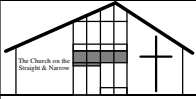


The Straight & Narrow Way



A Newsletter for OUR SAVIOUR LUTHERAN CHURCH

December 2006

Comfort on the Journey

Advent Wreath

An Advent Wreath is a ring of four candles, usually made with evergreen cuttings and used for household devotions during the season of Advent. It comes to us through German tradition but has spread to many parts of the world.

Its exact origins are unclear. Some say that the first advent wreath appeared during the 1840's in the orphanage of Johann Hinrich Wichern, a pastor in Hamburg Germany. (It was made of a large wooden ring decorated with 28 candles, one to be lit on every day of Advent's four weeks.) Others date it much earlier as a Christian adaptation of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples who lit circles of candles to pray to the sun god for the day's light to return. Either way, the advent wreath is about Jesus who is the Light of the world. (John 1:4-9; 8:12 & 12:46).

The circular arrangement of the wreath has no beginning and no end. It is intended to symbolize eternity: The eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the eternity of our life in Christ.

The various evergreens of the wreath are chosen because they continue to live even in the midst of darkness and winter. This signifies the theology of the cross wherein our life in Christ continues even in the midst of the darkness and death of this sin-filled world.

In addition, each type of evergreen has its own significance. The laurel signifies victory over persecution and

suffering. Pine, holly and yew stand for immortality. Cedar signifies strength and healing. Holly, in particular, is fraught with Christian meaning. It's prickly leaves are reminiscent of Jesus' crown of thorns while it's bright red berries call to mind His saving wounds.

Often the wreath is decorated with pine cones, nuts, or other seeds. When these are used, we are reminded of Christ who is the Resurrection and the life by virtue of His suffering and death on the cross (John 12:24).

In this wreath are arranged the four

and one rose. Contrary to popular opinion, the pink one is not the last to be lit, but the third.

The violet candles symbolize faithful expectation, and the rose candle joy and hope.

The first candle is often called the prophets' candle and is meant to signify the hope of the Messiah's advent (coming).

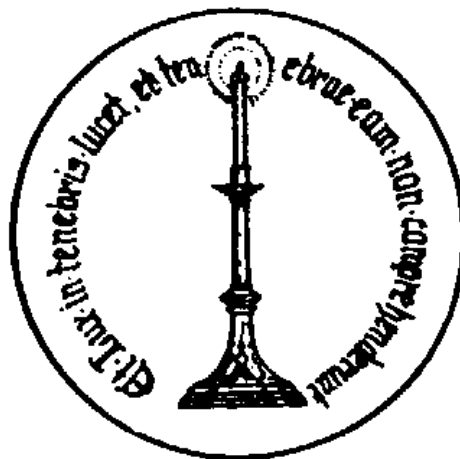
The second is generally called the Bethlehem candle, reminding Christians that God's advent of grace is always in a humble manner. Bethlehem was located in the territory of one of the least powerful tribes of Israel (Micah 5:2).

The third candle (rose) is the shepherd's candle, and marks the joyous Sunday when Advent is half over and the Nativity is near. It is lit on Gaudate Sunday when the Introit sings out, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil 4:4).

The fourth candle is the angels' candle, symbolizing their message of peace and good will on earth.

When the advent wreath is used in the home, it is especially appropriate to be lit during your evening devotion (vespers) or before the evening meal. When this is done, it is appropriate to light the candle for the coming week beginning on Saturday night. (1st candle at evening of December 2nd, 2nd candle at evening of December 9th, etc...)

Advent devotions are available on the table in the back of the nave...or, download your own at <http://higherthings.org/reflections/download.html?file=Advent-2006.pdf>



CANDLESTICK
CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

candles of advent. Sometimes they are all white (especially when the wreath is in the chancel area). Other times, they are all violet. And due to changes in the lectionary in America, some Lutherans and a few Anglicans use blue candles. But most often, three candles are violet

Charting the Course

Notes on Translation

For the past several years a dedicated group of pastors, poets and linguists have been at work to prepare the hymn texts for *Lutheran Service Book*. The work was tedious and painstaking. Each hymn from *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Lutheran Worship* together with every proposed hymn for LSB was examined for its presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for its faithfulness to the original language, and for its poetic sound.

