



The Six Words of
Christmas



The Six Words of Christmas

During Advent, we will discuss and study “The Six Words of Christmas” and what they mean to us as Christians. These six words will carry us into the New Year as we prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ. During the next six weeks we will look at **HOPE, LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PROMISE** and **PRESENCE** and how the Bible teaches us ways to embrace and share these words with others.

Last year, we as a congregation came together to reflect on the power of Advent and Christmas. We invited everyone to build a plan for the holiday season that focused on spending less, giving more and loving all.

This year we encourage you to remember those themes and reflect on them with your family. Set aside time to have a conversation with your loved ones and set goals for the season: creating a Christmas budget without going into debt, giving away as much to those you don’t know as you spend on those you do and giving meaningfully of yourself with your gifts, your time and your heart.

This booklet is designed to help you, your family and your friends reflect on the meaning of the season and prepare for the celebration of Christ’s birth. We hope you will use it as a guide and a reference to help you prepare for Sunday worship, plan your holiday activities, consider the meaning of the season and join in some of the events here at St. Luke’s as we honor the birth of our Lord.

Giving Hope, Feeling Love, Practicing Peace and Sharing Joy:

How St. Luke’s will provide Presents with our Presence

During the season of Advent, we have two Congregational Goals: the Hope for the Holidays Food Collection and the Annual Wish Tree. If each of us takes part in these two activities, we will truly bring to life the Six Words of Christmas, and give precious gifts to over 2,100 families here in Central Florida who need hope and love this season. Together, our St. Luke’s family will give presents with our presence as we share hope, joy, peace and love with those who need it most.



Congregational Goal #1

Feed Hope and Assist with our Food Collection.

Sunday, November 13 – Sunday, December 11

Families who depend on free and reduced meals struggle during breaks in the school year. Many of our IMPACT school students at Mollie Ray & Pineloch rely on the free meals they receive during the school day, and often do not have meals each day when school is not in session. To ensure these students and their families will have enough food at home, St. Luke's is collecting food that will be given to students just before they begin Christmas break. Each bag will provide enough food to feed a family of five for five days.

This year's list is on the back page of this booklet. Tear it off, take it with you when you shop and return it with your donation by Sunday, December 11.

To aid you in your food collection shopping, grocery totes can also be purchased for \$1 each in the Welcome Hall each Sunday between worship services. The collected food will be given to the students in the totes so that it can be brought home in a special way. The totes are the perfect way to collect and deliver your donation items as well as use for your own grocery shopping.



Congregational Goal #2

Share His Presence with a Present – Help the Wish Tree

Sunday, November, 13 – Sunday, December 11

St. Luke's commitment to Orange County Public Schools continues whether school is in session or out. This year, our Wish Trees include the names and ages of children right here in Orange County. Each child has shared their simple Wish for a Christmas gift to open on Christmas Day. The tags hung on the trees each have the name of a child, their age and special wish.

Imagine, if each of us adopts just one of these Wishes, the smiles the gifts will bring to these children will brighten their homes – and their hearts – this holiday season.

The St. Luke's Wish Trees are located on campus in the Welcome Hall in Bldg. C and the Narthex of the Sanctuary.

Please do not forget your tag – gifts returned without their tags will not make it to the child you purchased your gift for. Help us ensure each child receives their special gift! All gifts must be wrapped and returned to St. Luke's by Sunday, December 11. If you take home a Wish tag and are unable to purchase the gift, please return the tag to the tree by November 27 so that the child will still receive a present for Christmas.

To learn more about this year's Food and Wish Tree collections, and to volunteer to help sort and deliver, please contact Mariam at mmengistie@st.lukes.org or 407.876.4991 ext. 313.





November 27: Revelation texts; Matthew 1

The final words of the Bible are consummation and new creation. In the Book of the Revelation, God brings to a final victorious end all of history and makes “all things new.” This final word is a word of hope because it promises Christ will come again and the kingdom of heaven will come to earth bringing us new life and we will be a new creation. The Bible then ends where it began, with creation. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...” (Revelation 21:1)

According to William Barclay in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, the gospel writer explains of the genealogy and lineage of Jesus’ birth as a symbol of the cycle of life. The genealogy is arranged in three sections that correspond to the three stages of Jewish History.

