



Central Lutheran Church

Come Share the Spirit!

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"The 'Star' that Guides"

Nativity scenes are depicted in many different ways. Some are expensive and elaborate, while others are very simple. A scene will typically have a roughly hewn stable sheltering Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus; with shepherds, wise men, barnyard animals, and perhaps, an angel, gathered around. Often missing is the presence of the star.



“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.” (Matthew 2:1-1)

The Bible tells us God used a particular star to serve as a guide for a group of men who had an interest in looking for a child said to fulfill the prophecy of Micah. “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.” That brilliantly shining star led the men to Bethlehem where they found Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

An innate sense of awe must have filled the wise men when the star led them to Jesus. Not knowing exactly where they were going, the brightness of the star became an accurate travel guide. The Christmas star should be recognized as being put there by the God of the universe, who put all stars in their places.

Furthermore, the star can be seen as a symbol of God’s gift of direction to us. All of us have had “stars” in our lives who have guided us. Travel guides like the star of Bethlehem should be honored as we think of Christmas. Faithful parents, friends, and others who pray for us and direct us. Writers of the past and present, who teach and lead, are Christmas stars who guide. People throughout our lives have been faithful, earthbound “stars,” always pointing to Jesus.

The star pointed the wise men to Jesus. When they found him, they worshiped and gave him gifts. Gifts are at the heart of Christmas. What gifts beyond those that can be wrapped and placed beneath a tree can we offer? What gifts can be given to those we come in contact with every day? The wise men presented their gifts to Jesus. Our desire is to present the gifts that Jesus offers to all.

Our Stewardship

Through the month of November our worship offerings have increased over last year from \$177,373 to \$214,608; this shows a growth of about 17%!

The increase reflects a greater number of worshipers, our 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?”

Thank you for your contributions to our growing ministry, helping us to meet our annual requirements to our congregation, synod and national church.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship

5 p.m. Casa Grande

7 p.m. Arizona City

Saturday Worship

5 p.m. in Casa Grande



Welcome Pastor Ron Hunt

The church council has invited Pastor Ron Hunt to work with Pastor Thom on a part-time basis, from mid-December through Easter. Pastor Ron will assist with worship, preach on selected weekends, help with visitation, and lead a program on spiritual growth and stewardship.

You will be introduced to Pastor Ron during worship later this month. He will be sharing more about his background in congregational ministry and counseling.

Please take the time to meet Pastor Ron and his wife, Lisa.



Angel Tree Ministry

This community ministry provides you the opportunity to give a gift to a child who may not receive a single gift this Christmas season.

You are invited to select from the names of children with a parent in prison, so you can provide a gift to the child on behalf of the parent. There are also names of children in our community whose families could use help with presents. Information cards are available for each child. Bring the wrapped gift to worship, with the

information card attached, and place it under the Christmas tree.

For more information talk with Ruth Kramer or Linda Gal.

A Special Christmas Card

When sending your Christmas cards send a special one or more to:

A Recovering American Soldier
c/o Walter Reed National Military
Medical Center
8901 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20889-5600
Special cards for special people.

Upcoming Events



Christmas Luncheon

Sunday, December 4th at 11 a.m.
Casa Grande

You are invited to this special Christmas gathering. Two Christmas trees will be decorated, then given to families in our community. You can bring treats to add to Christmas gift baskets. Lunch and dessert will be provided, Christmas carols will be sung.

Good Grief

Sunday, December 18th at 9:30 a.m. Arizona City

*"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.

You are invited to these upcoming opportunities to share grief. To be comforted, to comfort. To be helped, to help. To be supported, to support others.

Study and Discussion

Youth Night Class

Our weeknight Bible study, discussion and activities offered to our elementary, middle school and high school students are held on Wednesdays from 6-7:30 p.m. at our Casa Grande campus. Study topics include our scriptures, the Small Catechism, present day social issues, and what it means to be a Christian.

Classes for the different age groups are led by Kara Cooper and Pastor Thom

Men's Saturday Fellowship

Saturday, December 3rd and 17th at 8 a.m. Casa Grande

Come join in the opportunity for fellowship and a discussion of the Advent/Christmas seasons.

