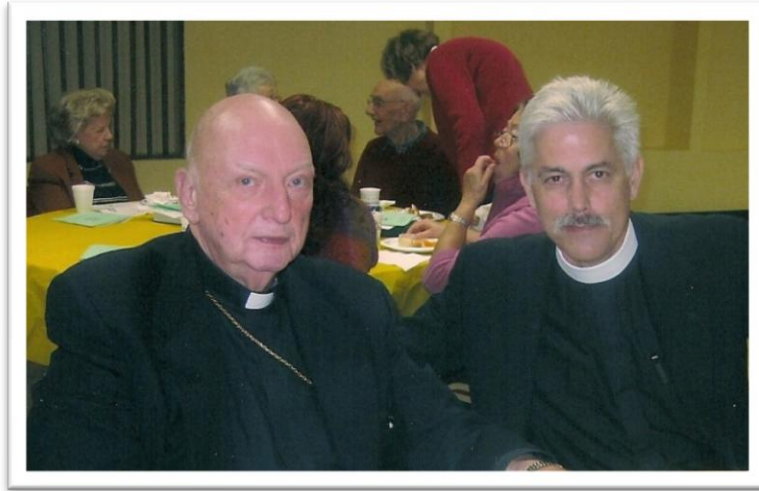
*Effective immediately: the following economizing measures are being implemented by the  
“Twelve Days of Christmas” subsidiary”*

1. The partridge will be retained, but the pear tree, which never produced the cash crop forecasted, will be replaced by a plastic hanging plant, providing considerable savings in maintenance.
2. Two turtle doves represent a redundancy that is simply not cost effective. In addition, their romance during working hours could not be condoned. The positions are, therefore, eliminated.
3. The three French hens will remain intact. After all, everyone loves the French
4. The four calling birds will be replaced by an automated voice mail system, with a call waiting option. An analysis is underway to determine who the birds have been calling, how often and how long they talked.
5. The five golden rings have been put on hold by the Board of Directors. Diversification into other precious metals, as well as a mix of T-Bills and high technology stocks, appear to be in order.
6. The six geese-a-laying constitutes a luxury which can no longer be afforded. It has long been felt that the production rate of one egg per goose per day was an example of the general decline in productivity. Three geese will be let go.
7. The seven swans-a-swimming is obviously a number chosen in better times. The function is primarily decorative. Mechanical swans are on order. The current swans will be retrained to learn some new strokes, thereby enhancing their outplacement.
8. As you know, the eight maids-a-milking concept has been under heavy scrutiny. A male/female balance in the workforce is being sought. The more militant maids consider this a dead-end job with no upward mobility. Automation of the process may permit the maids to try a-mending, a-mentoring or a-mulching.
9. Nine ladies dancing has always been an odd number. This function will be phased out as these individuals grow older and can no longer do the steps.
10. Ten Lords-a-leaping is overkill. The high cost of Lords prompted the Compensation Committee to suggest replacing this group with ten out-of-work congressmen. While leaping ability may be somewhat sacrificed, the savings are significant as we expect an oversupply of unemployed congressmen this year.
11. Eleven pipers piping and twelve drummers drumming is a simple case of the band getting too big. A substitution with a string quartet, a cutback on new music, and no uniforms, will produce savings which will drop right to the bottom line

Note: Regarding the lawsuit filed by the attorneys association seeking expansion to include the legal profession ["Thirteen lawyers-a-suing"], a decision is pending.

# *Day of Healing - October 17th*

Pr. Thomas Nelson Green  
led a wonderful Day of Healing Retreat at St. Matthew's.



Pr. Thomas Green & Pr. Eric Mathsen



Dottie Troiano, Debbie Hart,  
Pr. Green (seated), Pr. Mathsen,  
Jim Wilson, and Rosemarie Faigle,



Bill & Sue Currie, Sharon Field and Joan Mohr



Sylvie Preston, Susan & Edna Tedesco



Esther Garbe, Mary Finnerty and Bart Utter



*Pastor Mathsen  
and his family  
wish all the  
dear members and friends of  
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church  
a most blessed Christmas  
and  
a healthy, happy New Year!*

