



# The Spirit of St. Paul's

DECEMBER 2025

## APOLOGETICS SEMINAR



*On behalf of St. Paul's, Pastor Keith presented Dr. Francisco with a gift of artwork from a local artist which depicts the wheat fields and living skies of our beautiful province.*

On Saturday Nov 15, I had the pleasure of attending the apologetics seminar led by Dr. Adam Francisco, hosted here at St. Paul's. At this seminar I had the opportunity to learn about the topic of apologetics and how a person can use it to defend the Christian faith. As a younger Christian it can sometimes be difficult to explain or defend certain parts of our faith to others who challenge the Christian faith or want to know why Christians believe what the Bible says is true. Dr. Adam presented wonderful points on how a person can go about doing this that I found very helpful.

Dr. Adam also mentioned that he co-hosts a podcast called *The Thinking Fellows* where they talk about Christian theology, apologetics, history, and doctrine, for anyone who is interested in the topic of apologetics and would like to learn more!

*Samuel Harper*



Christmas Social and  
New Member Sunday  
December 14  
after service  
Bring potluck  
– mains and desserts –  
to share

## PASTOR'S CORNER

“Time is moving so quickly! It seems like it was just Thanksgiving and now it's the beginning of December! Christmas will come and go before we know it!” I have heard a number of people share words similar to these this year and I am feeling the same way myself. Maybe the mild weather and relatively little snowfall so far has something to do with it, but I haven't quite come to terms with the fact that Christmas is less than a month away. You might be feeling this way too. The season of Advent can be very helpful when we're feeling rushed toward December 25. Advent (from the Latin *adventus*, “coming”), is a season in the Church Year that helps us to prepare for, anticipate, and receive God who comes to us in the person of Christ Jesus.

During this time of the Church Year we focus on and anticipate Jesus coming into the world by being born of the Virgin Mary at Christmas (John 1:1-14). The fact that the Eternal entered time, the Infinite became finite, the Creator became part of creation, is a most profound mystery. The season of Advent invites

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## Reminders

- Please remember that, because we have a number of members with allergies to nuts, any foods brought to church events should be nut-free.
- Also, several have allergies to fragrances. Please consider them when choosing toiletries and whether or not to wear perfumes.
- LWMLC mites and society offerings may be put in the offering plate in an envelope separate from your church offering, mailed to the church or given to society treasurer, Marion Hollinger. Please make any cheques payable to St. Paul's Lutheran Church but mark them clearly as being for LWMLC. Indicate the amount for mites and the amount for society funds.

## Classifieds

Something to sell or give away? Need something? Services to offer to fellow members? Try The Spirit Classifieds first. No cost. Send your ads to the editor.

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*Pastor's Corner, continued*  
 us to not get lost in the celebrations of the season—but to remember who Jesus is, why He took on our flesh, and how He accomplished the salvation of the world.

Advent is also a time to remember that Jesus continues to come to us, to dwell with us, today through His Word and Sacraments. Jesus is truly present and delivers all that He accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection in His Word read, heard, and meditated upon and His promise of salvation connected to water, bread, and wine. Through these tangible means our Lord assures us that the forgiveness and life that

He won for the world is ours.

Advent is a time to anticipate Jesus' final coming on the Last Day when He will usher in the new creation and will wipe away every tear (Revelation 21:4).

Time is moving so quickly. Slow down. Embrace the season of Advent. Anticipate Jesus coming into our world on Christmas Day. Be comforted that He continues to come to us now, He is truly present in our lives, through His Holy Word and Sacraments. Remember that He has promised to return to take us to Himself for eternity. O come, Emmanuel!

*God's blessings,  
 Pastor Keith*

## Christianity 101

Please join the next Christianity 101 class on Sundays after Divine Service. The group has looked at how we know God through observing nature, through our conscience, and most especially by the working of the Holy Spirit through Holy Scripture. They also looked at God's covenant promise of salvation and the Apostles' Creed. Everyone is welcome to participate.

## Like to sing?

St. Paul's choir is open to anyone who would like to join.  
 Contact: Josias Martins at [josiasmartins@gmail.com](mailto:josiasmartins@gmail.com).



## SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

For the 2025-2026 year, we are offering Sunday school on **one Sunday a month**. Bring your friends and join us on **December 7** and hear the greatest story ever told as well as for some special crafts!

