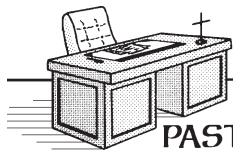


Trinity Tribune

Trinity Lutheran Church ✦ Paola, Kansas



FROM THE
PASTOR'S DESK

The Christmas Tree— A Missouri Synod Contribution to Christmas in America!

This article by Pastor Kevin Vogts appeared in the December, 1998 issue of The Lutheran Witness.

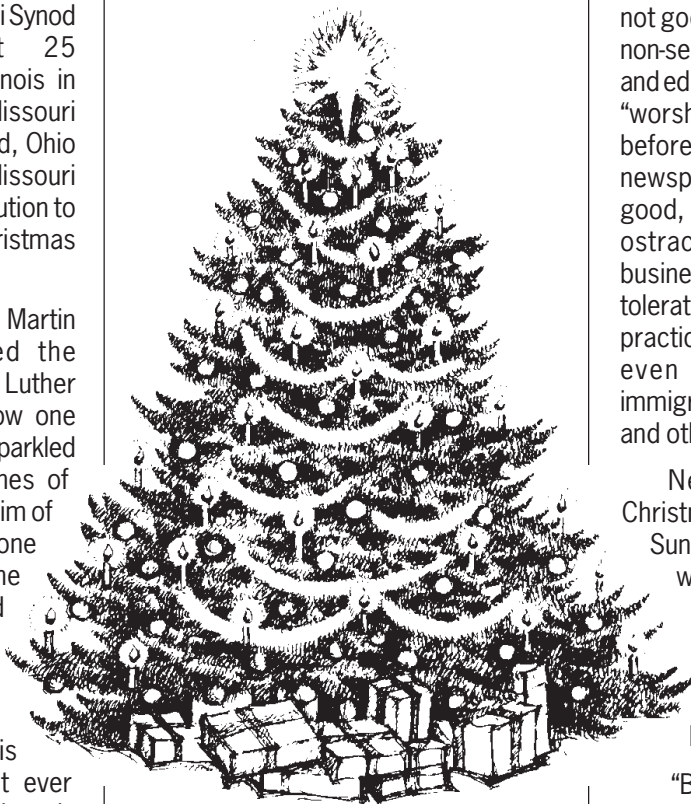
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was organized—by just 25 congregations—at Chicago, Illinois in 1847. Four years later, a Missouri Synod congregation in Cleveland, Ohio made what is certainly the Missouri Synod's most significant contribution to American popular culture: the Christmas tree!

According to legend, it was Martin Luther himself who invented the Christmas tree. It is said that as Luther trudged home through the snow one night he noticed how the starlight sparkled through the ice-covered branches of the evergreens. This reminded him of how the "glory of the Lord shone round about" the shepherds the night of Jesus' birth, and inspired him to chop a tree down, drag it home, and set it up, bedecked with candles, nuts and fruits.

Whether or not that legend is true, it is a *fact* that the first ever Christmas tree in a church anywhere in North America was in a Missouri Synod congregation. At the Cleveland Public Auditorium at the corner of Lakeside Avenue and East Sixth Street in downtown Cleveland is a historical marker with an inscription attesting to this fact:

"On this site stood the first Christmas tree in America publically lighted and displayed in a church Christmas ceremony. On this site stood the original Zion Lutheran Church where in 1851, on Christmas Eve, Pastor Henry Schwan lighted the first Christmas tree in Cleveland. The tradition he brought from Germany soon became widely accepted throughout America. The present site of Zion Lutheran Church is at 2062 East 30th Street."

Pastor Schwan would later rise to great prominence in the Missouri Synod, serving as Synodical President from 1878 to 1899. He was also the original



author of the questions, explanations and Bible proof texts appended to Luther's Small Catechism, which you may have used in Confirmation class (the old blue Catechism), and are still used today in an updated version.

But in 1851, Pastor Schwan was a young minister of 32 serving a small congregation of German immigrants. Little did he and his flock realize the furor they would cause!

Christmas Eve was on a Wednesday evening as Pastor Schwan stood before the candlelit tree and read the Christmas story to his congregation. For Pastor Schwan and his parishioners, their Christmas tree brought back wonderful memories of Christmas in the Old Country. It was bedecked with candles and topped with a silver star which Pastor Schwan himself had brought from Germany.

