



For decades Bing Crosby's "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" was the #1 song ever recorded, until it was topped by the tribute to Princess Diana, "A Candle in the Wind." But, I'm not sure how many of us this year will be singing—or dreaming—about a "White Christmas" after last year's blizzard on Christmas Eve!

Although it is a secular song, in a way it also symbolizes the *real* meaning of Christmas. For, the Lord promises in Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

A beautiful, snow-covered landscape symbolizes how God sees you. In God's sight, all your sins and failures are completely covered over, with the pristine, perfect holiness of His own Son.

The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Colossians 1:19-22: "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body, through death, to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

That's what Christmas is really all about: the lights, the trees, the decorations, the gifts, the Christmas

carols and nativity scenes. We are celebrating the Good News: You are at peace with God, on account of His Son, born into our world as the Babe of Bethlehem. It's not just a dream—Christmas really does make you "white as snow" in God's sight!

I wish you a blessed and happy Christmas, and invite you to celebrate your Savior's birth at Holy Cross, at the special Wednesday evening Advent services at 7:00pm on December 1, 8, & 15; the Children's Christmas Program at 9:15am on Sunday, December 19; the Christmas Eve Candlelight Services at 7:00pm & 11:30pm on Friday, December 24; and the Christmas Carol Communion Service at 9:15am on Sunday, December 26.

God's blessings at Christmas and always!

Pastor Kevin Vogts



**This anonymous woodcut of the Nativity is from a collection of sermons or "postils" by Martin Luther, published early in the Reformation, in 1523.**



## Why December 25?

### *The Origin of Christmas Had Nothing to Do with Paganism*

by Gene Edward Veith

According to conventional wisdom, Christmas had its origin in a pagan winter solstice festival, which the church co-opted to promote the new religion. In doing so, many of the old pagan customs crept into the Christian celebration. But this view is apparently a historical myth—like the stories of a church council debating how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, or that medieval folks believed the earth is flat—often repeated, even in classrooms, but not true.

William J. Tighe, a history professor at Muhlenberg College, gives a different account in his article "Calculating Christmas," published in the December, 2003 *Touchstone Magazine*. He points out that the ancient Roman religions had no winter solstice festival.

True, the Emperor Aurelian, in the five short years of his reign, tried to start one, "The Birth of the Unconquered Sun," on December 25, 274. This festival, marking the time of year when the length of daylight began to increase, was designed to breathe new life into a declining paganism. But Aurelian's new festival was instituted after Christians had already been associating that day

with the birth of Christ. According to Mr. Tighe, the Birth of the Unconquered Sun “was almost certainly an attempt to create a pagan alternative to a date that was already of some significance to Roman Christians.” Christians were not imitating the pagans. The pagans were imitating the Christians.

The early church tried to ascertain the actual time of Christ’s birth. It was all tied up with the second-century controversies over setting the date of Easter, the commemoration of Christ’s death and resurrection. That date should have been an easy one. Though Easter is also charged with having its origins in pagan equinox festivals, we know from Scripture that Christ’s death was at the time of the Jewish Passover. That time of year is known with precision.

But differences in the Jewish, Greek, and Latin calendars and the inconsistency between lunar and solar date-keeping caused intense debate over when to observe Easter. Another question was whether to fix one date for the Feast of the Resurrection no matter what day it fell on or to ensure that it always fell on Sunday, “the first day of the week,” as in the Gospels.

This discussion also had a bearing on fixing the day of Christ’s birth. Mr. Tighe, drawing on the in-depth

research of Thomas J. Talley’s The Origins of the Liturgical Year, cites the ancient Jewish belief (not supported in Scripture) that God appointed for the great prophets an “integral age,” meaning that they died on the same day as either their birth or their conception.

Jesus was certainly considered a great prophet, so those church fathers who wanted a Christmas holiday reasoned that He must have been either born or conceived on the same date as the first Easter. There are hints that some Christians originally celebrated the birth of Christ in March or April. But then a consensus arose to celebrate Christ’s conception on March 25, as the Feast of the Annunciation, marking when the angel first appeared to Mary.