**On Sundays when we don't have Sunday school**, some of our families have been enjoying the online Sunday school offered by Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in London, Ontario. They plan to offer sessions by Zoom on the third, fourth (and fifth) Sundays of the month. If you are interested in checking out these online lessons, please ask Lisa, Denise or Natalie for contact information.

## ADVENT FINGER PLAYS

### ADVENT

See the candles brightly glowing on the Advent wreath.

*Wiggle fingers; make circle.*

Soon the Saviour will be born, born for you and me.

*Rock baby in arms; point to others and self.*

Light the candles, sing a song, wait and watch and pray.

*Hold hands like book, pretending to sing; fold hands in prayer.*

Soon the Saviour will be born, born on Christmas Day.

*Rock baby in arms; clap and smile.*

### ADVENT COUNTING

One, two, three, four—

*Hold up fingers as you count.*

It's hard to wait one week more.

*Cross arms and tap toe.*

Four, three, two, one—

*Hold up four fingers, and put them down, one at a time.*

Advent's waiting for God's Son.

*Rock baby in arms.*

## BURY THE MITTEN TREE?



Wouldn't it be amazing to cover the mitten tree with so many pairs of mittens, toques, scarves and the like that we can't see any of those wooden branches?

Deadline is December 14 so they can be delivered before Christmas.

### ADVENT WAITING

In Advent we wait; in Advent we hope,

*Tap toe, look up.*

For the Saviour God promised to send.

*Open hands like Bible.*

In Advent we wait; in Advent we hope,

*Tap toe and look up.*

For the King who is coming again.

*Make crown on head with hands.*

From *Wiggle & Wonder: Bible Story Rhymes and Finger Plays* (223130)2012 Concordia.

## The Story of the Candy Cane

Many years ago, a candymaker had an idea. He wanted to show, through the candy he made, that Jesus Christ was born among us and lived and died to save us all. So, through the use of colour and shape, he created a piece of candy that told the story of Jesus from Christmas to Easter.

He made white stripes on his candy to stand for the fact that Jesus was sinless and pure. He made small red stripes to indicate the scourging Jesus endured before he died and a large red stripe to show Jesus' blood shed on the cross. Then he shaped his candy like a shepherd's staff to remind us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. What did he make? A candy cane! And if you turn it upside down, you'll see the focus of the piece—the letter J for Jesus.



## STEWARDSHIP

### POINTING TO THE ROCK OF AGES

*“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves”* (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? Do you have a person or two on your list that you just don't know what to give them? While I know you are running short of ideas...dad doesn't really want another tie, and your kid's teacher doesn't need another coffee mug. It can be nothing short of maddening to try to figure things out in the middle of this busy season!

As stewards of all of life and life's resources, we know that life is more than giving gifts. We stewards never want to take anything the Lord provides for granted. During this season of Advent and Christmas, it is a great idea to do whatever you can to be a faithful steward of your pastor. Even more so than the rest of the year, the demands on their time, their presence and their stewardship of the Gospel in the congregation become heightened.

The demands on pastors can wear them down and wear them out. How does the steward in the congregation serve as a faithful steward of the treasure that is their pastor? Here are a few ideas:

Put them at the top of your prayer list. – Pray that the Lord guards them against the weariness that makes them susceptible to the work of the devil.

Make worship a priority – St. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians and us to respect those who labour among us. There is no greater way to steward your pastor than to respect him enough to show up and receive what he has been sent to offer in the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Holy Sacraments.

Be receptive to his work. – If your pastor is tasked with calling you to repentance or encouraging you to be in worship, know that he is only caring for your soul.

Esteem him highly – Take the time to thank him for his faithful service to Christ, the congregation and your family.

Be at peace. – This is an easy time for even minor annoyances to get blown out of proportion and become full-blown conflict. This not only spoils the season of Advent and Christmas, but it

also spoils our stewardship of the Gospel and those who serve us in that Gospel. Remember that Jesus came into the world to be the Prince of Peace. This is an act of grace and mercy. The steward seeks to reflect this toward their pastor and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Stewardship at Christmas can be a challenge. Stewardship of your pastor during this time of the year is critical to our shared stewardship of the Gospel at a time of year when many are more open to hear and receive it.

