**The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**



**November and December 2019**

**Hallmark Moments**

***“[F]or this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”***

* **Luke 15:24 RSV**

To begin, I have a major confession to make. I’ve wanted to get this off my chest for a long time, but I’ve feared that people might laugh at me if they knew. Nevertheless, here goes:

*I like watching Hallmark Christmas movies*.

OK, I know that not all of these movies are produced by Hallmark, but I think you know the type. They are made-for-television movies that are released in the weeks prior to Christmas. They are often filmed in Canada and are cheaply produced, though some of them *are* executed well. They most often feature principal actors and actresses in the “washed up” phase of their careers; many of them were childhood television stars.

These movies are frequently mocked as being predictable, cheesy, trite, and mawkish. And there is truth in all of these labels. The other day when searching the internet, I came across a “plot generator” for these kinds of movies. Choosing eight different numbers corresponding to different plot elements and piecing them together, the result is something similar to what you have seen on the Hallmark Channel in November and December of any given year, perhaps something like this:

1. An attractive young woman (or sometimes a man) has a high-powered job in the big city.
   1. Sometimes she is a single mother with a sassy-smart daughter (or son). Sometimes she is single with a boyfriend or fiancée who really isn’t a nice person.
2. Through some set of circumstances, she ends up in some out-of-the-way location in the days leading up to Christmas, oftentimes her old hometown that she hasn’t seen in years.
   1. This town often has a ridiculous-sounding name like “Hollydale” or “Christmas Bluff.”
3. She is upset about the inconvenience of having to spend Christmas in backwater America away from her job and perhaps boyfriend or fiancée in the big city.
   1. She is also often cynical about Christmas because of some personal loss in her past.
4. While she is in this location, she meets a handsome local bachelor, who might have been a childhood or teenage acquaintance. The man has a visible amount of facial hair and likes to wear flannel.
   1. If the woman is single, then the man is often a widower and has the sassy-smart daughter or son.
5. Though initially reluctant, the woman slowly comes to appreciate the man as well as the small town values that she was missing out on in the big city. The two often end up ice skating with the child.
   1. There is usually an animal of some kind in the mix, often a dog.
6. While in the out-of-the-way location, the woman and the man must work together to solve some problem, and in the process fall in love.
   1. Options for the problem to be solved include, but are not limited to, saving the family business from a tyrannical large corporation or saving the production of some local Christmas festival.
7. In the process of working together, some conversation is overheard or a note is read that threatens to unravel the developing relationship between the woman and the man.
   1. The woman realizes that she has hurt the man’s feelings because she revealed her previous dislike of the community.
8. At the climax of the story, the woman confesses that her initial feelings of dislike for him and the community have changed, and she expresses her love of Christmas. She now understands the true meaning of the holidays.
   1. It starts snowing, and they kiss.
9. They live happily ever after.

Given that Hallmark and other entertainment outlets produce literally dozens of these kinds of movies every year, there is some variety to them, but most of them include at least a majority of the plot elements that I have outlined above or some variation on them, rehashing of the same general idea.

Why would I like to watch them, you might ask? Well, not every movie needs to be an Academy Award winning film. There is a need for thought-provoking stories and films that are food for our brains, there is also a time and a place for brain candy that is comforting and entertaining. I’d even argue that movies like this are part of the reason that movies were invented to begin with, to provide entertainment and the occasionally-needed distraction from the stress of life.

There is a lot to make fun of in these kinds of movies, but I think that they are popular because they touch on a deep desire that many people have: a longing for meaning, tradition, and relationships. So much that we hear tells us that the most important thing in life is to “get ahead.” But these movies carry the message that true meaning in life isn’t found in accumulating “stuff.” It calls to mind the words of Jesus from Matthew 16:26: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” These movies speak of the value of tradition and relationships that transcend material wealth.

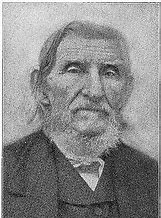
Thinking about Hallmark movies and the theme of “coming home” for the holidays reminded me of the story of the Prodigal Son in the Bible. We know, of course, that however much we desire perfect “Hallmark moments,” we don’t always get them. Real life is much more complex than the formulaic plots of Hallmark movies. But if anything, these movies should help open our eyes to the blessings we have around us and fill us with thanksgiving at the daily bread that we do enjoy already. With the empty promises that the world gives us, we are called, like the Prodigal Son from Jesus’ parable in Luke 15, to find our place and life in our true home with God, our heavenly Father. The greatest “Hallmark moment” we can have is to be embraced by the love of God and to live in fellowship with Him. The father welcomed his son back home in spite of his disobedience and prepared a great feast.