Note the pro-life point: According to both the ancient Jews and the early Christians, life begins at conception. So if Christ was conceived on March 25, nine months later, he would have been born on December 25.

This celebrates Christ’s birth in the darkest time of the year. The Celtic and Germanic tribes, who would be evangelized later, did mark this time in their “Yule” festivals, a frightening season when only the light from the Yule log kept the darkness at bay. Christianity swallowed up that season of depression with the opposite message of joy: “*The light [Jesus] shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*” (John 1:5).

Regardless of whether this was Christ’s actual birthday, the symbolism works. And Christ’s birth is inextricably linked to His resurrection.

*Dr. Gene Edward Veith is a lay member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He is a noted author and frequent contributor to the LCMS magazine The Lutheran Witness. He serves as Provost and Professor of Literature at Patrick Henry College, Purcellville, Virginia, and Director of the Cranach Institute at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.*

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### As of November 22, 2010

Total Offerings Budgeted	
Year-to-Date .....	\$179,869
Total Offerings Received	
Year-to-Date .....	\$178,400
Total Budget Deficit	
Year-to-Date .....	(\$1,469)



Jane Michels

*Entered Eternal Rest  
November 6, 2010*

*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain.  
(Revelation 21:4)*

### **Balcony Hymnals Donated**

Our thanks to St. John’s Lutheran Church, Yankton, South Dakota for donating to Holy Cross 30 copies of *Lutheran Service Book* for use in our balcony. These survived the fire which severely damaged St. John’s last year. Because they were replaced with new hymnals by their insurance coverage, St. John’s was not permitted to keep or use their old hymnals—but they can give them away.

They have been carefully cleaned and the smoke odor professionally removed. Though slightly discolored on the tops where soot settled, they are otherwise in excellent condition and suitable for use in our balcony.

## **Crossnotes**

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*Number 12*

## ***LCMS College and Church Worker Enrollment Up***

This fall marks the 18th consecutive year that total enrollment at the Synod's 10 Concordia University System schools has increased, hitting a record high of 27,454 graduate and undergraduate students—an increase of 1,938 students, or 7.59 percent.

A particularly bright spot in this fall's enrollment figures is that, for the first time in five years, the number of students preparing for church vocations also is rising. That figure—1,954—represents an increase of 54 students, or 2.8 percent over the previous year.

In addition to these undergraduate church work students, 767 men are studying at our two LCMS seminaries to serve as Pastors, and 67 women are studying at the seminaries to become Deaconesses, for a total of over 2,700 undergraduate and graduate church work students at all Synodical institutions.

Among undergraduate church-work programs, preparation to serve as a Lutheran parochial school Teacher gained the most students—from 1,192 last year to 1,266 this fall, an increase of 74 students, or 6 percent. Other gains were recorded for Director of Parish Music (32, up 13), Deaconess (31, up 5), Pre-Seminary (248, up 3) and Director of Christian Outreach (19, up 1).

Church-work students typically receive close to half their tuition in scholarship aid. Tuition and fees range from a low of \$7,370 at Concordia College, Selma, Alabama, to a high of \$27,400 at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota, with an average of some \$22,000 per year.

The schools also offer training for a variety of secular careers, including business, communications, computers, engineering, healthcare, law, recreation and fitness, and visual and performing arts.

Concordia University Wisconsin opened its new pharmacy school to 71 students this fall—turning away an



Bring Your Family and Guests to Celebrate  
the Real "Reason for the Season"

Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24  
Family Service at 7:00pm  
"Midnight Mass" at 11:30pm

Enjoy Your Favorite Christmas Carols  
Including "Silent Night" by Candlelight

*All Invited — Everyone Welcome!*

## **Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful!**

astounding 670 others who had applied for admission to the program! That inaugural class contributed to the school's record enrollment of 7,485—an increase of 307 students, or 4 percent, and the highest enrollment at any LCMS school. A \$12.5 million School of Pharmacy building is under construction on the Mequon, Wisconsin campus and is expected to be completed next summer. Concordia, Mequon, also leads in the number of students enrolled in church-work programs—631, an increase of 66 students, or almost 12 percent, over last year.

