

Come and see!

2021 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



This Advent season we invite you to daily meditate in God's Word. Thanks to our brothers and sisters at the University Lutheran Chapel, we have a well thought out devotional each day, to help us wait for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Editors,

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*“Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.”*

[Psa 66:5 ESV]



Week 1

IN THE BEGINNING

Sunday, November 28, 2021
to Saturday, December 4, 2021

John 1:1-3

Come and See | Pastor Gabe Kasper

An important key in reading the Bible is to know that scripture interprets scripture. In other words, the Bible is one coherent story and the different pieces are interrelated.

So, when we read a verse like John 1:1 and it says, *"In the beginning,"* that should trigger something in us where we ask, "Where have I heard that before?" And the answer is in Genesis 1, the first words in the first book of the Bible: *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*

What's happening here is the gospel writer John is pointing us back to the creation of the world. And if we look back at the story of creation we see that John is telling us something important about who God is. In the creation narrative, we see that God is present, but then the text tells us that the *"Spirit of God hovered over the waters,"* and then finally as God creates, He speaks and His Word is present.

So in creation there is God, God's Spirit, and God's Word. There are three different "persons," but only one God. Three who's and one what. This is the doctrine of the Trinity. This is our God.

But, our text isn't just about the Trinity—John emphasizes one person in the Trinity in particular, The Word.

John is talking about Jesus. And what he says about Him is remarkable.

He says that Jesus of Nazareth—a man who actually lived on this earth in real time and space, a man who ate and drank and laughed and probably stubbed his toe at one time or another is...God. This man who walked the streets of first century Israel is actually one with the God who exists eternally and created everything we see. This means we have a God who is not only a transcendent, all-powerful Creator, but He is a God we can know.

In Jesus, God invites you to come and see who He is. May you do that this Advent.

Reflection:

Where have you seen God at work in your life?

Monday, November 29, 2021

Psalm 33:6-9

The Wonder of Creation | Bob Grese

At the start of Advent, it's useful to be reminded of just who our God is. He is the maker of all things, the Lord of Creation. He is clearly worthy of our praise and adoration. He made and rules the earth; therefore, His promises to us come from Someone with all authority.

As someone who's spent much of his career studying and caring for nature, I continue to marvel at the wonderful diversity and beauty of God's creation. As a child, I was fascinated with all things outdoors (water, soil, leaves, trees, insects, and birds) and was pretty destructive as my siblings and I dammed creeks, dug in the dirt, peeled bark off trees, and created outdoor forts and tree houses. As an adult, I've sought to understand how ecosystems function and how we as humans can play a role in their stewardship. Yet through it all, I continue to stand in awe of God's planning and power. Here in Michigan and particularly around Ann Arbor, we are blessed to have many examples of God's handiwork in nature all around us—in our neighborhoods, in our many parks and preserves, at the Arb and Botanical Gardens, along the Huron River, around the Great Lakes, and in so many other places. These are places that sustain us daily and provide physical and emotional respite from the more hectic and busier parts of our lives. During the pandemic this past year, many of these places provided much needed solace to many people in our community and region.

They are also places of great wonder. It's hard not to be immersed in a prairie in full bloom with insects buzzing all around or to be in the middle of a forest with gentle light filtering through the trees without feeling lifted outside of yourself. One can't gaze at the stars or northern lights without feeling a sense of awe. Even small things like watching squirrels or chipmunks store up food for the winter or the delicate catkins and flower buds on trees and shrubs that hold the promise of blooms for next spring are no less than miraculous.

During the weeks ahead as we prepare for the coming of our Savior, let us find joy in the miracle of God's creation that surrounds us daily. Ours is a God who created all things and will certainly keep His promises to redeem us.

Reflection:

Think about how your life is enriched by God's creation—the view out your window, a walk you've taken recently, or memories of a camping trip this past summer—how did God speak to you through those things? If God provides those daily miracles to us, how much more can we trust Him to answer our prayers? Have you thanked Him for those blessings?

Tuesday, November 30th, 2021

Isaiah 40:26-31

A God Who Creates and Sustains | William Cannon

It's both terrifying and comforting to look up into the sky on a clear night. Terrifying because you cannot escape how small and finite you are compared to the vastness of space, but comforting in finding that despite your finitude, the universe continues to exist despite whatever challenges or setbacks you are facing in your life. This passage examines this emotion.

The passage begins by calling the readers to lift their attention to the vastness and greatness of the whole cosmos. Not only did God create everything but He sustains it in perfect order. Verse 27 then exposes the natural conclusion we can jump to—that our lives are meaningless in comparison to the vastness of creation. We reasonably, yet mistakenly, think our lives are insignificant to a Being that made stars billions of light years away.

Verse 28 quickly corrects our misunderstanding—God, having made all things, misses nothing: *"His understanding is unsearchable."* Not only does He see our small, insignificant lives, He sustains them at every stage of life. Verse 31 ends by recognizing the strength given to those who accept this truth: *"The LORD shall renew their strength"* and give them everything they need to move through the rest of their days here on earth.

This passage grapples with our inherent limitations as created beings: even *"youths will grow faint and be weary, and young men will fall exhausted."* God meets us in these very limitations and gives us all we need when we *"wait on Him."* From this place of waiting, He empowers us to fly, to run, and walk through all the days ahead of us. Let's take comfort the next time we look up into the night sky.

Reflection:

Where do you feel, or have felt, looked-over by God in your life? What was your response to this emotion?

Spend time considering the power of God on display in creation. What has He made that you have never considered?

Where in your life are you fainting or growing weary? What does waiting for the LORD do in these areas?

Luke 2:25-32

Getting Old is Not for the Faint of Heart | David Carlson

Luke doesn't actually say Simeon was an old man, but I think it is safe to infer it from the text. I became an old man this year, by my own reckoning anyway. I turned 75 this past summer and declared to my family that 75 was an official enough age for being old and that henceforth they would have to cut me some slack, like listening to my stories even if they've heard them before.

So what about this getting old thing? In *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis said that he was surprised at how similar grief feels to fear. I am surprised how much being old feels like grief. The old are constantly letting go of something. When you're young you don't think much about getting old. Why should you? Youth is surely God's intention for us. Then by degree you're not young anymore, and then rather suddenly you're old, and getting old is not for the faint of heart.