### PROVIDING SUPPORT

Lutheran Church–Canada as a synod is concerned about the health and wellness of our pastors and church workers – not only during this busy Advent and Christmas season, but throughout the year. Synod

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## St. Paul's FAMILY NEWS

**WELCOME** to new members John McInnis and Kristine Dunlop-McInnis. They have been attending St. Paul's for some time and recently began caring for the lawn sign. Their help is greatly appreciated.

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Les and Marion Hollinger who will celebrate their 66th wedding anniversary on December 5.

## EVANGELISM and PUBLIC RELATIONS

### COMING!

The entrance to my suite is at the opposite end of where my main living area is located. Whenever I hear a knock at my door, I am quick to call out, “Coming!” to assure the person waiting in the hallway that I am on my way.

In Revelation 3:11 Jesus asked the apostle John to assure the Church in Philadelphia, “*I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.*” Jesus also assured all who await His return, “*And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.*” (Revelation 22:7) and “*Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with Me, to repay each one for what he has done*” (Revelation 22:12). I pray that each one of us is eager to join the apostle John in responding, “*Come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20)!

During the season of Advent, we not only celebrate the humble birth of Christ who first came to serve as Saviour/Messiah of the world, but we also focus on that Day to come when He will return in power and great glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. These words of hymn #336 in Lutheran Service Book help us envision it.

1 Lo! He comes with clouds descending,  
Once for ev’ry sinner slain;  
Thousand thousand saints attending  
Swell the triumph of His train;  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!  
Christ the Lord returns to reign.

2 Ev’ry eye shall now behold Him  
Robed in glorious majesty;  
Those who set at naught and sold Him  
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree;  
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing  
Shall their true Messiah see.

3 Those dear tokens of His passion  
Still His dazzling body bears,  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers.  
With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture,  
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

4 Yea, amen, let all adore Thee,  
High on Thine eternal Throne;  
Saviour, take the pow’r and glory,  
Claim the kingdom as Thine own.  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!  
Thou shalt reign and Thou alone!

Text and music: public domain

As we exchange greetings with loved ones near and far, may Christ Jesus remain the most precious gift our Heavenly Father has given, and may it be His love and light that shines through us for everyone to see!

*Verla Schmirler*  
*Board of Evangelism and Public Relations*

### *Stewardship, continued*

is asking all congregations and other church employers to support pastors and church workers by adopting a set of guidelines—Guidelines for Caring for Called Workers—a practical and biblically grounded resource designed to help congregations and employers support these Called Workers. The guidelines encourage congregations to foster healthy ministry environments, establish supportive practices, and build a culture of care and respect for those who serve. St. Paul’s congregation is adopting these guidelines and we encourage each of you to keep Pastor Keith in your prayers and support his ministry among us.

### HEADING TO YEAR-END

Financially here at St. Paul’s, at the end of October, we are showing a deficit of \$18,111 compared to a deficit at October 31, 2024 of \$22,177. We are still projecting a year-end deficit in the range of about \$10,000, however last year we were able to end the year with a surplus and we hope to be able to do that this year as well. We ask for your support as we approach the end of the year so we can meet our mission and ministry goals.

*Blessings and Peace this Advent  
and Christmas season*  
*Board of Stewardship*

## EDUCATION

### KIDS CORNER GROWING HEARTS OF FAITH

One Lord, One faith, One baptism (Ephesians 4:5)



Hey Kids!

Are you excited about Christmas coming?! I'm sure you are! I have another question. Are you getting ready for Christmas? Did you know there is an important part of getting ready besides putting up the decorations, writing your letter to Santa and buying Christmas gifts? We prepare our hearts for Jesus! The way we can do this is by taking part in Advent. Advent is the four weeks before Christmas when we slow down to think about Jesus' coming which is the REAL meaning of Christmas. We can do this by lighting the candles on an Advent wreath. Each candle has a different meaning. There is one for hope, peace, joy and love. The joy candle is usually a pink colour. There are also Advent calendars and Advent devotions, as well as

songs, finger plays and colouring pages. You will be able to find some of these included with this newsletter. However you choose to get ready for Jesus, I hope you enjoy all the blessings He has for you!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Denise Timm

For the Board of Christian Education  
and Youth

PS. Don't forget to go to SUNDAY SCHOOL after church on SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7!