Kudos also are in line for Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Nebraska, which saw its enrollment grow by 25 percent in the past year—from 1,717 to 2,146, an increase of 429 students.

This fall's enrollments—including both graduate and undergraduate students—at LCMS schools is as follows:

Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan—668 (a decrease of 79 students, or 10.5 percent)

Concordia University Texas, Austin, Texas—2,573 (up 329, or 15 percent)

Concordia College, Bronxville, New York—777 (up 73, or 10 percent)

Concordia University, Irvine, California—2,969 (up 405, or 16 percent)

Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wisconsin—7,485 (up 307, or 4 percent)

Concordia University, Portland, Oregon—2,114 (up 213, or 11 percent)

Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Illinois—5,223 (up 174, or 3 percent)

Concordia College, Selma, Alabama—657 (up 61, or 10 percent)

Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota—2,842 (up 26, or 1 percent)

Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Nebraska—2,146 (up 429, or 25 percent)

For more information about LCMS colleges and universities—and professional church-work careers—visit the LCMS website at [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org) and select "University Education" under the "Our Ministries" tab at the top of the page.



## Holy Cross Angel Tree

Holy Cross will again be sponsoring an Angel Tree for the Sioux City Gospel Mission, beginning Sunday, December 5. These items will help provide a “Merry Christmas” for the homeless children, women, and men they serve.

There will be different cards for different items on the tree in the Gathering Room. Simply take a card for an item that you would like to give and leave your gift under the tree in Gathering Room by Sunday, December 19. All items should be new, not used, and unwrapped or in a gift bag or sack, so that the Gospel Mission staff can match your gift to the right recipient.

Perhaps your children could select a card and pick out the gift—a wonderful way to get them involved in the real spirit of the season.

Thanks for helping provide a “Merry Christmas” for these homeless children, women, and men! *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people”* (Galatians 6:10).

## Women’s

## Christmas Dinner

All women of Holy Cross are invited to our annual Women’s Christmas Dinner, Monday, December 6, at 6:00pm at Grahams in Dakota Dunes. The cost of



Holy Cross member Mabel Schibonski celebrated an amazing milestone on November 14—her 102nd birthday! To start the service the bell was rung 102 times in her honor, and a reception followed the service in the Gathering Room.

the meal, which includes tax and gratuity, is \$18.

Our freewill offering will go toward buying cookie dough for the Women and Children’s Center of Jackson Recovery. there will also be an ornament exchange.

Please RSVP to Betty Gunderson (235-1551); or Ginny Peterson (232-3287).



## POINSETTIAS

The deadline to sign up to order poinsettias through Mosher Garden Center for \$11 each is Sunday, November 28.

However, you are also welcome to bring your own plants, if you wish to purchase them elsewhere or receive them as gifts. Please sign up in the Gathering Room, indicating either that you wish to have your plants purchased for you and put your payment in the offering marked “Poinsettias,” or that you will provide your own plants, which you may drop by the church anytime before Christmas.

When you sign up, please indicate whom your plants are in memory or honor of, the way you want it printed in the January newsletter. After Christmas you may take home the plants you have donated or brought.



## Advent Services Begin December 1

The theme for this year’s Advent services is, *“A Season of Faith, Hope, and Love.”*

Advent services are on Wednesdays at 7:00pm, December 1, 8 & 15. Amidst all the hustle and bustle bring your family to meditate on the real “reason for the season”!



## Children's Christmas Program December 19

Our Children's Christmas Program will again be held during the morning service on the Fourth Sunday in Advent, December 19 (in place of the sermon).

The service will include many favorite Christmas carols, recitations by the children, an adult choir anthem, and Holy Communion. It's wonderful to see the real meaning of Christmas through children's eyes

All children participating in the Christmas Program need to be present for a brief rehearsal on Saturday, December 18 from 9:30am-10:30am.



