

**St. Peter Lutheran Church**  
**208 Newtown Ave.**  
**Norwalk, CT 06851**

# ***PARISHSCOPE***

## ***DECEMBER 2021***



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## Pastor's Ponderings

Next door to my house is a house that for years was a group home run by STAR. Its residents were developmentally disabled adults. I remember when I first began visiting there – it is 15 years ago, now. One of the residents, Michael MacDonald, had begun attending our church and wanted to join, so I went over every week to teach him the basics of the Christian faith and ready him for communicant membership. Jack Kleis, who was an Elder at the time, joined me. Michael couldn't read, so I would bring pictures which helped to illustrate what I was teaching. I especially remember the week we focused on the first chapters of Genesis, which proclaim that God is our creator. After the lesson, Sara, the young woman who ran the home that day, questioned Michael about what he had learned. "Who made the world, Michael?" she asked. He thought about it and then responded, "Jesus did!" "That's great, Michael!" she said, and then asked, "Who made lions?" Again, he thought about it and then responded, "Jesus did!" "Very good, Michael," I said, and then asked, "Michael, who made Sara's new baby?" (She and her husband, Rob, had a 5-month old baby.) Michael thought about my question and then said, "Rob!" We all burst into laughter. None of us were expecting that answer! And, you know, Michael was right – and very insightful!

Rob and Sara did make their baby – along with God. Every baby is made by a man and a woman; every baby except one. The prophet Isaiah, over 700 years before Jesus was born, prophesied: *"Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son, and will call him Immanuel"* – which means, God with us. *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?"* asked Mary when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that she, a virgin, would bear the Savior. Gabriel responded, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."*

Sadly, there are many in our day who say that this did not happen. Many leading theologians and Bible scholars – you see them quoted on TV programs and in magazines often this time of year – believe only what their experience tells them must be so. The Scripture that recounts Mary's conception and birth must be the repeating of a fable, the intentional restating and expanding of the story to make Jesus appear greater, they say.

Michael MacDonald was far smarter than the wisest theologian who proclaims this. He listened to what I taught and believed what God said because God said it. A virgin conceives? The number of chromosomes in her ovum doubles and changes on its own? Yes, if God says so; and He does.

Does this really matter? Is this story of Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus (which only occurs in a few verses in Luke) all that big a deal? Yes! God says it is and tells us of it, and that should be enough. But, it is also a big deal because from this we learn that Jesus is like us – fully human, conceived of a woman, spending 9 months growing and developing within her, and being born like us – and yet is unlike us. He is conceived without sin, for His father is God the Holy Spirit Himself. As God breathed into the dirt He had formed into a man and brought Adam to life as His son, so the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, breathed upon Mary and brought forth His Son into life among us. Jesus is the new Adam, and in Him creation begins all over again! Baptized into Him and believing in Him, we, too, are given a new beginning. The apostle John says in His Gospel, *"He came to his own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:11-13) And St. Paul says in 2 Cor. 5, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* This is what Christmas, the celebration of the Father's gift of His Son to us, is all about.

Who made you? Because Jesus was conceived and born of a virgin for us, and died and rose for us, we can all answer: "Jesus did!"

In Christ Jesus, our Lord,  
Pastor



## **CONFIRMATION ESSAY**

This month's essay is from Bryce Saladyga, and is on the Ten Commandments.

We find the Ten Commandments in two different places in the Bible. They are in both Exodus (chapter 20, verses 2- 17) and in Deuteronomy (chapter 5- verses 2-21).

The Ten Commandments were given to Moses by God himself on Mount Sinai. God picked Moses to go back to Egypt to demand that the Israelites be freed from slavery. Moses was leading and living with the Israelites near Mount Sinai teaching them God's ways. Moses went up Mount Sinai and received the Ten Commandments through God's own voice and also, they were written on two stone tablets. They weren't written on the stones by Moses but they were written by God himself.

God told his people something before he gave Moses the Ten Commandments. He said "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage". This is important because God is telling his people that he is their real leader and that HE cares for them - HE saved them - HE is the person that they need to look to and follow. By doing that, they will be safe and free.

But why did God give them and us the Ten Commandments? God gave his people the Ten Commandments so that they would know what was expected of them and how they were supposed to live their lives. What was important to him and in life, like at home or school. There are instructions and rules to give to us so we know what our expectations are.

God gave us all Ten Commandments or rules so we can understand what is expected of us. But not all of The Commandments are equally important. There are two that are more important than the others and one most important of all. The most important commandment is the first one: I am the Lord your God - you shall have no other gods before me. That you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the most important thing to remember. That HE is the most important and that all things are centered around God.

