



# St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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December 2024

## Christmas: What God's Coming Into the World Means for Us

*"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (1 Timothy 1:15)*

Paul describes himself as a sinner whom God saved. I would like to introduce you to another sinner. His name is Wilhelm Buntz and he is also known as the "Bible smoker." Quite literally, he smoked the Bible. In prison. How did that happen? Briefly, let me tell you his story, one step at a time.

Wilhelm Buntz grew up in difficult circumstances. His mother abandoned him as a baby, and his father sent him later to a children's care home. As a teenager, he hit a man with his car and killed him for which he had to serve a sentence in juvenile detention. Even after that, he repeatedly came into conflict with the law. He was repeatedly sent to prison.

He was described as a "serious criminal with a riot profile," which caused him to be placed in solitary confinement several times. He was not allowed to take anything with him. Except a Bible. He had insisted on this. Not because he was so religious or pious, but because the Bible had a hollow space that he had filled with tobacco. Whenever he wanted to smoke a cigarette, he would roll the tobacco into the remaining pages of the Bible.

However, he was in the habit of reading the torn-out page first. Over time, the text of Scripture got a hold of him. At one point, as he continued reading the Bible, he realized how God was telling him, "I am faithful like a loving father." Eventually, he turned in faith to the God who had already found him in prison. Buntz discovered, "Life with God is ... tough. Tough (yet) full of miracles."

After his time in prison, he found work in a home for blind people in Freiburg until his retirement in October 2017. To this day, he reads the Bible every day. His motto is, "We must plunder hell and populate heaven."

Christmas is the story of a baby who was also not accepted by his own people when he came into the world (see John 1:11). At Christmas, we naturally remember the birth of Jesus, God's only begotten Son. He was born into a dangerous world with a "riot profile" that is no less dangerous today.

What situation was he born into? The emperor in Rome initiated a census. This was necessary for taxing purposes and to know who is fit for military service (Luke 2). For King Herod, this baby Jesus was a thorn in his side. He wanted to get rid of his rival to the throne as "King of the Jews." Joseph learned of this plan in a dream, which is why the Holy Family fled to Egypt, whereas the innocent boys of Bethlehem perished (Matthew 2).

The beginnings of Jesus' life were difficult. He was threatened and persecuted. And yet we must not underestimate what this baby would one day do for us. Because at Christmas, God's only begotten Son Jesus came to us, as Paul said, "to save (us) sinners." Jesus came into the world to rescue us out of the hands of the devil, or – in the words of Wilhelm Buntz – to "plunder hell."

The birth of God's Son Jesus was necessary to free us from the forces of sin. In Jesus, God came into the world to transform it. It worked with Wilhelm Buntz. Why not with us too? This truly turns the birth of Jesus into a reason for joy, as the angel also announced it to the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of

great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10f).

I wish you a blessed season of Advent and a joyous Christmas,  
Bjoern E. Meinhardt, Pastor

### **Weihnachten: Was Gottes Kommen in die Welt bewirkt**

*„Das ist gewisslich wahr und ein Wort, des Glaubens wert, dass Christus Jesus in die Welt gekommen ist, die Sünder selig zu machen, unter denen ich der erste bin.“ (1. Timotheus 1,15)*

Paulus beschreibt sich als einen Sünder, den Gott selig gemacht hat. Ich möchte euch einen anderen Sünder vorstellen. Er heißt Wilhelm Buntz und wird auch der „Bibelraucher“ genannt. Er hat die Bibel geraucht. Im wörtlichen Sinne. Im Knast. Wie kam es dazu? Also, der Reihe nach.

Unter schwierigen Verhältnissen wuchs Wilhelm Buntz auf. Seine Mutter hatte ihn als Baby ausgesetzt, sein Vater später ins Heim abgeschoben. Als Jugendlicher fuhr er einen Mann tot, wofür er eine Haftstrafe im Jugendarrest absitzen musste. Auch danach kam er immer wieder mit dem Gesetz in Konflikt. Immer wieder kam er ins Gefängnis.

