




"A multi-cultural congregation open to all."

Transformation Times

December 2011
Volume 1, Number 11

Christmas Worship Schedule

- **December 11:** Christmas Cantata, "Lead Me Back to Bethlehem", at 8:30 and 11am.
- **December 18:** Children's program, "Christmas Letters: The Musical", at 10am.
- **December 21:** Blue Christmas at 7pm in the chapel.
- **December 24:** Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion at 6pm, "One God, Many Names".
- **December 25:** Celebrate Jesus' birthday at 10am, "Christ for the Masses".

A silhouette illustration of the Nativity scene is set against a background of warm, glowing colors (yellow, orange, and red). The scene includes the Virgin Mary kneeling on the left, the infant Jesus in a manger in the center, and the three wise men on the right, one of whom is holding a long staff. The overall mood is peaceful and reverent.

Each service will feature carols and special music. There's something for everyone so please invite friends, neighbors, family and co-workers to attend.

Reflections from Emonia



THE MEANING OF "12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS"

There is one particular Christmas carol that has always baffled me. What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans and especially the partridge that won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

Below is an explanation of the song. I hope you find it interesting if you have not heard this before; and if you have, this is a nice reminder.

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

1. The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
2. Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.
3. Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.
4. The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
5. The five gold rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.
6. The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.
7. Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership and Mercy.
8. The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.
9. Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self Control.
10. The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.
11. The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.
12. The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

Unfortunately for so many people today, Christmas is shrouded in mistaken codes. It is seen as a time of parties, endless shopping and getting the latest and greatest presents. Yet, if we were to look deeper into the Christmas parties, we would see those who are hurting and pretending to be festive. If we looked deeper at the endless shopping, we would see tiredness or just not wanting to go home because of the unhealthiness that is there. If we would just look beyond the presents, we would see someone trying to fill emptiness in their heart.

This season can be a joyous and wonderful time, but not for everyone. Look for the clues as well as the opportunities to share the true meaning of the season.

Have a blessed Christmas,
Pastor E

What's Going On?



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

A member of the church recently gave me something to think about: "Every week we recite Our Mission to make new disciples. What about making stronger disciples? Shouldn't we be doing that also?" The member defines stronger

disciples by implying growth: "Someone who tries prayerfully to discern what Jesus would do rather than reacting to gossip and falsehood; someone who practices Wesleyan principles in their lives."

New disciples are "people beginning a relationship with Jesus while learning how to be faithful student followers." (See poster on the Friendship Room wall). What is a stronger disciple? A Christian who...

- a) is becoming more like Jesus and less like themselves, little by little.
- b) loves God and people more as time passes.
- c) chooses God's will and way over their own.
- d) treats people more kindly than they did the previous year.
- e) prays and studies the Bible and then does what God wants.

As I continue to ponder this intriguing question, I hope you'll share your answers with me. Take the quiz. Who knows? You may just hear it in a sermon.

SOMETHING TO PRAY ABOUT

As the Staff/Parish Relations Committee and I interview people who have applied to be our new part-time Children's Ministry Director, pray for us, every day. Our children, church and community needs the right person to teach, lead and nurture.

PLEDGES

More than 134 households have pledged and tithed about \$428,000 to next year's ministries. Thank you. And many thanks to those of you who are unable to pledge but will give offerings. May God bless your extravagant generosity. See you at the 2012 Church Council Budget meeting at 9am on Saturday, December 17.

YELLOW BUS REPORT

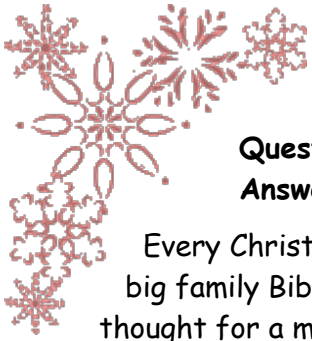
The 1983 yellow school bus served the church well for many years. However, a Transportation Committee was formed to determine what should be done with the bus since needed repairs were extensive and expensive. The committee recommended that the Trustees authorize its sale, and the Trustees agreed. Please thank Jim Milburn and Ross Worley for arranging the sale and delivering the bus to a buyer in Sedalia. The bus sold for \$750, plus the church will save about \$1,200 a year in reduced insurance costs. Transportation Committee members were Jim Milburn, Jerry Cornell, Donna Gregory, Jason Dattilo, Wil Abram, Ross Worley, Pastor Emonia and me.

DECEMBER INVITING EVENTS

What are you going to give Jesus for his birthday? How about your heart? Invite a friend, co-worker or un-churched family member to church. Non-religious people are more likely to say "yes" this time of the year. Use the Christmas worship schedule on page one to invite others.

As we enter the Christmas season, may your hearts be filled with the joy of the Holy Infant coming into our lives and world.

See you in Church,
Pastor Londia



RELIGIOUS HUMOR FOR CHRISTMAS

Question: What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?

Answer: It's Christmas, Eve.