- **First: the history down to David and the rise of Israel’s greatest king.**
- **Second: the history of exile in Babylon telling of a nation’s shame, tragedy and disaster.**
- **Third: leading to Jesus Christ...the person who liberated all from slavery, disaster and turned tragedy to triumph.**

Barclay goes on to share how this history is our personal history as well. Humanity was created for greatness in the image of God who made us to be in fellowship with God. But instead of longing for a relationship with God, we use our free will to chase our own desires and dreams and the greatness becomes lost in our sin. Barclay writes “Even then God did not abandon man to himself and to his own devices. God did not allow man to be destroyed by his own folly. The end of the story was not left to be tragedy.”



Our Present Hope

Hope came to us at Christmas as God's gift of himself in the form of Jesus Christ. How do you live daily within that hope? When lost in the struggles and worries of life, what does it mean to you that God would enter into this world as a gift of Hope to offer us new life?

Being the Presence of Hope

Hope in your Heart: 13th Annual Survivors of Suicide Day

Saturday, November 19, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm – The Attic

Join the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention as thousands of survivors of suicide gather together around the world to offer hope, healing, and support. Registration is \$20 and \$10 for additional family members. Please visit afsp.org/cfl to download a registration form or call 407-415-8038 for more information.

Giving Hope to Children: Foster Care Q&A

Sunday, November 20, 3:30 pm – Fellowship Hall

Learn how you can give hope to a child by becoming a foster parent as Open Hearts Family Services, the foster care ministry of the Florida United Methodist Children's Home, hosts an informational session and panel discussion.

Hope Through Your Time: Volunteer for Family Promise.

November 20 – 27 – various times throughout the week

Share your Thanksgiving blessings this week with families in transition. Volunteer as our homeless ministry hosts four families November 20 – 27. Volunteers are needed all week to host, set up and tear down the rooms, entertain the children and cook. Please visit www.CareCalendar.org, enter Calendar ID 5382 and the security code 1111. Once you have logged on, please scroll to the calendar for November to sign up. For more information, please contact Mariam at mmengistie@st.lukes.org or 407.876.4991 ext.313.



Have Hope for the Future – World AIDS Day Interfaith Service

Thursday, December 1, 7:30 pm – The Sanctuary

Join St. Luke's as we come together with other churches, faith communities and community groups to imagine a world without AIDS through hope, prayer, music and peace. This special service remembers those who lost their battle, honors those who fight every day and imagines a world without the disease. There will be a reception immediately following, along with a display of panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

Hope Through Dignity: Clothing Drive for Goodwill

December 8 – 10

Get ready for the holidays by cleaning out your closet and bringing your donation of gently used clothing and shoes to St. Luke's. This year, through a partnership with Goodwill, our clothing drive will help us earn vouchers for free shopping at the Goodwill Thrift Store. These vouchers will be given to the individuals and families we serve through our FREE, Jobs Partnership and Family Promise programs so that they can shop with dignity. Please bring your clothing to the South Welcome Hall in Bldg. C. If you have any questions, please contact Mariam at mmengistie@st.lukes.org or 407.876.4991 ext.313.

Children's Gift-Making Night

Thursday, December 1, 6:00 – 8:30 pm – Coleman Gym

Children in Grades K-5 are invited to participate in a free Holiday Gift-Making Night. Children will start their evening with open gym time before gift-making rotations begin. Due to supply quantities, space is limited to 50 participants. Reservations should be made no later than November 28 by contacting Cindy at cbrough@st.lukes.org or at 407-876-5226.





December 4: Matthew 1:18-25

Sometimes the word “love” is used during Christmas time to represent the sentimental feelings of family, significant others and a love born out of the nostalgic notions of the season. But in our Christian faith there is an understanding of love which comes from a much deeper source. The story of Joseph not only begins to dig deeper into this profound love which is rooted in respect, faithfulness and obedience, but reveals the gift of God’s love for the world in Jesus.

In ancient times there were three steps to the Jewish marriage. First, there was the engagement. An engagement was arranged through parents when the couple were only children. The second step of betrothal was the legal ratification of the engagement which lasted for a year and could only be dissolved by a divorce. During this year the couple were known as man and wife. The third stage was the marriage proper which finalized the process.

It was during the second stage that Joseph learns Mary was to bear a child conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph made a decision to deal with the situation privately rather than to disgrace Mary publicly. Joseph’s longing to obey the law, but also to do what is right to protect her from public disgrace gives us an indication of the character of Joseph. It was to this upright man that an angel of the Lord came to reveal the role God was inviting Joseph to play in the birth of this child. The vision revealed that Joseph was to not be afraid to continue with his marriage to Mary. The child she would bear would fulfill the prophecy of Emmanuel, God with us, and that the child would be named Jesus, which means Jehovah is Salvation, who would save the people from their sins.

