

# *First Church Alert*

*December 2016*

## *Taizé at First Church*

*The Taizé Community is an ecumenical monastic order in a tiny village of the same name in Burgundy, France. Founded in 1940, the community of brothers centers its life around prayer — three times each day. Taizé has become a place to which over 100,000 visitors per year come on pilgrimage to join in worship and prayer. Reflecting the community's spirit of simplicity and reconciliation, the meditative chants of Taizé have been adapted into liturgies in churches around the world, its hallmarks being the use of icons, candlelight, instrumentalists, and free movement throughout the worship space to "pray closer to the light."*

*Downtown Pittsburgh during the Advent season has become a destination for many visiting various holiday-themed sites, including the larger-than-life Crèche across the street from First Lutheran Church in the U.S. Steel Plaza. In an effort to provide a peaceful sanctuary for visitors Downtown this Advent, the church will remain open throughout the evening on Fridays, with luminaria, signage, and publicity to help draw people in. At 7:00 p.m., a simplified 30-40 minute Vespers service, modeled on Taizé, will begin, with the musical leadership of some of our very gifted instrumentalists and singers.*

*As folks, including our members, are visiting the city's new restaurants, Christmas Market, and shows, we hope you will stop by and consider joining us for these special liturgies.*

## **FRIDAYS IN ADVENT** *at First Lutheran Church*



**Friday, December 9**

**Friday, December 16**

**Friday, December 23**

**7:00 pm**

**Candlelit Song and Prayers from**

***Taizé***

*with instrumental ensemble*



## From Our Associate Pastor: Advent 2016

The season of Advent has begun and our lives are immersed in holiday celebrations and preparations. The lights sparkle and the colors dazzle. Gatherings mark the festive time at home, school, and work. We prepare to give gifts to people whom we love and to be in touch with people whom we don't see as often. Many of us focus our energy on hospitality, as we prepare to host family or friends. These are all worthy preparations, which for Christians are focused on the Feast of the Nativity. All of these occur in the midst of our world's pain, grief, division, and violence that we all know so well. The contrast can seem jarring and superficial.

For us Christians, these apparently opposing realities are brought together in the good news of Jesus Christ. His incarnation was a gift to the world marked by sin and brokenness. His ministry and resurrection were foretastes of the kingdom new life that will one day come in fullness. The season of Advent is not just preparing for one of our holiest days in the church year. As we prepare to remember Christ's birth, we again prepare our hearts and minds, our souls and bodies, our very lives, for the day when he will come again and our world will be recreated in his love.

This is why we hear such dark, apocalyptic texts on Sunday mornings, as we approach Christ the King Sunday (November 20) and the First Sunday of Advent. Christ's Church recalls each year his promise to judge the world, both the righteous and unrighteous. We remember the vision of what his kingdom will be like, when it has come in fullness on that last day. It will be a time when all people will be gathered on the mountain of the Lord, with an abundant feast. There will be no violence or war, no pain or tears. Our sin-soaked world will finally be healed in God's redemptive power and grace.

Hymn 23 in our *Lutheran Book of Worship* helps us wonder:

*O Lord, how shall I meet you,  
How welcome you aright?  
Your people long to greet you,  
My hope, my heart's delight!*

I invite you to consider: How will you meet your Lord, in this busy season? How will you grow in earnest hope and expectation of Jesus and his gracious reign in

our world? We're called to so center our lives on Christ that we would ache for his arrival and signs of his grace. We're called to make more room in our lives for our incarnate Lord, whom the trees in our homes celebrate. We're called to care for the hungry and poor and forgotten, not just our closest loved ones.

*He comes to judge the nations,  
A terror to his foes,  
A light of consolations And blessed hope to those  
Who love the Lord's appearing,  
O Glorious Sun, now come,  
Send forth your beams so cheering  
And guide us safely home.*

May our hope and trust in our Lord grow stronger in these Advent and Christmas seasons. May the light of our Glorious Sun shine brighter in our world.

*The Rev. Jennifer Peters McCurry  
Associate Pastor*



## Annual Meeting

Our Semi-annual Congregation Meeting will be held at 9:45 AM **Sunday, December 11** in Holy Cross Hall. The purpose of this December meeting is to take action on the Congregation Council's Proposal for Ministry, 2017. This proposal (budget) has been developed with the involvement of parish committees, staff, and the Council itself. All Voting Members are urged to be present. Voting Members are defined as those members of the congregation who have communed and made a contribution of record in the past year.