In 2003, at the young age of 57, I moved to Kentucky to take my last full-time job before retirement. I moved next door to a man who would become my dearest friend. E. H. Melson was 91 when I became his neighbor. When we moved in next door, he had only weeks earlier lost his bride of 71 years. Helen was her name, and when they were young, they had a child who lived only for a few hours. Ever after, it was just the two of them.

One day E. H. told me of his vision. "It was not a dream! It was a vision" he said. In his vision, he was working in the back yard when suddenly Helen came to him. "When I saw her," he said, "I ran towards her leaping over a bush on the way. I haven't leaped over anything in 60 years, but I had no trouble jumping over that bush." Helen stopped him, he said. She said he couldn't come with her yet, but she was waiting. And he knew he would leap over bushes once again.

Getting old is not for the faint of heart. This is where Simeon comes in. He had been faithfully waiting on a promise. And then that promise was in his arms. I find that getting old has its compensations. It focuses one's attention on eternity. "... *you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation.*" From Simeon to me—from one old man to another—the promise remains. That promise, and realization, of salvation is not of course only for the old, but it sure is what keeps us from faintness of heart.

Reflection:

How does the promise of salvation and the promise of eternity interact with your present life?

Thursday, December 2, 2021

1 John 1:1-5

The Sound of the Word | Paul Chamberlain

"Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start." If you had grown up in my family, you'd instantly recognize those words as the opening bars of "Do-Re-Mi" from *The Sound of Music*—my mom's favorite musical, and one whose songs we often sang together. The premise of Do-Re-Mi is that singing starts with being able to match the pitch and tone of all the notes in a scale. From this foundation of notes, you can craft melodies, harmonies, lyrics, and rhythms to sing any song imaginable.

1 John begins by proclaiming someone as foundational to our journey of faith as notes are to music: the Word of Life. We learn in today's reading that eternal life "... *was with the Father and was made manifest to us*" (v. 2) through this Word. The Word is none other than Jesus Christ, as we learn from John's Gospel. In 1 John, we experience the Word as Someone people could hear, see, look upon, and touch (v. 1), and Someone who completes our joy (v. 4). We could not make our way to God due to our sinfulness, brokenness, and wayward hearts, yet we can have friendship with God because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Advent celebrates God coming to earth to be with us through the birth of Jesus. The One who is light, and in whom there is not the faintest hint of darkness, chooses to come and die for us even though we were walking in and completely enveloped by darkness. Praise be to God!

Reflection:

Have you felt yourself walking in darkness lately? How can you invite God to draw you ever more deeply into his light and make your joy complete?

Friday, December 3, 2021

Hebrews 11:1-3

Seeing Isn't Believing | Danielle Behnke

"Seeing is believing," or so the saying goes. After all, that's how society seems to operate. We demand concrete evidence and overall tend towards finding things out for ourselves. It's much harder for us to accept statements blindly. However, that's not what God asks us to do when it comes to faith.

Hebrews 11:1 states that *"faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* This is especially true during the season of Advent as we look forward to Christmas and reflect on the original period of waiting for the Savior. When God promised Adam and Eve that their descendant would be the One to come and finally defeat Satan, they had to take that promise on faith. They did not get to see the fulfillment of that promise and neither did generation after generation of their descendants. They all had to have faith that eventually God would fulfill His promise and until then, they would have to be content with waiting without seeing.

When it comes to the promise of Jesus's first coming, we have already seen its fulfillment. We have the words of our fellow Christians who did see Christ and his eventual victory over Satan. However, we still have to accept those words without seeing how those events unfolded, and we have to accept God's promises that have not yet been fulfilled. Even though we're no longer waiting for Jesus' birth, we are still waiting for His return.

This can be daunting. Thankfully, God has told us that we're not on our own. We have the Holy Spirit sparking faith within us and strengthening it daily. Therefore, within this time of waiting, we can trust our God and come and see how faithful He has been since the beginning of time.

Reflection:

How does God call you to "faith without seeing"?

Saturday, December 4, 2021

Colossians 1:12-18

Grandeur in Every Square Inch | Kyle Gontjes

Have you ever tried to photograph the moon? I have. Without high-quality filters, the moon can appear distorted and insignificant, looking like a pinhole in the canvas of the night sky. By focusing on taking polished, Instagram-worthy photos, we often overlook what's right in plain sight. We miss experiencing the moon's inherent beauty and its grandeur, especially its provision of light amid a sea of darkness.

Today's Scripture reading, Colossians 1:12-18, reminds us of Christ's preeminence over creation. Paul reminds us that *"all things were created through Him and for Him."* Christ is *"before all things"* and *"in Him all things hold together."* Importantly, Christ reigns supreme over all created things, *"whether they be thrones, or domains, or principalities, or powers."*

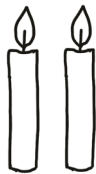
Notice Paul's assurance of Christ's headship over all things. All things were created through Him, for Him, and are held together by Him. Abraham Kuyper exquisitely exclaims the significance of Christ's sovereignty in his oft-quoted phrase: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" There is not a single square inch where Christ does not cry: "Mine!" How amazing is that?

Let's briefly return to our discussion of photography. Camera filters are powerful tools. Filters can improve a photo's lighting, color, and even cover up blemishes! Filters can both positively and negatively alter our relationship to the world around us.

How do you see the world? What filters are you using? Do you fix your eyes on Christ and rest in Him? Without drawing near unto Christ, Kuyper argues that "we stagger in the darkness and stumble through life as if careening off tombstones." I hope that we draw near unto Christ this Advent season. May we dwell in the grandeur of Christ's sovereignty and his provision of light amidst the darkness. May you look around this Advent season and rejoice in Christ's preeminence and magnificent handiwork!

Reflection:

Where do you experience the wonder of Christ's handiwork? Are there areas in your life where you can better honor Christ's lordship?



Week 2

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Sunday, December 5, 2021
to Saturday, December 11, 2021

Sunday December 5, 2021

John 1:4-8

Overcome The Darkness | Todd Baker

Think back over the past year. Have there been moments when you felt defeated, distressed, or broken-hearted? To say that the trials and tribulations of this world can be overwhelming is an understatement. The darkness that is mentioned in verse 5 of today's reading is often all too easy to see in our daily lives. It can be very tempting to see this darkness and admit defeat, seeking solace from the pain that surrounds us. What chance do we have against the pain and suffering that constantly swirls around us?