With the Commandments we know what is expected of us. But just like the rules at home or the rules at school, can we follow all the rules all of the time? Can we actually follow the Commandments? Unfortunately, no. Nobody except Jesus himself was perfect. God wants us to keep his Commandments just like Jesus did, but no matter how hard we try, we cannot keep the Ten Commandments. We are not

perfect, in fact none of us are. Sin and death entered the world in the very beginning of the Bible when Adam and Eve didn't follow their original rule of not eating from the Tree of Life. Just like that, we all sin and fall short of the rules we were given to follow. We need to pray and ask for forgiveness all the time. We will never be perfect but thankfully we have forgiveness and unending love through Jesus.

The last question that Pastor asked me was, "Do the Ten Commandments save us or make us God's children?" We talked about this question at home. I think the answer is neither. The Ten Commandments were given so that the people understood how we are supposed to live our lives. Knowing that none of us can really follow the Commandments, they can't be what saves us. If the Commandments were the thing that saves us then none of us would be saved – which is not true. Do they make us God's children? Not really. But they are the rules given to us. At home I am my mom's and dad's child whether I follow the rules they give me or not. Nothing I can do will change this. I am also a child of God whether I follow the Ten Commandments or not. God sent his Son to save the world so that anyone who believes in him will have eternal life. We are supposed to live good lives according to the rules and the Ten Commandments. But they don't save me or make me God's child. I am saved by grace alone through faith in our Lord and Jesus Christ and his death on the cross.





## **THE SCHEDULE OF CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

- + Children's Christmas Program: Sunday, 12/19, at 10:00 AM
- + Christmas Eve: 5:30 PM.
- + Christmas Day: 10:00 AM.

There will be our usual 10:00 AM Divine Service on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup>, but no Sunday School or Bible class that day.

### **WILL THERE BE A SERVICE TODAY?**

You might ask this question when the weather is bad. To find out, call the church office (203-847-1252), as Pastor will leave a message on the answering machine. Also, you can check the notices on channels 8 & 12 on TV. Would you like a text message notification from Pastor? Be sure to give him your cell number.

### **POINSETTIAS FOR THE ALTAR**

If you would like to donate plants for the altar at Christmas, please call the church office or send an email. The cost is \$12.00 per plant. The deadline for ordering is Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you to all for adding to the beautification of the church during this season.

### **CAROLING**

Every year a group from the church goes caroling to homebound members of our congregation. This is a fun and rewarding way to serve and get to know our homebound members. This year we will carol on Dec. 12 and will meet at church at 4:00. Please consider coming! (Good voices are not required, only good spirits!)

### **FALL CLEAN-UP ATTENDANCE**

A huge thank you to the following people who were at the leaf clean-up day on November 21: Pastor Beinke, Rick Castillo, Bob LeMay, Ian MacKenzie, Carl Mathis, John Meek, Wayne Palmisano, and John & Karen Shane.

Prior to Saturday, Tom Collins had his landscape crew come to do leaf removal at Pastor's front yard (which Tom will pay for), as he and Kathy were out of town.

We also want to give a special thank you to Bob LeMay, who throughout this fall has been removing leaves. He will continue to do so for the late-dropping trees like the oak near his house and the Japanese maples near Newtown Avenue.

## **MISSION OF THE MONTH**

### **BRIDGEPORT RESCUE MISSION**

Bridgeport Rescue Mission demonstrates the love of God to hungry, homeless and addicted people throughout coastal Fairfield County, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Through God's grace and the generosity of our donors, we provide nourishing meals, safe and clean shelter, addiction recovery programs, as well as clothing, groceries, and job-skills training, to those grappling with real-life challenges. We provide a place of hope and dignity, fighting poverty from the inside out.

We are funded by compassionate individuals, churches, businesses, foundations and civic organizations. Your selfless gifts allow us to be a place where the message of God's love and grace is at the heart of each meal set before a hungry child...each bed we prepare for a weary man or woman....and each act of guidance we offer to those struggling with addiction and longing to leave their pasts behind.

We thank God for your partnership and pray for your continued support. Checks may be made out to St. Peter Lutheran Church marked for the Bridgeport Rescue Mission.

### **BOOK REVIEW**

*"Wonder-Fully Made"*, written by John W. Kleinig - a retired lecturer and Pastor in the Lutheran Church of Australia - is a new addition to our St. Peter library. It is a Christian book about the life of the human body from its conception to resurrection. Through the different chapters, Pastor Kleinig takes the reader through the stages of the created physical body, the redeemed body, the spiritual body, the sexual body, the spousal body and the living Heavenly body - all in great detail.

This excellent literary work of faith contains many Bible references and also quotes from Martin Luther. It is an easy read - hard to put down - and I felt like I was reading an informing and comforting sermon that ended all too quickly.

*"Wonder-Fully Made"* is a terrific book to read and reread and will help you understand why we are here and God's plans for our eternal life. It would make a great gift or addition to your home library.

