

# THE UPDATE



## Christmas 2016 at LFMC: Hope is Here

2016 has been a difficult year for many people. Think for a moment about what has happened in our country and around the world in the past year, and it's not hard to make a list of things like storms and flooding, drought and famine, poverty and hunger, terrorism and war, and a nation divided in many ways. In our own homes, and among our families and friends, some of us have had to deal with addiction, severed relationships, the loss of dear ones, depression, illness, financial struggles--our list could continue to grow the longer we think about it. But listen: hope is here.

The Advent season reminds us that despair need not overcome us. The words of the prophets remind us that God has not forgotten us, that He knows our situation and is coming to our rescue. The birth of a child in Bethlehem showed us that though we could not become like Him, He was willing to become like us to save us and to help us understand what God is like. That the first who learned of Jesus' birth were common shepherds tells us that He sees and cares about those who are on the margins in our world and in our community. The appearance of the host of angels worshipping at His birth demonstrates that the birth of this child, our Savior, is a VERY BIG DEAL in the grand scheme of things--good news of great joy for all the people.

**Hope is here.** And, someone you know needs to hear it and wants to hear it, to know that your hope is real and founded on something true. And, you can be the one who invites them to check it out and join in the celebration. (Maybe you need to hear it again, too.)

### What's happening this season at LFMC

The Advent season begins on Sunday, November 27, and in each Sunday worship service we will be reflecting and preparing for a joyful Christmas celebration as we worship together. *Continued on page 2*

#### Christmas Service Schedule:

Friday, Dec. 23, 7:00 p.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 24, 4:00 p.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m.

#### Worship Service Schedule:

Christmas Day (Sunday, Dec. 25):  
one worship service at 10:00 a.m.  
New Year's Day (Sunday, Jan. 1):  
one worship service at 10:00 a.m.  
Our regular worship service  
schedule will resume on Jan. 8.

There will be resources online for you and your family to use to help you make the most of your preparations for a joyful, meaningful Christmas. You can find them at [www.lfmchurch.org/christmas](http://www.lfmchurch.org/christmas).

These weeks of preparation will culminate in our Christmas services on December 23 and 24. There will be three identical services for you to choose from--one of these services should fit into your otherwise busy schedule, and we hope you will invite your friends, neighbors, and coworkers to come with you to one of these services, where they will enjoy beautiful and encouraging Christmas music (both traditional and contemporary), share in some of our Christmas traditions, and connect with this story of hope, perhaps for the first time.

### Bring an item to share

If you are able, when you attend one of our Christmas services, we encourage you to bring one or more of these items to share with homeless persons in our area:

- Towels, washcloths
- Sheets (twin-bed)
- Socks (adult or child sizes)
- Body wash, deodorant

All items collected will be donated to the Lawrence Community Shelter.

## Discipleship Ministries



### Primetimers

*Tuesday, Dec. 13, at noon in Rm. 24/25*

Fifteen Primetimers enjoyed pizza and a salad on Election Day, followed by an excellent Billy Graham film. Thank you, Judy, for arranging the viewing of the film. Our next meeting will be at noon on December 13. We will be having a Holiday Luncheon to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas. We have volunteers who will be preparing the turkey and providing mashed potatoes, gravy, and the stuffing. We are asking those who attend to bring a favorite holiday salad or dessert. After the meal, we will be addressing old Christmas cards for nursing

home residents and singing Christmas carols. All those who are 50-and-better are invited to attend. If you have never attended our lunch, you are invited to attend as our guest. If you have questions, you can contact Ernie Dyer at (785) 393-3846 or [epdyer@att.net](mailto:epdyer@att.net).

### Spring Women's Bible Studies

*Thursdays, 9:30-11:30 a.m., beginning in late Jan. and early Feb.*

This spring, women will again have multiple Bible studies to choose from! More information and sign-ups will be made available in the coming weeks, but here's a preview:

Searching the Scriptures Bible Study will be focusing on *The Prayers of Jesus*, dividing the study into two parts: Biblical Principles of Prayer and Jesus' Practice of Prayer. This study will begin Jan. 26, and the cost will be \$5. Questions? Contact Susan at (785) 843-7660 or Dana at (785) 331-2795.