There is a light that cannot be overcome by the darkness, sin, and brokenness in this world. Jesus is the light that the evil in this world cannot overcome. Christ our Savior cannot be defeated by COVID, relationship divisions, employment distress, mental and emotional health trauma, or any other trial that may come our way in this world. We could spend all day listing the ailments that bring us pain, and these present expressions of darkness would certainly overpower and destroy us if we tried to fight back on our own strength.

Reflection:

Join me in asking the Lord to shine a light on the darkness and give us the strength and grace to defeat the sin and pain that ravages our lives. Praise the Lord that He sent His Son to shine a light and overcome the darkness for us.

Monday, December 6, 2021

Psalm 36

Tuning Out Distractions | McKinley Schmitz

It is a truth universally acknowledged that those given a megaphone typically don't have anything worthwhile to say. We all know at least one person that has been given a societal platform that they should not possess. They are the reincarnation of the wicked in Psalm 36: *"For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful"* (Psalm 36:2-3).

These individuals wreak havoc in society. They fan the flames of hate and fear among groups of people, pitting one against another and creating places for animosity to fester. It is painful to see this happen at all, but it is worse to see it among those who hold places in the Church. There are those who use their platform to voice opinions that drive people away from the faith instead of drawing them closer. Their opinions are not rooted in the good news of the Gospel, but in their own pride.

As we welcome the beginning of a new year within the Church, we can find peace from the second half of the Psalm: *"Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice is like the great deep"* (Psalm 36:5-6).

As this season is filled with messages from all sides, let us hold steadfast in the knowledge that the message of Christ's birth never ceases. May the voices that fill the airspace with nonsense fade away and allow us to focus on the truth, for it will never fail.

Reflection:

What are some ways that you can avoid the messages that distract from the truth?

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Isaiah 40:1-5

Her Warfare is Ended | Chloe Haynes

Life can be incredibly stressful and overwhelming. We are led into sin countless times, which complicates our lives, knotting them into a disarray that we can't untangle. There are plenty of things the world prescribes to heal this mess through earthly means: yoga, self-care, a degree, a dog, a new relationship, and other quick fixes for our entanglement. These things are good in the right context, but they can never solve the messes that we are. If anything, they add to it.

Isaiah 40 speaks of an entrance of peace. The text refers not only to an end to Israel's warfare, but also introduces a forgiveness of sins: "*Her iniquity is pardoned.*" The peace they needed was salvation from themselves and their sinful nature rather than just from opposing armies.

In the same way, we need salvation from our own sin. Things of this world can never be a solution that is meaningful. Jesus' death and resurrection are the only way. The Scripture passage alludes to this by declaring the need for preparation for the Christ. This time in the Church year is the perfect time to examine our own sin and prepare ourselves for Jesus.

Reflection:

Have you been trying to solve messes with things other than Christ? Examine ways in which you can prepare your life for the peace of Christ.

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

1 John 1:1-5

What about Jesus? | Dan Dolsen

A few years ago, my wife Kristin and I were visiting with a neighbor and the conversation turned to the topic of faith. Our friend shared that she had been a deeply committed Christian, married to a pastor, and had been a teacher who taught all the “stuff” about Christianity. She had even taught the apologetic arguments of C.S. Lewis, who stated that that we could never consider Jesus as simply a good moral teacher; he either had to be truly the Son of God (*Lord*), or a deranged *lunatic*, or simply a *liar*. But she shared that today, she would have none of these arguments.

As the conversation continued, we simply asked her, “We get where you are with these arguments, but what are you going to do about Jesus?” She knew what this question meant—that she could not simply turn her back on the truth that Jesus lived and walked on Earth, and that there is irrefutable evidence of his resurrection. She paused and stated, “Now that *is* something I must think about.”

Kristin and I never learned where our friend ended up on her search for Christ (unfortunately, we moved from that neighborhood), but we do know that the conversation brought the light of Christ to her that day and caused her to reconsider the reality of Jesus.

It is this reminder of the reality of Jesus’s life...that He *really did* walk on the Earth, spent time with people, went to the cross, and rose from the dead. It is this incarnate Christmas truth that is at the heart of the Advent season. It’s a reality that simply changes everything! It’s this truth—this reality—that brings light into the dark places of our lives and inspires us to see clearly who Christ is and that through this light, “*our joy is complete.*”

Reflection:

How does the truth about Jesus coming into the world impact your faith and complete your joy?

Thursday, December 9, 2021

2 Corinthians 4:1-10

Light in Darkness | Rob Kasemeyer

Did you ever tour a cave or a mine before the days of cell phones? If so, then you probably experienced the tour guide turning off all the lights to show what true darkness looked like. In that setting, you literally could not see your hand right in front of your face. Thankfully, the guide didn't leave the lights off for very long, and the tour resumed with normalcy. Nowadays, the tours are quite different: everyone has a "flashlight" in their pocket and the experience can be altered by the slightest glimmer of light. Just a few lumens allow shapes and colors to come alive again. Thank God for a glimmer of light!

Yet, we still live in dark times. Sometimes it seems like we live like blind people stumbling around in the dark. However, the darker the world, the brighter even a dim light looks. Darkness changes dramatically when we remember and share God's Word. As verse 6 says, *"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."*

We have the light! Our mission is to share that light of the gospel. As a cell phone illuminates a dark cave, Christ's light pierces the darkness of this world. Jesus can shine through us as we love

our neighbor in difficult times. Paul writes in verses 7-9: *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."* Regardless of our circumstances, good or bad, we have His light. Shine. As Oscar Hammerstein II put it, "The love in your heart wasn't put there to stay. Love isn't love until it's given away."

Reflection:

In what ways does the world around you appear as dark as the interior of a cave? How can you allow God's light to shine through you?

1 Peter 3:13-17

The Answer in Darkness | Becky Johnson

What kind of Advent reading is this? I love the passages about John the Baptist or the passages from Isaiah, but this reading? How does it fit the Advent message of light in the midst of darkness? What does God want to teach us from this particular Scripture during this particular season of Advent?

