



THE LORD'S DAY
December 3, 2023
WE GATHER TO WORSHIP
10:00 a.m.

PRELUDE *Piano/Chancel Organ*

CALL TO WORSHIP & STRIKING THE HOUR *"Adeste Fideles" The Carillon Bells*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

† INTROIT *"The King is Coming" (Verse 1)* Page 763
 † *Please stand as you are able.*

† HYMN *"Away in a Manger" (All Verses)* Page 261

† PRAYER OF THE DAY AND THE LORD'S PRAYER
 † ANTHEM *"Gloria Patri"* Page 813

HYMN *"O Come, O come, Emmanuel" (Verses 1,2,3)* Page 245

WE PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER AND RECITE GOD'S COVENANT PROMISES

PASTORAL PRAYER
 RESPONSORIAL *"Psalm 66" Psalter 66^B*
Sung To The Tune of: "O' Little Town of Bethlehem" (Verses 7,10)

LIGHTING THE FIRST CANDLE OF THE ADVENT WREATH

WE RETURN OUR TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE UNTO THE LORD

RECEIVING THE TITHES AND OFFERINGS
 † DOXOLOGY AND OFFERTORY PRAYER



WE LIFT OUR VOICES IN PRAISE

SPECIAL MUSIC

CONFESSION OF FAITH AND EXPOSITION OF THE WORD

† THE NICENE CREED

THE SERMON:
"Concerning Times and Seasons."
1 Thessalonians 5:1-4

† HYMN *"Come to the Table" (Verse 1)* Page 464

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
(Please hold the Elements until all are served.)

† PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

† CLOSING HYMN *"Come Thou Long Expected Jesus" (All Verses)* Page 244

† BENEDICTION

† ANTHEM *"The Family of God"* Page 419

DEPART IN PEACE TO LOVE AND SERVE THE LORD



In this constantly changing world, our goal is to reflect and recapture the historic and classical worship of Almighty God. Central to our service is the proclamation of the Word and a biblical understanding of the Sacraments in the tradition of the Evangelical and Reformed faith.

OUR MISSION
 TO PRESENT CHRIST TO EVERYONE,
 EVERYWHERE, AT EVERY AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY.



THE LESSONS FOR USE ON THE
 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ YEAR B
 Micah 3:5-12 • Psalm 43
 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4

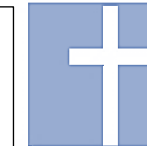
WE AFFIRM THE FOLLOWING:

- The Holy Trinity of God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God has revealed Himself fully and decisively in Holy Scripture. We believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God and our guide for faith and life.
- There is only one way to Salvation - through Jesus Christ.
- The sanctity of human life based on our creation in the image of God and our election by God for service in His Kingdom. This leads us to respectfully affirm the sanctity of life at every stage, from conception to ordinary death.
- The Biblical principles of immutable gender and sexuality: The exclusive union of one man and one woman in marriage; and fidelity to its vows. And, chastity outside of marriage for the sake of the Kingdom.
- God made all people from one man and although people can be distinguished by different ethnicities and nationalities, we are all one human race and absolute equals before God in creation, the need for repentance, and the offer of redemption.
- That the mission of the Church is to spread the Good News of the Gospel in every word and deed. Proclaiming to the world the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and seeking to bring every person into a life of faith, discipleship, and submission to Him.

ATTENDANCE
 LAST SUNDAY: 112

Are you interested in Church Membership? We receive new members the last Sunday of each month. Please see Pastor Kler today.

Our Church believes in financial transparency and so our Quarterly Reports are displayed on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall.



GIVING REPORT	
<i>Week Ending November 26, 2023</i>	
\$2,962	
Sunday General Giving	1,470
Online General Giving	757
Interest Income	390
Total General	2,617
Less 3% to Building	-79
Less 10% to Missions	-262
Net Revenue	2,277
Designated Giving	
Building Maintenance	79
Flowers	25
Gals	255
Gift Cards for Needy Families	65
Missions	262
Total Designated Giving	685
Net Revenue	2,277
Designated Giving	685
Total Receipts	\$2,962
<small>Monthly Reports are posted in the Fellowship Hall.</small>	



It's that time of year again. It's the time of year when naysayers and critics pull out the old trope: *You know Christmas is all based on ancient Roman holidays, don't you?* Every year, we see the same objections. Supposedly, Christmas is secretly pagan, merely a fusion of beliefs and a co-opting of pagan stuff, just ignorantly claiming it to be Christian. The truth, however, is so much deeper and more interesting that it needs to be shared. So, to that end, I want to tackle a few common misconceptions over the next several weeks, beginning with the selection of December 25th.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of Christians have become concerned that the timing of Christmas, particularly the date of December 25th, has been borrowed from Roman sun god worship. But when we look back in history, several early Christian writers attempted to calculate the date of the Lord's Nativity long before the cult of Sol Invictus was established as an official religion by the Roman Emperor Aurelian. Much earlier in the Second Century, for some Christian Church fathers, the choosing of a date for Christ's birth (correctly or not) went like this: They suggested that if we start with the birth of John the Baptist, we can arrive at the date of the birth of Jesus Christ. They referred to Luke 1:5-9 which states, *"In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah... Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense."* Then, verses 10-17 tell us that an angel visited him and announced the birth of his son, John the Baptist. It was assumed that John the Baptist was conceived soon afterward. These early Christian writers believed that Zacharias may have been visited by the angel on the Day of Atonement (Luke 1:9), which occurs in the Hebrew calendar on Tishri 10 and asserted "... it would seem that he entered the Temple sanctuary on the highest and holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Beside the altar of the Lord, a radiant angel gave news of the child to be born to Elizabeth. The date reckoned for this occurrence is September 24th, based on computations from the Jewish calendar in accordance with Leviticus 23."