Man hat ihn als „Schwerkriminelle(n) mit Randleprofil“ beschrieben, was dazu führte, dass er sich wiederholt in Isolationshaft befand. Außer einer Bibel durfte er dorthin nichts mitnehmen. Darauf hatte er bestanden. Nicht weil er so gläubig war, sondern weil die Bibel mit einem Hohlraum versehen war, den er mit Tabak gefüllt hatte. Wann immer er eine Zigarette rauchen wollte, rollte er den Tabak in die übrig gebliebenen Bibelseiten ein.

Jedoch hatte er die Angewohnheit, erst einmal die ausgerissene Seite zu lesen. Mit der Zeit packte ihn der Text. Irgendwann wurde er gewahr, wie Gott ihm durch die Lektüre der Bibel mitteilte: „Ich bin treu wie ein liebender Vater.“ Schließlich wendet er sich dem Gott hin, der ihn ja schon im Gefängnis gefunden hatte. Buntz merkte, wie er sagte: „Das Leben mit Gott ist ... knallhart. Knallhart (und) voller Wunder.“

Nach seiner Gefängniszeit arbeitete er bis zu seiner Rente im Oktober 2017 in einem Blindenheim in Freiburg. Bis heute liest er jeden Tag in der Bibel. Sein Motto lautet: „Wir müssen die Hölle plündern und den Himmel bevölkern.“

Weihnachten ist die Geschichte eines Babys, das ebenfalls nicht von den Seinen angenommen wurde, als es in die Welt kam (siehe Johannes 1,11). An Weihnachten erinnern wir uns natürlich an die Geburt Jesu, Gottes eingeborenen Sohn. Er wurde in eine gefährliche Welt geboren, mit „Randleprofil“, die heute nicht weniger gefährlich ist.

In welche Situation wurde er hineingeboren? Der Kaiser in Rom ließ eine Volkszählung durchführen, was zur Besteuerung der Bevölkerung aber zur Erhebung der Wehrfähigen im Militär nötig war (Lukas 2). Für König Herodes war dieses Jesus-Kind ein Dorn im Auge. Er wollte den Konkurrenten auf den Thron als „König der Juden“ aus dem Weg räumen. Im Traum erfuhr Josef von diesem Plan, weswegen die Heilige Familie nach Ägypten floh, die unschuldigen Knaben von Bethlehem aber leiden mussten (Matthäus 2).

Die Anfänge von Jesu Leben waren beschwerlich. Er wurde bedroht und verfolgt. Und doch dürfen wir nicht unterschätzen, was dieses Baby einmal alles für uns tun sollte. Denn an Weihnachten kam Gottes eingeborener Sohn Jesus zu uns, um, wie Paulus es sagte, uns „Sünder selig zu machen“. Jesus kam in die Welt, um uns aus den Fängen des Teufels zu entreißen, oder, in den Worten von Wilhelm Buntz, „die Hölle (zu) plündern“.

Die Geburt von Gottes Sohn Jesus war nötig, um uns von unserer Sündenschuld zu befreien. Gott kam in Jesus in die Welt, um sie zu verwandeln. Mit Wilhelm Buntz hat das geklappt. Warum nicht auch mit uns? Jesu Geburt ist wahrlich ein Grund zur Freude, wie es auch der Engel den Hirten verkündet hatte: „Fürchtet euch nicht! Siehe, ich verkündige euch große Freude, die allem Volk widerfahren wird; denn euch ist heute der Heiland geboren,

welcher ist Christus, der Herr, in der Stadt Davids“ (Lukas 2,10f).

Ich wünsche euch eine besinnliche Adventszeit und eine fröhliche Weihnacht,  
Björn E. Meinhardt, Pfarrer

### Scripture Lessons for December. Lesungen für Dezember

#### Advent 1 (December 1)

Jeremiah 33:14-16  
Psalm 25:1-10  
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13  
Luke 21:25-36

#### Advent 2 (December 8)

Malachi 3:1-7b  
Psalm 66:1-12  
Philippians 1:2-11  
Luke 3:1-20

#### Advent 3 (December 8)

Zephaniah 3:14-20  
Psalm 85:1-13  
Philippians 4:4-7  
Luke 7:18-35

#### Advent 4 (December 22)

Micah 5:2-5a  
Psalm 80:1-7  
Hebrews 10:5-10  
Luke 1:39-56

#### Christmas Eve / Heiligabend (December 24)

Isaiah 9:2-7  
Psalm 96:1-13  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-20