Come Decorate for Christmas

## Christmas Decorating December 4

Doesn't our church look especially beautiful for Christmas each year? The Decorating Committee needs your help to decorate the Sanctuary and Gathering Room this Saturday, December 4 at 9:30am. The more, the merrier—see you there!

(Also mark your calendar for undecorating, which is scheduled for Saturday, January 8, 2011 at 9:30am.)



A Season of Faith  
Hope  
and Love

## 2010 Advent Services

Wednesdays – 7:00pm

December 1

*"A Season of Faith"*

Luke 1:26-38

December 8

*"A Season of Hope"*

Luke 1:39-56

December 15

*"A Season of Love"*

Matthew 1:18-25

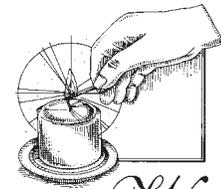


We list members' birthdays and anniversaries in the newsletter each month and the bulletin each week. However, our records are not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the church office at 232-9117 or email [holycross@longlines.com](mailto:holycross@longlines.com).

- Randy Stein, December 2
- Katelyn Yockey, December 2
- Mark Reed, December 4
- Helen Hamilton, December 11
- Melissa Rehnelt, December 15
- Benjamin Bargstadt, December 21
- Julie Eickhoff, December 21
- Sherry Isley, December 26
- Barbara Goede, December 30

Kevin & Terese Vogts  
December 29, 1990

T.J. & Tami Michels  
December 31, 1989



Worship Assistants

Elders for December

Carroll Gustman & Ron Yockey

Ushers for December

Gary Gunderson & Steven Stoeger-Moore

Chancel Care for December

Linda Amunson & Mary Mettenbrink

Acolytes for December

- Dec. 1 (Advent) ..... Jacob Michels
- Dec. 5 ..... Kathleen Soukup
- Dec. 8 (Advent) ..... Bear Jensen
- Dec. 12 ..... Stephanie Stoeger-Moore
- Dec. 15 (Advent) ..... Brandon Dodds
- Dec. 19 ..... Jacob Michels
- Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve) .... Anna Vogts
- Dec. 26 ..... Kaleb Martin

Crucifers for December

- Dec. 1 (Advent) ..... Kasey Michels
- Dec. 5 ..... Nathan Soukup
- Dec. 8 (Advent) ..... Tiara Selby
- Dec. 12 ..... Claire Johnson
- Dec. 15 (Advent) ..... Emily Steemken
- Dec. 19 ..... Kasey Michels
- Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve) .... Anna Vogts
- Dec. 26 ..... Kaleb Martin



**Missionaries  
of the Month**

Our congregation has designated a tithe of 10% of our general offerings to support the work of our District and Synod. Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services specific missionaries around the world who are supported in this way by our congregation.



December 5  
*Rev. Jorge & Olga Groh*  
Panama



December 12  
*Rev. Shauen & Krista Trump*  
Kenya



December 19  
*Rev. Fungchatou & Kalia Lo*  
Cambodia



December 26  
*Rev. Robert and Laine Rosin*  
Germany



**Christmas Caroling  
December 19**

All members of Holy Cross are invited to join the Holy Cross Youth Group for Christmas caroling on Sunday December 19.

We will meet at the church at 3:30pm and carol at the homes of some of our senior members. Our last stop will be Stony Brook Assisted Living in Dakota Dunes, where we will enjoy a lite supper, cocoa, and cookies.

All youth, parents and members from the congregation are invited to join in—the more the merrier!



**Soup Supper Success!**

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Soup Supper sponsored by the Youth Group on November 14 such a big success! The Fellowship Hall was

packed with a constant stream of customers and we made over \$500, which will be used for youth activities, such as a Christmas bowling party. Thanks to the youth, their parents, and all the Holy Cross members who donated delicious soups and desserts!