Make a "Joyful Noise"

Thursday, December 8th and 15th at 6:30 p.m. Arizona City

You are invited to join in our music ministry by sharing your voice in song. For information talk with John Sutton

Ladies Book Club

Begins Monday, December 12th at 9 a.m. Casa Grande

FLASH, the homeless donkey, taught author Rachel Anne Ridge about life, faith and second chances. The first meeting will focus on chapters 1-6. Check Amazon.com book stores or the library. Coffee will be provided. For more information contact Dell Hoff (520-836-2243) or Sandy Christopher (520-316-9083) .

Revelation Study

Starts Wednesday, January 4th at 6:30 p.m. Arizona City

Revelation is probably the most misunderstood and misused book of the Bible. Martin Luther commented that it didn't belong in the Bible because he "Couldn't find Christ there." If you are curious about this last book of the Bible you are invited to a study with Pastor Bob Kleinke. Join in an interesting and enlightening discussion that promises a better grasp of this fascinating book.

Community Ministries

Community Education Ministry

Many students are currently participating in our adult study programs. You can help them learn English and develop basic math skills. Please consider volunteering as a tutor or making a donation -- designate as "adult education."

For information, contact Alyson Stephens: 602-721-1673 or alysonstephens@q.com.

Thank you for the donations received for this ministry!

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.

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 call Judy Smith (520-466-6227) . 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.

Ladies Quilting Ministry

December 7th and 21st in Arizona City

The women gather on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 9:30 a.m. Invite your friends to participate, everyone's help is appreciated. Bring your lunch.

Many thanks for the contribution they make to our community, a message of care and comfort through their gift of quilts.

The donation of materials and blankets are greatly appreciated.

Serving Meals

You can help serving meals at "Seeds of Hope" in Casa Grande on Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. For more information contact Jayne Schneuer (520-840-4038) .



City of Joy Rwanda

You can learn more about this inspirational ministry and hear how God's Spirit is leading lives to Christ when Todd returns to visit on January 7th and 8th..

Once again you can support the graduates of the sewing program by purchasing a large purse or apron (\$20); or other artistic items.

Todd Ellingson

President and Founder of City of Joy

todd.d.ellingson@gmail.com

<http://cityofjoyrwanda.org>

Love & all its glory IS

Wendy Landers has completed the second installment of her series "Dieting After She Died."

After setting up her recording studio, Manon started writing rock songs again. Traveling to a recording seminar, she met a film producer, Jacob. Yet the plague that harassed her continued. Can her original rock band, A Slip of the Cue, help her make it end?

Her blog is www.wendylanders.com

Remember in Prayer

Harry Brink, Marlita Buchholz, Trent Burkhart, Ruby Craun, Rev. Bekah Davis, Grant Davis, Ellva and Gene Erickson, Mark Gerrish, Rachel Grack, Ray Grant, Ryan Harrison, Lanny Johnston, Rolland Karlin, Gertie Kenyon, Norma Kringen, Dick Laudahl, Gary Linafelter, Bob McGregor, Dick Mueser, Walt Neulieb, Neil Northey, Marcus Ramirez, Jon Schmidt, CJ Squires, Gary Towle, Ski Wrybkowski

Military Service -- Grant Davis, Ryan Harrison, CJ Squires.

Bereavement -- Paula Luft and family following the death of husband, Gene; and, Jay van Oort and family after the death of his wife, Charlene.

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

We will not be participating in the internship program in 2017. Over \$26,000 of contributions have been received for this program, and will be placed in a mutual fund account. Next year we will evaluate pursuing an intern for 2017-18.

Casa Grande Land Fund

Our property “growth fund” has a balance of \$6,399, for the purchase of a permanent Casa Grande site. Discussion of future possibilities is ongoing.

November Finances

Account information:

Offering Income: \$16,923

Balance General Fund: \$20,732

Average Monthly Expenses: \$17,000

Capital Fund: \$69,621 - includes the Internship Fund: \$26,848

Casa Grande Land Fund: \$6,399

Balance of Mortgage with Thrivent: \$323,908 (12/31/14)

Worship Schedule

Arizona City

Sunday - 8:30 a.m.

For information on Sunday School for children contact Linda Gal (705-1450).

Casa Grande

Saturday -- 5 p.m.

Sunday -- 10 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.

Name Tags

We would like to have name tags for all of our worshipers. Sign up for yours.

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

www.centrallutheranaz.org

Arizona City Campus

12921 S. Sunland Gin Road PO Box 677 Arizona City, AZ 85123
(520) 466-5024

Casa Grande Campus

324 N Sacaton Street Casa Grande, AZ 85122 (520) 316-9659

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