## *For Unto Us A Child Is Born*

### *Christmas At First Lutheran Church*

#### Christmas Eve Saturday, December 24

At **12:00 Noon** we celebrate **The Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord** with a chorale liturgy of the **Holy Eucharist**. Familiar

Christmas carols will replace our usual liturgical songs. This is **not** just a brief noonday service of the sort we celebrate on every workday of the year. This is a rich and full celebration of our Lord's birth in the traditional beauty of Christmas Eve. We offer this liturgy at Noon to enable our older members to worship without having to be out after dark. It allows those who depend on public transportation to more easily attend. It also provides a convenient worship time for young parents with very young children and infants.

The first of our evening liturgies on Christmas Eve is especially for children and families. At **6:45 PM** an expanded **Festive Prelude** of Christmas music prepares us to worship at the manger.

The prelude features our youngest instrumentalists, strings, handbells, and organ. Our candlelight celebration of the **Holy Eucharist (The Angels' Mass)** begins at **7:00 PM**. The liturgy is enriched with the music of our Jubilate Choir, Gloria Dei Ringers, and Bel Canto.

A **Festive Prelude** for organ, strings, and choir at **10:15 PM** prepares worshippers for our **most glorious Christmas Eve liturgy**. Our celebration of the **Holy Eucharist (The Shepherds' Mass)** begins at **10:30 PM**. It is a traditional "late" candlelight liturgy. Our Parish Choir offers major choral works. A string trio is also featured along with our majestic Casavant Organ. Celebrated in the quiet of night in the heart of the city, this liturgy is very special. It brings reverent and solemn joy as worshippers make their way home enlightened by the light of Christ.

#### Christmas Day Sunday, December 25

Worship on Christmas morning is an important ingredient of our Christmas tradition at First Church. Many members and annual visitors express deep gratitude and find special joy in gathering to welcome the Christ Child in the new light of Christmas morning. As is our custom, there will be a solemn high celebration (with the use of incense) of the **Holy Eucharist (The Christ Mass)** at **10:00 AM** on **Christmas Day**. Weather permitting, the liturgy will conclude with a **Procession to the Crèche** in the US Steel Plaza for **Devotion at the Manger**.

#### The First Sunday of Christmas

#### Sunday, January 1

The celebration of our Lord's Nativity continues with **The Holy Eucharist** at **8:30 AM** and **11:00 AM**. Weather permitting, these liturgies end with a **Procession to the Crèche** in the US Steel Plaza for **Devotion at the Manger**.

**First Lutheran Church**  
**Will be Closed**  
*on the following days:*

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 26**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30**

**If you have a pastoral concern when the Parish Office is not open, please call 412-471-6507 and leave a voice mail message and one of the pastors will return your call.**

### *The Epiphany of Our Lord*

The Christmas season officially comes to an end with the celebration of **The Epiphany of Our Lord on Friday, January 6, 2017**.



The Epiphany story recounts the visit of the Magi to the Infant Christ, their adoration of the Holy Child, and their offering of lavish gifts: gold, incense, and myrrh. The Bible says that these wise men were "from the east." They are recognized as gentiles and not as Jews. The Epiphany, therefore, celebrates the manifestation of the Infant Christ to the world and not to the people of Israel alone.

**The Epiphany of Our Lord** is a major festival of the Church Year and we give it the attention it deserves. There will be a celebration of the Holy Eucharist at **12:10 PM** and **7:00 PM**.





# Take Note

*City sidewalks, busy sidewalks dressed in holiday style, in the air there's a feeling of...*

through Christmas and Epiphany well past the world's hasty farewell the season!

There are so many marvelous opportunities to rejoice in our Savior's coming...*Venite adoremus Dominum!*

While the song and the secular world declare "Christmas", the church knows it is not yet Christmas, but rather a wonderful time of waiting, expectation, and preparation. Advent - with Old Testament prophecies, beautiful hymn texts, quiet anticipation and the confident joy in our Savior's arrival - all help us walk through this holy season amid all the rush elsewhere.

First Church observes Advent in many significant ways. Setting Three of the Sunday liturgy is more restrained and



solemn. Advent hymns and anthems tell of Christ's first coming, and the hope of his second arrival at the end of all things.

Just as last year, we shall gather at 7:00 PM on Friday evenings in Advent for sung prayer in the exquisite, contemplative liturgy from Taize. Members of the Parish Choir will provide choral leadership; instrumentalists from the congregation will enhance the prayers and chants with music by piano, strings and woodwinds. Worshippers may pray, sing, and light candles during the service.

**First Church will host the German community at the Service of Lessons and carols in German on Sunday December 18 at 4:00 PM** The Teutonia Mannerchor and Damenchor, Tenor Soloist Andre Bierman, Parish Choir members, Gloria Dei Ringers and Pittsburgh Posaunenchor (trombone choir) will offer festive music.

**Christmas Eve liturgies will be enhanced by music** for strings, flute, choral ensembles of all ages, and handbells. Joyous carols and anthems will continue



Sr. Cynthia Pock, n/OLF, AAGO, Cantor



## Luther Reading Challenge

The Luther Reading Challenge meets on the **second Wednesday** of every month, a group will

meet in Holy Cross Hall. at 7:30 PM. to discuss selections from Martin Luther's written works. The texts will range from his personal letters and hymns to his doctrinal and social treatises to his catechisms and his will. Please visit [www.lutherreadingchallenge.org](http://www.lutherreadingchallenge.org) for online discussions and more. Copies of the readings are available at the Reception Desk or you may contact Christine Hoffman at [flc@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:flc@flcpittsburgh.org); 412-471-8125.

**The next meetings are Wednesday, December 14 and Wednesday, January 12**

### Young Adults (after Taizé)

Following the Taizé service on Friday, December 16, First Lutheran's Young Adult Group (18-35 year olds) will gather at the Omni William Penn Hotel's Tap Room. Join us for prayer and then fellowship that evening!



**THE DAYTIME BOOK GROUP** will meet at the home of Beth Braugher on **Thursday, January 12** at

12:00 noon at the home of Nola Garrett. They will discuss the book, North to the Orient by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. All are welcome.



Congratulations to **Pastor Brian and Pastor Erin Evans** on the birth of their daughter, Vivian Mae, on November 4, 2016.

Vivian will be baptized on the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, Thursday, February 2, at 7:00 PM. Bishop Kusserow will

preside.

## Visit The Crèche Across Grant Street



Just across Grant Street from First Lutheran Church, in the US Steel Plaza, is the world's only authorized replica of the crèche that graces St. Peter's Square in Vatican City. The Christian Leaders' Fellowship, businesses, labor unions, and private citizens, have made this magnificent Nativity display possible. In all the commercialization of this holy season and in the midst of a secular downtown business community, the crèche stands as a clear proclamation of the true message of Christmas. Weather permitting, we will conclude the liturgies on Christmas Day and on Sunday, January 1, with a procession across Grant Street for devotion at the crèche.

## 2016 Record of Contributions Closes on December 31

The record of financial contributions to First Lutheran Church in 2016 will close on December 31. Offerings and gifts received after that date will be credited to giving in 2017.

Now is the time to fulfill pledges of support. Now is also a perfect time to make special year-end gifts for the ministry of First Church. Gifts, over and above regular contributions, enable us to enter the new year on sound financial footing. As always, the financial gifts of members and friends are needed and greatly appreciated.



Elyse Buckley

***From The Director of Christian Education and Youth Ministry***

**Recent Events**

In November, the Tween Group packed 76 boxes for Operation Christmas Child! Special thanks to Amy Hansmann, Natalie Connors, and Darryn Cleary.



On Light Up Night, our youth group enjoyed the beautiful weather after vespers for an evening of s'mores and hot chocolate. We had many visitors who stopped by for a snack and to see the church, and some who even came back the next Sunday!

For our Advent Intergenerational Activity, families designed prayer candles while we prayed for Jesus to steal away our burdens and leave us with his gifts of love, hope, and everlasting life.



**Upcoming Events**

On December 11 & 18, get your holiday treats at the Cookie Walk, organized by the youth group! Cookies will be sold for \$6/dozen from 8:30 am – 12:30 pm.