The other Thursday morning Bible Study will focus on *Armor of God*, a study by Priscilla Shirer. Each lesson will be split into two weeks, and the study will begin on Feb. 2. The cost will be \$13.

## Student Ministries

### Christmas Party Lock-in

Friday-Saturday, Dec. 16-17, 6:00 p.m.-9:30 a.m. in the Teen Center

The Christmas Party Lock-in will take place Friday-Saturday, Dec. 16-17, from 6 p.m.-9:30 a.m. Students should bring \$3 for pizza, a cheap white-elephant gift (wrapped), a sleeping bag, and any snacks they would like to share with everyone.



Email Pastor Bryce at [bball@lfmchurch.org](mailto:bball@lfmchurch.org) for a digital copy of the General Release Form or stop by the Influx Ministry Center to pick one up. (Parents need to fill this out to grant permission for their student(s) to participate in this event.)

## Children's Ministries



### Christmas Caroling

Sunday, Dec. 18, at 4 p.m.

You are invited to join us in delivering Christmas cheer as we go Christmas caroling on December 18! Everyone is invited to attend. Families and children are especially encouraged to take part.

We will meet at church at 4 p.m. We will then travel for about an hour to several locations. Our last stop will be Pastor Bill's house. After caroling, Pastor Bill will travel with us back to church for hot drinks, cookies, and telling the Christmas story.

Dress warm! Don a festive hat! Grab a friend or bring your family and help us celebrate the joy of this season!

### Operation Christmas Child 2016

Thank you to every person who contributed time, money, and supplies to make this year's Operation Christmas Child shoebox drive a success! These 168 shoeboxes will lead to many children and their families hearing the Gospel!



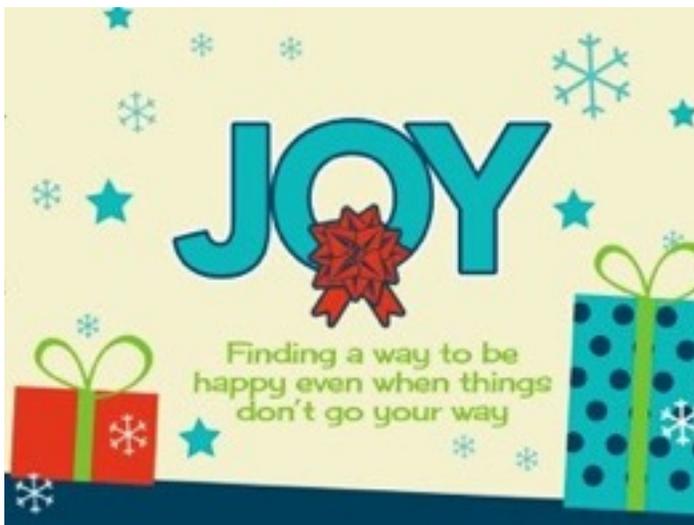
### Jr. Camp 2017

June 12-16, 2017

Jr. Camp is a week-long summer camp for children finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade. Located at Rock Springs 4-H Center near Junction City, KS, Jr. Camp is a wonderful, safe, and fun environment for kids to begin to explore new hobbies, make new friends, gain more independence, and connect with God on a deeper level. Jr. Camp is not just for kids from the Lawrence area; kids connected with Free Methodist churches in Kansas and Nebraska come, too!

For more information, contact Pastor Allie or Bethany Engel (the Jr. Camp Director) in the church office. Registration forms will be available in early 2017. The cost is expected to be similar to recent years, around \$200, with \$100 deposit due at the time of registration.

Note: The gift card fundraising program is a great way to save money for camp without spending any extra. See page 7 or ask the person at the gift card kiosk in the lobby Sundays for more information.



## December in DU

Joy is a response to the character of God.

When God created the world, He made it to be a place of peace and contentment. In the Magnificent Paradise, God provided fruit trees that were pleasing to the eye and good to eat. And He personally walked with His creation! But when sin entered the world, so did greed and jealousy. As circumstances changed and life presented more challenges, people found it harder and harder to be happy. However, even now in this broken world, God wants us to have joy.

Even though we try to find joy through our stuff, or our vacations, or our relationships, joy isn't dependent upon any of those things. Joy is about being content beyond our circumstances. We can have joy when we recognize that God's plan is greater than our own. Joy is a response to our trust in God.

Jesus is the reason we find joy.

God sent His only son as a baby, born in humble circumstances. Jesus wasn't what anyone expected, but this was how God wanted to rescue the world. God made good on the promise He made hundreds of years before. This December, we pray that through the story of Jesus, kids realize that God loved them so much that He sent His Son to be here on this earth. The story of Christmas can remind us through every season, regardless of our situation, there's a reason to celebrate what it means to have a relationship with God.

That's why it's important for us to help our kids and families discovery more about **joy—finding a**

## way to be happy even when things don't go your way.

Our Memory Verse for December comes from Philippians 4:4. When Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi, he wasn't saying to have joy only when it's easy. Paul was writing from prison and learned the secret of having joy no matter what his circumstances looked like. Paul's faith in God made him strong and gave him the ability to find joy, even in the difficult times.

In Philippians 4:4, we read, **Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful! (NIRV)** As kids memorize this

verse, we hope they remember that their joy is not tied to their circumstances. Instead, we find joy when we realize that we belong to God. When we trust God no matter what, we can find joy knowing that whatever happens He is in control.

We will spend the month of December taking a closer look at the way joy shows up throughout the Christmas story.



### WEEK 1

In **Isaiah 9:6-7**, the prophet Isaiah wrote: *'A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace,' (NIRV)*. He wrote this hundreds of years before Mary or Joseph or any of the shepherds came on the scene. But this piece of history is significant to the Christmas story because it tells us something incredible about God. It reminds us that God made a promise to send a Savior. A promise He made at a time when things looked dark—during a period when the tribes of Israel were lost and scattered and hopeless. And then finally, hundreds of years later, God kept His promise on that first Christmas.

Bottom Line: **I can have joy because God keeps His promises.** We don't always see the bigger story that God is telling through our lives. But when we remember how God has kept His promise to us in the past, we realize that we can trust God with our future.

**WEEK 2**

We continue our look at joy in **Luke 1:5-25; 57-79**. After God had been silent for about four

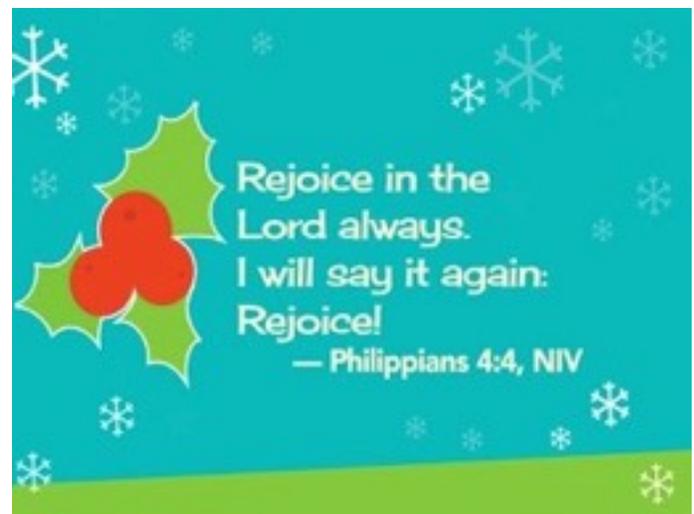
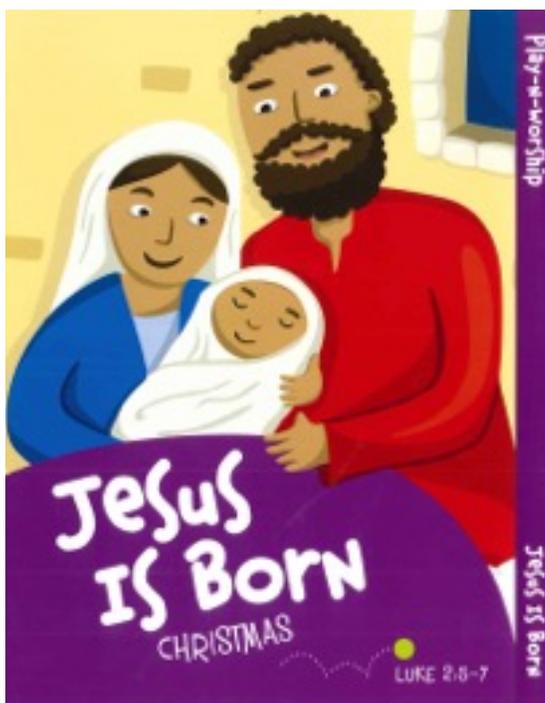
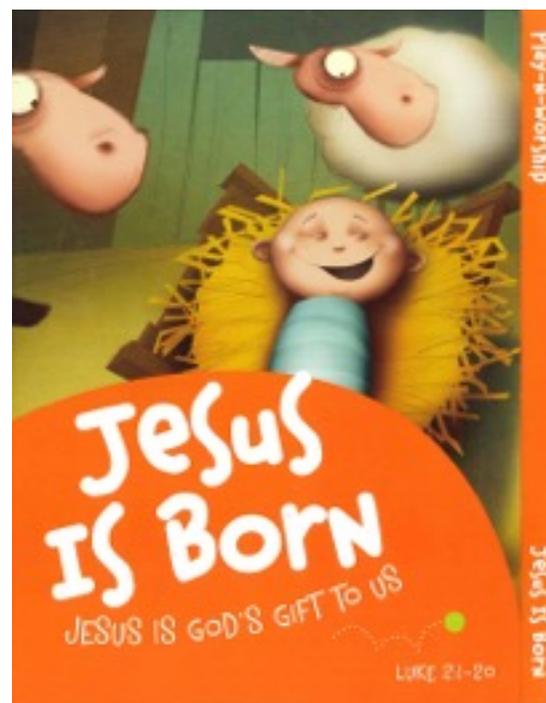
hundred years, an angel suddenly showed up and made a promise to Zechariah and Elizabeth. The angel told Zechariah that they would have a son, even though they were well past the age of having children. The day John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, was born to them, the Christmas story was set in motion. Zechariah broke into a song and his house celebrated. They realized firsthand that they could have joy because anything is possible with God.

Bottom Line: **I can have joy because anything is possible with God.** Knowing that God can do the impossible has the possibility to fuel our joy. God may not always choose to do the impossible right away or at all, but that doesn't mean He isn't faithful. God can give us joy as we learn and grow during those impossible seasons of life.

**WEEK 3**

In **Luke 2:1-7**, we read Luke's account of Jesus' birth. Jesus was God's Son, yet God chose to have Him born in a place where they kept the animals. It was dirty and smelly, but that didn't matter. Mary and Joseph were thrilled because they had a Son, Jesus. And Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise to rescue the world.

Bottom Line: **I can have joy because God sent His Son.** Christmas lights and presents are fun and can bring joy during the Christmas season. But none of that compares to the joy we experience when we believe that Jesus is God's Son.

**December in Twos...****and in Threes and Fours**



Gather around and read about God's gift of joy, one day at a time, as you count down to Christmas Day. Then do the suggested activities so your family and others can experience more joy this Christmas season.

# advent calendar

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p><b>Monday</b></p> <p>A young couple, Mary and Joseph, get engaged.</p> <p>Send encouraging snail mail to a friend. (Imagine the joy on their faces when they open their mailbox!)</p>	<p><b>Tuesday</b></p> <p>One day, God sends the angel Gabriel to Mary. He has some very special news!</p> <p>Jump in the car and deliver Christmas flowers to a friend. (Be spontaneous! Create some joy on the spot!)</p>	<p><b>Wednesday</b></p> <p>Mary is greatly troubled when she hears the angel's greeting.</p> <p>Watch the sunrise or sunset together. (God's beauty makes the heart smile.)</p>	<p><b>Thursday</b></p> <p>Gabriel responds to Mary: "Don't be afraid, God is very happy with you!"</p> <p>Give back by volunteering, cleaning the neighbor's yard, or making cookies for others. (There's joy in serving others.)</p>	<p><b>Friday</b></p> <p>Gabriel tells Mary the special news: she will have a baby boy, and He will be named Jesus.</p> <p>Go for a walk together. (Endorphins make everyone feel better!)</p>	<p><b>Saturday</b></p> <p>Gabriel shares more details of God's plan with Mary: "Jesus will be great and will be called God's very own Son!"</p> <p>Power down for the evening. (Real people bring real joy!)</p>	<p>Mary doesn't understand how she can have a baby without being married, but the angel Gabriel assures her of a great truth: nothing is impossible with God.</p> <p>Plan a party. (Music + food + friends = a room full of joy!)</p>	<p>"I serve God with my life and want all that you have said to happen," Mary tells the angel, and he leaves.</p> <p>Create a masterpiece. (Days, maybe not a masterpiece. But painting, writing, and songwriting will create a joyful feeling.)</p>	<p>Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth and is so overwhelmed with God's goodness that she sings a song of praise.</p> <p>Say three things you're thankful for to start the day. (A thankful heart is a happy heart.)</p>	<p>Caesar Augustus wants to know how many people are in his empire, so he tells all the people to go back to their hometown to be registered and counted.</p> <p>Get some rest! Tell the family to grab a blanket and pick a napping spot. (More sleep = more joy.)</p>
<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Joseph takes Mary, who is pregnant, to his hometown of Bethlehem to be counted.</p> <p>Light a winter-scented candle and share favorite Christmas memories. (The flickering fire, seasonal scent, and sweet memories will calm your mind and fill your heart.)</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>While Joseph and Mary are in Bethlehem, the time comes for the baby to be born.</p> <p>Laugh a little—or a lot! (Turn your frowns upside down with anything from a joke book to YouTube Videos.)</p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>Mary gives birth to Jesus, wraps Him in swaddling cloths and lays Him in a manger because there is no room for them anywhere else.</p> <p>Search your favorite artists singing their version of popular Christmas carols and sing along. (Singing away a 'not so great day' is one way to choose joy.)</p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>At night in a nearby field, shepherds are watching their flocks.</p> <p>Organize a room—or a drawer. (Getting rid of clutter makes the brain sigh in relief—alright.)</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>The sky lights up—God has sent an angel to the shepherds to tell them the good news.</p> <p>Go outside at dusk and see who can spot the first star as you breathe in the night air. (Pressing pause is a good thing.)</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>When the shepherds see the angel, they're afraid!</p> <p>Look in a mirror and try your funniest, jolliest, holiday laugh. (It will make a bad day feel better and a great day even greater!)</p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>The angel tries to calm the shepherds: "Don't be afraid—I bring wonderful news that will bring joy to all of the world!"</p> <p>Make a snowman—out of anything! (Snow, sand, pancakes, play dough. It feels great to get those creative juices flowing.)</p>			
<p><b>18</b></p> <p>"A Savior—the Rescuer you have been waiting for is born today!" the angel proclaims to the shepherds.</p> <p>Stretch it out—your muscles, that is. (A happy body makes for a happier person.)</p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>The angel explains that the shepherds will find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.</p> <p>Hug someone. (Hugging is great for all seasons. Hurt, happy, frustrated, excited? Hug!)</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>More angels come to celebrate the good news—they arrive at the shepherd's field and begin praising God!</p> <p>Say something positive. (If a family member says something negative, be the first to think of a way to turn it into a positive statement.)</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>The shepherds leave their flocks and hurry to find Mary, Joseph, and the baby who is lying in a manger.</p> <p>Give a gift without getting caught. (Secret gifts are fun to give and receive. Joy for everyone!)</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>After they see the baby, the shepherds excitedly go and tell everyone they run into the good news!</p> <p>Make your bed. (No, Mom and Dad didn't make this up. Tidy lives truly are happier lives.)</p>	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>The shepherds return to their flocks, praising God for all they had seen and heard.</p> <p>Compliment someone—or everyone! (It just feels good to make others feel good.)</p>	<p><b>24</b></p> <p>Mary names the baby Jesus just as the angel had told her to do.</p> <p>Drink a cup of hot tea while listening to Christmas music. (Peppermint, vanilla, green, or cinnamon—hot tea and joyful music can be good for you!)</p>			
<p><b>25</b></p> <p>God has sent His Son to rescue us because He loves us so very much! Luke 1:26-2:27</p> <p>Go back to Day 1 and read about God's gifts of true joy, from beginning to end. We can choose joy each day because God gave us joy in Jesus!</p>									

2016



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## Missions

### Thank you from Kids Alive

*Our good friends at Lawrence Free Methodist,*

*Thanks for being an amazing partner! Your labor has provided sturdy homes for our kids. Your prayers helped protect us from Hurricane Matthew. And, the many child sponsors in your congregation help sustain our ministry daily.*

*Thanks for your continued partnership!*

*Rich Anderson, Kids Alive*

## Misc.

### Gift Card Fundraiser

Want to pay for camp, Awana, youth group events, or missions trips without spending extra money? Use the gift card fundraiser program. It's easy and can make a huge dent in out-of-pocket expenses. (You can help others pay for events, too!)

**How does it work?** Buy a gift card, and 2-14% of the total goes into fundraiser account, ready to use for any church-sponsored event. You choose whether it goes toward your family, another family, or a ministry (eg. missions or children/youth).

#### What can you use them for?

Traveling? Get gift cards to pay for gas, airlines, or hotels!

Shopping? Get gift cards to pay for purchases in-store or online!

Picky person on your list? Get them a gift card!

Making lots of goodies? Get gift cards to purchase your groceries!

Need a break? Get gift cards to go out to eat or to the movies!

**Where can you use them?** Checkers, HyVee, Kohls, and Walmart/Sam's Club are always onhand. Hundreds of others ("prepaid cards") can be ordered -- from Amazon to Zappos, Applebee's to Wendy's, AMC Theatres to Walgreens, and many, many more. See the complete list at the kiosk in the lobby on Sundays or in the church office during the week.

**When can you buy/order them?** Every Sunday in the lobby and in the church office during office hours (Mon-Fri, 8-12 & 1-5)

**Deadline to order prepaid cards for Christmas:**

**Dec. 18 for pick-up on Dec. 23.**

Need prepaid cards before Dec. 23? Order the Sunday before the Friday you need them.

(Orders are placed on Mondays and arrive on Fridays.)



## Sunday Services & Programs

9:00 a.m.

Blended Worship

Care for infants through preschoolers

10:35 a.m.

Contemporary Worship

Care for infants through 2-year-olds

Programs for preschoolers through 12<sup>th</sup> graders

## Church Office Information

Office Hours: Mon-Fri, 8 a.m.-12 p.m. & 1-5 p.m.

Phone: (785) 842-2343

[office@lfmchurch.org](mailto:office@lfmchurch.org)

[www.lfmchurch.org](http://www.lfmchurch.org)

### Bill Bump

Senior Pastor

[bbump@lfmchurch.org](mailto:bbump@lfmchurch.org)

### Larry Baldridge

Pastor of Discipleship

[lbaldridge@lfmchurch.org](mailto:lbaldridge@lfmchurch.org)

### Bryce Ball

Pastor of Student Ministries

[bball@lfmchurch.org](mailto:bball@lfmchurch.org)

### Allie Klopenstein

Pastor of Children's Ministries

[aklopenstein@lfmchurch.org](mailto:aklopenstein@lfmchurch.org)

### Bethany Engel

Administrative Assistant

[office@lfmchurch.org](mailto:office@lfmchurch.org)

### Doug Heacock

Director of Media & Contemporary Worship

[dheacock@lfmchurch.org](mailto:dheacock@lfmchurch.org)

### Vanessa Thomas

Director of Choir & Blended Worship

[vanessathomasvoicestudio@gmail.com](mailto:vanessathomasvoicestudio@gmail.com)