In Christ, Nancy Shandrowski

**PARKING**

Although only 2 spaces are officially marked as “handicap” parking, on Sundays please be considerate of the members needing to avoid stairs and long walks and reserve all upper parking lot spaces for all those who need them. If God has blessed you with better mobility, park in the lower lot and enjoy the walk!



**NOTE:** From December 13<sup>th</sup> through December 20<sup>th</sup> a film crew will be using our parking lot. You may notice extra cars in the back.

## **\* RENOVATION \***

Framing of the powder rooms is complete and the installation of plumbing and toilets is underway. Materials such as tile, mirrors, and accessories is arriving. I think we will be pleased with the size and privacy of each lavatory. The new mothers' room or nursing room will also be a nice space for moms and their babies.

## **CELEBRATE ADVENT!**

The Board of Stewardship & Deacons is pleased to present each family with an Advent Celebration Gift Bag. Distribution began Sunday, November 21, during the service; board members will contact members who did not attend this Sunday to arrange for personal delivery.

The Board of Deacons and Stewardship would like to share with you a festive Advent bag with several meaningful items to help us be connected, even if only virtually, during the Advent season. Each week, one or more candles will be lit during your weekly Advent devotion. This can be done privately or over Zoom at 7:00 pm each Wednesday, December 1, 8, 15, and 22. The 5th Christ candle will be lit on December 25 privately.

Zoom Meeting ID: 886 2270 8211 and Passcode: 131501.

The Board of Deacons and Stewardship members are Holly Robaczynski, Karen Shane, Sheena Yuen, and JoAnn Shapiro. We want to extend our gratitude to Joe Orban for preparing the wooden disks and to Monica Arcario for baking the delicious cookies.

Advent bags contain: an Advent wreath and candles, an Advent calendar, candy canes and a bookmark explaining their significance, a daily devotional book, a Christmas carol songbook, and the worship guide for the Wednesday Zoom calls. We look forward to seeing you on the call!



## **"HOLIDAY HELPERS" – THRIVENT GRANT**

During the month of December our congregation will be participating in a Thrivent grant called "Holiday Helpers" to collect and gather warm clothes and food for the homeless and needy. Keeping people warm and well fed can make a difference and be felt instantly. The donated items will touch both the body and soul with love and light, and will be given to Person-to-Person and the Open Door Shelter.

Suggested items to donate include the following: Warm winter clothing- scarfs, hats, mittens, gloves, thick socks, sweaters, new underwear, gently used coats (All items can be for men, women, or children). Food- soups, canned vegetables, beans, rice, cereals, canned chicken or tuna, pasta, peanut butter, jelly, boxed macaroni and cheese, canned spaghetti sauce, hot cocoa mix, etc. Any food your family would eat can be contributed too.

Thank you so much for being "Holiday Helpers" during the month of December. Donations will be collected in boxes at the back of the church. Call Joan Papsun if you have any questions at 203-847-4678.

*Matthew 25:40 The King will reply, Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*

## **OFFERING ENVELOPES**

The offering envelopes for 2022 are in the back of the church ready to be picked up. If you do not see your name and would like a box, please contact the church office.

## **CHANCEL SCHEDULE**

**Nov. 29 – Dec. 12** L. Beinke & G. Wash  
**Dec. 13 – 26 (Christmas)** E. Meek, J. Meek  
**Dec. 19 @ 11:00 am** All chancel members  
(Christmas Decorating)

## **BIBLE READINGS FOR DECEMBER**

Dec. 1: Daniel 8:1-27  
1 John 2:1-17  
Psalm 120:1-7  
Proverbs 28:25-26

Dec. 2: Daniel 9:1—11:1

**Dec. 27 – Jan. 9, 2022** N. Sayler, J. Soos

## **USHERS SCHEDULE**

**Dec. 5** S. Yuen, I. MacKenzie, J. Soos  
**Dec. 12** D. Cakavell, C. Mathis, J. Orban  
**Dec. 19** O. Brown, S. Sabol, S. Yuen  
**Dec. 26** I. MacKenzie, J. Soos, D. Cakavell

## **COUNTERS SCHEDULE**

**Dec. 5** S. Yuen, E. Meek  
**Dec. 12** S. Yuen, C. Douthwaite  
**Dec. 19** I. MacKenzie, J. Orban  
**Dec. 26** C. Douthwaite, J. Orban

1 John 2:18—3:6  
Psalm 121:1-8  
Proverbs 28:27-28

Dec. 3: Daniel 11:2-35  
1 John 3:7-24  
Psalm 122:1-9  
Proverbs 29:1

Dec. 4: Daniel 11:36—12:13  
1 John 4:1-21  
Psalm 123:1-4  
Proverbs 29:2-4

Dec. 5: Hosea 1:1—3:5  
1 John 5:1-21  
Psalm 124:1-8  
Proverbs 29:5-8

Dec. 6: Hosea 4:1—5:15  
2 John 1:1-13  
Psalm 125:1-5  
Proverbs 29:9-11

Dec. 7: Hosea 6:1—9:17  
3 John 2:1-14  
Psalm 126:1-6  
Proverbs 29:12-14

Dec. 8: Hosea 10:1-14:9  
Jude 1:1-25  
Psalm 127:1-5  
Proverbs 29:15-17

Dec. 9: Joel 1:1-3:21  
Revelation 1:1-20  
Psalm 128:1-6  
Proverbs 29:18

Dec. 10: Amos 1:1-3:15  
Revelation 2:1-17  
Psalm 129:1-8  
Proverbs 29:19-20

Dec. 11: Amos 4:1-6:14  
Revelation 2:18-3:6  
Psalm 130:1-8  
Proverbs 29:21-22

Dec. 19: Zephaniah 1:1-3:20  
Revelation 10:1-11  
Psalm 138:1-8  
Proverbs 30:11-14

Dec. 20: Haggai 1:1-2:23

Dec. 12: Amos 7:1-9:15  
Revelation 3:7-22  
Psalm 131:1-3  
Proverbs 29:23

Dec. 13: Obadiah 1:1-21  
Revelation 4:1-11  
Psalm 132:1-18  
Proverbs 29:24-25

Dec. 14: Jonah 1:1-4:11  
Revelation 5:1-14  
Psalm 133:1-3  
Proverbs 29:26-27

Dec. 15: Micah 1:1-4:13  
Revelation 6:1-17  
Psalm 134:1-3  
Proverbs 30:1-4

Dec. 16: Micah 5:1-7:20  
Revelation 7:1-17  
Psalm 135:1-21  
Proverbs 30:5-6

Dec. 17: Nahum 1:1-3:19  
Revelation 8:1-13  
Psalm 136:1-26  
Proverbs 30:7-9

Dec. 18: Habakkuk 1:1-3:19  
Revelation 9:1-21  
Psalm 137:1-9  
Proverbs 30:10

### **Bible Readings (continued)**

Revelation 11:1-19  
Psalm 139:1-24  
Proverbs 30:15-16

Dec. 21: Zechariah 1:1-21  
Revelation 12:1-13:1a



	Psalm 140:1-13 Proverbs 30:17	Dec. 31:	Malachi 3:1-4:6 Revelation 22:1-21 Psalm 150:1-6, Proverbs 31:25-31
Dec. 22:	Zechariah 2:1-3:10 Revelation 13:1b-18 Psalm 141:1-10 Proverbs 30:18-20		
Dec. 23:	Zechariah 4:1-5:11 Revelation 14:1-20 Psalm 142:1-7 Proverbs 30:21-23		
Dec. 24:	Zechariah 6:1-7:14 Revelation 15:1-8 Psalm 143:1-12 Proverbs 30:24-28		
Dec. 25:	Zechariah 8:1-23 Revelation 16:1-21 Psalm 144:1-15 Proverbs 30:29-31		
Dec. 26:	Zechariah 9:1-17 Revelation 17:1-18 Psalm 145:1-21 Proverbs 30:32		
Dec. 27:	Zechariah 10:1-11:17 Revelation 18:1-24 Psalm 146:1-10 Proverbs 30:33		
Dec. 28:	Zechariah 12:1-13:9 Revelation 19:1-21 Psalm 147:1-20 Proverbs 31:1-7		
Dec. 29:	Zechariah 14:1-21 Revelation 20:1-15 Psalm 148:1-14 Proverbs 31:8-9		
Dec. 30:	Malachi 1:1-2:17 Revelation 21:1-27 Psalm 149:1-9 Proverbs 31:10-24		

## ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH - DECEMBER 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 10:00 am Bible Study 7:30 pm Zoom Bible Study	3 4:00 pm Confirmation	4
5 8:45 a.m. Sunday School & Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Worship Service 11:00 am VOTER'S MEETING	6	7	8	9 10:00 am Bible Study 7:30 pm Zoom Bible Study	10 4:00 pm Confirmation	11
12 8:45 a.m. Sunday School & Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Worship Service 4:00 pm Caroling	13	14	15	16 10:00 am Bible Study  Shane Rehearsal Dinner	17 Ritchie Shane Wedding	18
19 8:45 a.m. Sunday School & Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Worship Service Children's Christmas Program	20	21	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE Candlelight Service 5:30 PM	25 CHRISTMAS DAY Worship Service 10:00 AM
26 NO SUNDAY SCHOOL OR BIBLE STUDY 10:00 a.m. Worship Service	27	28	29	30	31 	