By Friday, their Christmas tree was the talk of the town—and the talk was not good! Local newspapers called it "a non-sensical, asinine, moronic absurdity" and editorialized against these Lutherans "worshipping a tree" and "groveling before a shrub." Worst of all, the newspapers recommended that the good, Christian citizens of Cleveland ostracize, shun, and refuse to do business with these Lutherans "who tolerated such heathenish and idolatrous practices in their church," making life even harder for the struggling immigrants, especially those with stores and other businesses.

Nevertheless, they left their Christmas tree up for the following Sunday's services. But after the tree was taken down, Pastor Schwan's wife, Emma, discovered the silver star he had brought from Germany in the trash. She cleaned it up and asked why he had thrown it away.

"Because there will never be another Christmas tree in Cleveland," he said.

"Nonsense," she answered. "This year you put up the first tree and next Christmas there will be many trees in Cleveland." Emma saved the star, and her prediction came true beyond her wildest imagination.

During the following year, Pastor Schwan carefully researched the issue and came to the conclusion that the use of Christmas trees was not a sacrilege but a good Christian custom in which Christians expressed their joy at the birth of the Christ Child. He wrote many letters and received replies assuring him that lighted and decorated Christmas trees were the custom in many Christian countries. Convinced that the Christmas tree was not of pagan origin, he actively promoted its use as a symbol of the joy of Christmas.

On Christmas Eve in 1852, his church again displayed a Christmas tree. But this time it was not the only one in Cleveland. In fact, decorated trees appeared in homes all over town, and within five years Christmas trees were being erected in homes and churches all across the country!

Although Pastor Schwan was not the very first person to decorate a Christmas tree in North America—one being noted in history at Fort Dearborn as early as 1804—he was the first to introduce one into a church. He spent the rest of his life promoting the use of Christmas trees and was almost singlehandedly responsible for this custom gaining widespread acceptance and popularity in the United States. Did you ever dream that the pastor who

wrote the questions in the back of the Small Catechism was also the man who popularized the Christmas tree in America?

So, as you put up your Christmas tree this year, and admire the Christmas tree in our church, remember that the widespread adoption of the custom of the Christmas tree is largely a Missouri Synod contribution to the celebration of Christmas in America!

Pastor Kevin Vogts

Building for the Future

Building Pledges Received Thru January 15, 2017

Following the Thanksgiving Potluck on November 20, congregational chairman Greg Windler gave a presentation on our congregation's proposed building project. The Powerpoint presentation he gave, project booklet with floor plans, and pledge card are all available online at www.trinitylcms.org/building.

He began with the underlying *assumption* behind the project, and the *focus* and *goal* of the project.

Assumption: Members of Trinity desire the congregation to continue serving the Lord into the future, at the present location, in the current church building.

Focus: Enhancing the function of the existing building and improving most critical aspects of code compliance.

Goal: Help ensure that we and generations to come will continue to enjoy using this Temple to the glory and service of the Triune God.

He then explained the main components of the project:

Handicapped Access: Instead of investing in another ramp, fill will be added to parking lot, gradually graded up to the building to put a new west entrance, at the same approximate location as the current handicapped entrance, at ground level. This entrance will also have a covered drive for dropping off passengers.

Restrooms: New handicapped accessible restrooms will be installed off the front lobby in same basic location as the current restrooms.

Elevator and Stairs: Because our current elevator and all the current staircases are no longer to code, an addition west of the current building will provide new stairs and a new full-size, fully automatic elevator to all three floors.

Overflow: The wall between the front lobby and overflow will be removed, and the overflow area will be opened up into one large room and will include a serving station with kitchenette to prepare and serve snacks.

Next he discussed the finances of the proposed project:

Estimated Cost	\$649,000
Funds Available	\$450,000
Funds Needed	\$199,000

And gave the timeline:

- Pledges received thru January 15, 2017.
- Considered by voters assembly on January 22, 2017.
- If approved construction would begin as soon as weather and contractor's schedule allows.
- Goal for completion is Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018.
- Dedication would be sometime in 2018 as part of celebrating Trinity's 150th Anniversary year.

Pamphlets explaining the project, including floor plans, and pledge cards are available in the overflow area. These materials and the Powerpoint presentation

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December, 2016*

as a Youtube video are also available online at www.trinitylcms.org/building.

Please review these and prayerfully consider what pledge you may be able to make toward this proposed project. Completed pledge cards may be placed in the pledge box in the overflow by Sunday, January 15, 2017, or mailed to the church, or given to chairman Greg Windler. You may contact Greg with questions or for more information.



As has become customary, we are again having extra services of Holy Communion from October thru March, on both the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. This provides an extra opportunity to receive the Sacrament for those who may not be able to attend worship on the first Sunday of the month due to inclement weather during the more stormy fall and winter months.



