



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018



St. John's Lutheran Church
Burt, Iowa 50522
Phone 515-924-3344
www.stjohnsburt.org

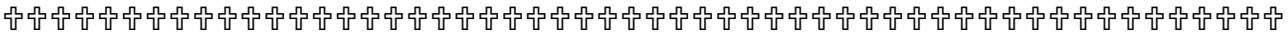
He remembers His **Testament** forever,
the **Word** He appointed for a thousand generations
Psalm 105:8 (JP)

Rev. Thomas Cowell
Pastor
Phone 515-924-3388

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'Telling the good News about Jesus-In Burt, Iowa, and the World'



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ at St. John's,

Perhaps you didn't know this about your pastor, but I hate winter. I don't really mind the cold, and kind of like the snow. It's the darkness of winter that gets me down. This isn't uncommon, though. Most people are affected by darkness to one degree or another. Between one and ten percent of Americans become so depressed during the dark winter months that they are diagnosed with Seasonal Affective Disorder. As obvious as this may sound, a major component of the treatment of S.A.D. is increased exposure to light. I have no doubt that the depressing power of darkness is one reason why Christmas lights are such a popular part of our holiday celebration. Hanging Christmas lights on houses and trees is one way to bring a little joy into the dark winter months.

Us Christians are also aware that darkness is representative of a spiritual reality. Darkness is symbolic of sin, evil, emptiness, and distance from God. Darkness is the place where the devil prowls and where temptation lingers. Spiritual darkness is the sort of darkness that no amount of Christmas lights on houses or trees can destroy. There is, however, one Christmas Light that does have the power to scatter the darkness of sin and evil and to illumine us with the love of God. That Light is of course Jesus Christ. Consider what Holy Scripture has to say about Jesus our Christmas Light:

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? - Psalm 27:1

The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. - Psalm 118:27

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. - Psalm 119:105

The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. - Matthew 4:16

The sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. - Luke 1:79

My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. - Luke 2:30-32

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. - John 1:4-5

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” - John 8:12

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. - 2 Corinthians 4:6

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. - 1 John 1:5

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.
- Revelation 21:23-24

Whatever power physical darkness may have over our mood and health, Scripture is clear that the spiritual darkness of sin, death, and the devil has no power over us because of Christ whose love, forgiveness, and life enlightens all who believe in him.

As we seek to chase away physical darkness this winter with our Christmas lights, let's also chase away spiritual darkness with our Christmas Light. It was once a tradition among Christians to chase away both kinds of darkness at the same time by singing a hymn as they lit their lamps in the evening. The hymn is called *Phos Hilaron*, or *Hymn of Light*, and was written some time before the 4th century. The hymn goes like this:

Joyous light of glory: of the immortal Father;
heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ.
We have come to the setting of the sun,
and we look to the evening light.
We sing to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:
You are worthy of being praised with pure voices forever.
O Son of God, O Giver of life:
the universe proclaims Your glory.

As you put up Christmas lights on your house and tree this year, join the Church in singing praise to (or at least meditating on) Jesus our Christmas Light who broke through the darkness of sin and death to be born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, die on the cross, rise from the grave, and who will return to bring us all into the eternal light and joy of our Triune God's holy presence.

God bless you all at the end of this church year and the coming Advent and Christmas season.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Thomas Cowell
Advent, Anno Domini 2018

A changeless Christ for a changing world:
A look back at our *Parish Messenger* from the Winter of 1931.

[The following article from the *Exchange* was published in the December, 1931 edition of the *Parish Messenger* of St. John's Lutheran Church.]

Rush or Hush?

“Christmas is coming!” Children shout it exultantly, with a gleam of joyous light in their eyes. Old people say it quietly, thoughtfully. Others repeat the announcement of the festival's annual approach somewhat mechanically, almost absently.

Perhaps we have been “too busy” to notice the nearness of the holiday. But it is coming, despite our inattentiveness. It is steadily, rapidly coming. And with it there comes – THE CHRISTMAS RUSH!

Crowded streets, hurrying throngs, whistling policemen, tooting motorists, tired shoppers, still more exhausted salespeople, badly ventilated stores, stuffier street cars, bustling housewives, unmanageable children – the Christmas rush is on!

It may not be as great this year as at other times. Business may not be able to shake off the grip of an inflicted lethargy sufficiently, to be able to mount to other holiday levels. Yuletide tradewinds may not greatly disturb the recent unwelcome lull in commerce. But there will be, also this year America's Christmas Rush. And few are they who will not be caught in its whirl.

How tragic! A Christmas Rush, when there ought to be a Christmas Hush! What is it all about? “Why, Christmas is coming!” Oh, to be sure. Preparing for Christmas! But suppose we drop the second syllable of “Christmas.” Suppose, instead of “Christmas is coming,” we say: “Christ is coming!”

What a difference that makes! Surely, there must be another form of preparation suitable for such a coming.

There is. The four weeks preceding Christmas have been called Advent (i.e., Arrival) Season, in order to establish a Christmas Hush – a fitting preparation for the great festival of Christ's coming. An old description of the European observance of Advent reads: “During these weeks public amusements, marriage festivities, and dancing are prohibited, fasts are appointed, and somber garments used in religious ceremonies.”

We are not so foolish as to suppose that the practices of our fathers of the 17th and 18th centuries could be introduced today. But fundamentally our preparation must be the same as theirs.

What does that mean? It means preparing for the coming of the Savior according to the laws of God which know no change and are restricted to no period of time.