Peter is writing to Christians who are being persecuted for their faith. These Christians were under great pressure! Certainly, we could say that they were surrounded by darkness. How does Peter encourage them? He tells them that they are blessed when they suffer for what is right. Wait a minute. Isn't the Christmas message about comfort and glad tidings? We didn't sign up for suffering as we gather to worship the baby in the manger. But that is Peter's message. Suffering for the name of Jesus is part of the package of following Jesus.

This is how we shine as lights in this dark world, a world filled with threats, with fear of being cancelled, and with ever-growing opposition to the name of Jesus: We start by revering, or setting apart, Christ as Lord. Popularity isn't our lord, 'likes' on social media aren't our lord, the new trend of the day isn't lord. Jesus is Lord. Listen to Him, follow Him, imitate His example.

Be able to give a defense of the Gospel, but do not be defensive. Always be prepared to give an answer when asked to present a reason for the hope that you have. If our light is shining, if we are living as Jesus-followers, then our actions should cause people to wonder and ask about our faith. And when they do, we speak with gentleness and respect. Wow! That's certainly different from most of the speech we hear around us. If we could obey this simple sentence, we would shine as lights in a dark world.

But here's the problem: the darkness is not just out there—all those others who insult, who threaten, who don't speak respectfully and kindly—the darkness is in me, too. Is my suffering for doing good, or is my suffering often the result of my own sin? I need the Light of the World, Jesus, to come into my darkness, to set me free from my sinful ways, to empower me to suffer because He has suffered for me. That baby in the manger went to the cross. He did not retaliate when mistreated, nor did He open his mouth and argue; rather, He suffered for doing good and He did it for me, for you, and for all those living in darkness.

Reflection:

How can the way we speak and act point to Jesus, the Light of the World?

Saturday, December 11, 2021

Luke 11:33-36

Bright Eyes Reflect the Light | Monica Heissenbuettel

The opening lines of an old Sunday School song begin "Oh, be careful little eyes what you see..." This song is a reminder that the eyes are the window to the soul. They are the gateway to the brain. They are the door to the heart. Eyes that see healthy, wholesome, God-pleasing sights will be filled with the light Luke writes about. And that light is the Light of Christ.

As an early childhood educator, young mom, and follower of Jesus, I walk gingerly, attempting to be careful and shield young eyes from the darkness. Books, music, videos, social media and our cultural environment can all reflect the darkness. If young eyes are looking at dark things, they cannot fully reflect the light.

John writes: *"If we claim to have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin"* (1 John 1:6-7). If we fill our eyes with "healthy" sights, sights that reflect God's goodness, words that capture His love, we will have no room for the darkness: *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them"* (Ephesians 5:11).

But none of us is perfect! Sin creeps in, temptations abound, and even the trappings of holiday traditions can capture our attention and draw our eyes into the darkness, distracting us away from the Light of Christ. Isaiah reminds us, though, that *"the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned"* (Isaiah 9:2). Followers of Jesus are drawn to His Light, redeemed by Him through His death and resurrection. Our eyes are filled with His Light!

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, 'I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12). Filled with His light, where there is no room for darkness, we can boldly shine our lights on a stand, drawing others to Him.

Reflection:

What things can you focus on this Advent season that fill your eyes with His Light? How can you intentionally look for ways to shine His light to those who don't yet know Him?



Week 3

CHILDREN OF GOD

Sunday, December 12, 2021
to Saturday, December 18, 2021

John 1:9-13

God Is Never Silent | Margaret Baker

As a literature student, I love finding the Gospel in the most unlikely of places. The Intertestamental Period, the 400 years between Malachi's prophecy around 430 B.C. about the coming of Elijah, and the arrival on the scene of John the Baptist, who fulfilled that prophecy, is one of those places. God did not speak directly with His people during that four-century period.

In that time of Heavenly quiet, Greek civilization flourished, and among their output was the oft-cited "Allegory of the Cave" from Plato's *Republic*. Simply explained, the story relates the tale of three prisoners living in a dark cave, only seeing reality as shadows, until one breaks free, discovers the sun, and has to acknowledge that his view of reality has been wrong all along.

Socrates explains, "When it is seen, it leads us directly to the finding that it is the universal cause of all that is right and beautiful. It is the source of visible light and the master of the same, and in the intelligible world, it is the master of truth and reason."

"When it is seen," writes Plato. Indeed, John tells us, this light, only dimly understood in the pagan world, the "true light" that gives light to everyone, has come into the world. Not only was this light an actual human being, He was also God. He IS Plato's "universal cause of all that is right and beautiful," as without Him nothing was made that has been made. And best of all, He promises adoption as children into His heavenly family to all who come out of the cave of sin, the world, and darkness, and joyfully, humbly believe.

As Christians, because of God's gracious revelation through His Word, we know what Plato did not. The true light to which John the Baptist was a witness is here! And it is not the sun; it is the One who made the sun, makes us His children, and saves us from our sins: Jesus! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

Reflection:

Give thanks that you are adopted into the family of the One true light!

Monday, December 13, 2021

Psalm 16:4-6

Security in a Loving King | Sarah Trent

The beautiful story of Christ's birth is the true reason for our celebration. Long ago, He sent angels to shepherds and wise men, as well as an earthly king to chief priests and teachers of the Law. Today, He draws you to Himself to hear exciting news: God is with us! Prophecies of old are fulfilled, at just the right time. He set the boundary lines for an eternity—and they are good. God has not forgotten you!

We experience the challenges of life full-force. A "portion" is what we wrap our hands and heart around—it's what we hold onto, like a warm mug of coffee in the morning. Or maybe you are blessed to have a faithful friend that holds your hand, if asked? Or perhaps a memory so precious that whenever you think of it, a smile comes across your face, revealing how it warms your heart? My heart melts at the love of a Great King. At Advent, we recall Psalm 16:4-6: God remembers His people; we are secure in His love. People disappoint us sometimes, but God is faithful.

In any sorrow, heartache and illness, remember God is with you. Allow Scripture to take up space in your mind and heart. Will you close your eyes and let it flow directly to your heart? If so, smile. Know that this One King loves you completely. Pleasant boundaries are the promises of God. His promises do not change with your life's circumstances. A Royal seal of love was set right at the beginning of time—just for you.

This King is present with you every day. This Advent season, may the Scriptures soak into your heart and mind, becoming a source of strength to carry you through—all year round.