Bible Class on Islam & Christianity

We hear constantly in the news about Islam. But, what is it really all about?

In December we continue a study in Adult Bible Class comparing and contrasting Islam with Christianity and helping give us a better understanding of the religion of Islam, its origins, history, and adherents today.



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

Christmas Eve Service, Saturday, December 24, 7:00pm

Featuring the 2016 Children's Christmas Program

"Symbols of Salvation" with Your Favorite

Christmas Carols Including "Silent Night" by Candlelight

Christmas Day Service, Sunday, December 25, 10:00am

"A Festival of Readings and Carols"

All Invited — Everyone Welcome!

Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful!

The Great Divide: A Christian Introduction to the Muslim Religion will include video presentations by Dr. Alvin Schmidt, who is an LCMS pastor and professor emeritus of sociology at Illinois College, and a recognized authority on the relationship between Islam and Christianity. Sessions include:

Muhammed and the Koran

Jesus in the Koran

The Five Pillars of Islam

Islam: A Religion of Peace?

This study helps us appreciate the grace we experience in Jesus Christ, in contrast not only to the political terror wrought in the name of Islam, but also the inner, spiritual terror experienced by many Muslims themselves.

Everyone is invited to join in at 9:00am in the Overflow!



AFTER CHURCH SNACKS

Thank you to all those providing snacks for Coffee Hour after worship!

December 4

Phyllis Trickett

December 11

Erin Meyer

December 18

Need Volunteers

December 25

Ruth Gaffney



Christmas Party & Talent Show December 4

Everyone is invited to join in the fun on Sunday, December 4 at 3:00pm for our second annual Christmas Party & Talent Show! Individuals, groups, families are invited to show off your talent! The fun will also include a Christmas carol sing-a-long.

Following the show, everyone is asked to bring your favorite Christmas treat to share on our "eat dessert first" bar—no meal, just dessert! Come enjoy the holiday fun and fellowship!



Vivian Wilson

Born June 30, 1922

Entered Eternal Rest
November 19, 2016

Christian Burial
November 23, 2016

*"Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days of
my life, and I will dwell in the
house of the Lord forever."*

Psalm 23:6



Christmas Eve CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Bring your family and holiday guests to celebrate our Savior's birth with our Christmas Eve Children's Program and Candlelight Service on Saturday, December 24 at 7:00pm. The theme of this year's service is "Symbols of Salvation" and includes favorite Christmas carols including "Silent Night" sung by candlelight. Pastor Vogts' message will be "Unto You Is Born a Savior" based on Luke 2:11. "O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"



Poinsettia Donations

Donating poinsettias to beautify our sanctuary is a great way to remember loved ones at Christmas!

Sign up on the counter in the Church Office to order plants from Price Chopper at a cost of \$7 each. Place your payment in the offering marked "Poinsettias." When signing up please indicate how many plants you wish to donate and for whom they are in memory or honor.

You are also welcome to bring your own poinsettias, which you purchase elsewhere or receive as gifts. Just drop them by the church sometime before Christmas Eve and leave them on the tables in the Overflow. Please still sign up on the sheet in the Church Office, indicating that you are providing your own plants, and for whom they are in memory or honor, so that this information may be included in next month's newsletter.



Festival Of Readings & Carols December 25

Our worship on Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25 will be a "Festival of Readings and Carols." This special order of service includes a series of Scripture readings related to the Christmas story, each followed by a Christmas carol.



We will celebrate our Christmas Communion on Sunday, December 18 with a "Christmas Carol Communion Service" with favorite carols used in place of the various parts of the Liturgy.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Our records of birthdays and anniversaries may not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 913-849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at blocktlc@midwest-connections.com.

- December 1 Kristie Gatlin
- December 1 Brianna Chapman
- December 5 Jennifer Haley
- December 5 Tyler Barnett
- December 6 Susan Henry
- December 6 Linda Oberheide
- December 8 Anita Koopman
- December 9 Marsha Windish
- December 10 Betty Crome
- December 10 Don Prothe
- December 11 Pam Holtz
- December 11 Nancy Honn
- December 13 Justin Prothe
- December 13 Dillon Reyelts
- December 15 Chris Jones
- December 15 Linda Prothe
- December 16 Joyce Johns
- December 16 Jake Prothe
- December 19 Samantha Honn
- December 21 Carole Brandt
- December 21 Nancy Green
- December 22 Jack Smith
- December 25 Shawn Brandt
- December 25 April Bruce
- December 25 Darleen Medlin
- December 25 Harold Peckman
- December 26 Brandon Prothe
- December 28 Shemene Peckman
- December 28 Royal Prothe
- December 29 Dan Minden
- December 29 Brian Meyer
- Dec 2 Leland & Slina Prothe (61)
- Dec 3 Henry & JoAnn Vaughn (28)
- Dec 6 Darrell & Sandra Schultz (25)
- Dec 16 Mike & Trish Armstrong (21)
- Dec 17 .. Steve & Kristie McMullin (22)
- Dec 28 ... Richard & Mary Ann Green (41)
- Dec 29 Kevin & Terese Vogts (26)