**Youth Bowling  
December 12**

All youth in 5th-12th Grades are invited to a bowling party on Sunday, December 12 from 6:30pm-8:00pm. Meeting at the Lewis Bowl North on Hamilton next to ShopKo. Proceeds from our successful Soup Supper will be used to pay for kids' bowling fees!



**Christmas Carol  
Communion Service  
December 26**

Because many members of Holy Cross are away visiting family on Christmas Eve itself, for our 9:15am service on Sunday, December 26 we will have a special "Christmas Carol Communion Service." Favorite Christmas carols will be used for the different portions of the liturgy.



## 2011 Flower Calendar Available

The flower calendar for 2011 is now on the table in the Gathering Room. Occasions to remember include anniversaries, birthdays, in memory of loved ones, etc.

Flowers may be obtained anywhere and you may provide your own vase or use one of the assortment in the cabinet in the Vestry (small room east of Altar). They may be delivered during Office Hours, Tuesday thru Friday from 9:00am-11:00am, and placed in the flower cooler in the Sacristy (small room west of the Altar). Or, you can simply bring them early on Sunday morning.

November 14

Mabel Schibonski  
102nd Birthday

Jeannette & Ron Yockey  
In Loving Memory of Eric Yockey

November 21

Stoeger-Moore



## Budget Meeting December 5

There will be a special congregational business meeting to approve the 2011 budget on Sunday,

December 5 following snack time at 10:30am in the Gathering Room. (There will not be Adult Bible Class or choir rehearsal.)

## Guest Preacher Guest Minister December 5

Rev. Henry Witte, LCMS missionary to Hispanics in Sioux city, will serve as our guest minister at Holy Cross on Sunday, December 5, so that Pastor and Terry Vogts can join his brother and sisters and their spouses for an early Christmas in Branson.

Worship with Holy Communion will be at the regular time of 9:15am. There will not be either Sunday School or Bible Classes that morning, due to special Business Meeting to approve the budget for 2011.

## The Epistles of Love 1st, 2nd & 3rd John

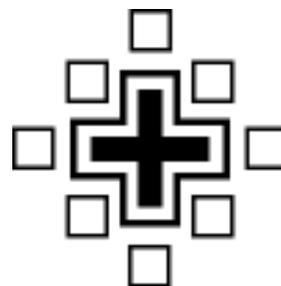
On December 12 & 19 we will continue our current study in Adult Bible Class on *The Epistles of Love—1st, 2nd & 3rd John*. We will not have class on December 5 due to Pastor Vogts' absence and the special Business Meeting to approve the 2011 budget, or on December 26 due to the Christmas holiday weekend.

Join in Sundays at 10:30am in the Gathering Room as we learn about love from the Author of love, with our study of *The Epistles of Love—1st, 2nd & 3rd John*.



No one has signed up yet to serve snacks for December 12 & 26. Please help with this fellowship activity by signing up on the table in the Gathering Room. Thank you to all those providing snacks!

December 5 ..... Dial  
December 19 ..... Steemken  
December 12 & 26 ... Need Volunteers



## December Commemorations

You may have noticed on our church calendar that in addition to members' birthdays and anniversaries there are also listed historic commemorations of some of our forbearers in the faith.

A list of such occasions commonly observed in the Lutheran Church is included on pages xi-xiii in the front of *Lutheran Service Book*. The following brief descriptions of the significance of these commemorations this month are from the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*. This excellent publication is available from Concordia Publishing House, 1-800-325-3040, www.cph.org, stock #12-4318.

### St. Thomas, Apostle (December 21)

All four Gospels mention St. Thomas as one of the twelve disciples of

Jesus. John's Gospel, which names him "the Twin," uses Thomas' questions to reveal truths about Jesus. It is Thomas who says, "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" To this question Jesus replies, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:5-6).

John's Gospel also tells how Thomas, on the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection, doubts the report of the disciples that they had seen Jesus. Later, "doubting Thomas" becomes "believing Thomas" when he confesses Jesus as "my Lord and my God" (John 20:24-29).