Reflection:

Knowing that One King loves you completely, how will you respond today?

Tuesday, December 14, 2021

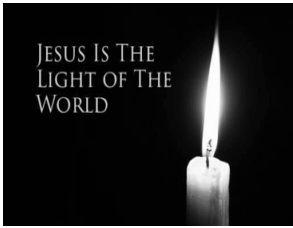
Isaiah 9:2-6

Love Moves us Out of Darkness | Larry Frank

Isaiah 9:2 *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."*

Think of a dark room, with a single candle lit. Look how it fills the darkness that had been there. The light seems fragile; your own movement could cause a wind that could snuff it out.

Look at the candle's flame, how it was made: Jesus' light is from God—perfect in construction, without flaw or weakness, designed for light to show love.



Now say this: "Jesus' light is my light." Jesus' light IS your light, so protect it in all your goings and comings. Of course, to guard the flame you will need the Word, His Word. Chasing the darkness away, His light shatters the yoke of your burdens and increases joy, and in Jesus' light, your reflected light will shine from you for others to see.

You may have grown complacent (Is 10:26-27), or you believe your burdens are yours alone to carry, but they rest uneasy on your heart. Instead, let the bright shining light of Jesus and His love for you continue to move you out of the darkness.

Even though our world is in 3-D, only His light truly gives it shape. In the light we are a shape, a spirit: in Him, we become Jesus' present to the Father., It is the only thing we were made for.

C. S. Lewis notes that "the swiftest thing that touches our senses is light. . . ." When Jesus' love for us is known within us, it shines from us to those around us. One can never see, without the candle of Jesus' light burning bright, the unique calling He has for each of us. Our spiritual gifts are God's gift to us.

Shine His light today, tomorrow too, even forever: the light of His candle burns bright, and yours can too!

Reflection:

What is your own description of this light? How does His light shine in your darkness? What is the purpose of His reign in your life?

Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Romans 8:12-17

Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story | Angela Post

The first time I listened to the Hamilton soundtrack, I was thoroughly confused. Who is Alexander Hamilton? Who is Aaron Burr? What is Yorktown? To say I was disappointed in this soundtrack would be an understatement. About six months later, I decided to give it another chance while on a drive to northern Michigan, and things haven't been the same since.

My favorite song in this musical is the last song titled "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story." In this final song, the cast returns to tell the audience how Hamilton influenced them following his death. After giving us an exhaustive list of all of the things she did in memory of her husband, Eliza Hamilton asks the audience "Will they tell your story? Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?"

Another way to ask this is "What will my legacy be?" This passage from Scripture answers these questions and confidently declares the truth for all Christians: Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God (v. 14)! Since we are children of God, which the Spirit testifies to (v. 16), we are co-heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may share in His glory (v. 17).

The Creator has given His creation the gift of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While there is absolutely nothing we can do to earn it, we can thank God for this gift by telling others His story.

"So, stay young, scrappy, and hungry
And don't throw away your shot."

Reflection:

What are some ways you can share the gift of your eternal legacy with others today?

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Galatians 3:23-29

Faith, Not Works | Thad Polk

My wife Norma and I recently attended an evening wedding in Chicago. And somehow, I let myself be convinced that I needed to wear a tuxedo. It looked nice and everything, but unfortunately very few people availed themselves of the opportunity to dress that formally. And let's just say that the contrast between my outfit and that of the guy with no socks was, um, STARK. 😊 As you might imagine, I would have much preferred if everyone dressed like I did, but it clearly wasn't required.

The Galatians, to whom Paul is writing in today's passage, had similarly convinced themselves that they had to behave in a way that wasn't required, but the stakes were much higher. The Galatians had become convinced that they couldn't be real Christians unless they obeyed the Jewish law, even though they weren't Jewish. That might sound strange to modern Christians, but when Paul wrote this letter, virtually all Christians were Jewish and saw Jesus as the fulfillment of God's Old Testament promises to the Jews. But that view raises a key question: Do you have to be Jewish in order to be a Christian? Many of the Galatians believed that the answer was yes, but Paul recognized the very significant danger in this belief. Put simply, it implies that Christian salvation depends on more than faith in Christ; it also depends on following the law.

Paul points out that God gave the Law to his people to serve as a "guardian" (v. 24); the Greek word refers to a kind of moral tutor. So if the Jewish law was a tutor, what did it teach us? Ironically, it taught us that no one was capable of following the law and that we need to be justified in some other way! That way was provided by Christ's death on the cross. Now we can be justified by faith in Christ's work (v. 24), and that's *all* that's required. It doesn't matter if we're Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, we're all one in Christ through faith (v. 28).

Of course, modern-day Christians don't believe we need to follow Jewish law. Nevertheless, it's easy for us to become divided over issues that aren't really central to our faith (e.g., hymns vs. contemporary music, dressing up vs. casually for church, Republicans vs. Democrats). Let us remember that our shared faith in Christ's sacrifice is what really matters, and we are all united as children of God through that faith (v. 26).

Reflection:

Are there aspects of your Christian walk that are not central to the faith but that you allow to separate you from your brothers and sisters in Christ? What steps can you take to help unify rather than divide his Church?

Friday, December 17, 2021

1 John 3:1-11

Love of our Father | Paul K. Knickelbein

As you can see from my profile above, I have a bunch of kids. I love them. I would do anything for them! I am pretty sure that any father reading this would do the same. Unlike our heavenly Father, I make mistakes; I make wrong decisions, but when all is said and done, I love my kids and want what is best for them, even in my imperfect way. What a huge blessing it is that we have a Father who is perfect and loves us in a perfect way.

My kids also make mistakes. They sin and at times are intentionally disobedient. I love them and I forgive them all with the hope and desire for them to grow up to be fine young men and women. (And they are growing up that way!) But more than that, this leads us to a responsibility. Author Ben Horowitz wrote a book called *What You Do Is Who You Are*. If we take the premise of that book and continue to sin, we are taking the devil's side and are obviously acting against our Heavenly Father. As the passage reads, "*Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child*" (vs. 10).

