



Christmas Eve

Worship Services

5:00 pm: Family Service and Christmas Pageant

10:00 pm: Christmas Music

10:30 pm: Candlelight Eucharist Service

First English Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1603 Monument Avenue, Richmond, VA 23220-2906

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From the Pastor

As I write these lines, we've already celebrated two of the four Sundays in Advent. Very appropriately, the new church year began on December 1, one month before the calendar year. That means we have less than four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas in 2013, therefore, fewer shopping days during the traditional "holiday season." So get out to those malls early, folks, or you'll be greeted by empty shelves come December 23! Or maybe not. In any case, the "most wonderful time of the year" is upon us.

It may seem sacrilegious to say, but I have found that there are many people who do *not* look forward to Christmas! First of all, it is a lonely time for some, especially those who have recently lost a loved one or who have no family. Do you know anyone like that? Think about it for a minute: here is a wonderful opportunity to translate your Christian faith into action. Give that person a call, pay a visit, invite them to spend Christmas day with you, or best of all, bring them along to church on December 24! Thus the "holiday season" can become a time of joy rather than loneliness and sorrow for someone you know.

But the second reason various people are not always fond of the days leading up to the 25th of December has to do with the *stress* they experience at this time of the year. There are cards to write, presents to buy, (and in that connection, mall parking lots to negotiate), parties and family celebrations to plan or attend, and always that nagging feeling that we've forgotten to do something, as if the success or failure of the Christmas season depended on what we *do*.

What's wrong with this picture? First of all, it misplaces the focus on *us* and what we do rather than on *God* and what God has already done.

Seen in this light, Christmas takes on an entirely different meaning. Then we will see December 25 as primarily a *Christian* holy day rather than a modern-day equivalent of the old Roman Saturnalia, a wild and raucous festival connected with the winter solstice. We celebrate the birthday of the *son*, not the return of the *sun*.

What a liberating message that Christmas is not *about* us but *for* us! Its meaning has nothing to do with our performance. It isn't dependent on mastering a certain body of knowledge; in fact, the reason children seem to get more out of Christmas than most adults is probably due to the fact that they, like the shepherds who were the first visitors the baby Jesus received, simply accept the message of the angels without any reservations or questions.

"Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us," the shepherds said to one another according to the story in Luke 2. So let's go to church on Christmas Eve, on December 22, or December 29 (and any Sunday before or after those dates, for that matter!).

Some years ago I preached a sermon here at First English on Christmas Eve with the title, "No Assembly Required." Would you believe that I've received several requests to repeat it from time to time? But I won't. I've never been a fan of "recycled sermons," because they usually don't work quite as well the second time around.

But the point of that sermon (and it was, to tell the truth, based on a piece by Robert Fulghum), is that Christmas is unlike those toys parents buy for their children at Christmas time, only to discover that "some assembly is required," which translates to: "advanced mechanical skills and an array of fancy tools are needed to put this thing together," often resulting in an end product that falls short of expectations. Rather, Christmas comes to us as a complete package from God, requiring nothing more than a believing heart open to God's possibilities.

So let us celebrate Advent in that frame of mind, knowing that since God has already taken care of our eternal salvation by sending his son, we can enjoy this magical season unencumbered by any concerns that somehow we have to tinker with it to make it meaningful. Christ the Savior is born. Thanks be to God for this wonderful gift!

~ Pastor John Schweitzer



Here's What's
Happening



Women of the ELCA

A JOURNEY TO WEST AFRICA

Please plan to join us for our **December 13th** meeting. Carol McCue will present a traveler's recollection of her family's trip to six countries in West Africa. Their journey included visits to Tomboctou, Mali, a World Heritage Site, as well as stays in Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Togo, Benin and Cameroon. We'll have dinner at **6:00** followed by our program and end with a short business meeting.



Ugly Sweater Sunday

Do you have an ugly Christmas or winter sweater? Plan to wear it to Hospitality on **Sunday, December 22nd**!