#### Christmas Day / Weihnachtstag (Dec. 25)

Isaiah 52:7-10  
Psalm 2:1-12  
Hebrews 1:1-12  
John 1:1-18

#### Christmas 1 / 1. Sonntag nach Weihnachten (Dec. 29)

Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15  
Psalm 111:1-10  
Colossians 3:12-17  
Luke 2:22-40

### December Worship Schedule

**Regular worship times** on the following Sundays (9:15AM in German, 11AM in English):

December 1 (Advent 1)

December 15 (Advent 3)

December 22 (Advent 4 with communion)

Chrismon ornaments

December 29 (Christmas 1)

There will be a couple of **joint worship services**, starting at **10:30AM**.

December 8 (Advent 2 with communion) Followed by decorating the Christmas tree while enjoying  
Glühwein (non-alcoholic) and a cookie for you.

December 25 (Christmas Day with communion)

We will offer **two** worship services on **Christmas Eve, December 24:**

4PM – bilingual and 7PM – in English

There will be a **Jahresschlussgottesdienst** on New Year's Eve with communion (Dec. 31) **in German at 4PM**.

## Seasonal Decorations

On the First Sunday of Advent (**December 1**) the Advent wreath will be set up in the church. Every Sunday during Advent an additional candle will be lit during the worship services.

The Christmas tree will be put up on the Second Sunday of Advent (**December 8**). The tree will remain undecorated during the worship service. The congregation is invited to stay after the worship service to decorate, together, the Christmas tree. Reminder: This is a joint service that begins at 10:30AM.

The Chrismon service, with an explanation of the symbolic meaning of the ornaments, will follow on the Third Sunday in Advent (**December 15**).

### Holden Evening Prayer Service

#### Vesper Service of Light

*Thursday, December 5 @ 7:00PM.*

A simple meal of soup and bread will be served in the church basement before the service at 6:00 p.m. All welcome to attend. Bring a friend!

*Submitted by Linda Lurvey*

### Looking Ahead

*Submitted by Michael Zacharias and Gudrun Neeth*

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) has been scheduled for Sunday March 9, 2025.

There will be a combined service at 10:30am followed by a light lunch. The AGM will begin at 12:30pm.

**Important:** ALL COMMITTEE REPORTS, WHICH ARE NOT RELATED TO THE FINANCIALS, MUST BE IN BY DECMEBER 31, 2024. PASTOR'S REPORT MUST BE IN BY JANUARY 10, 2025. THANK YOU (FINANCIALS AFTER THE AUDIT)

### Volunteer opportunity

*Submitted by Linda Lurvey*

St. Peter's *needs your help* looking after the area around the altar for our worship services. It involves preparing and cleaning up the elements for Holy Communion and seasonally changing the paraments (fabric hangings on the altar, pulpit and lectern) according to the church year. Our hope is that we have **several teams** of two people involved. Training will be provided. Please speak to Pastor Bjoern if you are interested in serving. Thank you.

### Special December Birthdays

Anita Hindemith, 89 on Dec 2

Marion Korn, 86 on Dec 3

Theresa Pastrick, 90 on Dec 10

Gudrun Neeth, 76 on Dec 15

Tony Bajt, 88 on Dec 21

Rosemary Hood Mueller, 68 on Dec 26

Ina Wiese, 87 on Dec 31

**We wish you a Happy Birthday and the Lord's blessings for the coming year!**

### Special Wedding Anniversaries

Helga& Jerry Roehr, 61 yrs on Dec 14

Meta & Arthur Pohl, 60 yrs on Dec 18

**Congratulations on these Milestone Anniversaries! Wishing you the Lords continued blessings!**



*Submitted by Jerry Roehr*

Even in the short months since Jerry Roehr was able to visit the school, development seems to continue at a fast pace; here are some of the highlights.



Just as in Canada, parents should be involved in their children's education. Here are a couple of parent/teacher meetings.



Previously, we showed the finished (empty) state-of-the-art lab. Now, most of the lab equipment has arrived. Teachers and students are happy to assemble the equipment.



The staple food is nsima, a patty made from cornmeal. Cassava is also used, and as part of diversifying, Kuwala is also experimenting with potatoes to swap for rice, which is very expensive. A few months ago, the school purchased some moringa tree seeds (apparently costly), which are known to be heat and drought-resistant and are not affected by any severe diseases. The trees will be used for their vegetable leaves.



We have a video that shows the additional farmland that was purchased around our 'green' school campus. It will produce vegetables for the school and for sale. The work is done by hiring local farmers and not by students except for teaching purposes.

As you can see, there is a new addition to farming. As Malawi is primarily a farming community, teaching agriculture and animal care is an essential aspect of education.

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**North American Lutheran Church.** Bishop Dan Selbo, in his weekly video on Friday, November 7, 2024, addressed the recent 2024 American elections and the upcoming 2025 Canadian federal election. Bishop Dan emphasizes the importance of grounding our lives in God's steadfast love amidst the political tides. As we approach Christ the King Sunday and the Advent season, Bishop Dan encourages us to stay rooted in faith, offering peace and compassion to a world in need. Pastor Meinhardt addressed the same topic in his Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup> sermon. The sermon is part of the Sunday Service package you have received by mail or e-mail. To view Bishop Selbo's video, go to: <https://vimeo.com/1027728354> To sign up for the NALC weekly email newsletter go to: <https://thenalc.org/gallery/sign-up-for-our-weekly-email-update/>

*Submitted by Jerry Roehr*

**John Longhurst.** Because of the weekly "Faith Page", we support the Free Press with a yearly donation of \$500.00. John Longhurst is one of two religious reporters, and we have several Zoom meetings per year. Last month, twenty religious articles were published. The highlight for John was being in Rome and covering the Roman Catholic Church's Synod.

*Submitted by Jerry Roehr*

**Mission Budget.** As of the day of this writing, we are pleased to report that we were able to support the following budgeted Mission Partners: Kuwala Christian Girls School, North American Lutheran Church, Seminary Student

Paul Frederickson, St. Aidan's Christian School, Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots, Free Press. For these projects, we spent \$28,400.00 of the adopted \$31,000.00 budget, leaving us the need to raise \$2,600.00 for Christmas Hampers, Food Bank, Outreach and \$700.00 Contingency. *Submitted by Jerry Roehr*

**And now, the End is near.** As this is the last 2024 edition of the Newsletter, the Mission Committee would like to express our gratitude and thanks to all members who so faithfully have supported the Mission Budget in order to share God's everlasting love with our congregation and indeed around the world. We hope that "Mission" will continue to be a priority in everyone's life. A full report of our mission activities will be published in the 2024 Annual Report and will be available for the Annual General Meeting. *Submitted by Jerry Roehr*

### **Cluster Groups**

At the mission renewal meeting with Pastor Wendel in June 2022, one of the action points that was identified was the formation of cluster groups. These are smaller groups that will meet at regular intervals in a member's home to discuss topics relevant to our Christian faith (this could for example be a book study, or watching and discussing a Christian documentary/movie or sharing devotions). Two cluster groups have now been established. The north/east Kildonan cluster group and the south/central cluster group.

If you are interested in participating and haven't yet signed up for a cluster group, you can still sign up. Please supply the requested information EITHER

1. by email to [oellermann@gmail.com](mailto:oellermann@gmail.com) with "Cluster Group" in the Subject line OR
2. by calling Ortrud Oellermann at 204-487 2175 with the requested information (leave a message if necessary).

- Your name (if more than one member from a household wish to participate, include all relevant names).
- Your address and part of the city where you live.
- Your telephone number.
- Your email (if available)
- If there is a member you'd like to be in a cluster group with, please give us their name.

### **Counselling Support**

*Submitted by Carla Betker*

St. Peter's Lutheran Church is pleased to offer counselling services, free of charge, to members of the congregation and surrounding community. This will be offered on a first come, first serve basis, on Monday evenings. Counselling is provided by Carla Betker, a certified School Psychologist with a private counselling practice. If interested, please contact Carla directly at [elparkcounselling@gmail.com](mailto:elparkcounselling@gmail.com)

The **Outreach Committee** is happy to organize information workshops on topics of interest to members of the congregation. If anyone has any particular requests, please contact Carla Betker at [elparkcounselling@gmail.com](mailto:elparkcounselling@gmail.com) *Submitted by Carla Betker*