Every Christmas morning, when my kids were little, I read them the nativity story out of the big family Bible. When my son was old enough to talk, he asked me what a stable was. I thought for a moment how to explain it to him in terms he could understand. Then I told him, "It's something like your sister's room, but without a stereo."

As it was coming up to Christmas day, a young boy is praying upstairs while his mother sits by him and his dad and grandma are downstairs. He prays, "Lord, I pray for a train set, a remote control car, and A NEW BICYCLE! "You don't have to shout dear," says the mother, "God is not deaf." "I know," said the little boy, "but grandma is."

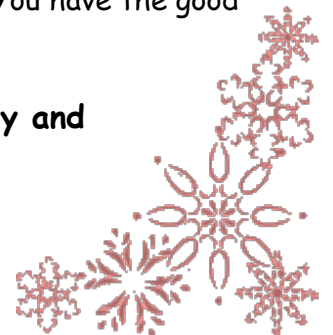
Did you hear about the Beverly Hills school Christmas pageant? Two kids dressed as Mary and Joseph and they are on their way to the inn in Bethlehem. On the other side of the stage, a boy in a shepherd's outfit is on a cell phone, calling for reservations.

The pastor was looking over the crèche the day after Christmas when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing. He went outside and saw a little boy pulling a new red wagon. In the wagon was Jesus. He walked up to the boy and said, "Hi, there. Where did you get the baby Jesus?" The boy answered honestly, "In the church." "Why did you take him?" the pastor asked. "Well," said the boy, "I prayed to the Lord Jesus and asked him for a wagon for Christmas. I told Him that if He gave me one, I'd take Him for a ride in it."

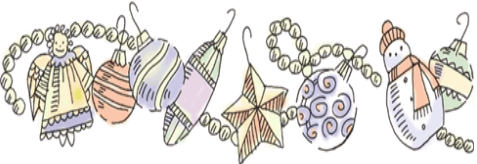
Three sons left home, went out on their own and prospered. Getting together for Christmas, they discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother. The first said, "I built a big house for our mother." The second said, "I sent her a Mercedes." The third smiled and said, "I've got you both beat. You remember how mom enjoyed reading the Bible? And you know she can't see very well. So I sent her a remarkable parrot that recites the entire Bible. It took elders in the church 12 years to teach him. He's one of a kind. Mom just has to name the chapter and verse, and the parrot recites it." Soon thereafter, the mother sent out her thank you notes: "Dear Milton," she wrote one son, "The house you built is too huge. I live in only one room, but I have to keep the whole house clean!" "Dear Gerald," she wrote to another, "I am too old to travel. I stay at home most of the time, so I rarely use the Mercedes." "Dearest Donald," she wrote to her third son, "You have the good sense to know what your Mother likes. The chicken was dee-licious!"

(Perhaps you will want to share these jokes as you gather with family and friends. May your holiday season be filled with joy and laughter.

-- Pastor Londia)



December 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Reminders and notes: The December 17 Church Council meeting is for the 2012 budget approval.		1 9:30am UMW Unit Meeting	2	3 7-10am Country Breakfast
4 Holy Communion 9:30am Blood Pressure Check 2pm Christmas Tea	5 6:30pm Rejoice Circle	6	7	8 11am WOW Circle 7pm Susanna Cir.	9	10 11:30am Wesley Class Christmas Social 6pm Asbury Class Christmas Social
11 8:30 and 11am Christmas Cantata	12	13	14	15 9:30am Hannah & Rebekah Circles	16	17 9am Church Council (Budget) 11am Joanna Cir.
18 10am Children's Christmas Program 12:15pm Singles Lunch	19 7pm LIFE Circle	20	21 7pm Blue Christmas Service	22	23 Office closed at noon	24 Christmas Eve 6pm Candlelight Worship Service
25 Christmas 10am Worship (No Sunday school)	26 Office closed	27	28	29	30	31
Sunday 8am Prayer Group; 8:30 & 11am Worship; 9:50am Sunday School; 5pm Youth Monday 7pm Boy Scouts Tuesday 10:45am Contemplative Prayer; 7pm Girl Scouts Wednesday 9am Quilters; 6pm Wed. Jam; 6:30pm Prayer Group, Gospel Choir; 7:30pm Chancel Choir Thursday 7pm Devoted Stitchers, Cub Scouts Friday 7pm Celebrate Recovery						

MINISTRY UPDATES FROM OUR STAFF

A message from Sue Kemp, adult ministry director



Tuesday Nights Together (T.N.T.) ended for 2011 on November 29 with the last class of the study *The Journey*. Hopefully everyone who took a T.N.T. class this year feels that they gained from this experience. Watch for the list of 2012 classes that will start on February 7. There will be something for everyone. Your sources for information will be the weekly Scoop and Sunday bulletins as well as the January edition of the Transformation Times. Start thinking about your spiritual life for 2012 and be ready to sign up.

In December and January, **don't forget Sunday school**. From 9:50 to 10:50am there are nine adult classes for you to visit. Each class is unique and studying various topics. If you haven't been attending a Sunday school class, please visit some of them between worship services. For assistance in choosing a class, call Sue at 816-347-0388.