**Ice Fest will take place on Saturday, January 28!**

Please e-mail me at [les@flcpittsburgh.org](mailto:les@flcpittsburgh.org) for registration details.

***From The Social Ministry Committee***

**Shelter Meals**

The Social Ministry Committee is looking for a small group of people to help serve dinner to residents at the Pleasant Valley Men's Shelter on the Northside on **Tuesday, December 13 and Tuesday, January 3**. It involves arriving at 7:00 or 7:30 PM and finishing by 9:00 PM. If you are open to serving dinner on that date or another in the future, please contact the Church Office at [flc@pittsburgh.org](mailto:flc@pittsburgh.org) or 412-471-8125.

<b>Designated Offerings for 2017</b>	
<b>Festival</b>	<b>Recipient Organization</b>
<b>Birthday</b>	<b>Northside Common Ministries</b>
<b>Love</b>	<b>Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services</b>
<b>Lent</b>	<b>Camp Lutherlyn (20% goes directly to Lutherlyn for camperships, and 80% goes to kids going to Lutherlyn from First Lutheran)</b>
<b>Easter</b>	<b>Abiding Ministries</b>
<b>Pentecost</b>	<b>412 Youth Zone, a downtown youth drop-in center for homeless teens and young adults (ages 16-24)</b>
<b>Reformation</b>	<b>Stay at Home Work Camp, a week long Synodical program for teens doing local mission work in Millvale</b>
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	<b>Lutheran University Center</b>
<b>Advent</b>	<b>St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Hazelwood)</b>
<b>Christmas</b>	<b>Lutheran Disaster Relief</b>
<b>For more information, please contact a member of the Social Ministry Committee</b>	



# December 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8:30 AM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>9:35 AM Bel Canto Rehearsal</li> <li>10:05 AM The Parish Choir Rehearsal</li> <li>11:00 AM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>8:00 PM Complime at Heinz Chapel</li> </ul>	<p>5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11:45 AM AA Meeting</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. EVANS</li> </ul>	<p>6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. HURNYAK</li> </ul>	<p>7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>FR. HALL</li> <li>1:00 PM BNY/MELLON BIBLE STUDY</li> <li>1:00 PM Staff Meeting</li> <li>6:45 PM Christian Education Committee</li> </ul>	<p>8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:00 PM Daytime Book Club</li> <li>12:00 PM Weight Watchers meeting</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. EVANS</li> <li>4:00 PM Kinder Care Holiday Concert</li> <li>6:15 PM Gloria Dei Ringers Rehearsal</li> </ul>	<p>9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. MCCURRY</li> <li>7:00 PM Taize Song and Prayer for Advent</li> <li>7:45 PM Advent/Christmas Party</li> </ul>	<p>10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9:30 AM Cantate Rehearsal</li> <li>10:30 AM Parish Choir Rehearsal</li> </ul>
<p>11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cookie Walk</li> <li>8:30 AM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>9:35 AM Bel Canto Rehearsal</li> <li>10:00 AM Congregational Meeting</li> <li>10:05 AM The Parish Choir Rehearsal</li> <li>11:00 AM Holy Eucharist</li> </ul>	<p>12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11:45 AM AA Meeting</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. EVANS</li> </ul>	<p>13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. MCCURRY</li> <li>1:00 PM Downtown Ministerium Board</li> <li>7:30 PM Dinner at Pleasant Valley</li> </ul>	<p>14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>FR. HALL</li> <li>1:00 PM BNY/MELLON BIBLE STUDY</li> <li>1:00 PM Staff Meeting</li> <li>7:30 PM Luther Reading Challenge</li> </ul>	<p>15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:00 PM Weight Watchers meeting</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. EVANS</li> <li>6:15 PM Gloria Dei Ringers Rehearsal</li> </ul>	<p>16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. MCCURRY</li> <li>7:00 PM Taize Song and Prayer for Advent</li> <li>8:00 PM Young adult fellowship</li> </ul>	<p>17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9:00 AM Assemble Cheer Baskets</li> <li>9:30 AM Cantate Rehearsal</li> </ul>
<p>18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cookie Walk</li> <li>8:30 AM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>9:35 AM Bel Canto Rehearsal</li> <li>10:05 AM The Parish Choir Rehearsal</li> <li>11:00 AM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>4:00 PM German Christmas Service</li> </ul>	<p>19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11:45 AM AA Meeting</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. EVANS</li> <li>6:30 PM Stamp Club</li> </ul>	<p>20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. MCCURRY</li> </ul>	<p>21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. EVANS</li> <li>1:00 PM BNY/MELLON BIBLE STUDY</li> <li>1:00 PM Staff Meeting</li> </ul>	<p>22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:00 PM Weight Watchers meeting</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. EVANS</li> <li>6:15 PM Gloria Dei Ringers Rehearsal</li> </ul>	<p>23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. MCCURRY</li> <li>7:00 PM Taize Song and Prayer for Advent</li> </ul>	<p>24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christmas Eve</li> <li>9:30 AM Cantate Rehearsal</li> <li>12:00 PM The Holy Eucharist</li> <li>7:00 PM Shepherds Mass</li> <li>10:30 PM Angels Mass</li> </ul>
<p>25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christmas Day</li> <li>10:00 AM Holy Eucharist</li> </ul>	<p>26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church Office Closed</li> <li>Christmas Day observed</li> <li>St. Stephen</li> </ul>	<p>27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St. John, Apostle &amp; Evangelist</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. MCCURRY</li> </ul>	<p>28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Holy Innocents</li> <li>12:10 PM Holy Eucharist</li> <li>PR. MCCURRY</li> <li>1:00 PM BNY/MELLON BIBLE STUDY</li> <li>1:00 PM Staff Meeting</li> </ul>	<p>29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church Office Closed</li> </ul>	<p>30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church Office Closed</li> </ul>	<p>31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Year's Eve</li> <li>9:30 AM Cantate Rehearsal</li> </ul>