This is one of the most exciting aspects of the work that went into LSB, and it is now present in your pew. Since no previous hymnal was bad or wrong *per se*, the differences are subtle and nuanced. In many cases, it is difficult to put your finger on what exactly was changed from one rendition to the next. But still, the differences are real and the improvements worthwhile.

There is no faster way to internalize the doctrine of Holy Scripture than to sing it into the hearts of young and old. And just as the beautiful and profound truths of the Gospel can be quickly memorized through sacred song, so quickly can false doctrine and self-centered theology be internalized through poor hymnody and poor translations.

For an example of how the *Lutheran Service Book*, has improved just one familiar text, let's look at the advent hymn: "*Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates.*"

The translation of the first stanza of this hymn is nearly identical with previous renditions. It only departs in the final three lines where "God, the Father" is more clearly proclaimed as the first person of the Trinity instead of *Lutheran Worship* calling Him "Our God, Creator, King."

The second through fifth stanzas will be compared side-by-side on the rest of this page.

Lutheran Worship

The righteous King is bringing peace;
He comes the pris'ners to release
His royal crown self-sacrifice
Its jewel, mercy without price
He brings our sorrows to an end
Shout out your joy to God, our friend
Our highest praise we bring,
Our God, Redeemer King.

When you look at these two translations side by side, you can see that the LSB version is more emphatic in underscoring the merciful humility of Christ Jesus. While neither translation would be called wrong, the LSB is superior simply because it makes the pity and humility of Jesus so much more central and explicit.

Lutheran Worship

O happy town, O blessed land
That keeps our gracious King's command,
And blest the heart when He comes in
His holy reign there to begin.
His entrance is the dawn of bliss;
He fills our lives and makes them His.
Our highest praise we bring,
God, Comforter and King

A subtle change in the second line above makes our blessedness less a product of what we do and more a product of what God causes us to confess by faith. The one does not exclude the other, but the shift of emphasis is instructive. Also, as in the two previous stanzas, the Person of the Trinity is called by name and not merely referred to as the Comforter.

Lutheran Worship

Unbar the gate, fling wide the door,
Your heart to God's design restore
Adorn its walls with all things right
With peace and love and joy and light
Your king will then be glad to come
And live within you as his home
Our highest praise we bring
To God, our Lord and King

The difference in verse four is most clearly seen in line five. The first translation seems to make God's eagerness to enter our heart based on how thorough of a job we do in opening it and prettying it up. The newer translation, rather, makes the adornment of your heart something that God does by His very entry.

Lutheran Worship

Christ Jesus, Lord and Savior come,
I open wide my heart, your home
Oh, enter with Your radiant grace
On my life's pattern shine Your face
And let Your Holy Spirit guide
To gracious vistas rich and wide
Our God we praise your name
Forevermore the same.

See again the difference between these two versions. On the left, I am opening my heart to Jesus. On the right, I am asking Jesus to come and open it for me. In the fourth line, both translations are improvements on the 1941 version. In TLH we asked to feel Jesus' inner presence. Now, much truer to the original German we ask Jesus to shine His face of mercy upon us. It is especially in this and the fourth stanza that the most important improvements were made.

Lutheran Service Book

A righteous Helper comes to thee
His chariot is humility
His kingly crown is holiness
His scepter, pity in distress
The end of all our woe He brings
Therefore the earth is glad and sings
To Christ the Savior raise
Your grateful hymns of praise.

Lutheran Service Book

How blest the land, the city blest,
Where Christ the ruler is confessed!
O peaceful hearts and happy homes
To whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless sun of joy is He
Who comes to set His people free
To God the Spirit raise
Your happy shouts of praise.

Lutheran Service Book

Fling wide the portals of your heart
Make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for heav'ns employ
Adorned with prayer and love and joy
So shall your Sovereign enter in
And new and nobler life begin
To God alone be praise
For word and deed and grace

Lutheran Service Book

Redeemer, come and open wide
My heart to Thee; here, Lord abide
O enter with Thy grace divine
Thy face of mercy on me shine
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on
Until our glorious goal is won
Eternal praise and fame
We offer to Thy name.

In the review of this one hymn, we noted a number of subtle improvements in translation, in theology and in poetic emphasis. I hope that you are able to appreciate them without disparaging the work of previous hymnists.

I do not call your attention to these things in order to disparage the work of previous generations. Rather, I rejoice to note the care and attention to detail that our LSB translation committee was able to provide for us.