A message from Jason Dattilo, youth ministry director

The Youth participated in the Pumpkin Festival/Trunk or Treat on October 30, providing games and prizes to the children. New games were purchased for this year and everyone had a great time.

In December the Youth will go Christmas caroling and have a holiday event. All youth are invited to participate.

We are looking at options for our 2012 mission trip. This is a great opportunity for all youth to serve God and help those in need. Watch for more information to come.



A message from Donna Gregory, early childhood director

Merry Christmas to our St. Luke's family from the Early Education Center!



Our *fruit of the spirit* for November was goodness. "And do not forget to do good and share with others." Hebrews 13:16

The December *fruit of the spirit* is peace. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." Colossians 3:15

In November the preschool enjoyed a visit from a Native American storyteller. The children loved hearing her stories from long ago.

In December we will collect socks, hats and mittens for the sock and mitten tree. Instead of having a gift exchange, each child is invited to bring a gift for the Community Assistance Council (CAC) and Raytown Emergency Assistance Program (REAP) boxes to help teach our children about giving to those less fortunate.

Thanks to all who supported our nut sale! Profits from this sale will be used to purchase three new cribs for the infant room in day care. Our St. Luke's family is awesome!

The **Asbury Class post office** will be open December 1 for you to mail your Christmas cards to active friends at St. Luke's. Your donation of \$.10 per card (free for those 65 and older) will be used in the mission areas of the Church Camp and Summer Adventure.



MINISTRY UPDATES FROM OUR STAFF

A message from Sue Love, missions director

The conference has asked for our support of Renaissance United Methodist Church (UMC), a new church start, in the previous Longview UMC location. Our December communion offering will be given in support of Renaissance UMC to develop a new community ministry in the Longview area.

We are also helping provide Christmas for needy families in our community. If you would like to provide a gift, we are collecting new items to be used in the CAC and REAP holiday stores. Families shopping at CAC or REAP can pick one gift for each child, one family gift and receive a holiday food box. If you could only have one gift, what would you want? Suggestions include toys, DVDs, CDs, books, games, sweaters, sweatshirts, small kitchen appliances and watches. Please bring all items for the holiday store to the Donation Station at church by December 11.

Our Christmas/Advent offering will be dedicated to St. Luke's contingency fund. This fund is part of the Compassionate Guidance Assistance ministry that helps our own members with financial assistance, loans, counseling for health, legal or money management issues or emergency food and clothing needs.



Reserve your **2012 altar flowers** on Sunday, December 4. *We will only have flowers on the altar for the Sundays that are reserved.*

The cost is \$30 a vase and must be paid when the flowers are reserved. Flowers may be given in honor or memory of someone and taken home after the 11am service.

A **Tea for the Season** will be held in Ragan Hall at 2pm on Sunday, December 4. Contact the church office to purchase a \$3 ticket.

There will be a Christmas project for the children, entertainment and, of course, a variety of seasonal goodies and Christmas tea.

This event is sponsored by the Rebekah Circle of our St. Luke's United Methodist Women. Invite your friends and family for a delightful tea party!



The church **security alarm** is now being set automatically at 10pm each night. If you have an evening function please plan accordingly to exit the building before the alarm is set at 10pm.

As requested by the Church Council, the **Safe Sanctuaries Policy** and the **Staff Handbook** have been published to the St. Luke's Web site in the Forms and Publications section.

Just as Mom was blessed by her many years at St. Luke's and her many friends there, we have been touched by your condolences, memories and kind expressions of sympathy in our time of loss.

Thank you,
The family of Thelma Backer

Staff

Lead Pastor: Londia Granger Wright
Associate Pastor: Emonia Barnett
Pastoral Assistant: Bobbie Stone
Adult Ministry: Sue Kemp
Youth Ministry: Jason Dattilo
Missions: Sue Love
Community Health: Barb Bruns
Communications: Angela Fleming
Office: Andrea McMurry
Facilities: Jerry Cornell
Early Childhood: Donna Gregory
Music Director: Keith Curington

Our Mission:

To make new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our Vision:

Invite, Grow, Serve.



"A multi-cultural congregation open to all."

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What's Inside?

Page 1: Christmas Worship Schedule

Page 2: Reflections from Emonia

Page 3: A Word from Pastor Londia

Page 4: Religious Humor for Christmas

Page 5: December calendar of events

Page 6: Ministry updates from our staff

Page 7: Ministry updates continued

Page 8: New members and children activities



Welcome New Members!
Welcome to Ray Shatley and Christina Sitienei (left) who joined November 13 and Katrina Kunkle (right) who joined November 20.



Children enjoy playing and learning about Jesus in the Kid's Corner Nursery every Sunday during 11am worship. On average, the nursery serves about 12 children at that hour.

Christmas program rehearsals are taking place during Children's Church while adults worship at 11am. After receiving an age-appropriate message during worship approximately 15 to 20 kids learn about Jesus each week.