But that's the blessing of being God's child: He calls us daily to repentance and always forgives us. No matter the sin, no matter the mistake, our Heavenly Father is always standing there, arms wide open to envelope us in his embrace, to welcome us back to him. When we truly accept the invitation that God gives us to be his child, we should want to do nothing else than to stop sinning and step it up to the next level: reflect the love of God by loving others placed here on earth around us. Whether it's to a family member, co-worker, or stranger at the grocery store, we can show our Father in Heaven that we appreciate His love and forgiveness and share the love that God gives us to others.

Reflection:

Are there times that you feel all alone and not loved? Take a moment to remember God's goodness and faithfulness, and reflect on how He, our Heavenly Father, loves you so much—more than anyone here on earth could ever love us. Write down five ways that you have seen His love in your life.

Saturday, December 18, 2021

Philippians 2:12-18

Shine Like Stars | Jeaneen Wyly

Complaining is almost an American pastime: gas prices are too high, we're frustrated that items we "need" are stuck on ships or in warehouses, and we never seem to get paid enough for everything we're expected to do at work. Arguing is much the same: just the words "guns," "vaccines," and "social issues" can send our blood pressure way above 120/80. And would cable news even survive without arguing?

Yet we are admonished to obey God by not arguing or complaining, thus "*shin[ing] like stars in the universe*" for a "*crooked and depraved generation*." In other words, Christ's love is to transform us so completely that we are noticeably different from those around us; we are less concerned with the things of this world and more focused on the eternal.

These verses are difficult for me: since I was a little girl, my dad called me "the lawyer" because I constantly felt the need to argue and defend myself, my brother, the random person in the news.... And complaining? I have it down to an art form: there are *always* things that could be better, which means I'm often not satisfied with how things *are*. It is so easy for me to get emotional about policies and procedures that ultimately *don't even matter*.

And that's the problem: when we focus on the minutiae of this world, we lose track of God's overarching plan or "*good purpose*" for us and for the world. We forfeit the opportunity to rest in God, to experience His peace, and to share the light of His Holy Spirit to others. This Advent season, may our spirits find a calmness and peacefulness in Christ among the chaos of this world. And may the light of Christ so shine through us, as stars in the universe, that others are drawn to experience Him for themselves.

Reflection:

In what ways do I require the Holy Spirit's transformation so that I can reflect Christ's love in me instead of the complaining and arguing that are natural to me?

Who is someone God may be placing in my life this Christmas season with whom I can share Jesus's love?



Week 4

WORD BECAME FLESH

Sunday, December 19, 2021
to Saturday, December 25, 2021

Sunday, December 19, 2021

John 1:14–28

An Unexpected Source of Fullness | Abby Haggard

'Tis the season!

'Tis the season of being merry, bringing tidings of joy, drinking hot chocolate, hanging ornaments, building snowmen, hearing sleigh bells, singing carols, exchanging gifts, and enjoying all the other festivities of the Christmas season!

The holly, jolly, and mistletoe of this season come with a price, or at least that is what the ads are telling me: "Buy this! Your life will be so much better once you purchase our item! Find joy in the savings!"

Christmas time is a competition between companies to offer the most from life. How do products sell? Well, consumers gravitate to what they need—or at least to what they think they need. We buy the things that we believe will bring us an upgrade, at least in some regard. What will bring us a more full and abundant life?

I'll be the first to admit that I'm often blinded by the sparkle of new products, and thus, I miss the real point of what makes this season so joyous.

Everything we need was made manifest through Jesus Christ. Over 2000 years ago on one night in Bethlehem, a young girl gave birth to everything we ever needed and laid him in an animal's feeding box.

The highest King of kings.

The source of my salvation.

The one who made me right with the Creator of the universe.

This one that lay in a grimy little box after a long journey to Bethlehem in the least "sparkly" place one would ever expect to find a King—He brought me and you "*grace upon grace*" and truth, as John tells us. On that night, the lowliest of births brought me and you the most valuable of gifts: eternal life with the Lord. What was materially poor was the most abundant and life-giving gift of all time.

Do rejoice in the festivities of the season. Be merry! But remind yourself of the truest reason for the holly, jolly, and mistletoe—the birth of Christ, in whom we receive grace upon grace and the fullness of life.

Reflection:

How might we be ones in the world who demonstrate that our fullness is in Christ? How do we live as Christians in a world that so often counters the gospel message?

Monday, December 20, 2021

Psalm 2

More Than A Manger | Liz Komurka

In 2019, my husband took me to my first Living Nativity. Just before the end of the mile-long walk, little kids (i.e. the shepherds) come bursting out of hiding spots, leaping, shouting and pointing to the lit star in the sky—until you turn the corner and a hush falls over the group because there, bundled up under many layers and surrounded by animals (including a real donkey!), is a couple and a rather realistic baby lying in a manger. Once you've had your fill of gazing at Baby Jesus, that's it, you leave and go home.

But, if we leave Jesus as the baby in the manger and simply go home, we're falling into a romanticized fairytale trap. His story doesn't end as a babe—in fact, it doesn't even end with His Death and Resurrection. Jesus is God's anointed, begotten by the Father outside of time and before all worlds. As such, He has been set as King over all nations, which He will fully claim when all of creation is restored to God during Jesus's Second Coming: *"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross"* (Colossians 1:19–20).

Reflection:

Even as we await this Second Advent, we are called to follow God and His Son—there is no neutrality. The alternative is opposition to God, His Son, and the Word, which will be met with no impartiality. How can you follow Jesus this Advent season?

Isaiah 61:1-4

Word Became Flesh | Stephen Mundy

The word "restoration" brings to mind images of 60-year-old cars perfectly remade, or YouTube videos of abandoned cars in fields with more rust than steel turned into spotless specimens that look like they just rolled off the factory floor. If any of you have rebuilt an engine or done bodywork on a rusty car you know how painstaking the work is. It requires patience, attention to detail, dedication, technical skill, and an artist's touch. A successful restoration can only be accomplished with a love and passion for the car.

Isaiah is prophesying about the restoration that Christ is going to bring to this earth. This is literally the Good News that salvation brings. The Lord anointed Christ to right every wrong and heal every wound. We have hope in God's faithfulness to bring total restoration to this earth—to fix every broken part, seal every leaking gasket, repaint every rusty portion. I find it immeasurably comforting that every prisoner will be set free and that every brokenhearted person will be comforted. Christ, in His perfect love and passion for us, will restore the world entirely.