The Jewish idea of the Holy Spirit was that it was “the person who brought God’s truth to men” (Barclay pg. 21). Joseph would have understood that if this baby was the work of the Holy Spirit then God was at work. He would have understood that choosing to raise this child as his own son, giving him an unquestionable birthright would be helping God reveal something of truth to the world.



Out of love and devotion for God, Joseph made the obedient choice to become a part of God's act of love for the world. Joseph's embrace of Mary and Jesus was an act of love to God, and God's choice to act through Joseph to provide a father for the son of God was an embrace of love for the world.

Our Present Love

There are moments in our life where God calls us to challenges which disrupt the comfort of our everyday lives. These callings can lead us into areas of sacrifice, whether of resources or of our "notion" of life. When have you followed such a call out of love and devotion for God? What has been the result?

Our Presence of Love

Love Around the World: Give Meaningful Gifts

Thursday, December 1 & Sunday, December 4

The Global Fair Trade Market featuring Ten Thousand Villages will be on campus Thursday, December 1 from 4:00 – 7:00 pm and Sunday, December 4 from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. The items for sale were lovingly made by people in third world countries, sharing their talent as they support their family.

Love of Art - Circles of Light: Praying in Color

Saturday, December 3, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm – The Fellowship Hall

Spend a morning to quiet your soul as you create a piece of art meant to inspire hope and healing for yourself or someone you love. You do not need to have artistic experience - if you can color in the lines, you can make something beautiful! This worshipful workshop includes a light continental breakfast. Childcare is available (babies-5th grade) for registered participants who request it and children pre-school and up will enjoy a special artistic component. To register, email Cindy at cbrough@st.lukes.org or call 407.876.5226 by Tuesday, November 29. A donation of \$5 for materials is suggested.



Presence of Love as a Family in Worship Together

Sunday, December 4, 11:00 am - Coleman Gym

PowerHouse Family Worship Experience, the monthly worship service designed specifically for children up to 5th grade and their families, celebrates the love of the season from a unique perspective this month. Join special guest Dody the Donkey as he shares the story of his great, great, great, great, great grandfather and the love and responsibility he had as he carried Mary on her journey to Bethlehem.

Presence of Love for Children - Sunday School Programming

Sundays, 9:30 am, 11:00 am, and 5:30 pm

Preschool and elementary aged children will love our exciting Live B.I.G. curriculum during Advent! The multifaceted lessons will bring the Christmas story to life and help kids grow as children of God.

Please note our Advent schedule for your child:

Infants, toddlers and preschoolers will not have Sunday programming on December 25 or January 1. Classes resume on Sunday, January 8.

Elementary age children (K-4th) may enjoy worship with their families December 18, 25 and January 1. Classes will resume on Sunday, January 8.

MERGE (5th & 6th grade) – Merge is a crossover program from St. Luke's Children's Ministry to NexGen Student Ministry. This season we will study the meaning of Advent and how it makes a difference in December and beyond! Meeting time is 9:30 am, the Attic, Bldg C. Students may enjoy worship with their families December 18, 25 and January 1. Classes will resume on Sunday, January 8.



**Presence of Love in the Gift of Friendship: Telos & FUEL
High School Bonfire**

Wednesday, December 7, 7:00 pm - St. Luke's back field

SmoreFUEL

Thursday, December 8, 7:00 pm - St. Luke's back field

Our annual holiday events for middle and high school students celebrate friendship and the love of God. "Admission" to each of these events is a donation of food in support of the St. Luke's Hope for the Holidays Food Collection. The food list can be found on the back page of this booklet.

Please note: Sunday morning classes will continue through December 11 and will restart after the New Year on Sunday, January 8, 2012

Presence of Love Through Time: Volunteer to Sort & Deliver Hope for the Holidays Food Bags

*Thursday, December 8; Friday, December 9 & Monday,
December 12 - various times*

Volunteer to sort and deliver the food collected for Mollie Ray and Pineloch Elementary schools. With the abundance of love shared by the congregation in support of this activity, we need help sorting and delivering food to the schools. To volunteer, contact Mariam at mmengistie@st.lukes.org or 407.876.4991 ext.313.

Presence of Love for Others: The Angel Tree Christmas Party

Saturday, December 10, 1:30 pm

CiCi's Pizza, 7437 International Drive.

