

## December Events

**Dec. 7:** Caroling at MIA. Join members of various Lutheran churches to bring holiday joy to travelers at Miami International Airport. We will meet in the parking lot of Grace Lutheran Church at 2pm.

**Dec. 10:** Advent Service at St. James. Dinner at 6:30pm followed by worship at 7:15pm.

**Dec. 19:** Third Annual Holiday Concert by the Coral Gables Senior High School Choir, 6:30pm.

**Dec. 21:** Joint Christmas lunch with New Miami Latino Mission following worship.

**Dec. 24:** Christmas Eve Service at 10:00am.



**St. James Lutheran Church**  
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**St. James worships every Sunday at 10:30am, with a bilingual service mostly in English but with some Spanish.** The entire liturgy is presented in both languages in the weekly bulletin, so that one may follow along in the language one prefers. Pastor Boudon preaches the sermon in English, followed by a brief summary in Spanish.

**Sunday school.** St. James offers a full Sunday school program for adults and children immediately after worship every Sunday morning. There is Bible study for adults and Christian education for children.

**Monthly Healing.** St. James offers a healing liturgy as a part of our normal worship service on the third Sunday of the month, replacing the Prayers of Intercession.

## FROM THE PASTOR

The month of December coincides with the church season known as Advent, when we look forward to Christ's return at the end of the age. For most of us, however, December is all about Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of our Savior. Inevitably we will at some point before December 25 hear what has come to be known as the "Christmas Story," a narrative that combines the accounts of Jesus' birth found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. While the two gospels do not actually contradict each other, the only thing they share in common is that they both have Jesus being born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecies. On just about every other detail, however, they differ. Matthew focuses on Joseph's dream, the visit of the wise men, and the flight to Egypt. Luke, meanwhile, says that Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem due to a census and has Jesus being born in a manger and visited by shepherds. The "Christmas Story" combines these two versions.

In addition to the discrepancies between Matthew and Luke, our celebration of Christmas on December 25 is somewhat problematic. First, neither Matthew nor Luke gives a date for the birth. Second, Luke's story describes "shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night." Traditionally, this would have occurred at a time when the sheep were giving birth to their young, which would have been vulnerable to predators and hence in need of round-the-clock vigilance. Consequently, it is more likely that Jesus was born in the spring and most scholars suggest May. The reason we celebrate Christ's birth on December 25 is that, when Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official

religion of the Roman Empire, church officials needed something to replace the Pagan festival of the Sol Invictus, which occurred just after the winter solstice. Since they had no precise date for Jesus' birth, it seemed like a good idea to celebrate it at that time.

None of the foregoing is intended to put in doubt our yearly celebration of Christ's birth on December 25, only to shed some light on it. Indeed, our Christian faith is not based upon Jesus' birth, but rather upon his death and resurrection. And on those events, there is little disagreement among the four gospels.

## **ELCA News**

### **ELCA bishops support Obama's immigration reform announcement**

CHICAGO (ELCA) – The [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(ELCA\) Conference of Bishops](#) released a statement Nov. 20 in support of President Obama's announcement of immigration reform.

"The positive role of immigrants in our history, economy and our community is unmistakable. We support this compassionate first step toward reforming an immigration system that is flawed and requires many of our neighbors to live in the shadows in fear," the statement said.