This time of the year, we are called to count our blessings and be grateful for the One who, through his incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension, has prepared a home for us in the kingdom of his Father and beckons us to come home. In this season of Hallmark movies, may God open our eyes to what is truly important and keep us on the path to our true and eternal home through our Lord Jesus Christ.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present.

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We remember in November and December the life of the German-American Lutheran missionary **John Christian Frederick Heyer**, who is commemorated on November 7. He lived from 1793 to 1873.

Born in Germany and raised in a Lutheran household, Heyer was sent by his parents to live with relatives in the United States. This was during the period of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, and many Germans made their way across the Atlantic during this time.

Heyer studied theology in Philadelphia as well as back in Germany in Göttingen before returning to the United States where he preached, established congregations, and taught at the Lutheran seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

More than anything, Heyer is famous for being the first American Lutheran foreign missionary. He traveled to India where he worked with existing Lutheran missions and expanded the scope of their work around India. He also obtained a medical degree during this time. He also founded congregations in the United States and returned again to India, serving as an example for other missionaries.

*God of grace and might, we praise you for your servant John Christian Frederick Heyer, whom you called to preach the Gospel in the United States and in India. Raise up, we pray, in this and every land, heralds and evangelists of your kingdom, that the world may know the immeasurable riches of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.* (Prayer from justus.anglican.org)

**Calling Sunday School Teachers!**

Since September, a number of people, including many youth members, have signed up to lead Sunday school at Good Shepherd. Many thanks to those who have volunteered to help with this important part of congregational life!

There are still a number of open Sundays after the turn of the year and into the spring season that need Sunday school leaders. Leading Sunday school doesn’t have to be difficult, and if only responsible for one or a couple of Sundays a year, the preparation is minimal. Curriculum is provided through Sola Publishing online. You will need the username and password to access it, however. Please consider assisting with this important part of congregational life. Contact Pr. Tom for more information.

**Featured Hymn for Nov. and Dec.**

***Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 95*

Wake, awake, for night is flying,

The watchmen on the heights are crying;

Awake, Jerusalem, at last.

Midnight hears the welcome voices,

And at the thrilling cry rejoices:

"Come forth, you maidens! Night is past.

The bridegroom comes! Awake;

Your lamps with gladness take!"

Alleluia! Prepare yourselves to meet the Lord,

Whose light has stirred the waiting guard.

Zion hears the watchmen singing,

And in her heart new joy is springing.

She wakes, she rises from her gloom,

For her Lord comes down all-glorious,

The strong in grace, in truth victorious.

Her Star is ris'n; her light is come.

Oh, come, you Blessed One,

Lord Jesus, God's own Son.

Sing hosanna! We go until the halls we view

Where you have bid us dine with you.

3 Now let all the heav'ns adore you,

And saints and angels sing before you.

The harps and cymbals all unite.

Of one pearl each shining portal,

Where, dwelling with the choir immortal,

We gather round your dazzling light.

No eye has seen, no ear

Has yet been trained to hear.

What joy is ours! Crescendos rise; your halls resound;

Hosannas blend in cosmic sound.

* Philipp Nicolai, 1556-1608
* Trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878

Note: The “King of Chorales,” this great Advent hymn is based on Matthew 25. Nicolai was a pastor in Unna, a small city in Westphalia near Dortmund, Germany

**Monthly Watchword for December**

“Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant, who walks in darkness and has no light, yet trusts in the name of the Lord and relies upon his God?”

* Isaiah 50:10 RSV

**Ushers for November and December:**

* Head Ushers (November):
  + Randy and Karen Hanson
* Ushers:
  + Les and Amy Johnson
  + Jamie and Mica Olson
  + Jim and Sarah Petersen
  + Dave and Diane Kumm
  + Ashley Guenther
* Head Ushers (December)
  + Travis and Shauna Kauth
* Ushers:
  + Lyle and Myva Scott
  + Gene Eckmann
  + Tony and Brenda Petersen
  + Kris True
  + Kathy Koops
  + Kylan Kauth

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**Martin Luther’s Morning Prayer**

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I ask you to protect me this day also from sin and every evil, that in all I do today I may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all that is mine. Let you holy angel watch over me, that the wicked foe have no power over me. Amen.