Christmas Pageant

Christmas Eve Nativity

Adults and children please meet in the Fellowship Hall at **9:30 am** on **Sunday, December 15th** and **Sunday, December 22nd** to rehearse the Christmas Eve Nativity. All are welcome.



Poinsettia Sign-Up

Again this Christmas we will decorate the chancel with poinsettias. If you would like to order one or more plants, at a cost of \$18.00 each, please mail your check to the office, letting us know the dedication, place your order online at our website, www.felcrichmond.org, or complete the form on the yellow sheet and place it, with your check, in the collection plate. Orders must be received by **Friday, December 20th**.

First English Evangelical Lutheran Church – December 2013



WORSHIP ASSISTANTS



	December 15 – 3 rd Sunday in Advent	December 22 – 4 th Sunday in Advent	December 24 – Christmas Eve	December 29 – 1 st Sunday of Christmas
8:15 Lector	Jane Stockman	Grace Gulick		Kevin Murphy
10:30 Lectors	1. Joedy Smith 2. Nicole Krause	1. Helen Schumann 2. Cheryl Shiembob	1. Wayne Griffin 2. Cheryl Shiembob	1. Wayne Griffin 2. Reni Gower
Crucifer	Sam Griffin	Stuart Myer	Stuart Myer	Jim Byerly
Acolytes	Cassidy Hoke Kirk Fenerty	Amanda Jarvis Sydney Stricker	Rachel Allen	Jake Parker
Altar Guild	Jim Byerly	Polly Brickman	Stuart Myer Brenda Myer	Brenda Myer Stuart Myer
Greeter	Roger Riggle	Roger Riggle	Roger Riggle	Roger Riggle
Communion Assistants	Deborah Hubbs Charlie Schumann Linda Smith	Debbie Lane Joedy Smith Joe Thisted, Sr.	Jim Byerly Mary Elizabeth Ellis Debbie Lane	Wayne Griffin Rob Comet Joyce Smith
Head Counter	Linda Smith	Bob Lane		Susan Fenerty
Counters	Margaret Thisted Joe Thisted	Mark Allen Joyce Smith	Rob Comet Helen Comet Bob Lane Debbie Lane	Mary Elizabeth Ellis Carol McCue
Ushers	Reni Gower Bill Davidson Jeff Nelson Roger Riggle	Bill Davidson Lynn Heltzel Roger Riggle Joyce Smith	Bill Davidson Roger Riggle Joe Smith Linda Smith	Lynn Heltzel Bill Davidson Roger Riggle Joyce Smith
Hospitality	Sheryl Finucane	Oldershaw Family		Libby Riggle
Readings	Isa 35:1-10 James 5:7-10 Matt 11:2-11	Isa 7:10-16 Rom 1:1-7 Matt 1:18-25	Isa 9:2-7 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14[15-20]	Isa 63:7-9 Heb 2:10-18 Matt 2:13-23

**** Please find a replacement when you cannot serve and notify the church office at 355-9185 as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and service.**

FELC People News



On Saturday, November 30 a memorial service was held at 11:30 am at church for **Sandra Schumann Marsicano**, who had passed away on October 1, 2013. It was followed by a luncheon in the Fellowship Hall. A private interment had taken place before the service at the Mount Hermon Baptist Church cemetery at Mosely, Virginia.



Congratulations to our Parish Administrator, **Mr. Brian Wingfield**, who will graduate from Averett University in Danville, Virginia with the degree of Master of Business Administration.



Happy Birthday to everyone celebrating a birthday in the month of December!



Congratulations to all celebrating a Wedding Anniversary in December!