According to Luke 1:26, Gabriel's annunciation to Mary occurred in the "sixth month" of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Counting six months from the assumed date of September 24th, we arrive at March 25th, the most likely date for the Annunciation and conception of Mary. Nine months hence takes us to December 25th. This, of course, is not infallible proof of a date. Ultimately, we cannot know when Jesus was born precisely. But right or wrong, the truth is that ancient Christian writers like Julius Africanus, Hippolytus, and others at least attempted to build their timing for the birth of Christ from personal Scriptural observation, not pagan influences.

Whether Christmas does or does not occur at the same time as a pagan holiday is irrelevant. We don't worship a "day;" we worship a Savior. As one Christian pastor wrote: *"Even if Our Lord's Nativity does coincide with a pagan celebration, a tiny little minority of Christians eventually beat their pagan's party into submission because we have the true and better story."* What should be of greater concern to Christians this time of year is the extent to which we have gone the opposite direction and adopted pagan practices into our celebration. There is nothing wrong with a bit of holiday fun, but some have gone overboard. We should be cautious of making Christmas too much about mythical images like Santa, The Grinch, Elf on a Shelf, and so on rather than the birth of Christ and why he came to save those who were lost. What is important is that we understand the implication of the omnipotent Son of God leaving his heavenly throne to empty himself! Why would the Creator of the universe choose to do this, knowing he would be raised by sinful parents in an evil world to be rejected and then die a horrible death? Unbelievable as it is, it was to go to the Cross so that we, though undeserving sinners doomed to die, could instead live with him for eternity. Now, that is worth celebrating any day - even December 25th!

~ Merry Christmas



The Chancel Flowers Are Placed by:

Bob Mitchell and Linda Walchak
in memory of wife & mother Cora
and daughter & sister Judy



MARK YOUR  CALENDAR

-----DECEMBER 2023-----
Annual Meeting.....Today, Immediately Following Worship
GAL's Meeting.....Monday, December 4th at 12:30
Guy's Lunch.....Thursday, December 7th at 11:00 a.m.
~~~ Guy's Prayer Group.....Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m.  
Board Meeting.....Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.  
Christmas Eve Service.....Sunday, December 24, at 6:30 p.m.

-----REGULAR SCHEDULE-----  
Wednesday Bible Study..... Weekly at 4:00 p.m.  
Sunday School.....Weekly at 9:00 a.m.  
Lord's Day Worship.....Weekly at 10:00 a.m.



THE ELDERS  
TEACHING & WORSHIP

Rev. H. Joseph Kler  
Senior Pastor / L.F.O.C. Chaplain  
Rev. John O. Strauss  
Worship Leader / Minister of Music

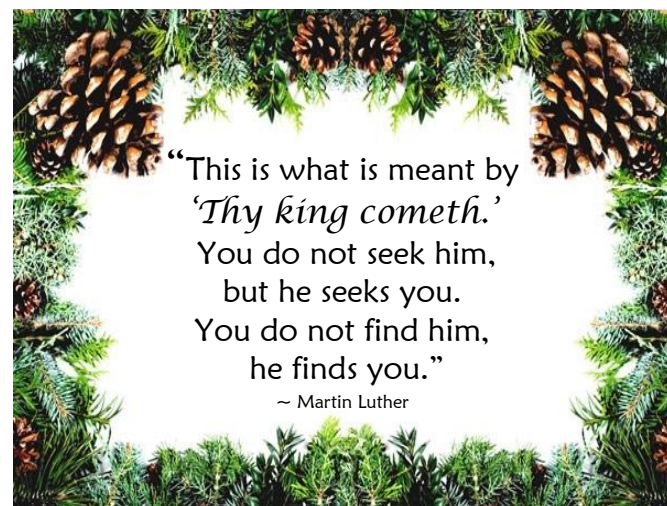
THE DEACONS  
Jim Leitzke, Gary Hatrick

OUR MUSICIANS  
Ann Dantuma  
Pianist/Organist  
Donna Zenisek-Huber  
Flutist

SOUND BOOTH  
Ric Romyn, Joe Negron,  
Jonathan Kler

To contact Board President  
John Vosteen, please call:  
813-731-2803

To contact  
the Pastor, please call:  
813-323-0802



CONNECT WITH US ONLINE AT:

[www.fcczhills.org](http://www.fcczhills.org)  
Email: [fcczh@aol.com](mailto:fcczh@aol.com)  
Or Phone: 813-780-6027  
Monday - Friday: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



FAIRVIEW

COMMUNITY CHURCH of ZEPHYRHILLS  
...a Christ-centered, Reformed faith fellowship.

Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing, but encourage one another as the Day of the Lord draws near. -Hebrews 10:25



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