## ***First Church Alert***

**First English Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**615 Grant Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219**  
**Phone: 412-471-8125 Fax: 412-471-9521**  
**E-mail: flc@flcpittsburgh.org**  
**Website: www.flcpittsburgh.org**

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***December 2016***

### **ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



*As often as you did it for one  
of my least brothers, you did  
it for me.*

## ***Walk-in Ministry***

**December 19 - 25**

***Time value data, please do not delay***

#### **FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH STAFF**

The Rev. Brian A. Evans, *Senior Pastor*  
The Rev. Jennifer Peters McCurry, *Associate Pastor*  
Sr. Cynthia Pock, n/OLF, AAGO, *Cantor*  
Ms. Elyse Buckley, *Director,*  
*Christian Education & Youth Ministry*  
Mr. André Bierman, *Tenor Soloist*  
Mrs. Mary Louise Procacina, *Administrative Assistant*  
Mrs. Suanne O'Dell, *Financial Secretary*  
Ms. Christine G. Hoffman, *Parish Secretary*  
Mr. Norman Brozell, *Building Manager*  
Mr. Seth Blackman, *Custodian*  
Mr. Justin Weilnau, *Scholar-in-Church Music*

#### **PASTORS-IN RESIDENCE**

The Rev. Dr. David P. Gleason, *Pastor Emeritus*  
The Rev. Horst H. Bandle  
The Rev. Brian O. Bennett, *Lutheran University Center*  
The Rev. Natalie Gessert Hall  
The Rev. S. Cyril Hurnyak  
The Rev. Larry E. Kemp  
The Rev. Leonard J. Larsen  
The Rev. Caroline M. Mendis  
The Rev. Gordon Peers Ray  
The Rev. Christine Rotella, *Abiding Ministries*  
The Rev. Martin M. Roth  
The Rev. Thomas A. Smith  
The Rev. Robert W. Strobel

#### **EPISCOPAL PRIEST-IN-RESIDENCE**

The Rev. Daniel E. Hall, M.D.

#### **PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER-IN-RESIDENCE**

The Rev. Calvin Coolidge Wilson

#### **ORGAN ARTIST-IN RESIDENCE**

Dr. Ann Labounsky Steele

#### **FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH CONGREGATION COUNCIL**

Neal Venters, *President*  
Charles Torie, *Vice President*  
Wesley Nelson, *Secretary*  
Lewis Steele, *Treasurer*  
Barbara Anderson  
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*The Alert is published eight times a year.*