Newsletter Deadline

All submissions for the January issue need to be turned in to the church office no later than **Friday December 20.**

Thank you for your cooperation. Church Office Staff



<p>Sunday December 1– 1st Sunday in Advent 8:15 am: Service of Holy Communion 9:15 am: Sunday School 9:30 am: Senior Choir Rehearsal 10:30 am: Service of Holy Communion 11:30 am: Advent Event 12:00 pm: Strategic Planning Committee Meeting</p>	<p>Tuesday December 17 7:00 pm: Congregational Council Meeting</p>
<p>Wed. December 4 – Wednesday’s Together 12:00 pm: AA - Wednesday Noon Group Mtg. 6:00 pm: Dinner 6:45 pm: Senior Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>Wed. December 18 – Wednesdays Together 12:00 pm: AA - Wednesday Noon Group Mtg. 6:00 pm: Dinner 6:45 pm: Senior Choir Rehearsal</p>
<p>Friday December 6 12:00 pm: TGIF NA Meeting 7:30 pm: AA - Not Saints Group Meeting</p>	<p>Friday December 20 12:00 pm: TGIF NA Meeting 7:30 pm: AA - Not Saints Group Meeting</p>
<p>Sunday December 8 – 2nd Sunday in Advent 8:15 am: Service of Holy Communion 9:15 am: Sunday School 9:30 am: Senior Choir Rehearsal 10:30 am: Service of Holy Communion 11:30 am: Hospitality – Jovin Family 12:00 pm: Congregational Life Committee Meeting</p>	<p>Sunday December 22 – 4th Sunday in Advent 8:15 am: Service of Holy Communion 9:15 am: Sunday School 9:30 am: Senior Choir Rehearsal 10:30 am: Service of Holy Communion 11:30 am: Hospitality – Oldershaw Family 12:00 pm: Worship & Music Committee Meeting</p>
<p>Wed. December 11 – Wednesdays Together 12:00 pm: AA - Wednesday Noon Group Mtg. 6:00 pm: Dinner 6:45 pm: Senior Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>Tuesday December 24 – Christmas Eve 5:00 pm: Pageant with Holy Communion 9:30 pm: Senior Choir Rehearsal 10:00 pm: Christmas Eve Music 10:30 pm: Candlelight Service with Holy Communion</p>
<p>Friday December 13 12:00 pm: TGIF NA Meeting 6:00 pm: Women of the ELCA 7:30 pm: AA - Not Saints Group Meeting</p>	<p>Wednesday December 25 – Christmas Day Church Office Closed 12:00 pm: Wednesday Noon AA Group No Wednesdays Together</p>
<p>Sunday December 15 – 3rd Sunday in Advent 8:15 am: Service of Holy Communion 9:15 am: Sunday School 9:30 am: Senior Choir Rehearsal 10:30 am: Service of Holy Communion 11:30 am: Hospitality – Sheryl Finucane 12:00 pm: Outreach Committee Meeting</p>	<p>Friday December 27 12:00 pm: TGIF NA Meeting 7:30 pm: AA - Not Saints Group Meeting</p> <p>Sunday Dec. 29 – First Sunday of Christmas 8:15 am: Service of Holy Communion 9:15 am: Sunday School 9:30 am: Senior Choir Rehearsal 10:30 am: Service of Holy Communion 11:30 am: Hospitality – Libby Riggle</p>

Kid's Page

PEACE Wreath

What you need:

- Paint (blue and green)
- Paint brush
- Embroidery hoop
- 24 wooden clothespins
- Scissors
- Craft foam (white, red and green)
- Glue
- 3 white feathers
- Floral wire (two pieces)



What you do:

1. Paint the hoop blue and the clothespins green. When dry, attach clothespins around the hoop.
2. Cut a dove shape (slightly wider than the hoop's diameter) out of white foam. Glue on feathers.
3. Pierce the beak with a scissors tip. Slide a piece of wire through the slit to make an olive branch.
4. From green foam, cut out two leaves. Attach them to each end of the wire.
5. From red foam, cut out the letters P E A C E. Glue them onto clothespins.
6. Place dove in center of hoop. Glue its head and tail to clothespins.
7. Attach wire to the back and hang up your wreath.



PUZZLE ★

A Child is Born

Jesus received many different names – even before he was born. Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) prophesies about four of these names.

Directions: Unscramble the words on the name tags below. (Hint: The first letter is capitalized.)

MY NAME IS
gyhMti

dGo

MY NAME IS
lerWnofud

esnruooCl

MY NAME IS
vrelEnsitga

eahFrt

MY NAME IS
niPcre
_____ of
aPcee

Answers: Mighty God, Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace