

The Spirit

of Atonement

**DECEMBER 2020 /
JANUARY 2021**

ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, and EPIPHANY Worship Schedule

(subject to change or cancellation)

Wednesdays, December 2, 9, and 16, at 7:00 p.m.

Holden Evening Prayer at Atonement

(no Advent dinners)

Christmas Eve, December 24, at 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.

Traditional holiday services with special music, homily, and everyone's favorite carols!

(possible additional service at 3:30 p.m.)

Christmas Eve, December 24, at 11:00 p.m.

A Service of Lessons and Carols with the Holy Eucharist.

Christmas Day, December 25, at 10:00 a.m.

Welcome the day of our Savior's birth with traditional carols, a message from the Word, and Holy Communion

New Year's Eve, December 31, at 5:30 p.m., Devotional worship

Followed by Family Fun Night at 6:00 p.m.

Epiphany, January 2-3 at 5:30 p.m., 8:15 and 10:45 a.m.

Welcome the Wise Men with story and song

Sunday, January 17 at 8:15 a.m.

A Festival of Lessons and Carols for Epiphany - An Atonement Tradition

Other Activities

Men's Club Tree Lot

M-F 3:00-8:30 p.m. /Sat. 10:00 a.m.-8:30 p.m./Sun. 12:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Church Decorating

Saturday, December 5, at 8:30 a.m.





Seniors Alive

(subject to change or cancellation)

Monthly Meetings

Meetings have been postponed until further notice, but when they resume, seniors (age 50 and over) are invited to monthly meetings at 1:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Check News & Notes or the weekly e-mail "blast" to learn about when the gatherings might resume.

2020-21 Tours

All tours for the remainder of 2020 have been rescheduled to 2021. Plans are to resume in May, beginning with:

- May 11-13, Branson
- June 16-18, Iowa

For more information on tours, please contact Don Kuethe at (314) 831-8478.



Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 our women's ministry will be unable to have Advent by Candlelight in person this year. The planning committee has been meeting to come up with a meaningful alternative for this year.

We will be recording and sending out an abbreviated program to previous hostesses and to the Atonement members who normally receive the link to worship. Watch for a link on December 6.

In all the years we have celebrated Advent by Candlelight, our hostesses and guests have given generous donations that have benefited Room at the Inn and Atonement's Helping Hand ministries. Without an in-person gathering this year, that offering won't be received.

As we join our hearts and thoughts virtually this Advent season that is "like no other," we can also consider an Advent calendar "like no other." We invite the members of the congregation to join us, as we use the Reverse Advent Calendar to assist the needy (*see next page*).

As we anticipate the coming of the Christ child this season, instead of (or in addition to) opening each day on an Advent calendar and receiving a message, piece of chocolate, or a trinket, let's take the opportunity to place a non-perishable grocery item in a box or basket. Collect food items through December and donate them in one of the ways below.

There is great freedom in how to collect and donate...Florissant and Hazelwood folks can donate to TEAM; folks in other areas can donate to your local pantry; you can support a Little Free Pantry near you or you can bring your items to Atonement and we will deliver them to TEAM after the first of the year. The flyer included here has a list of suggested items, but feel free to be creative with the non-perishable foods you donate.

The Advent by Candlelight Team will be happy to answer any questions.

Donna Beck, Brenda Blight, Sharon Eichenberger, Jan Koch, Betty Luebke, Jane Meyerkord, Linda Tomazi

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

December 1 - box of cereal
December 2 - peanut butter
December 3 - stuffing mix
December 4 - boxed potatoes
December 5 - macaroni and cheese
December 6 - canned fruit
December 7 - canned tomatoes
December 8 - canned tuna
December 9 - dessert mix
December 10 - jar of applesauce
December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
December 12 - cranberry sauce
December 13 - canned beans
December 14 - box of crackers
December 15 - package of rice
December 16 - package of oatmeal
December 17 - package pasta
December 18 - spaghetti sauce
December 19 - chicken noodle soup
December 20 - tomato soup
December 21 - can corn
December 22 - can mixed vegetables
December 23 - can carrots
December 24 - can green beans

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Greetings from the Congregation President, Cathy Hohl

Once, many years ago, I saw a bumper sticker that said, "Jesus came to take away our sins - not our brains." I never saw that again and, to be sure, the thought sounds more like Lent than Advent.

I mention this because surviving 2020 has felt like a Lenten discipline as we have coped with the impact of Covid-19. In fact, it was still Lent when Covid-19 restrictions prohibited us from having "live" worship. Since that time, some of us have lost family, friends, or jobs. We've adapted to virtual church, virtual school, and virtual get-togethers with family and friends. It's not been easy. Have you wondered, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

And still...Jesus came. He came when we immediately shifted to worshipping together via YouTube. He came when our teachers quickly pivoted to virtual classrooms and, for the 2020-21 school year, offered blended virtual and live classroom. He came when our Bible classes, Men's Club, parish nurses, garden group, and other Atonement programs successfully continued their ministries. He came through the events of this fall's Service Sunday. He comes through Advent by Candlelight. Jesus came. Jesus comes.

During this Advent season, let's continue to anticipate Jesus' coming. Where will He come in 2021? What ministry will He call you to share, and what does He call us to do as a congregation? Let's use those brains, trust in His guidance, and figure it out. Jesus will come — as He always does.



From the Parish Nurse Dependency Issues

Joyce Pingel, L.P.N.

I pray that you and your loved ones experience God's gift of peace and wholeness as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child! This special time of year finds us with little free time. Most years we get busy with the additional activities at church, all of the preparation activities, family gatherings, and parties at work and with friends. As I think of these many activities, I am mindful of holiday indulging and drinking.

This year we have the opposite situation. Disappointment over the loss of holiday traditions can lead to excess drinking, as can isolation from loved ones.

The serious issues related to alcoholism are difficult to talk about during this holiday season; yet, alcoholism is a real problem in our personal and family lives. The Bible encourages us to limit our alcohol use, and stay in control of it (Romans 13:13, Ephesians 5:18, First Timothy 3:3). At the same time, Scripture give us confidence that with God's help, alcoholism can be conquered (Psalm 103:1-5, Matthew 9:12, Hebrews 12:1-17, First John 1:7-10).

Alcoholism is a progressive disease that affects the drinker as well as his/her family and friends,

but that help is available. I have resources to help you. In addition, Alcoholics Anonymous can help you if you have a drinking problem, or if someone you know has a problem with alcohol. Reaching out for support is not a sign of weakness. It takes a lot of strength to start back on the road to wholeness. Please let me know if I can be of help to you or your family.

May we make the time to experience the Holy Christ Child, to relax and to spend quality time with those we love.

Psalm 103

1. Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits,
3. who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
4. who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion
5. who satisfies your desires with good things so that your health is renewed like the eagles.



Atonement Creation Care Team: Our Tip for December

"Here's another eco-conscious change worth making; switching to LED lightbulbs. It's theorized that their rapid, widespread adoption could reduce energy consumption by the equivalent of 44 power plants by 2027." LED Christmas lights save energy, last longer, run cooler, and are far safer.

Consider LED lightbulbs as a stocking stuffer this year.

Adapted from The Oprah Magazine, "The Love the Planet Issue," April 2019, Vol 20, No. 4, p. 99.

B.O.O.S.T. Thanks Rich Cox and Danmark Tire

We are blessed with people in our community who help BOOST with our efforts to do service to others. BOOST thanks Rich Cox and Danmark Tire and Auto for giving us space for a large box of yarn with an explanation sheet so that others may also take yarn to Bless Others One Stitch-at-a-Time.

Service Sunday: The Blessings Continue

Although Service Sunday looked very different this year, our congregation still managed to provide some great community services. After a chilly start for the outdoors “sending service” (photo at right) the weather turned beautiful, as members headed to their projects. Some of these included service at members’ homes, at Jamestown New Horizons, and at a Red Circle community garden. Our parking lot hosted a drive-thru food collection, and ballots were notarized in Fellowship Hall. Trash was picked up at a fishing lake. “Operation Christmas Child” shoeboxes were assembled at Florissant Valley Christian Church for shipment to children overseas. Also assembled were “red bags” with simple meals for those requesting food.



Some members worked at home. These projects included thank-you notes to essential workers, greeting cards for use by our homebound members, and a variety of knit, crocheted, and sewn items to provide winter warmth, such as quilts, hats, scarves and afghans. These made-at-home items were

dedicated in worship on November 8 (photos at left and right). Parish nurse Joyce Pingel is sharing some of these with homebound members. Others have been delivered to the Women’s Safe House (a domestic violence shelter), to Lydia House (a shelter for women and children in crisis), and to God’s Helping Hands (headed by Janis Hutchinson of “Breakfast with Immanuel” fame). On November 8, worshippers were surprised by the bountiful outpouring of handcrafted items.



BOOST’s continuing ministry of Service Sunday is the creating of fleece blankets for adults in shelters and for the homeless. Preparing the blankets involves sewing a hem (rather than cutting and tying knots, as in the past; photo at left). If you see coupons for 50 percent off at fabric stores, please purchase two yards (for one long blanket) or three yards (for two shorter adult blankets). If you do not sew but want to help, please bring the fabric to the church office or call Elaine Skarstad at (314) 402-2825. So, BOOST continues to “Bless Others One Stitch-at-a-Time.

Community Garden Ready for Winter

The garden has been prepared for winter and will be ready for the 2021 growing season. This past season our gardeners harvested over 350 pounds of produce for use by family or for donations to groups that feed the needy. Our sweet potato beds yielded 170 pounds of sweet potatoes that will be donated to the Women's Safe House, to the TEAM food pantry, and to A Red Circle. A group of



young students spent an afternoon digging the sweet potatoes and discovering roly polies, spiders, and earthworms first hand. Several wanted to take their earthworms home, but were persuaded that the worms would be happier left in our garden!



Who knew how okra grows? That was a new plant to many of students. The plants grew tall—some over 6 feet—with pretty flowers and small okra growing off the stem. Betty Jane Ruckman and her friend Barbara Lindemann grew okra, herbs, cucumbers, and more. Emily and Jason Buis grew green beans, parsley, and giant zucchini. Rob Biesendorfer, the Johnsons, Thurnaus, Bunzels, Murrays and Schroeders rounded out the group of gardeners. Thanks to them and also to Cathy Hohl and to Don Meier for their help in the garden.



In the former rose beds...

After the roses were removed, most of the new plantings were Missouri natives. When they were blooming in late summer, they were visited by birds, bees, and butterflies. The planting team made sure they were watered and weeded consistently. The picture shows one of our monarch visitors on the milkweed.

The few roses that survived were moved over to the DeSmet fence line in what we refer to as the "rose infirmary." Jim Temps tended and watered them all summer. They have been blooming and hopefully will be alive and well in their new home next growing season. The roses were removed when the majority of plants were afflicted with rose rosette disease. The garden team learned that, due to the disease, it will be at least three years before roses can be returned to the rose beds.





News from Atonement School, Principal Rob Biesendorfer (Mr. B.)

20/20 Catch the Vision—Fix Your Eyes on Jesus!

What a year!

I would say that in nearly 40 years of education none has been more challenging than this! Covid-19 continues to present challenges as we maneuver through the school year.

We started the year with 50 percent of our students learning in the building and 50 percent learning “virtually” at home. Thanks to the CARES Act we were able to receive Chromebooks for our students in third grade and up. The second quarter of the school year has brought a number of quarantines for classes and now throughout the entire school. In fact, I have been isolated, because in mid-November I tested positive with the Covid-19 virus.

Through it all we have a lot to be thankful for:

Teachers, who are working extra hours to provide the best experience for students. This system is a lot more work. Not only are teachers prepping and delivering lessons in the building, but simultaneously recording themselves for the students at home. Typically, when students have questions they raise their hand, but now teachers receive e-mails that need to be answered at all hours of the day. It's hard work.

Students, who despite the challenges and changes, are working hard to learn. They certainly are becoming more tech savvy as they work through Google Classroom to prepare their work. Our students continue to be the reason we exist, as we prepare them for a bright future ahead!

Parents, who although frequently inconvenienced, continue to support our school. I am so thankful for their trust and flexibility as we work together to provide a quality and safe experience.

Atonement members, who frequently will inquire to see how things are going. Through your prayer and financial support, we are hopeful for a bright future with a heartbeat for serving Jesus.



Tina Kassebaum, our new 2nd and 3rd grade teacher, presenting a lesson. Notice the social distancing and laptop in front. This allows the teacher to present the lesson to students at home via the laptop camera.



Atonement Book Club has been continuing to meet over Zoom and it has been working well. We have pretty much mastered the on-line meetings with the

help of the Central States Synod's Zoom account. Meetings are at 2:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of every month.

We just finished our last book of 2020 and will start meeting again on January 10, 2021. Our first selection is *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles. The novel is a story of Court Alexander Rostov, a Russian nobleman who, after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, is placed under house arrest in Moscow's Metropol Hotel.

We welcome new readers! If you would like to join us, please contact Jan Koch at (314) 921-5434 or njkoch@aol.com to request a link to the meeting on January 10.

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Return Service Requested

December 2020

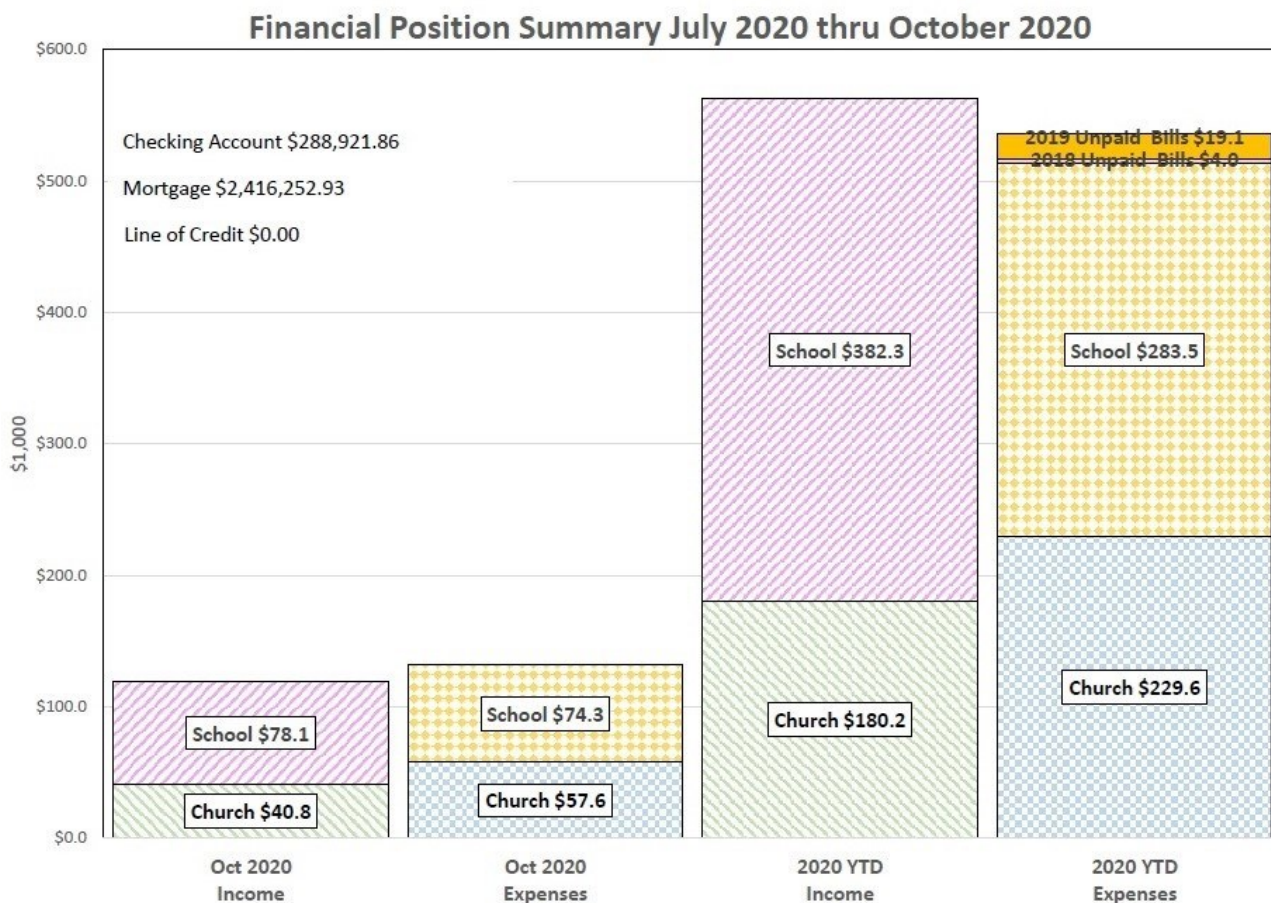
January 2021

Newsletter

Deadline for the Feb. issue

12:00 Noon

Wednesday, Jan. 6



Notes: 1) The quarterly church support for the school of \$28,125 is included above both as an expense to the church and as income to the school. 2) The "unpaid bills" designation does refer to a handful of unpaid bills, but mostly to our obligation to the Lutheran high schools. 3) The chart does not reflect funds borrowed for on-going ministry expenses from designated funds, such as memorials or Confirmation Camp or from a line of credit at Commercial Bank. 4) A cash balance of at least \$100,000 is maintained in order to meet current obligations.