At the beginning of verse 2 we read "*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" One of my favorite car restoration shows is a YouTube series put together by the YouTuber Ronald Finger. In it, he documents a three-year-long restoration of a 1985 Pontiac Fiero 2m4. What makes this project so interesting is not only the depth to which he goes to perfectly restore every single detail of the car, but more so that the car is not particularly valuable. A Malaise-era GM economy car, it makes about 90 horsepower and lacks even power steering. Ronald invests many times the value of the car restoring it. This models to me what the year of the Lord's favor means. God looks upon us with favor, not because there is anything about us deserving of that favor—but rather because He loves us so deeply. And because of His love and favor, He promises to bring total restoration to us and to the world.

As we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, let us be filled with the excitement, the joy, the anticipation of Christ's coming. Let us feel the energy in Isaiah's words as he describes the restoration that is coming. And then let us remember that this restoration is not only a future event we look forward to when Christ returns—but that this deep, complete restoration is a work that Christ is enacting in us right now.

Reflection:

What does it mean in your life to live as someone who is being restored? What are some areas of your life that are in need of restoration? In what ways have you seen God's restoration this past week?

Wednesday, December 22, 2021

Romans 3:21–26

Rent-Free | Andrew Komurka

You might have encountered a quote by author Rory Vaden, saying “success is never owned, it is rented, and the rent is due every day.” It appears on posters, coffee mugs, and social media posts to motivate us to work hard—to invest effort toward our goals. The implication is that without sufficient investment, we will fall behind on the rent and success will be taken from us. “Successful,” the posters and mugs say, is a label we can temporarily have, but it is not something we can inherently, permanently be.

Taken out of context, Romans 3:23 might send a similar but bleaker message. “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*” might as well say “righteousness is never owned, and you’ll never afford the rent either.” Thankfully, there’s more to that sentence, and more to the story! “*[All] are justified freely by [God’s] grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus*” (Romans 3:24) is a declaration that we are right with God, just as if we had never sinned, with no payment required. Righteousness, God promises, is owned. Justified, Christ Jesus says, is what we permanently are. We live rent-free as residents of God’s Kingdom.

That’s true for “*all who believe*” (Romans 3:22). And even better, there are no restrictions that faith must be “big enough” or “strong enough” or “good enough.” By God’s grace, complete and permanent justification comes through faith in Jesus.

Reflection:

Are there parts of your life in which you are “paying rent” towards temporary success? How can remembering your rent-free righteousness change your perspective and mindset towards those things?

Thursday, December 23, 2021

John 14:6-11

The Way and the Truth and the Life | David Dickhudt

Have you ever used the maps feature on your phone or a GPS device to provide directions for your travel? And have you ever done as I have on occasion and ignored the GPS directions and taken what you thought was a faster, more direct route only to wind up stuck in a traffic jam or road detour?

Jesus is our infallible GPS, who provides us clear guidance on the way to connect with our almighty God and His Father—*"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."* And, yet, too often we listen to other voices, voices from within us or around us, which urge us to take spiritual routes we think may be shorter or faster, but instead are routes that ultimately lead us in the opposite direction from where we should be heading.

This familiar Bible passage goes on to relate the words of Jesus's disciple, Philip, who says, *"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."* We may wonder how the disciples could have been so blind as to not realize that Jesus is one with God the Father after years of following Jesus and walking with him and witnessing firsthand countless miracles he had done.

And yet how about us? Do we truly know Jesus? Have we taken the time to meditate deeply on God's Word to know Jesus and see the Father through him? Do we know Jesus well enough to describe to a friend the way to the Father—through Jesus and the Word?

Reflection:

Take a minute to reflect on a couple of things you have come to know about the Father through Jesus, then share those with a friend or colleague—today!

Luke 2:1–20

Dwelt Among Us | Pastor Marcus Lane

Throughout the Scriptures, we encounter ways that God repeatedly defies expectations, and the birth of Christ is no exception. Israel's Messiah does not come wrapped in the glory of riches and power. He was not born in the throne room of Caesar Augustus. Instead, he was born in the shadows of the Roman Empire, in the small town of Bethlehem, to a young virgin pledged to be married to a carpenter. His company at his birth is not the social elite of society, but poor shepherds and outcasts. This arrival of God's own Son is nothing if not unexpected.

Søren Kierkegaard tells a parable of a great and noble king who falls in love with a peasant woman. But the king, overwhelmed by his love for this woman, finds himself at an impasse. If he were to go to this woman in all of his majesty, wearing a crown and royal robes, he would certainly overwhelm her, and he could never know if her love for him was truly genuine. So, the king does the unthinkable. He takes off his crown, leaves his throne and castle, and puts on the garments of a peasant to woo the woman who has captured his heart.

Kierkegaard's parable captures one of the many truths at the heart of the incarnation. God's Son has come to us, not in power and majesty to overwhelm or dominate us, but he has come in weakness in order to win us back. He has entered our world, taking on our flesh and dying our death, all so that He might bring us back to the Father. In the words of St. Irenaeus, "He became as we are so that we might become as He is." He became like us, so that we could become like Him: perfect, holy, and righteous children of the Father.

So, come and see the baby wrapped in a manger, because in this One, the King of the world has come.

Reflection:

How can you gratefully embrace the greatest gift of all—God's presence, love, and redemption—this Advent season? How can you share this Gift with others?

Saturday, December 25, 2021

1 John 5:6-12

Forget about the presents this year! | Mark Liston

Whatever is under your tree this morning can't compare to the words in 1 John 5:11-12: "... *God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*" Wow!

This Christmas I'd like for you to ignore the gifts under the tree and think about some of the words to our best Christmas carols: "Joy to the World, the Lord Has Come," "Away in a Manger," "Silent Night," "O Holy Night."

Forget about Santa, letting it snow, and who got run over by a reindeer, for a second. Without Christ there really isn't a Christ-mas. Look at your Christmas tree, with the lights shining, and think about how this all got started.

According to the History channel, Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther first added lighted candles to a tree. Walking toward his home one winter evening, composing a sermon, he was awed by the brilliance of stars twinkling amidst evergreens. To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a tree in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles.

Picture Martin Luther walking and being inspired by the twinkling stars. He understood the wonderful gift the Lord gave us and how it all started in a manger in a stable and how it seemed to end with Jesus dying a horrid death on a cross—just so He could overcome death and give each of us everlasting life.