The best manner of preparing for Christmas was indicated by the Lord Himself when He sent John the Baptist to prepare people for the birth of the Bethlehem Babe with the message: “Repent ye.”

Our preparation during these weeks is to consist in a quiet, prayerful, humble examination of our worthless, sinful persons, which will lead to the realization of the crying need

of a Savior, and which, in turn, will produce spontaneous and vigorous gratefulness for the Infant Redeemer. Such quiet preparation is necessary.

For a fuller enjoyment of the true meaning of Christmas, help substitute more “Christmas Hush” for Christmas Rush.”

[The following are announcements taken from the November and December 1931 editions of the *Parish Messenger*.]

November:

- In the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 8th, we shall celebrate in a special service the second anniversary of the dedication of our church. Pastor Geisler of Spencer will be the speaker. Our appreciation for the rich undeserved spiritual blessings which we have been privileged to enjoy in our fine house of worship for two years, ought to find expression in a liberal offering, which you are asked to give in this service.

- The condition of the congregation’s treasury is still very poorly. It receives too much copper, and too little silver. It is surprising how much of the former and how little of the latter the collection plates contain. Friends, do not cheapen religion. Let us get away from the “penny collection.” How can you consistently and with a clear conscience sing, “Take my silver and my gold,” when you offer a mere penny?

- The members of the Walther League have purchased quite a supply of beautiful Christmas cards which they offer for sale. Buy your supply from them, and send cards that bear the real Christmas message, “Unto you is born a Savior,” instead of sending those meaningless, fictitious, Santa Claus cards.

December:

- Dale Arthur, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Schroeder, born Oct. 4th, 1931, was baptized Nov. 1st, 1931.

- Our anniversary service Nov. 8th was not so well attended. Pastor Geisler, basing his anniversary sermon on the words: “We will not forsake the house of our God,” Neh. 10:39, stressed the very thing which so many of our members are continually doing, namely forsaking the house of our God. May these also firmly resolve: Henceforth we are going to visit the Lord’s house regularly and not forsake it.

- Christmas Eve will again be observed as usual. An appropriate service with songs and recitations by the children is being arranged. Other arrangements, such as collecting for a purchasing the gifts, are left to the young people.



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2 – Wendell Christensen, Jr.
2 – Rolland Peyman
7 – Larry Behnkendorf
8 – Zachery Steven
9 – Mary Gifford
9 – Tess Reutzel
10 – Barb Schroeder
14 – John Smith
16 – Megan Crosser
17 – Kim Reutzel
19 – Brynetta Lavrenz
23 – Gabrielle Kelly
24 – Donna Haase
26 – Bev Skadburg
28 – Dick Knoll
28 – Molly Melick-Klinger
29 – Jason Christensen
29 – Kevin Koestler
30 – Eden Koestler
30 – Jerry Koestler



SPECIAL SENIORS

November 2 – Rolland Peymann
November 14 – John Smith
November 24 – Donna Haase
November 26 – Bev Skadburg
December 10 – Larry Manus
December 19 – Wendell Christensen, Sr.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 – Michael Bierstedt
1 – Nicolle Marlow
3 – Darrel Schmidt
3 – Derek Schutjer
4 – Gene Hanna
9 – Olivia Marlow
9 – Karla Schutter
10 – Barb Harms
10 – Larry Manus
18 – Vivian Lavrenz
19 – Wendell Christensen, Sr.
25 – Conrad Schmidt
27 – Lisa Haase
27 – Chardonnay Lavrenz
28 – James Bowman
28 – Terry Tieman
28 – Wanda Tieman

Christmas Coffee

Join us for coffee and cookies after church on December 2 as we celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season.

St. John's Ladies Aid and Evening
LWML

Thank you

Kids of the Kingdom Preschool would like to say a **BIG** thank you for everyone's support of the soup dinner and bake sale. You are all **important to us**. Once again you have given us overwhelming support to continue our mission of providing a quality Christian education to our preschoolers.

Kids of the Kingdom Preschool Board

Ladies Aid

St John's LWML met Sept. 6 at 1:30. Bev Skadburg opened the meeting with devotions, 'God's Light'.

Pastor Cowell led the Bible study on James 2 - 'Faith produces works'.

Roll call was answered by 5 members and pastor. The secretary and treasurers reports were read.

Bev Skadburg gave a report on the NE Zone board meeting.

The Fall Rally will be at Immanuel Lotts Creek Sept. 20 at 4:30. The speaker will be Pastor Miesner. The offering is to go to Pastor Michael and Karen Schenaph - missionaries in Uganda. The ingathering offering is new underwear for adult men and women for IOWAY.

Motion carried to give \$50 to the missionaries in Uganda.

A Yearbook meeting at church is Sept. 13. A list of the officers is to be sent to zone president Ellen Meyer

A get well card was signed for Esther Christensen.

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

Barb Harms was hostess.

St John's LWML met on October 4th at 1:30.

Mary Gifford gave devotions, 'Anxious for Nothing' Phil 4:6.

Pastor Cowell gave the Bible study on James 2, 'Jesus is our salvation thru His sacrifice.'

Roll call was answered by 6 members and Pastor.

The secretary and treasures reports were read.

Correspondence read: LFS invitation to host group Christmas Parties in December.

Bev Skadburg gave a report on the Fall Rally at Immanuel - 32 attended.

Nominations for 2019 officers will remain the same. The 2019 yearbook is done.

LWML Sunday is October 7 and a coffee will be held. Members will furnish cookies.

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

Hostess was Bev Skadburg.

Caradene Parsons,
Secretary