Mrs. Natalie Keith will have the greatest TRUE story to share with you and some fun things for you to do!

## LAY MINISTRY

*"For to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).*

God's blessings to everyone as we celebrate the real meaning of Christmas which is the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We hope and pray that everyone is doing well.

The Board of Lay Ministry, along with Pastor Keith, continue to meet on a regular basis to discuss the overall ministry at St. Paul's. This ministry over the Christmas season will include several additional opportunities for worship including the traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight service and Divine Worship on Christmas Day. We hope you will join us for these opportunities to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Keith continues to provide numerous opportunities for members of the congregation to

be in the Word through several Bible studies. These include an online Bible study on Tuesday mornings, a men's Bible study on Thursday mornings and a Bible study on Thursday evenings where we have been watching and discussing the movie series, "The Chosen." We encourage members of St. Paul's to take part in any of these Bible study opportunities. We are also pleased that we continue to transfer new members into the congregation. We hope you will take the opportunity to introduce yourself and welcome these new members to St. Paul's.

As always, we continue to be blessed with the dedication of the many volunteers who assist with worship services including serving on the altar guild and ushering. In addition we continue to be blessed by the presence and leadership of Laura Neufeld

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*Lay Ministry, continued*

as well as the many others who share their musical talents during the worship services.

Pastor Keith continues to be a constant in providing leadership to St. Paul's in carrying out the ministry of word and sacrament to the congregation including through member visitation and private

communion and we thank God for his ministry.

We wish all members and their families a very blessed Christmas and we look forward to seeing all of you in the new year.

*Barry Walter  
Board of Lay Ministry*



## Symbolism of the Poinsettia

Symbolically, we have Jesus' lifestory in one plant. The leaves symbolize the star that led the Wise Men to the newborn Jesus, the red leaves are a reminder of the blood of Christ shed during His crucifixion and on plants that have them, the white leaves represent Christ's purity.

## Legend of the Poinsettia

How the poinsettia and Christmas became linked centers around a bit of Mexican folklore involving a poor girl named Pepita. In the legend, Pepita had no present to offer baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve service. As she walked to church, she noticed weeds growing alongside the road. She gathered a bouquet of weeds (some accounts say she did this at the urging of an angel). When Pepita laid her bouquet at the feet of the Christ Child, the weeds burst into bright red flowers. From that night on, the poinsettia was known as "Flores de Noche Buena," or "Flowers of the Holy Night."

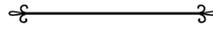
## A Joyful Christmas Reflection

In winter's hush, the snowflakes fall,  
A gentle white upon us all.  
We gather close, our hearts aglow,  
To share the love that Jesus shows.  
The star above, so bright and clear,  
Guides shepherds as they draw near.  
With angels' songs upon the air,  
We celebrate God's love and care.  
The manger small, the Saviour's bed,  
Where Mary kissed His little head.  
The gift of hope, the Prince of Peace,  
God's greatest love will never cease.  
With joyful hearts, we laugh and sing,  
Of Christmas gifts that Jesus brings.  
Forgiveness, grace, and light divine—  
For every child, these gifts are mine!  
So gather 'round, both young and old,  
The greatest story ever told.  
For Jesus came for me and you—  
Merry Christmas! God loves you too.

*Written by Microsoft Word Copilot*



## SAVIOR OF THE NATIONS, COME



Savior of the nations, come,  
 Virgin's Son, make here Your home!  
 Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,  
 That the Lord chose such a birth.

Not by human flesh and blood,  
 By the Spirit of our God,  
 Was the Word of God made flesh—  
 Woman's offspring, pure and fresh.

Here a maid was found with child,  
 Yet remained a virgin mild.  
 In her womb this truth was shown:  
 God was there upon His throne.