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Sacrament of Baptism**

***How can water do such great things?***

*It is not the water that does these things, but the Word of God connected with the water and our faith which relies on that Word. For without the Word of God it is simply water and not Baptism. But when connected with the Word of God, it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit. As Saint Paul says to Titus, “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy” (Titus 3:5-8a).*

**Birthdays for November and December**

*Note: This list of birthdays is a work in progress, as we are currently trying to gather membership information from the old congregational record into an electronic form. If your name is not listed in the appropriate month, please let pastor know your birthday so that it can be added in the future. If you would not like your name to be listed, simply let pastor know. The birthdays are provided here as a way of giving thanks for the lives of members of the congregation. Happy birthday to all!*

* November 5: Richard Beckmann
* November 5: Jesse Eisenhauer
* November 26: Natalie Cross Peetz
* November 27: Tony Petersen
* December 4: Regg Eckmann
* December 9: Margo Poppe
* December 13: Jaiden Johnson
* December 21: Patty Kumm
* December 25: Doug Stewart
* December 31: Samantha Stewart

**Baptismal Anniversaries for November and December**

*Note: Just as it is important to acknowledge the beginning of our earthly lives with our birthdays, it is even more important for us as Christians to remember the day when God has given us a new birthday, a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Lutherans confess that baptism is the means by which God gives us as a part of sinful humanity a new relationship with him, a promise that our faith can look to all our lives. In turn, we are called to a life of repentance and faith that trusts in Christ as our salvation. As with the birthdays, this list is a work in progress. Blessed baptismal anniversaries to everyone!*

* November 1: Tim Jessen
* November 11: Perry Kolterman
* November 12: Madisen Petersen
* November 13: Beverly Kumm
* November 14: Marlin Kumm
* November 15: Jeff Barger
* November 18: Connie McDonald
* November 23: Jake Eckmann
* November 29: Sarah Arens
* December 9: James Carlow
* December 18: Jesse Eisenhauer
* December 24: Del Cross

**T-Shirt Fundraiser**

The Good Shepherd Youth Group is once again selling church t-shirts. Please see one of the high school youth to purchase your shirt(s). The shirts are available in two colors—dark green and Carolina blue. There will be sample shirts in the social hall before and after church. The sizes available for sale are: Youth--small, medium, and large and Adult--small, medium, large, x-large and XXL. The cost is $20 and all proceeds will go the youth group. T-shirt orders will be taken the whole month of November. Payment is due at the time the order is placed. Thank you in advance for your support!

**Worship Schedule**

November 3: All Saints Sunday with Holy Communion at altar rail (White)

November 10: Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost (Green)

November 17: Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost with Holy Communion in continuous line (Green)

November 24: Christ the King Sunday (Last Sunday of the church year) (White)

November 27: Thanksgiving Eve worship (7:00 PM) (White)

December 1: First Sunday of Advent with Holy Communion at altar rail (Blue)

December 8: Second Sunday of Advent (Blue)

December 15: Third Sunday of Advent with Holy Communion in continuous line (Blue)

December 22: Fourth Sunday of Advent (Blue)

December 24: Christmas Eve (5:00 PM) (White)

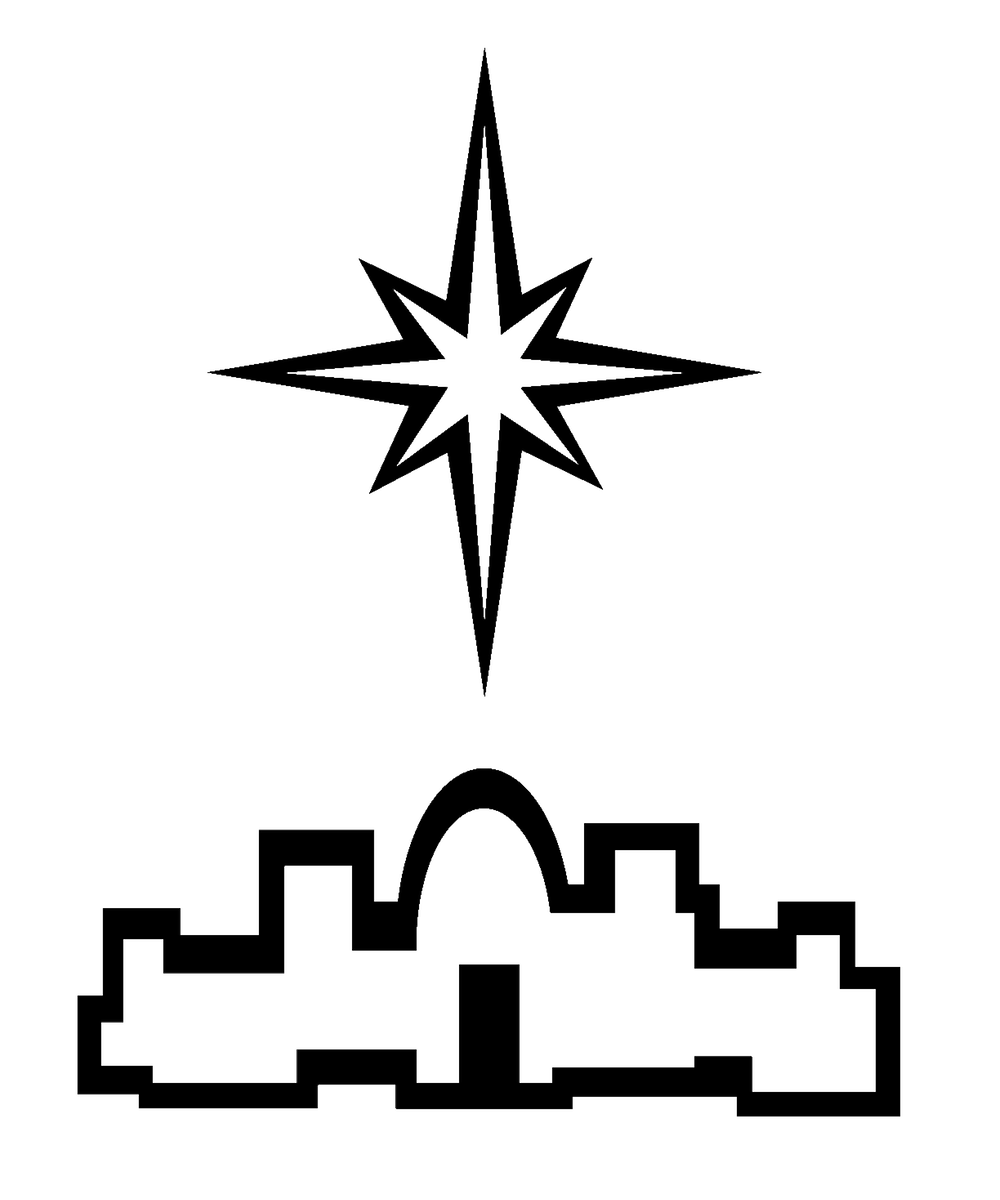
December 29: First Sunday after Christmas (White)

**Important Announcements**

* We will continue, once a month on the fourth Sunday of the month, having a time of adult education during the Sunday school hour, starting at 9:30 AM. For November, it will be on November 24, and for December, it will be on December 22.
* The Church council meetings will be held on Wednesday, November 13 at 7:00 PM and December 11 at 7:00 PM.
* The Women of the Word/Women of the North American Lutheran Church will meet on November 13 at 10:00; this is a change from the usual date of the third Sunday of the month.
* On December 4, 2019 there will be the Women’s Meeting Noon Luncheon, Meeting and decorating the tree and church for Christmas. We will also be making plates for the shut ins.
* On Sunday, November 17, part of the worship service will include a dedication of the newly renovated basement, and part of the worship service will be held in the basement.
* Physical copies of the NALC News newsletter will be made available for pickup after worship when they become available. They may also be accessed online at thenalc.org.
* Books, especially children’s books, are needed for the church library, so if anyone has old children’s books to donate, they would be most welcome.
* Thanksgiving Eve worship will be held on November 27 at 7:00 PM



***Be strong, do not fear. Here is your God!* – Isaiah 35:4**



**Weekly Scripture Commentary**

**Also available online at the NALC website thenalc.org under “Devotions” is a daily reading from the Bible along with a weekly commentary on a part of the Bible. Here is a sample of the weekly commentary from the week of November 1:**

*Regarding the statement in Gen. 24:22, that Eliezer had given Rebekah an earring and two bracelets, with a specification as to their weight, [Martin] Luther makes this comment: “What is here told appears to reason to deal with carnal and worldly matters, and I myself wonder why Moses has so much to say concerning such trifling things and speaks so briefly concerning far more sublime matters. However, there is no doubt that the Holy Ghost wished that these things should be written for our instruction, for there is nothing small, nothing useless presented to us in Holy Scripture; but all things that were written, were written for our learning, Rom. 15:4. For God wishes to be recognized in all things, both small and great.”* (54)

–Johann Michael Reu, *Luther on the Scriptures*

**November 2019**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 2 |
| 3  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  (altar rail)  All Saints  White | 4 | 5 | 6  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  Green | 11 | 12 | 13  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s meeting, 10:00  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45  Church council, 7:00 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  (continuous)  Dedication of basement  Green | 18 | 19 | 20  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  White | 25 | 26 | 27 28 29 30  Pr. Tom in Lindy  No confirmation  Class  Thanksgiving Eve  Worship, 7:00 PM | | | |
|  |  |  |  | | | |

**December 2019**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| 1  Sunday school, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30 (altar rail)  Blue | 2 | 3 | 4  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s noon luncheon and decorating  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  Blue | 9 | 10 | 11  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45  Church council, 7:00 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  (continuous)  Blue | 16 | 17 | 18  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22  No Sunday School  Adult education, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  Blue | 23 | 24  Christmas Eve worship, 5:00 PM  White | 25  No confirmation class  Christmas Day | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29  No Sunday school  Worship, 10:30  White | 30 | 31 |  | | | |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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