Following worship on the First Sunday in Advent, Trinity's Sunday School children had a "pajama party" to help the Trinity Lutheran Youth decorate the church for the Advent and Christmas seasons. Visit the Photo Gallery on our church web site at www.trinitylcms.org/photos for lots more pictures and a movie of the fun! Thanks to Kevin Debrick for the pictures and movie, and the Sunday School children and Trinity Lutheran Youth for decorating the church so beautifully!



- December 4
"God's Great 2-for-1 Christmas Special"
Isaiah 40:1-2
- December 11
"A Major Message from a Minor Prophet"
Micah 5:2
- December 18
"Immanuel—God with Us"
Isaiah 7:14

December 24 (Christmas Eve)
"Unto You Is Born a Savior"
Luke 2:11

December 25 (Christmas Day)
"The Prophets Have Foretold It"
Jeremiah 33:14-16

January 1, 2017 (New Year's Day)
"Shed for You"
Luke 2:21



Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries

around the world who are supported by our congregation through our mission offerings to our Synod.

December 4

Rev. Cullen &
Deaconess Jacqueline Duke
Peru

December 11

John & Jenn Wolf
Kenya

December 18

Rev. Douglas & Angela Thompson
Ghana

December 25

Dennis & Monta Denow
Thailand



Sharing God's Gift of Sight in Jamaica

One of the metaphors for sin used most often in the New Testament is spiritual "blindness": *"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the blindness of their hearts"* (Ephesians 4:18).

The opposite of such spiritual blindness is saving faith, "seeing" God's love in Jesus: *"God made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

A recent LCMS mission event in Jamaica helped to alleviate *both* physical and spiritual blindness for some of the neediest people in that poor nation.

Statistics show that more than 40% of the population of Jamaica has never received an eye examination and less than a quarter of the country's people receive a regular eye exam every few



You Are Invited to an
Epiphany Open House
at the Parsonage

Sunday, January 8, 2017
2:00pm–5:00pm

All Invited – Everyone Welcome!

years. To help with this problem, Lutheran Hour Ministries of Jamaica recently partnered with MOST Ministries to host an eyeglass clinic in three locations throughout the country.

The MOST team of ten arrived at the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay last summer to meet up with the Lutheran Hour Ministries of Jamaica staff and volunteers and begin their journey to the first stop at Bath Mountain in Westmoreland. Over the next several days, the team served children as young as four years old and men and women as old as 90 with eyesight difficulties. Each of them walked out of the clinic with glasses that would give them perfect or almost perfect vision—as well as the Good News of God's love and saving grace!

By the end of the week, the team served 514 individuals and gave out 585 pairs of glasses (some people went home with two pairs of glasses since they needed them for both close-up and distance vision). Response to the clinic from the Jamaicans was very positive:

- In Kingston, a young woman asked questions about the ministry and what we do. When all of her questions were answered she asked if she could send her children to our Vacation Bible School. The answer: Absolutely!

- At Bath Mountain, one person went around shaking each team member's hand to thank them because "the Lord has truly sent you for now I can see better. This has helped me both physically and spiritually because I can now read my Bible."

- At a nursing home in St. Elizabeth, one of the residents there got her glasses and her eyes lit up as she gave a big smile. While she didn't say anything, the glow on her face told the whole story!

"Wow...that is all that our team can say," reported MOST team member Laura on her group's blog. "We have been overflowing with joy and love sharing the Word of God and giving the opportunity of sight to the people here in Jamaica. We are so thankful that we were able to have such a successful mission in Jamaica and also able to serve the people there by spreading the Gospel."

MOST Ministries stands for "Mission Opportunities Short Term" and is an LCMS organization that coordinates overseas mission trips for LCMS members, groups, organizations, and congregations. For more information about MOST Ministries check their web site at www.mostministries.org.