Our Lord gave every one of His people the greatest Christmas gift they could ever want—Eternal Life. All they had to do is believe that Jesus came to die for them so they could join Him for eternity. It is free to us. It is simple. It is the greatest Christmas gift your family could ever receive. Just believe. Merry Christmas!

Reflection:

MK and I have found that age is wonderful in our walk with Christ. Our daily devotions remind us how we need our Lord as the guide of our lives in every way—every day. We always need to submit to His will and show patience for His guidance.

ABOUT OUR WRITERS

Margaret Baker

Margaret is married to David, the man of her dreams, and together they are raising five wonderful children, ranging from 15–23. Her hobbies include walking, swimming, playing from the American Songbook on the piano, accompanying young instrumentalists, reading children's classics, editing college essays, pondering the wonders of Scripture, and learning about fascinating topics, like the endangered kakapo of New Zealand and the mystery of the Basque language, for her 6th grade writing students.

Todd Baker

Todd seeks to follow Christ above all else, serves ULC by leading small groups, drinks chocolate milk like it's oxygen, and can often be found engrossed in a book or podcast about an interesting topic.

Danielle Behnke

Danielle is a senior at UM studying English and German. She enjoys reading and knitting, preferably with a cup of tea nearby.

William Cannon

Will is a mission director for University Christian Outreach and a member of the Servants of the Word, an international brotherhood of lay missionaries. He serves as an elder for ULC, as well as on the music team.

David Carlson

Living the good life of winters in Arizona and otherwise in Michigan, David is husband of Pat. He has been a more or less retired professor of sociology for ten years and is a want-to-be guitar slinging troubadour.

Paul Chamberlain

An avid runner, hiker, musician, and board game enthusiast, Paul recently moved to Seattle, WA, where he works as a software development engineer for Amazon Web Services (AWS). Paul enjoys reading books by many authors, but especially those written by his sister Grace.

David Dickhudt

David, his wife Rose, and daughter Anna moved to Ann Arbor from Hong Kong 3-1/2 years ago. He works at the Delonis Center as the Finance Director and rides his bike several miles to work year-round—except when the snow is too deep, and he takes the bus instead.

Dan Dolsen

Dan is married to Kristin, and they have three married children and one grandchild. Dan and Kristin split their time between Ann Arbor and Harbor Springs, Michigan, where they enjoy hiking, snowshoeing, and boating.

Larry Frank

Baptized October 1937. Those strong words protect me forever—in Grace!

Kyle Gontjes

Kyle is a PhD student at UofM who does research on antibiotic resistance and public health. He likes to listen to music, drink coffee, and keep tabs on Chicago sports teams.

Bob Grese

Bob is a professor emeritus in landscape architecture at the School for Environment and Sustainability at UM. He is married to Susan and loves gardening and spending time in nature.

Abby Haggard

Abby is a senior at Concordia University Ann Arbor studying Secondary Education English. She enjoys snowboarding, reading, and writing, and she hopes to be a cool English teacher.

Chloe Haynes

Chloe is a third year student at Concordia studying Software Engineering. She enjoys the outdoors and is active in CUAA's theatre department.

Monica Heissenbuettel

Monica is the lead preschool teacher at St. Paul Early Childhood Center-Liberty (Downtown) Campus, Ann Arbor. She's married to Bruce, has two daughters, and enjoys teaching piano, playing the church organ, gardening, walking the family Corgi, and traveling.

Becky Johnson

Becky Johnson is happily married to Tom and works at Ann Arbor Christian School as the Spiritual Life Coordinator.

Rob Kasemeyer

Rob is a test engineer for an automotive company that remanufactures automatic transmissions. He is married to Heather, and they have one daughter, Rachel. He loves to watch football and visit with friends and family.

Pastor Gabe Kasper

Gabe Kasper is Lead Pastor at ULC. Husband to Melissa. Dad to Titus, Lila, and Levi. Fan to Packers. Friend to all.

Paul K. Knickelbein

Paul is husband to Suzy and proud father of nine kids, aged 4–26, many of whom you will see around ULC. During the day, he works at a church software company, ParishSOFT and loves playing and watching sports as well as watching and coaching his kids play sports.

Andrew Komurka

Andrew is an engineer at Ford Motor Company. He's very thankful for his wife, Elisabeth, their daughter Natalie, and any opportunity to play a sport, make music, or ride a motorcycle.

Liz Komurka

A college golf coach, wife to Andrew, and fur-mom to Quincy, 2021, Liz has also been graced with the ability to add "mom" to her accolades through the birth of their daughter, Natalie Grace. Motherhood may be the greatest adventure she's ever been blessed to embark upon.

Pastor Marcus Lane

Marcus serves as campus pastor here at ULC and loves reading, writing, coffee, whiskey, basketball, and spending time with his wonderful wife Vanessa and their two kids, Della and Jude!

Stephen Mundy

Stephen is a senior in Mechanical Engineering at UM who loves engines and all things car-related, with a particular soft spot for Jeeps. He is applying to Ph.D. programs to research combustion.

Mark Liston

In 2010 Mark was recruited to join Glass Doctor, a Dwyer Group/Neighborly company, as the Vice President of Operations before becoming the President of Glass Doctor in 2011. His wife, Mary Kay, also worked for Neighborly as the President of Five Star Painting before being recruited to head up Molly Maid, headquartered in Ann Arbor. Both retired from Neighborly in 2020 and now live in Florida.

Thad Polk

Thad is a psychology professor at Michigan who does research on how the mind is implemented in the brain, and how aging changes both. He's married to Norma, his college sweetheart, has three children, and loves to golf and play guitar.

Angela Post

Angela is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst who recently transitioned to a new position as the Director of Admissions for Bethesda College at Concordia University-Ann Arbor. She enjoys spending time with friends, playing piano, and line dancing!

McKinley Schmitz

McKinley is a third year business student at Concordia University Ann Arbor. She is deeply involved in the theatre and enjoys reading and watching hockey with her friends.

Sarah Trent

Sarah is the mom of ULC Intern Elizabeth Trent.

Jeanee Wyly

Jeanee enjoys reading, traveling, and teaching. She is married to Jamie and is Mom to Makayla and Jenna.

Merry Christmas!