Although any one of these improvements may seem insignificant, taken by itself, when you add together an entire hymnal full of such improvements, it becomes no small gift to the Church. And these gifts will echo in the hearts of all who sing from LSB for generations to come!

*Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song.
For He has done marvelous things!*

† † †

Excursions in Faith

◆ Advent Midweek Services

Beginning on Thursday, December 7th, we will have midweek Advent Services of prayer and preaching. These three services are a part of our greater Advent fast to prepare our hearts and minds for the feast of the Holy Nativity.

Our meditations will be organized around the First Tablet of the Law and center on each of the first three commandments which speak of our relationship to the Lord who has become flesh for us.

◆ Advent Daily Devotions

One of the traditions of Advent is the practice of daily family devotions. I would encourage you to use the beginning of this new Church year as a fresh start or a rededication to this excellent, year-round practice. Devotional booklets for Advent are available on the back table of the church and have been provided, compliments of *Higher Things*, an organization for Lutheran Youth.

◆ Joint Youth Tree Cutting

On Saturday, December 9th, the youth of Kemmerer and Evanston will be getting together to cut Christmas trees for our respective churches to be trimmed in time for Christmas Eve.

◆ New Hymnals

On Sunday, November 19th, we began a fund-raising drive to purchase the new *Lutheran Service Book* [LSB] for use in the *Divine Service*. All donations collected for the purchase of hymnals and supporting books will be matched by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Our drive will conclude on Thursday, December 7th in the hope that we can place an order on Friday the 8th and have the new hymnals in time for Christmas Eve Services. Donations may be made at the Church or given to April Lange, our Thrivent coordinator.

Each hymnal costs \$20 including shipping. You may also wish to have a name inscribed on the front cover for an additional \$3 (1 line) or \$4 (2 lines). You are encouraged to use this opportunity to purchase one or more hymnals for your home use and each one so purchased will be matched to place another one in the pew.

You may also wish to donate one or more of the hymnal's supplemental materials such as Agenda, Altar Book, Lectionary and Organist Editions. A sign-up sheet for this purpose is available at the new hymnal display in the fellowship hall.

Lutheran Service Book is the first hymnal that the LCMS has ever adopted in convention. It has been seven years in the making with great attention to detail and sensitivity to the person in the pew. There have been about 100 new hymns added to this hymnal. Many of these have been written in recent years and others come from around the world and across the centuries.

The liturgies that we know from *Lutheran Worship* and *The Lutheran Hymnal* have been kept intact while a completely new setting has been added.

I am confident that on the day you take it in hand, you will feel like you are coming home to an old friend who has become more interesting by traveling the world.

◆ Christmas Lessons and Carols

On Sunday evening, December 24th, at 7:00PM, Our Saviour will be singing a candlelight service of lessons and carols. This meditative and beautiful setting will be led by various choirs and instrumental ensembles. Make plans to join us on Christmas Eve and begin your celebration of this most holy night.

After the evening service, you are also invited to join us at St. Paul's in Kemmerer for the traditional *Midnight Mass*. Scheduled to begin on December 24th at 11:30PM this service is timed so that the body and blood of Christ are consecrated for distribution at the stroke of midnight. This ancient practice dramatically portrays the Introit for that day: "When all was still and it was midnight, | Your almighty Word descended from the royal throne."

† † †

◆ Advent 1 - December 3

Psalm: 24 or 143
Old Testament: Jeremiah 23:1-8
Epistle: Romans 13:8-14
Gospel: St. Matthew 21:1-9

◆ Advent 2 - December 10

Psalm: 50
Old Testament: Malachi 4:1-6
Epistle: Romans 15:4-13
Gospel: St. Luke 21:25-36

◆ Advent 3 - December 17

Psalm: 85
Old Testament: Isaiah 40:1-11
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
Gospel: St. Matthew 11:2-11

◆ Advent 4 - December 24

Psalm: 19 or 145
OT: Deuteronomy 18:15-19
Epistle: Philippians 4:4-7
Gospel: St. John 1:19-28

◆ Holy Nativity - December 25

Psalm: 8
Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2-7
Epistle: Titus 2:11-14
Gospel: St. Luke 2:1-20

◆ Christmas 1 - December 31

Psalm: 111
Old Testament: Haggai 2:2-9
Epistle: Galatians 4:1-7
Gospel: St. Luke 2:22-40

† † †