



Central Lutheran Church

Come Share the Spirit!

Central News - December 2019

- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Study and Discussion](#)
- [Community Ministries](#)
- [Remember in Prayer](#)
- [Financial News](#)
- [Worship Schedule](#)
- [Our Mission](#)
- [Church Family Photo Directory](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

A Place for Jesus

In the Christmas story Jesus was born in a stable and placed in a manger to sleep. Although romanticized in tales and songs, the bed of hay and company of animals were hardly an ideal setting for the birth of a child. But Mary and Joseph had no choice.



In our society, with many cultural forces vying for our attention, we hope there is a place for the gospel of Jesus. Too often, it seems, Jesus plays little if any role in the world. Even though, it could be said there seems to be an emergence of behavior built around the values of Jesus.

Outside of religious settings, many people seem to be focusing on the values and teachings of Jesus, finding a relevant source of guidance and uplift for daily life.

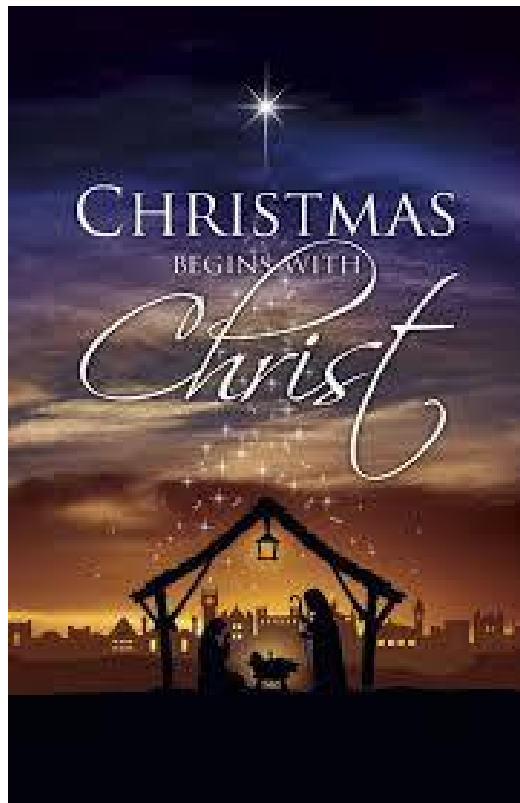
What happens when society is injected with the ethic of Jesus? Jesus maintained an unwavering commitment to honoring the dignity and humanity of all people. Jesus taught that the ultimate test of character is how we treat those with the least power and status, those we most easily forget.

Jesus continues to stand in contrast with the norms of a culture obsessed with the acquisition of status, wealth and consumer products. A hunger that is never satisfied and a thirst never quenched.

How different would our society and lives be by finding a place for the real meaning and truth in the story of Jesus, who held no political power or economic influence? No worldly throne. No worldly riches.

Christmas is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of a child whose family had no place to go. A child who would go on to convey profound insights that remain relevant today: the value of philanthropic love, especially for those we find the hardest to tolerate; the reality of being truly strong when we become vulnerable; and, experiencing the fullness of life only when we stop living for ourselves.

We really ought to stress the importance of a place for Jesus.



Christmas Eve Worship

December 24th

5 p.m. Casa Grande

7 p.m. Arizona City

Saturday Evening Worship begins on January 4th at 5 p.m. in Casa Grande.

Angel Tree

Since 1982, the Prison Fellowship organization has shared over 9 million



Christmas gifts with children of incarcerated parents.

We have given hundreds of gifts in past Christmas seasons and this year supported 41 children, who were given both an article of clothing and a "toy." They also received a message from their parent and the gift of the gospel

of Jesus.

Thank you to everyone who purchased gifts and made donations, thus touching the lives of many children in our community.

Christmas Tree Ministry

Once again we partnered with "Seeds of Hope" in Casa Grande by providing 9 decorated Christmas trees and 9 meals to our neighbors.

Thanks for all of your donations and assistance with preparing the trees and meals for delivery.

Upcoming Events

Arizona City Seniors

The senior activity program is welcoming participants from the entire community. Initially, our congregation is planning on hosting the event on Tuesdays.



Activities offered will include exercise programs, dancing, board and card games. There are plans for a computer room and library. Each day cinnamon rolls and coffee will be served.

Watch for the start of the program coming soon. Contact person is Gary Linafelter.

Study and Discussion

Friendship Center Ministry

Robson Ranch



Sunday Inter-Denominational Worship
8 and 9:30 a.m. Worship
Laredo Room

Central Lutheran Church is sponsoring and assisting the Friendship Center ministry for the Robson Ranch community under the direction of Pastor Ron Hunt. The ministry's focus is being a welcoming and supportive spiritual environment for the residents of the community. It offers the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus and make a difference in the lives of others through personal callings.

Our congregation shares in prayer, outreach, administrative needs and financial support.

Spanish Classes

Several opportunities will be available for conversational Spanish

lessons beginning the week of January 13th in Casa Grande at the Comprendre Services office (two doors from the church site in suite GG).



Two beginning classes will be held:

Twice a week on Wednesday and Friday from 10-11:30 a.m.

or;

Once a week on Saturday from 9 a.m.-noon.

An advanced beginner class is scheduled for:

Twice a week on Tuesday from 9:30-11 a.m. and Friday from 2:30-3 p.m.

The fun and interactive classes will be held for an 8-week period. Our instructor, Mary Menchaca, is paid \$50 per student, which is being paid from our Adult Education funds, donations are appreciated. Sign-up on any Sunday or call the church offices.

Women's Book Club

December 20th

The group will meet on the third Friday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in Arizona City. Discussion will focus on two books:

"What Did Jesus Ask? -- Christian Leaders Reflect on His Questions of Faith"

Jesus engaged his followers as well as skeptics in dialog, posing powerful questions to guide them to examine their personal faith and to teach them how to think after his own heart.

More than 70 of today's most spiritual writers, religious leaders and artists offer modern meditations on the question Jesus asks in the Bible. Their interpretations lead readers on an exploration of their own faith and to shape their own meaningful answers.

"The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong" by Karen Gonzalez

Here is a riveting story of seeking safety in another land. A gripping journey of loss, alienation, and belonging.

The book is an invitation to read the scriptures with the fresh eyes of the author, a theologian with a story that is relevant, heartbreaking, and always surprising. She deeply believes in the God who sees, and she invites her readers to discover the God who is obsessed with the immigrant.

Bring your Bible and friends.



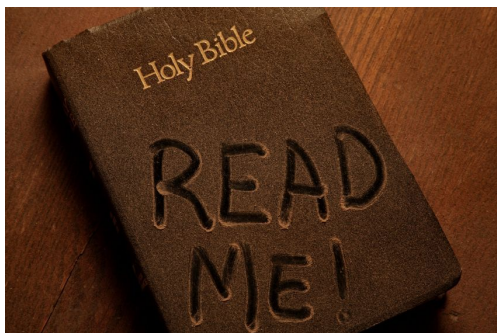
Ladies Quilting Ministry

The group meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 9:30 a.m. in Arizona City.

Thanks to all the women who have contributed to this ministry that provides a message of care and comfort to women and children of our community through the sharing of quilts.

Your donations of blankets, sheets, fabric and yarn

are greatly appreciated!



Men's Monday Coffee

December 16th

The men are invited to join in Bible study and discussion of today's topic at 8:30 a.m. in Casa Grande. Bring your questions, thoughts and ideas.

Youth Night Class

Our youth group meets on Wednesday evenings from 6-7:30 p.m. at our Casa Grande campus. Our program includes our elementary, middle school and high school students. Classes for the different age groups are led by Kara Cooper and Pastor Thom.



Good Grief

*"Grief never ends, but it changes.
It's a passage, not a place to stay.
Grief is not a sign of weakness,
nor a lack of faith.
It is the price of love."
(Author Unknown)*

Because of all the people and things in life we love, life is full of sorrow, sadness, distress, pain, suffering, and, adversity. Life is full of loss in many different forms. Unique in many ways. Common in many ways.

These gatherings are intended to provide opportunities to share grief. To be comforted, to comfort. To be helped, to help. To be supported, to support others.

Meetings are the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 2 p.m. in Arizona City. Please contact Pastor Thom or Judy Smith for any questions or needs.

Winter Softball Season

Watch for a new winter season to begin in early 2020. Games are played at the Paul Mason Sportsplex on Pinal Ave in Casa Grande.

Special thanks to the fans who come out to support our team.

9-Hole Golf Scramble

Our first winter event will be held on Saturday, December 7th at 1 p.m. Mission Royals Golf Course in Casa Grande.

A scramble makes it possible for golfers of all abilities to play together. Players



are placed on teams of 3 or 4 and use the best shot or putt of the group.

The fee is \$35 per player, which includes use of the practice facilities and driving range.



Our Stewardship

We continue to celebrate our growth reflected in a greater number of worshipers, worshipers who have met their monthly offering goal (even when missing a worship service), and, those who have doubled their offering on the second Sunday of each month.

We have held the belief that many of us have had the ability to grow in our giving. Continuing to ask ourselves, "how come I don't give more?"

Your contributions have made it possible for us to extend our benevolence to many areas of need. This year the council will designate contributions to:

All Hands and Hearts -- assisting the recovery effort of the people of Puerto Rico;

City of Joy Rwanda -- sponsoring a student in Rwanda for an entire school year;

Lutheran Disaster Relief -- the ELCA provides extensive support for the relief and recovery efforts of the impacted regions;

Refugee Program -- Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest supports the resettlement of families from around the world in Arizona;

Florence Immigration and Refugee Rights Project -- providing educational materials, sports equipment, school supplies, pregnancy and new parent support;

Maricopa Lutheran Church -- assisting the congregation's efforts to establish a permanent location in their community;

Friendship Center -- sponsoring the start-up ministry for the Robson Ranch community.

Thank you for your contributions to our growing ministry, helping us to grow our ministry within our congregation, to the Grand Canyon synod and the national church, and to those in need around the world.

A Fragrance Free Environment

We are now encouraging that everyone please avoid wearing scented products, such as perfumes, colognes and aftershaves, during worship and other congregational events held at our two sites.

Many people have sensitivities and respiratory difficulties that are triggered when exposed to personal fragrances.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Council Members for 2019

Members for this year are:

Gary Erickson (Vice President), Paul Garrison, Ina Johnson, Dick Jones, Gary Linafelter, Leticia Luse, John Pieschl (President), Mary Pietrini, Skip Simes (Secretary), and Carolyn Torr (Treasurer).

If you would like to know more about becoming a council member in 2020 talk with John Pieschl, Gary Erickson or Pastor Thom.

Next meeting is Tuesday, December 17th at 6:30 p.m. in Arizona City.

Community Ministries

Shield a Badge

Central Lutheran Church joins with many congregations and organizations in the area participating in the "Shield the Badge" support ministry. Volunteers agree to pray daily for a member of the Casa Grande Police Department.





Pick up an information card and contact Sandy Carpenter (carpesm56@gmail.com) and you will be assigned a badge number. For one year pray for the safety and well-being of the officer using the badge number.

Community Education Ministry

We now have 13 students who have passed the math test, 10 language arts, 11 science, 11 social studies, and, 13 civics. Eleven students have completed all of their GED requirements.

Number of passed GED tests	Previous Progress	Current Progress
Math	11	13
Language Arts	9	10
Science	11	11
Social Studies	11	11
Civics tests	13	13
GEDs earned	9	11

You can help by volunteering as a GED or English tutor or making a donation -- designate as "adult education." Thank you for the donations received for this ministry!

Education Opportunity: Learn Spanish

Central Lutheran is offering Spanish Language Workshops. Sessions are free for everyone and will focus on learning beginning/ intermediate conversational skills. Dates and times are determined based on the schedules of participants.

Donation of Home Furnishings

Sometimes the families of our participants are in need of furniture, and small and large appliances. You can help them by donating these items. Contact Alyson to help.

For information of all our programs contact Alyson Stephens:
mailto:alysonstephens@q.com

Manna Bags

We continue to work with the Casa Grande Police Department providing Manna Bags for officers to distribute in our community.

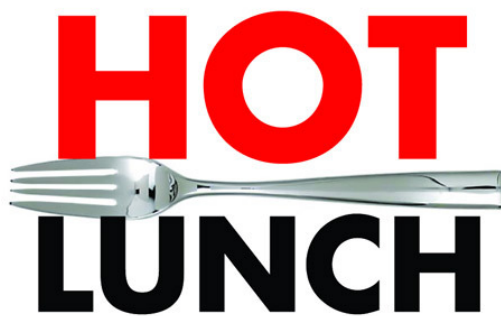
You can pick up Manna Bags to carry in your car to be shared with someone in need that you may meet in the course of your day.

Manna Bags generally include the following items:
two 16.9 oz water bottles, packaged tuna, sausage, crackers (plain, with cheese or peanut butter), energy bars, PayDay candy bars, fruit cups, hand wipes, plastic forks and spoons, in a gallon plastic bag.



Community Food Pantry

Our congregation has donated thousands of food items to the Casa Grande Food Bank. The second Sunday of each month has been designated as a day to support those in need. You are encouraged to make it a practice to bring food items each month for the food bank. Food bins are located at both of our sites.



Hot Lunch Program

You can help the Eloy lunch program on Wednesdays by providing 25-50 homemade or purchased “treats.” For information talk with Sandy Christopher. You can bring your “treats” to worship on Sunday and they will be delivered to the program site.

Request to Travelers

Contribute shampoo, conditioner, lotion, soap, toothpaste and coffee packets to Helping Hands, which assists families through mentoring, healthcare, nutrition, and emergency programs. A container is located in the entry at both sites.



City of Joy Rwanda

God's grace is on daily display and the Holy Spirit continues to build up the ministry taking place in Rwanda. You can support this inspirational ministry by sponsoring a student and supporting the graduates of the sewing program by purchasing items that have been created.

After visiting with us in January, the

Ellingson family briefly returned to Rwanda and have now settled in the Phoenix area.

Todd Ellingson, President and Founder of City of Joy

todd.d.ellingson@gmail.com

<http://cityofjoyrwanda.org>

<https://youtu.be/oDUbpBEfokk>



"Good Gifts" Ministry

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeast Africa that was formerly known as Nyasaland. The topography of the country is defined by highlands split by the Great Rift Valley and enormous Lake Malawi, which takes up about one-third of Malawi's area.

The population of Malawi is estimated at a little over 18 million. This estimate takes into account a lower life expectancy, and higher infant deaths, due to AIDS.

Malawi is among the world's least-developed countries. The economy is heavily based on agriculture, with a largely rural population. The government depends on outside aid to meet development needs. There are challenges in building and expanding the economy, improving education, healthcare, environmental

protection, and becoming financially independent amidst widespread overpopulation and unemployment.

Our congregational campaign raised \$8,783, which has been increased to \$10,000 by the church council. These funds will allow us to partner with the Malawi Health and Wellness program. Through the direction of the Lutheran Church of Malawi our funds will be used to provide access to clean water, sanitation, livestock, farm equipment, fruit trees, medical supplies and medicines, school materials, and mosquito netting.

This is a specific breakdown of expenses:

- 2 simple water wells
- 4 latrines
- 1 fish farm
- 1 fruit tree nursery
- 4 women attending farming school
- 20 sets of farm tools
- 4 piglets
- 10 chicks
- 5 roosters
- 2 pair of goats
- 4 colonies of honey bees
- 1 month of medical supplies
- 1 classroom of school supplies
- 1 community of mosquito netting.

Thank you for your contributions to this ministry. You can continue to make individual donations to Good Gifts throughout the year. ELCA Good Gifts provide more than 50 different gift-giving options, starting at \$10, that fight disease and hunger, and transform lives around the world.

Remember in Prayer

Harry Brink, Willie Bergren, Harold Bonde, Trent Blessing, Judy Burruel, Sandy Carpentar, Carole Crain, Anne Decker, TJ Esco, Ellva Erickson, Pam Gardner, Tom Gearhart, Rachel Grack, Gerre Graves, Harold and Peggy Hall, Darcy Hunter, Dwight Jorgensen, Ron Jung, Tammy Kempke, Gertie Kenyon, Ruth Kramer, Gary and Bev Linafelter, Ken and Lois Morgan, Dick Mueser, Walt Neulieb, Red and Dede Parrish, Ruthann Raitter, Marcus Ramirez, Denise Shepard, Coby Snow, Julie Sternhagen, Linda Ward, Ski Wrybkowski.



Military Service -- Caleb Ball, Grant Davis, Ryan Harrison, Sean Harrison, CJ Squires.

Financial News

“What You Have First Given Us”

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us - our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love.

*Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

On the second weekend of each month we continue to prayerfully consider the challenge to double our offering. The reason for this proposal is the need to increase offerings and the belief many people have the ability to fulfill such a request. As we consider this challenge we can ask ourselves, “how come I don’t give more?” Thank you for your contributions to our growing ministry.

Internship Fund

The \$20,848 of contributions received for the internship program have been invested in an ELCA Mission Investment Fund account. The council will continue to evaluate the possibility of participating in the internship program in the futures or applying to other staffing needs.

Special note: At the annual meeting in January, it was approved to use \$6,000 of the fund to support the work of our tutor for our GED program this year.

Casa Grande Land Fund

Our property “growth fund” has a balance of \$16,699 for the purchase of a permanent Casa Grande site. Discussion of future possibilities is ongoing.

Council Meeting

The next meeting will be held on December 17th at 6:30 p.m. in Arizona City.

Subjects will include the annual meeting and budget and programs for 2020,

November Finances

Account information:

Offering Income for the Month: \$17,366

Balance General Fund: \$14,250

Average Monthly Expenses: \$19,000

Capital Fund: \$52,489 (includes \$20,000 savings from General Fund)

Internship Fund: \$20,848

Worship Schedule

Arizona City

Sunday - 8:30 a.m.

Casa Grande

Sunday -- 10:05 a.m.

Our Worship

Our focus is on the good news shared by God through Jesus Christ, and is celebrated through the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday at all services.

Fellowship is held at both sites each Sunday.

Worship Assistants

You are needed to help as accompanist, greeter, usher, reader, communion server, offering counter, and nursery care. Sign-up to help.

Altar Flowers

Sign-up to provide flowers on the altar for a special remembrance or event.

Our Mission

“We are a Spirit-filled community of loving and caring, light-hearted people who joyfully invite all to share, through the Gospel, the love of Christ.”

Multi-Site Ministry

- Draw upon resources to meet the needs of each campus
 - Use of congregational resources based on needs
 - Programs at one or both sites
 - One governing body, one budget
 - Staff active on both campuses
 - Capital projects at both campuses
-

Church Family Photo Directory

Click here to go to the church [photo directory](#)

Contact Us

Church Office: churchoffice@centrallutheranaz.org
Pastor Thom Stephens: pastor@centrallutheranaz.org
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