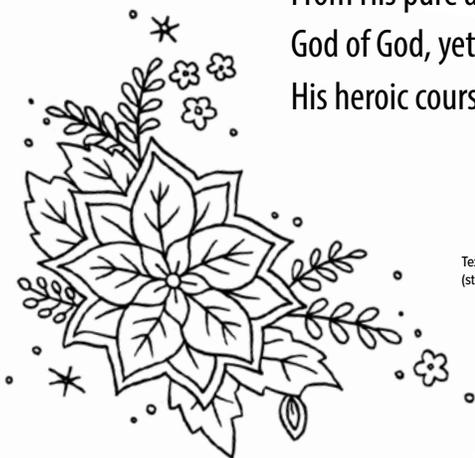
Then stepped forth the Lord of all  
 From His pure and kingly hall;  
 God of God, yet fully man,  
 His heroic course began.

God the Father was His source,  
 Back to God He ran His course.  
 Into hell His road went down,  
 Back then to His throne and crown.

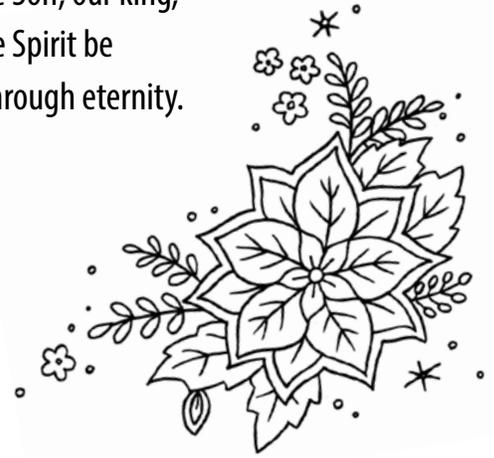
For You are the Father's Son  
 Who in flesh the vict'ry won.  
 By Your mighty pow'r make whole  
 All our ills of flesh and soul.

From the manger newborn light  
 Shines in glory through the night.  
 Darkness there no more resides;  
 In this light faith now abides.

Glory to the Father sing,  
 Glory to the Son, our king,  
 Glory to the Spirit be  
 Now and through eternity.



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# Immanuel: God with Us

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL CALENDAR FOR FAMILIES

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
30 Creation GENESIS 1-2	1 The Fall GENESIS 3	2 The Flood GENESIS 6-8	3 Call of Abram GENESIS 12:1-9	4 Abraham & Isaac GENESIS 22:1-19	5 Jacob's Dream GENESIS 28:10-22	6 Joseph in Egypt GENESIS 40-41
7 Moses & the Burning Bush EXODUS 3	8 Crossing the Red Sea EXODUS 14	9 Twelve Spies in Canaan NUMBERS 13-14	10 Entering the Promised Land JOSHUA 3-4	11 Ruth & Naomi RUTH 1-4	12 God Calls Samuel 1 SAMUEL 3	13 Saul Becomes King 1 SAMUEL 9-10
14 God Chooses David 1 SAMUEL 16	15 God's Promise to David 2 SAMUEL 7	16 Solomon Builds the Temple 1 KINGS 6-8	17 Jonah JONAH 1-4	18 Israel Exiled 2 KINGS 17	19 King Hezekiah Prays 2 KINGS 18-19	20 King Josiah & the Book of the Law 2 KINGS 22-23
21 God Calls Jeremiah JEREMIAH 1	22 Three Men in the Fiery Furnace DANIEL 3	23 Return from Exile EZRA 1 AND 3	24 Gabriel Visits Mary LUKE 1:26-38	25 Birth of Jesus LUKE 2:1-21	26 Jesus Presented at the Temple LUKE 2:22-38	27 Visit of the Wise Men MATTHEW 2

## DECEMBER 2025

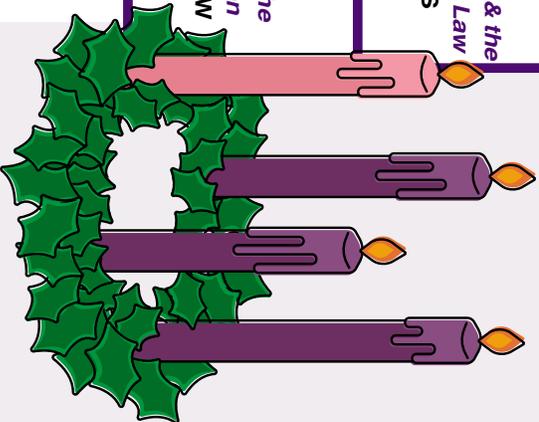
### WHAT IS ADVENT?

