

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN LCMS, PASTOR JOSHUA HAYES
11400 WEST PANAMA ROAD, CRETE, NE 68333



Come to the cross and learn of God's great love for all His people. There is friendship, fellowship, and the gift of God's word of forgiveness.

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 29 ISSUE 12 DECEMBER 2015

WHY WE DO THAT: CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS ON DECEMBER 25

This is the time of year when all sorts of media outlets will spout claims regarding how Christians are making up all this stuff about Jesus and Christmas. The usual claim goes something like this: *Christians are really celebrating a pagan holiday on December 25. That was the Roman pagan holiday for the Birth of the Unconquered Sun at the winter solstice. The early church tried to take a pagan holiday and replace it with a church holiday. So Christmas is really a pagan holiday that originally had nothing to do with Jesus.*

In responding to this (because people will say it as if it were fact) we should note, first, that it doesn't really matter. Even if it were true (and it's not), so what? Christians do not believe in December 25 but in the Christ who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. If the church stole a day from the pagans, good for them. We care not so much about dates on a calendar as we do about the historical facts of the Bible and the Creed. Any discussion of Christmas should focus on Jesus.

Second, however, we can debunk this notion that Christmas was originally a pagan holiday. The date for Christmas in the early church depended not on any Roman holidays but on attempts to calculate the exact date of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection on the Jewish lunar calendar and then translate that to the Roman solar calendar. In the end, it was thought that Jesus was crucified on March 25 (a miscalculation). In addition, there was a belief, common in Judaism, that the prophets of Israel died on the same day as their conception. By applying this belief to Jesus, people added 9 months to March 25 to arrive at December 25 for Jesus's birth (and March 25, then, is the Annunciation—when Gabriel tells Mary that she will conceive). Since December 25 seemed as good a date as any, it stuck.

Of course, we do not know the exact day when Jesus was born. In fact, it was not uncommon for people in the ancient world to be ignorant of their birthdate. People did not keep track of birthdays the way we do. But we do know, based on the best evi-

dence, that Jesus was born sometime in late 3 BC or early 2 BC. So at least December 25 can't be too far off.

As for the pagan festival "Birth of the Unconquered Sun," this did not arise until the year 274 AD. Roman Emperor Aurelian, who was hostile to the growing number of Christians in the empire, created this new festival on December 25th to be a symbol of the hoped-for "rebirth," or perpetual rejuvenation, of the Roman Empire, resulting from the maintenance of the worship of the gods. He blamed the problems of the empire on Christians who refused to worship the political gods of Rome. If his new holiday co-opted the Christian celebration of Christmas, so much the better.

In the end, rather than Christmas having its origins in a pagan festival, this pagan festival was created, in part, to counter the Christmas celebration so popular among Christians!

Peace to you,

LADIES AID MINUTES

St. John's Ladies Aid met on November 18, 2015, with Donna Hillgren as hostess. Dianne Kouba led the meeting for Olga Weidner. The meeting opened by singing "Not What These Hands Have Done". Pastor Hayes led us in prayer and the Bible Study on Galatians 2:11-21.

Roll call was taken with twelve members present and one guest, Jolene Reetz. The minutes were read and one correction was made. The Bible Study last month was on Galatians 2:1-10, instead of Galatians 4:1-10. The treasurers' report was given and approved.

OLD BUSINESS: Diane Kahle had checked into getting a calendar for volunteers to sign up to put flowers on the Altar. A motion was made and seconded to buy the calendar. Motion passed. If someone would rather give a donation, the Altar committee will purchase the flowers and place them on the altar. There will not be any flowers on the altar during Advent and Lent. Marilyn Nast said that food donations to Blue

Valley Family Center will be taken until at least Christmas. Kay Jordan is going to check on getting a wheel chair for the church. LWML and Ladies Aid will purchase the chair.

NEW BUSINESS: A motion was made and seconded to accept the election ballot as it was presented. Motion passed. The 2016 officers will be:

PRESIDENT: Darleen Dittmer

VICE PRESIDENT: Dianne Kouba

TREASURER: Janice Reetz

SECRETARY: Shirley Reetz

ALTAR COMMITTEE: LaVonne Nitzel, Diane Kahle and JoAnn Renner

WELFARE COMMITTEE: Barb Meinke, Donna Hillgren and Noreen Wild

The new officers will take office in January.

The Ladies Aid will send \$20.00 Christmas donations to each of the following: Lutheran Family Services, Lutheran Hour Ministries, Orphan Grain Train, Ministry to the Armed Forces and Crete Cares. A \$50.00

gift will be sent to the Chris Ahlman family, our adopted missionaries in Germany.

Dianne was going to check with LWML if our Ladies Aid could purchase oranges and apples for the shut in baskets.

Birthdays celebrated in November were Olga Weidner, Irene Reiss and Carol Brinkmeyer. The birthday song was sung.

On December 30, we will have a Christmas party with a pot luck luncheon at 12:00. Darleen Dittmer will provide the meat and everyone else will bring a covered dish.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer and table prayer.