The Shalom Ministry needs volunteers to assist with the Angel Tree Christmas Party for the children and families of those incarcerated. St. Luke's is hosting 50 children and their caregivers, and volunteers will assist with greeting guests, distributing presents, hosting games and events and ensuring everyone has a wonderful time. To volunteer, please e-mail theshalomministry@gmail.com, or contact Doug Mears at 407.721.9797.





December 11 - Luke 1:39-45

The third word God gives at Christmas is Joy. According to William Barclay's work on the Gospel of Luke, one of the writer's primary purposes was to communicate through the story of Christ that "barriers are broken down and Jesus is for Jew and Gentile saint and sinner alike." The gospel writer wants all readers to know that the Kingdom of Heaven is not closed to anyone and through this loving gift of God in Jesus Christ we are to praise and rejoice that Christ is the Savior for all people without distinction.

One of the barriers Luke breaks down is in regards to women. In Palestine the place of women was low among the other people in a community. With no regard to rights, property ownership or education, women were seen as lower than even second class citizens. The gospel writer of Luke uses women in very particular ways to show that through the life and ministry of Jesus, God is seeking to open up doors for all people to receive the Kingdom. And so the birth of the Savior is seen through the eyes of Mary.

We aren't told why Mary goes to visit Elizabeth. It is most likely out of joy or wonder. The verbs used to document her journey convey a sense of urgency and joy: "Mary set out and went with haste to Elizabeth."

Elizabeth's child leaps with joy and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit as she speaks the truth of what God is doing. The joy of Mary and Elizabeth is the joy of everyone who looks forward with wonder and expectancy to the birth of a child.

In the same way, we have joy in waiting to see God work in us through the power of Christ. When we invite Christ to be born in us, we surrender our lives to a greater purpose. Much like the process of becoming a parent, there is something going on within us that is shaping and changing us for a future purpose of meaning. The response to being a participant in God's purpose brings Joy to our lives that cannot be taken away.



Our Present Joy

Christ is at work birthing something through St. Luke's. We've said that a great deal over the last year. But making such a statement means something about our individual lives, because it's the individuals that make up St. Luke's. How is Christ being born anew in your life this year to prepare your life to be a part of our new vision?



Our Presence of Joy

Experience Joy through Song – Annual Christmas Concerts

December 10, 5:30 pm & 7:30pm

December 11, 5:30 pm & 7:30 pm

Enjoy the music of the season at our annual Christmas concerts. The concert features the combined choir of members from Solid Rock UMC and St. Luke's and an orchestra of church members, professional musicians, music teachers and student musicians.

Tickets may be picked up in person after worship on Sundays beginning on November 20 in the Welcome Hall of Bldg. C and at the church office from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm during the week. There are a limited number of tickets for these special concerts, so don't forget to get yours so that you may enjoy this joyful evening of music.





December 18 - Luke 2:22-35

In Biblical times there were Jews who were still waiting to understand the meaning of being the “chosen people.” Some believed there would be one who would come to lead them to be the leaders of all the nations. They were divided into those that believed this would be a King from David’s line and others who believed a heavenly conqueror would come to earth to lead them in conquest.

Barclay writes that there was another group known as “The Quiet in the Land. They had no dreams of violence, power and armies with banners; they believed in a life of constant prayer and quiet watchfulness until God should come.”

Simeon was one such man. He lived a life patiently and quietly waiting for God to come and bring comfort to his people. His devotion led him into constant prayer and worship waiting for the moment for God to reveal the Savior of his people. When the word came for him to go to the temple, and he held Jesus in his arms, he knew his waiting had come to an end.

Our job is to be like Simeon and to trust and wait, content knowing that it will happen, that God will be true and faithful; When he saw the child, Simeon was able to let go of his mission. Simeon was waiting for a sign that God would be faithful and by disciplining himself to listening to the spirit.

Peace comes to us in our waiting periods when we discipline ourselves to be in tune with God. Simeon is described in scripture as being “righteous and devout” meaning he was a man of prayer, worship and disciplined in the faith. He spent his life seeking to “see” the Savior – not just with his eyes, but by preparing his heart to be able to see beyond human constraints in order to see the salvation of God.



Our Present Peace

So often we long for life to just “settle down” and we long for our circumstances and situations to change in order to find the peace we seek. But Paul writes in Philippians 4 of a peace of God that surpasses all understanding that, through Christ, will guard our hearts and minds. How does one come to this kind of peace? We discipline our lives as Simeon did – even in our waiting. What does that look like for you in this season of your own life?



Our Presence of Peace

Finding Peace Within Ourselves: Beat the Holiday Blues Party

Sunday, December 18, 5:30 pm – The Attic

At different times in our lives it is hard to feel at peace. Whether it is because of a hectic lifestyle, the loss of a loved one, the stress of a job or the ache of loneliness, our hearts often feel heavy during the holidays. Find peace – and share it with others – at this special and unique party. No RSVP is necessary and light refreshments will be served. The St. Luke’s Praise Band will perform.

The Presence of Peace in Our Home

Monday, December 12 – Friday, December 31, 5:00 pm

To help you give more time to your friends, families and others, and so that you can have the time to reflect and find peace in your home, the church will close at 5:00 pm beginning on December 12. There will be no evening activities, including THRIVE on Thursday, on the church campus during this time. Regular schedule resumes on Tuesday, January 3, 2012.





PROMISE

Christmas Preeve Worship Services

December 23, 6:15, 7:15, 8:15 pm

Christmas Eve Worship Services

December 24, 5:00, 6:15, 7:30, 8:45, 10:00, 11:15 pm

Luke 2:1-20; Isaiah 9:2-7

This promise of God in Jesus Christ is a gift for everyone. Just like Joseph, we are invited to make room for Christ to come into our life in a very particular way as members of St. Luke's. We don't want anyone to be turned away on Christmas Eve, as we recognize that many families come to St. Luke's on Christmas Eve who do not regularly attend worship.

As an act of love to God and in response to this gift of Christ, we invite you to give away your seats on Christmas Eve and instead join us on Christmas Preeve, December 23 for worship.

"O Come All Ye Children" - Children's Nativity Pageant

Saturday, December 24, 4pm - The Sanctuary

All children and their families are invited to participate in the very special telling of the Christmas story at our annual Children's Pageant. Children are asked to come dressed in costumes as shepherds, angels, Mary, Joseph, wisemen, and farm animals as we travel back to Bethlehem. We provide a limited number of costumes on the patio prior to the pageant. We look forward to sharing this special story with your family.

The Christmas Eve Offering will support the children in the residential program in Enterprise and the Open Hearts Foster Care program in Orange County of The Florida United Methodist Children's Home.



Christmas Day
John 1:1-14

Sunday, December 25, 10:00 am – The Sanctuary

In celebration of the Promise given and the birth of our Lord, there will only be one worship service today.

PRESENCE
Epiphany Sunday
Matthew 2:1-12

Sunday, January 1, 10:00 am – The Sanctuary

In celebration of the Presence of our Lord, there will only be one worship service today.



Advent Activities at a Glance

November 19	Survivors of Suicide Day
November 20	Foster Care Q&A
November 27	Family Promise Volunteer Opportunities
December 1	World AIDS Day Interfaith Service Ten Thousand Villages Sale Children's Gift-Making Evening
December 3	Circles of Light: Praying in Color
December 4	PowerHouse: Family Worship Ten Thousand Villages Sale
December 7	High School Bonfire
December 8	SmoreFUEL
December 8-12	Food Collection Volunteer Opportunities
December 8-10	Clothing Drive
December 10	Angel Tree Christmas Party St. Luke's Christmas Concert
December 11	St. Luke's Christmas Concert
December 18	Beat the Holiday Blues Party
December 23	Preeve Services
December 24	Children's Pageant Christmas Eve Candlelight service

2011 Hope for Holidays Food Collection List

- _____ Canned chicken (4 medium cans)
- _____ Canned tuna (4 medium cans)
- _____ Canned vegetables (4 cans)
- _____ Canned fruit (4 15 oz cans)
- _____ Cereal (1 box)
- _____ Hamburger Helper or Tuna Helper (1 box)
- _____ Jelly (1 medium jar)
- _____ Macaroni and cheese (2 boxes)
- _____ Mashed potatoes (1 box)
- _____ Pasta sauce (1 jar)
- _____ Pasta/macaroni (2 boxes)
- _____ Peanut butter (1 medium size)
- _____ Rice (2 boxes or 2 small bags)
- _____ Soups: (6 cans) - Chicken & rice,
Chicken noodle, Vegetable (No cream of
Mushroom or chicken broths please)

**Please return your donation and this list with the items donated
marked off by Sunday, December 11.**

All donations may be dropped off in the Rotunda of Bldg. C. If you have
questions, please contact Mariam at mmengistie@st.lukes.org
or 407.876.4991 ext. 313.



St. Luke's

United Methodist Church

BUILDING THE KINGDOM BY BUILDING DISCIPLES

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