The word Advent means "coming." It is a penitential season to prepare for and reflect on Christ's coming in past, present, and future.

*Christ came in His incarnation as a baby, lowly in a manger.*

*Christ comes to us in the Word and Sacraments.*

*Christ will come again in His promised second coming.*



Participating in devotions at home keeps you connected to the gifts you received in the Divine Service all week long.

## TIPS FOR STARTING A DAILY DEVOTIONAL PRACTICE

- Choose a time each day for daily family devotions.
- Read the daily Bible passage or use a children's Bible.
 

*All of these passages can be found in The Story Bible (CPH)*
- Talk about it: Where do you see that God is with the people in this passage?
- Respond with prayer.
 

*Use your own words, the Lord's Prayer, or a prayer from pages 305-318 in the Lutheran Service Book.*
- Sing an Advent hymn (LSB 331-357).

## LOOKING FOR MORE?

- If you're looking for more structure for your daily devotions, check out pages 294-298 in the *Lutheran Service Book*.
 

*If you don't have a copy at home, ask about borrowing one from your congregation.*
- Supplement with an additional Advent devotion, like the ones from Lutheran Laymen's League of Canada, Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots, or CPH's *Portals of Prayer*.
- Additional free reading plans can be found here: <https://communication.cph.org/free-bible-reading-plans>

## TIPS FOR FAMILIES

- If family devotions are new to you, start small and build on the habit.
- For a visual way to mark the season, consider:
 

*Lighting candles on an Advent wreath, as a reminder that you are preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who is the Light of the World!*

*If you don't have an Advent wreath at home, you can make one as a family.*

*Colouring the calendar box or using a sticker to mark the date when you've finished your devotion.*
- Repetition is a great learning tool, so come back to the reading throughout the day and talk about it.
- If children are having a hard time sitting still, give them a piece of paper and ask them to draw what they're hearing.
- Give older children a chance to read the passage.
- When praying, folding your hands and bowing your head is both a physical posture of worship and can help curb distractions.
- For younger children, use prayers they hear in church, have them repeat after you, or give them a prompt, e.g. "Thank you God for..." and let them complete the prayer.

## A post by Terry Ditmer, December 24, 2018

It must have been Christmas 1953.

I was 5 years old.

My family went to Immanuel Lutheran Church

At 42<sup>nd</sup> and Tracy

In Kansas City, Missouri.

Immanuel was the “mother-church” of Lutheran churches in Kansas City.

The Reverend T.A. Weinhold was the pastor.

I remember him to be serious and elegant.

A gentleman and passionate pastor.

I have a vivid memory of that Christmas.

The church was packed . . . and packed might be an understatement.

The Senior Walther League had decorated the massive church.

(Massive might be a relative term; remember I was five)

The church was beautiful . . .

Lights

Trees

Candles

Tinsel . . . lots of shimmering tinsel.

The Christmas Gospel was read

And the pageant began: Mary. Joseph.

Shepherds. Angels.

And the choirs

All in robes, like angels

And it was one choir that was called, I think, the “Junior Choir”

High school and college-aged young adults

A large group

Sang a Christmas hymn I had never heard before,

“Oh Holy Night”

And I still remember it.

How it sounded.

Like angels.

“Fall on your knees and hear the angel voices.”

I remember being enchanted with this “new” hymn

(Although now I know it was written 101 years before I was born.)

“Fall on your knees . . .”

On Christmas eve, 1953

Christmas eve was AWE-some for this five-year-old because of that hymn.

It was like magic to the kid.

unfolding of the mystery of the incarnation

Come alive in the heart and mind of a child.

“Fall on your knees” . . . in joy and awe.

There’s a lot of talk about revitalization of the church.

When we talk about revitalization, maybe we need to see through the heart of a five-year-old.

Remember what Jesus said, Mark 10:14-15?

Rediscover the awesome majesty of God

Recover the mystery

Respond to God’s plan and how it unfolds.

This year, what will your children, be they five, fifteen or twenty-five . . .

What will your children see?

What will they hear?

What will they feel?

What will they taste?

I almost forgot, Christmas at Immanuel meant the candy sack.

Every child got a lunch bag, filled with treats –

An orange

Orange slices

A few chocolate drops

And some peanuts.

God bless you with an AWE-some, JOY-filled Christmas!