According to tradition, Thomas traveled eastward after Pentecost, eventually reaching India, where still today a group of people call themselves "Christians of St. Thomas." Thomas was martyred for the faith by being speared to death.

### **St. Stephen, Martyr (December 26)**

St. Stephen, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5), was one of the Church's first seven deacons. He was appointed by the leaders of the Church to distribute food and other necessities to the poor in the growing Christian community in Jerusalem, thereby giving the apostles more time for their public ministry of proclamation (Acts 6:2-5).

He and the other deacons apparently were expected not only to wait on tables but also to teach and preach. When some of his colleagues became jealous of him, they brought Stephen to the Sanhedrin and falsely charged him with blaspheming against Moses (Acts 6:9-14).



**The symbol for St. Thomas is a carpenter's square and a spear, because tradition says that he built a church in India with his own hands, and that he was martyred by being speared to death.**

Stephen's confession of faith, along with his rebuke of the members of the Sanhedrin for rejecting their Messiah and being responsible for His death, so infuriated them that they dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death. Stephen is honored as the Church's first martyr and for his words of commendation and forgiveness as he lay dying: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" and "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:59-60).

### **St. John, Apostle and Evangelist (December 27)**

St. John was a son of Zebedee and brother of James the Elder (whose festival day is July 25). John was among the first disciples to be called by Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22) and became known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," as he refers to himself in the Gospel that bears his name (e.g., John 21:20).

Of the Twelve, John alone did not forsake Jesus in the hours of His suffering and death. With the faithful women, he stood at the cross, where our Lord made him the guardian of His mother.

After Pentecost, John spent his ministry in Jerusalem and at Ephesus, where tradition says he was bishop. He wrote the fourth Gospel, the three Epistles that bear his name, and the Book of Revelation. Especially memorable in his Gospel are the account of the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12), the "Gospel in a nutshell" (John 3:16), Jesus' saying about the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-16), the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11),



**The symbol for St. Stephen is three stones, to symbolize his martyrdom by being stoned to death, and the palm of victory, to symbolize that he is now with all the faithful in heaven, whom Revelation 7:9 describes as "wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands."**

and Jesus' encounter with Mary Magdalene on Easter morning (John 20:11-18).

According to tradition, John was banished to the island of Patmos (off the coast of Asia Minor) by the Roman emperor Domitian. John lived to a very old age, surviving all the apostles, and died at Ephesus around AD 100.

### **The Holy Innocents, Martyrs (December 28)**

Matthew's Gospel tells of King Herod's vicious plot against the infant Jesus after being "tricked" by the Wise Men. Threatened by the one "born King of the Jews," Herod murdered all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or younger (Matthew 2:16-18).

These "innocents," commemorated just three

days after the celebration of Jesus' birth, remind us not only of the terrible brutality of which human beings are capable but, more significantly of the persecution Jesus endured from the beginning of His earthly life.

Although Jesus' life was providentially spared at this time, many years later, another ruler, Pontius Pilate, would sentence the innocent Jesus to death.



**As an Apostle and Evangelist, St. John actually has two symbols. The first is his symbol as an Apostle, a Communion chalice with a snake, because tradition says that false teachers attempted to kill him with poisoned Communion wine. The second is an eagle, his symbol as an Evangelist, based on the vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1-10, 10:14), upon which also Mark is represented by a winged lion, Luke by a winged ox, and Matthew by a winged man.**





# Church Decorating December 4

Everyone is Invited to Help  
Decorate Holy Cross for Christmas

Saturday, December 4  
Beginning at 9:30am



# Christmas Eve Services

Bring Your Family and Guests to Celebrate  
the Real "Reason for the Season"

Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24  
Family Service at 7:00pm  
"Midnight Mass" at 11:30pm

Enjoy Your Favorite Christmas Carols  
Including "Silent Night" by Candlelight

*All Invited — Everyone Welcome!*



Return Service Requested

Rev. Kevin Vogts, Pastor  
149 Bison Trail  
Dakota Dunes, SD 57049

**Crossnotes**  
Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church