Shirley Reetz, secretary

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS & BAPTISMS

BIRTHDAYS

1 Tim Reetz
4 Deanna Eggert
5 Austin Adams
7 Donna Kalkwarf, LaVerna [Kate] Kattau
9 Ethan Eggert, Irelynn Kirkpatrick
10 Rylee Pospichal
11 Gloria McDermott
13 Lydia Lee, Janice Mehl, Aaron Meinke, Travis Shore
15 Melissa Gash
16 Kade Nelson, Barb Shore
18 Doug Kattau

20 Andrew Munro
21 Ryan Lee, Dan Meinke
22 Dalton Aksamit, Rev. Art Brinkmeyer, Tanna Nitzel
23 Jerome Kalkwarf
28 Kent Nelson
29 Beau Bachman, Glen Louch
30 James Samples
31 Troy Henning, Scott Murphy

BAPTISMS

4 Heather Wendelin
6 Lewis Clark
7 Carol Brinkmeyer
8 Nicole Anderson, Nathan Patak,

Alayna Poole
10 Cathy Hollman
11 Darren Weber
12 Brad Hestermann, Kristine Muff, Dave Musil
15 Tim Reetz
17 Kasey Murphy
18 Charles Slama
19 James Walker
20 Bryce Kalkwarf
22 Alexandra Tremblay
23 Teagan Kalkwarf
24 Madison Hestermann
25 Donna Kalkwarf
26 Judi Korte

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PASTOR JOSHUA HAYES
11400 WEST PANAMA ROAD,
CRETE, NE 68333

Contact information for Pastor Hayes
Church Office: 826-3883
Cell: 418-4980
Email: Joshua.hayes@gmail.com

OUR MISSION Share the Joy
of His News by growing inward
through God's Word,
Sacraments and fellowship and
by growing outward through
words, actions, and mission
outreach.

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERVICES & DUTIES

December 2

Pianist: Ellen Miller
Elder: James Walker
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Nitzel
Acolytes: Morgan & Maggie Wohl

December 9

Pianist: Ellen Miller
Elder: Jeff Meinke
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Del Reiss
Acolytes: Olivia & Hugo Pomajzl

December 16

Pianist: Ellen Miller
Elder: Brent Wohl
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Rollo Schultz
Acolytes: Elliott Reitz & Colton
Homolka

December 24 (6pm)

Organist: Jayne VanAsperen
Elder: Tim McDermott
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. Ken Tesar

December 24 (11pm)

Organist: Jolene Reetz
Elder: Roger Koch

December 25

Organist: Jolene Reetz
Elder: Roger Koch
Greeters: Mr. & Mrs. James Walker

December 31

Organist: Jayne VanAsperen
Elder: Tim McDermott
Greeters: Carol Brinkmeyer & Darleen
Dittmer

December 2, 9, & 16: Advent Service 10:30 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.
Christmas Eve: Service with Lessons & Carols 6:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve: Communion Candlelight Service 11:00 p.m.
Christmas Day: Service with Communion 9:00 a.m.
New Year's Eve: Service with Communion 6:00 p.m.

LAMBS OF CHRIST PRESCHOOL NEWS

Counting Down to Christmas

Children are very excited about Christmas! So we will count down the days until we celebrate Jesus' Birthday. Yes Christmas is about celebrating Jesus' Birthday and we will prepare to celebrate His birth this month. Waiting for Christmas will give us an excellent opportunity to practice our counting and review our numbers. The children will learn the letters of "H," "R" and "M".

Christmas Program

Make plans to join us for our Christmas Program on Sunday, December 6 at 3:00 PM. The children will present "Counting Down to Christmas" in the Bethlehem Church Sanctuary. Please join us for cookie reception after the program in the fellowship hall. All are welcome!

Rhonda Beethe
Teacher

402-826-4375
lambsofchristcrete@gmail.com

**The St. John Lutheran children's
Christmas program is Sunday,
December 20 at 4:00 p.m.
Cookie social to follow in the
Fellowship Hall.**

**ST. JOHN LUTHERAN
CHURCH -MS**
 11400 W. Panama Road
 Crete, NE 68333
 4 miles East & 2 miles South of Crete
PHONE:
 Pastor: 418-4980
 Office: 826-3883
PASTOR'S EMAIL:
 Joshua.hayes@gmail.com
CATHY'S E-MAIL:
 cathyatchurch@hotmail.com
 www.stjohnkramer.org

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER GROWTH

Schedule at a Glance

Worship Service (Sundays)	9:00 a.m.
Sunday School (Sundays)	10:30 a.m.
Bible Class (Sundays)	10:30 a.m.
Elder's Meeting (December 7)	7:00 p.m.
LYF ()	Following Worship Service
Lutheran Women in Mission (December 15)	6:30 p.m.
Ladies Aid Meeting (December 30)	1:30 p.m.

FROM THE ELDER'S

Advent season is upon us now with services on Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.. Midweek students will be let out of class a little early on those nights.

The children's Christmas program is set for the afternoon of December 20th at 4:00 p.m. They continue to practice Sunday mornings during Sunday School time.

Soon nominations for the Church Council will begin. Please prayerfully consider an office that you could serve on.

Thank you to those who have and continue to serve.

Please everyone have a blessed and safe Christmas season!

The Elders of St. Johns

PLEASE HAVE ALL INFORMATION OR ARTICLES FOR THE NEWSLETTER TO CATHY HOLLMAN BY 25TH, THANK YOU!

CLOTHING FOR ORPHAN GRAIN TRAIN: We can once again send used clothing to Orphan Grain Train. When leaving clothes at the back door, please mark them for either OGT or PCM (People's City Mission).

THOSE SERVING DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

DUTY	December 6	December 13	December 20	December 27
Organist	Jayne VanAsperen	Jolene Reetz	Jayne VanAsperen	Jolene Reetz
Elders	John Reitz	Jeff Meinke	John Reitz	James Walker
Greeters	Mr. & Mrs. Brian Persing	Mr. & Mrs. Bob Renner	Mr. & Mrs. Byron Shore	Mr. & Mrs. Darren Weber
Acolytes	Madison Persing & Elliott Reitz	Devon Reitz & Ashlyn Adam	Morgan & Maggie Wohl	Aaron Meinke & Mersadies Kvasnicka