**Any submissions for the January 2025 edition of the St. Peter's Newsletter should be made by noon Thur, Dec. 26, 2024. Submissions should be sent to Ortrud Oellermann at [stpetersnews@gmail.com](mailto:stpetersnews@gmail.com)**

## Young Adult News

By Emily Adams

### Announcements

- ***Saturday, December 7th from 2PM-3:30PM let St. Peter's Christmas Party*** with our young adults and youth be part of your festivities this season! Please bring a Christmas Tree ornament or two, to go on our congregational Christmas Tree in the Narthex. You are also welcome to bring a snack or a drink to share. The youth and young adults from Beautiful Savior Lutheran church have also been invited. There will be games, prizes, and snacks in the Erich Griebing Hall after hanging up your ornaments. No RSVP is required, but if you are coming to this party, and can assist us with the clean-up afterwards, please sign-up on the "Volunteer Sign-up Sheet for December 7" in the Narthex.
- ***Sunday, December 8th after the 10:30AM combined service, enjoy Glühwein and a Cookie for You*** while decorating the church Christmas Tree.
- ***St. Peter's Transportation Program for 2025***  
Do you want to come to St. Peter's Sunday worship, but are unable to find the right transportation services? St. Peter's Transportation Program is here to assist! Please reach out to [yaevents@stpeterslutheran.ca](mailto:yaevents@stpeterslutheran.ca) or call 431.557.4154 to talk to Emily Adams to discuss the options available for you. We are currently looking at the possibilities for providing at least once a month options and subsidization.

### Some October Fun

- One fine way we spent a Sunday morning in October, was by going to the young adult event, Coffee and a Cookie for You. Everyone was given a cup of coffee and a homemade pumpkin cookie with cream cheese frosting. The main topic of conversation on this lovely day was: did Emily Adams really bake these cookies, or were the cookies baked by her husband, a chef, Robert Adams? Let's just say, the cookies tasted delicious, and even though we don't know who baked them, Robert was able to list off all the ingredients, unlike a certain someone...
- Three Lutheran churches came together in St. Adolphe to enjoy the wonders A Maze in Corn had to offer. St. Peter's was joined by young adults from Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, for a total of 6 people on a cold autumn day. After a quick welcome and greeting, the group read a Bible passage from Galatians 6:1-10. Here we reflected on how even though our paths in life sometimes seem uncertain and alone, we have many people who are with us and help us on our journeys. An additional reflection was made on how labyrinths are seemingly a walk on our own, but in the end, we are led closer to God. After our group enjoyed some hotdogs and chips, we split into two smaller groups to enjoy the attractions at our own pace. By the time our girl group finished looking at pumpkins, the boys had already finished the corn maze and were debating fresh mini doughnuts. From here the girls enjoyed the hayride while the boys finished the corn maze a second time. After, we all met up again to enjoy each other's company and say our goodbyes, and thus concluded the outing.

## December Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
<p>1 Advent 1 9:15AM German</p> <p>10:15-10:45 Choir practice</p> <p>11AM English</p>	2	3	4	<p>5 Soup supper 6PM and Holden Evening service 7PM</p>	6	<p>7 YA invite to St. Peter's Christmas Party with Congregational Christmas tree decoration 2PM-3:30PM</p>
<p>8 Advent 2 (Combined service w/ communion) 10:30AM Decorating Church Christmas tree and enjoying Glühwein and cookie for you</p>	9	10	11	<p>12 Mission Committee meeting 7PM</p>	13	14
<p>15 Advent 3 Chrismon service 9:15AM German</p> <p>10:15-10:45 Choir practice</p> <p>11AM English</p>	<p>16 Council meeting 7PM</p>	17	18	19	20	21
<p>22 Advent 4 (services w/Communion &amp; Greetings from Kuwala) 9:15AM German</p> <p>10:15-10:45 Choir practice</p> <p>11AM English</p>	23	<p>24 Christmas Eve services 4PM (Combined) 7PM (English)</p>	<p>25 Christmas Day service (Combined w/ Communion) 10:30AM</p>	26	27	28
<p>29 Christmas 1 9:15AM German</p> <p>11AM English</p>	30	<p>31 New Years Eve service in German w/ Communion at 4PM</p>				

**We wish everyone a joyous and blessed Advent & Christmas Season:** For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6