

the sower

... christ + charity + community ...



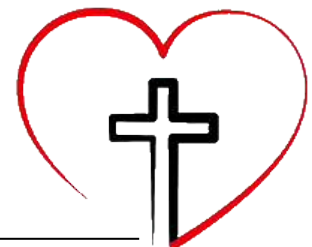
It's, probably, safe to say ... we haven't had a Christmas like this, in a long, long time. Not as church, anyway. Not as god's own. No trees. No wreathes. No candles. Altar pushed off to the side. Chairs stacked in a corner. Dust – nine months thick – covering everything. For most of a year, now, we've pulled back. We've pulled away. Giving each other space. To keep safe. To stay healthy. It hasn't been easy. Figuring out new ways to be us! Trying to discover god is in the midst of it all!

Good news ... it's almost over! Lord willin' and the creek don't rise, there's only a few months more. There's light at the end! How much of yesterday remains? We don't know. How different tomorrow might be? We have no idea. For now, it's enough just to admit that we're tired. Worn down. Wearied. By the changes, the chances.

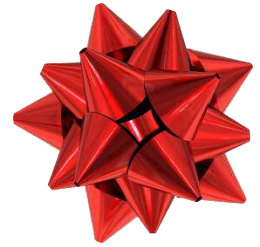
No, it's not what we'd hoped for. It's not what we'd expected. None of it is. But the good news ... neither is god! We've hoped for someone up high. We've looked for someone far away. Walking on clouds. Sitting among stars. All mighty. All powerful. Changing the world, simply, with the nod. But instead, we are led to a child ... wrapped in bands of cloth ... lying in a manger ... Maybe it's not just us trying to figure out new ways to be us! But maybe it's, also, god trying to figure out how to be god!

comfort and joy is yours ...

Bol



FIRST THING FIRST ... THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! That's from us – Sherice & pastorBob! Thanks for your generous Christmas gift! It went right into our savings and we'll let you know what y'all "gave" us ... as soon as we figure it out! But even more, thank you for your patience and for your endurance over the last ten months! This has been nothing any of us expected! And the learning curve has been pretty steep, considering! Looks like we, still, have a few more months to go. So, continue washing those hands, keeping that distance, and wearing those masks! We're not there, yet, but we can, FINALLY, see it from here!



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AND ABOUT THAT ... At its last meeting, the congregationCouncil – after polling the congregation – decided to postpone the annualMeeting, until later in the year! Post-vaccine! The bylaws require us to meet, each January. However, due to "extenuating circumstances," we felt discretion the better part! So, this year's meeting will be later in the Spring. We'll let you know the details as they develop. Until then, we'll maintain the status quo and will make major decisions, only when absolutely necessary. And even then, we'll keep y'all in the loop! Anytime you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, don't hesitate to call/text the pastor and/or theCouncil! Cellphone numbers are listed below ...



+ the **CONGREGATION COUNCIL** +

samantha schievelbein (210.315-1505)

ken spencer (432.853-6683)

janice taylor (432.661-5920)

fred behnken (432.212-1496), treasurer

jonathan yee (432.352-9387), secretary

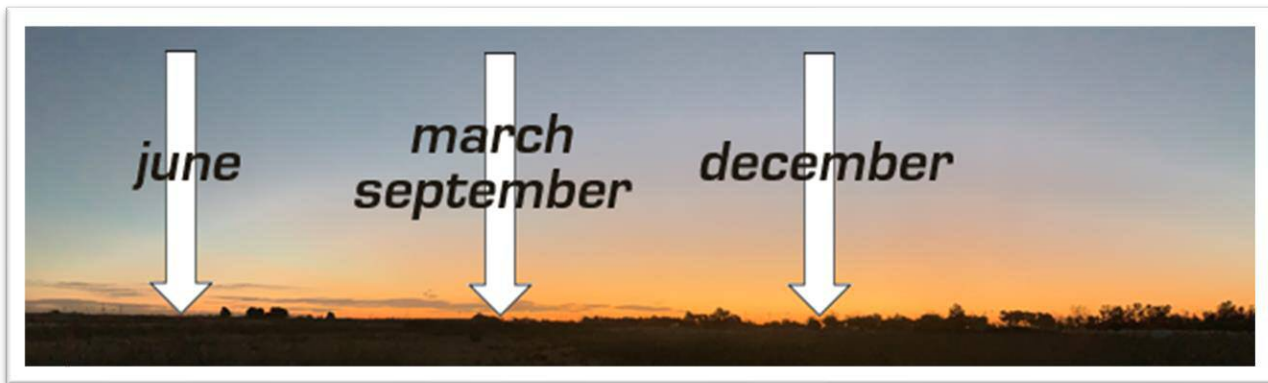
bob barndt (432.349-7407), pastor

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WITH THE LATEST SURGE, looks like we'll "Keep Calm and Carry on" just a little longer. No need to get reckless, now! Besides, what we've been learning about being church online will come in handy when we, finally, "cross over the river," at the end of all this! We'll be sure to let you when anything major is about to happen!



THE amBLESSING ... is at sunrise! Every Tuesday and Thursday! Rain, snow, or shine! On FacebookLive! The times change from week-to-week. So, they're listed on the calendar! Good news ... if you miss it in real time, you can always watch the video, later, at your convenience! And if you've been watching, you might not have noticed the "dance." At the end of December, the sun has stopped sliding southward along the horizon and is slowly turning North, again! The shutdown in March started just before the spring equinox and has gone through the summer solstice, the fall equinox, and the winter solstice. And now, we're getting ready to close the circle for an entire year! The panorama, below, is a view of the eastern horizon taken from the Sibley Nature Center. As Earth revolves on its axis – at a tilt of 23.5-degrees – and orbits around the sun, the sun seems to move back and forth! From left to right, the arrows below point to where the sun rises on the equinoxes and solstices!



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AND ONE MORE PIECE OF ASTRONOMICAL TRIVIA ... You may not have seen it. But the Christmas star is to the southwest just after sunset! Look close! You'll see two dots! The bigger one is Jupiter. The smaller one above Jupiter is Saturn. It's a conjunction – a coming together – of the two that hasn't been this close (or this visible) for 800 years! "In astrology," according to allure.com, "when they line up, their vibrations blend and work together. A Great conjunction happens when Jupiter and Saturn align. Both planets are associated with authority, but each very differently." The "wise men" or "kings" were, actually, astrologers! And they, probably, saw something like this in the sky and ended up "following" its lead to Jerusalem and, eventually, to a house in Bethlehem ... as the story goes! It's still there, if you'd like to take a look, tonight! Just not as close together! Enjoy!

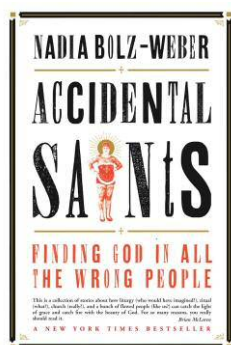




THE CONGREGATION COUNCIL ... will be getting together, twice this month! The first time will be via Zoom! After worship, Sunday, January 10th! The purpose is a quick discussion of what business items (both old and new) need to be a part of the agenda of this year's – eventual – annual Meeting! Then, on Saturday, January 16th, they'll be meeting in-person, in the fellowship Hall, from 10:00am till 2:00pm, to discuss the annual Report and the annual Meeting in detail!

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NEW BOOK, NEW GROUP NAME! Last year, when we read and discussed (pastor)



Lenny Duncan's book *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US*, our group name was "Dear Church Discussion Group!" Pretty original, huh? This year, our name is changed. "Lutheran Book Club!" And we'll be reading *Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People* by (pastor) Nadia Bolz-Weber. Everyone's responsible for getting their own copy of the book! We'll meet on Zoom, just like last time! 7-8:00! Every Tuesday evening! Starting January 19th! If you weren't a part of the last

discussion, no worries! Just go to Facebook, look for Lutheran Book Club (or click [here](#))! Don't be intimidated by the request to join! We let anyone in! And we'll send an invitation, each week, with the password and secret handshake to get on Zoom with everyone else! If you have a problem finding us or connecting, talk with pastorBob – call/text @ **432.349-7407**, email bbarndt@juno.com – or message through the congregation's [Facebook page](#)!

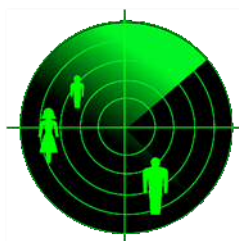
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THE pmSTUDY RECONVENES ... Wednesday evening, January 20th! 7-8:00! On Facebook! Ash Wednesday's on February 17th, this year! We'll have only four Wednesdays, before then. So, we'll keep it short and sweet! If you have a topic in mind, let pastorBob know ... call/text @ **432.349-7407**, email bbarndt@juno.com, or message him on [Facebook](#) (@MidlandLutheranChurch)! If nothing comes to mind, he'll come up with something! Maybe four different somethings, this year!



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FAMILY PROMISE ... Our first week to host, this year, is the first week of February! But we start with supper on Sunday, January 31st! We'll get more information to you, as things get closer. For now, we just wanted to get it on your radar!



COLLEGE CLASSICS is just around the corner. This year, with a few changes! According to the website, "College Classics is perhaps the most interesting of all Midland College classes for area citizens who are 50+ years of age. The program, initiated in the Spring of 1989, provides a low-cost, non-credit opportunity for citizens 50 and over. The program's goal is to broaden knowledge in various areas of interest in an informal educational setting.

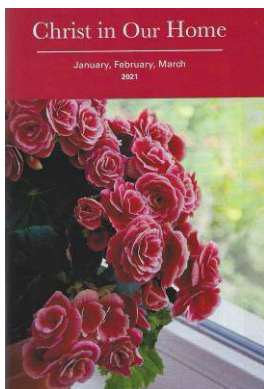


Classes are offered on the Midland College main campus and are taught by Midland College faculty and community volunteers who want to share their time and expertise in a variety of areas."

Pastor Bob is one of those "community volunteers," this go-round, and will teach, Tuesday afternoons, between January 26th – February 16th, from 1:00 to 2:30. The topic: *Imagining Death*. The class will look at ways people imagine "life" on the other side of the grave – as nothingness, resurrection, immortal soul, and reincarnation – and at how those images shape their understanding of life on this side! Class size is limited to 12 persons with strict adherence to COVID protocol. Check out the college's website – www.midland.edu – or click [here](#) for more information and registration. By the way, the class will, probably, be videoed and uploaded to "our" Facebook page if you can't be there in person or prefer not being there! Any questions, talk with pastorBob!

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CHRIST IN OUR HOME ... "is the quarterly devotional resource of our



denomination – the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – that encourages readers to live out their faith daily. Each reflective reading is accompanied by a daily scripture reference and prayer for the day that follows the Revised Common Lectionary." Anyway, we just got copies – regular print – for the first quarter of 2021! So, if you'd like one, give us a call or drop us a line! Landline! Cell! Email! Text! Message! Whatever's most convenient for you! And we'll get a copy out to you, stat! We're, still, waiting for the large print edition, though. We'll let you know as soon as it comes in. And don't be shy! We always have a handful left, at the end of each quarter. So, if you know of someone you think may appreciate a copy, just ask!

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A LITTLE CHRISTMAS SOMETHING ...

from Debbie Wise's Facebook page! A new cover photo! Yup! She and Todd are going to have a baby! In fact, they're going to have two! At the same time! If you'd like to drop them a note ...

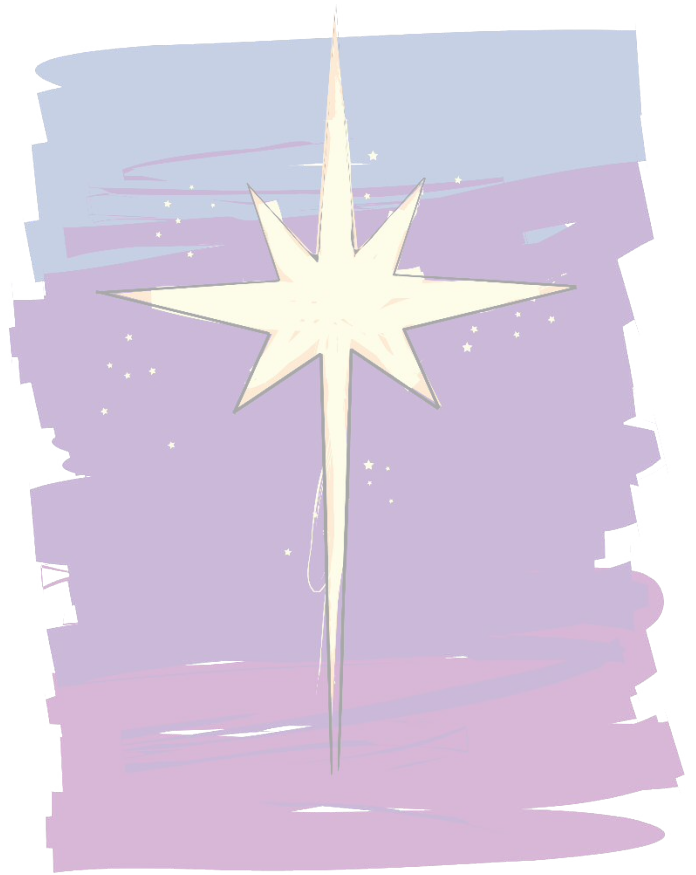
Todd & Debbie Wise
1 summit drive
middlin, PA 17058
email: daa6728@gmail.com



REMEMBER CODY, ABIGAIL, & PAISLEY JO?



Well, we got a ChristmasCard from them ... with the newest member of the family – Neva Rae! ¡Feliz Navidad, y'all!



Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.



the PROPERs for January

the SECOND SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS, January 03

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

the **READINGS**: Jeremiah 31:7-14 + Psalm 147:12-20 + Ephesians 1:3-14 + John 1:[1-9] 10-18

the BAPTISM of OUR LORD, January 10

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: Holy God, creator of light and giver of goodness, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace, and transform us by your Spirit, that we may follow after your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

the **READINGS**: Genesis 1:1-5 + Psalm 29 + Acts 19:1-7 + Mark 1:4-11

the SECOND SUNDAY after EPIPHANY, January 17

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

the **READINGS**: 1st Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20] + Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18 + 1st Corinthians 6:12-20
+ John 1:43-51

the THIRD SUNDAY after EPIPHANY, January 24

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
























the **READINGS**: Jonah 3:1-5, 10 + Psalm 62:5-12 + 1st Corinthians 7:29-31 + Mark 1:14-20

the FOURTH SUNDAY after EPIPHANY, January 31

the **PRAYER** of the **DAY**: Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

the **READINGS**: Deuteronomy 18:15-20 + Psalm 111 + 1st Corinthians 8:1-13 + Mark 1:21-28

enero 2021

domingo	lunes	martes	miércoles	jueves	viernes	sábado
Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum the word of the lord endures forever					 misd holiday	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
 10:30am – worship	misd holiday	 7:49am – amBlessing		  7:49am – amBlessing		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
 10:30am – worship  11:00am – council		 7:49am – amBlessing		  7:49am – amBlessing		 10:00am – congregation Council
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
 10:30am – worship	 misd holiday	 7:48am – amBlessing 7:00pm – bookDiscussion	 7:00pm – pmStudy	 7:47am – amBlessing		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
 10:30am – worship	 week of hosting familyPromise begins	 7:45am – amBlessing 7:00pm – bookDiscussion	 7:00pm – pmStudy	  7:44am – amBlessing		
 10:30am – worship						





Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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midland lutheran church

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bob barndt, pastor

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facebook: www.facebook.com/GospelCrossWords/

www.facebook.com/MidlandLutheranChurch/

email: bbarndt@juno.com

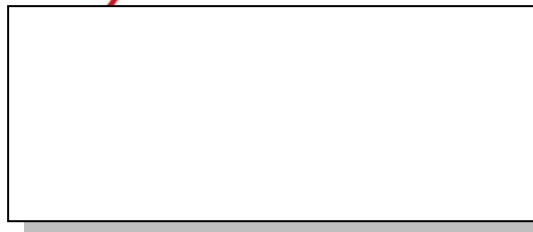
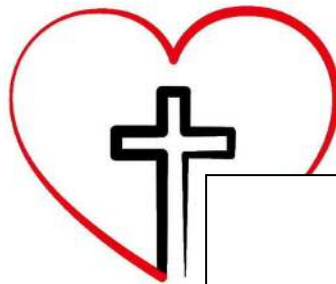
sunday morning schedule: **learning hour @ 9:15 *worship @ 10:30**

office hours: monday-thursday, 9am-noon & by appointment

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midland lutheran church

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january 2021