



Church Office Closed
December 25 & 26
December 31 & January 1
for Christmas Break

**Have a joyous and blessed
Christmas.**

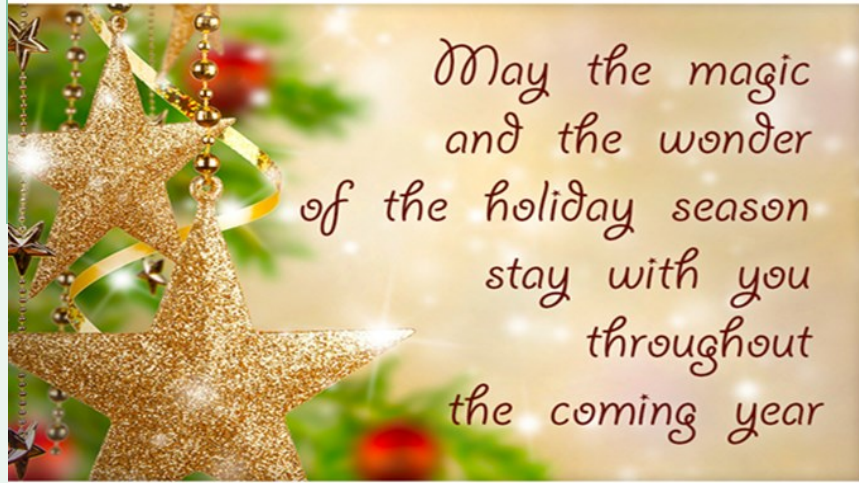
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Church Calendar for December

December 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesd3ay	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lord's Supper No Youth Group		6 p.m. Elders Mtg				11:00 a.m. Christmas Tea
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
6-8 p.m. Youth Group		6:30 a.m. Discipleship 7:00 p.m. Nest	6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study 6-7:30 p.m. Awana			1 p.m. Children's Church Christmas Program Rehearsal
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
"Let's Do Lunch" 6-8 p.m. Youth Group		6:30 a.m. Discipleship 6 p.m. Elders Mtg 6:30 p.m. Christian Ed. Mtg	6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study 6-7:30 p.m. Awana			7:30 a.m. Men's Breakfast
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
No Youth Group		6:30 a.m. Discipleship 5 p.m. Christmas Eve Service				
29	30	31				
No Youth Group		 Youth Group Christmas Party 7:30p -12:30 a.m.				

Updates and Opportunities



The Nest

Tuesday, December 10 @ 7 p.m.
3 Dozen Cookies to share
Carols to sing
Join us!



Men's Breakfast: Save the Date

Save the date for **Saturday, December 21 at 7:30 a.m.** at church for our men's breakfast. All men are invited for a time of food, fun, and fellowship! Please contact Chris Matula or Chet Kamark with any questions!



Operation Christmas Child

Thank you so much for all the shoeboxes you made!!! So many children will hear the gospel because of you! This year we made 28 boxes online and 76 boxes=104 total!!! For those of you that like to compare: 2023=38 boxes online and 67 boxes= 104, 2022= 48 online and 51 boxes=99, 2021=36 online and 68 boxes= 104, 2020=14 online and 75 boxes=89, and 2017 was our record year with 126.

Thank you once again for filling the boxes showing Christ's love!



Christmas Tea



Ladies, you are invited to participate in our annual Christmas Tea! It will be held on **Saturday, December 7!** Come for fellowship, fun, food and a time of inspiration. Tickets are on sale now for \$15

"HANGING" IN APPRECIATION

I want to extend an heartfelt "Thank You" to all those who participated in the "Hanging of the Greens" this year. I greatly appreciate the gracious loving-kindness and patience that you extended to me. Once again, I thank you from the bottom of my heart! Gary



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: We will be having a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Tuesday, December 24 @ 5:00 p.m. We invite everyone to come for this special time of worship as we take a break from the hectic pace of getting ready for Christmas by pausing to honor our Lord & Savior, Emmanuel!



"Let's Do Lunch"

Come and join us December 15 at Pizza Ranch (5450 W. Integrity Way) We have reserved a community room for after church so we can spend some time eating and enjoying fellowship with one another.





Children's Church

Evergreens will be finishing their unit on truth. We hope you have been able to use the Home Connections sheets to reinforce these important lessons. December will be our next unit on Who Do We Worship.

Sprouts will be learning about Jesus and His birth in December.



Both groups will be busy preparing for our Christmas Program Sunday December 15 during our church service. **There will be a rehearsal on Saturday December 14 at 1:00 p.m. here at church.** We will be sending information out on the songs to practice at home so everyone can be confident as they sing out the Good News of Christmas.



May you all have a blessed Christmas!



December is here! It's hard to believe that we are rolling into our 12th week of Awana! This month we have "Stuffed Animal Night" on December 4th and "Christmas Dress-UP" on December 18th.



December 25 & January 1—No Awana

AWANA GRAND PRIX Registration!
Race Day: Friday, February 28th

 Plain Block	 Indy Car
 Stock Car	 Truck

It is also time to get ready to **START those engines!** Join us for our **2025 Grand Prix!** **ALL AGES** are welcome to participate! Cost is \$7, which includes your car kits. Car kits will become available on December 11th. Race day is Friday, February 28th at 6:00 (dinner at 5:30). Register to join the race and get your car kit by scanning the QR code on the flyer OR by visiting <https://acefc.churchtrac.com/connect?ei=I1ZH3RR> If you have any questions, please contact Pam MacDonald at appletonawana@gmail.com or 920-460-9571.



Christmas: An Outreach Opportunity?

Most authentic Christ-followers are well aware that Christmas, a day or a season that is celebrated around the world, is not a holy day that was mandated by God and spelled out in scripture. But people, like me, love it because, for the people of God, it provides an opportunity to focus on a most unlikely event in human history - the most powerful being in the universe, the God Who spoke the universe into being and created all things, willingly becoming like us, enduring what it is like to traverse this broken and evil world. And why? To establish a pathway to redemption for a race of people who have rejected and disobeyed Him.

During this season, those of us who have acknowledged and embraced the wonder of this act get to read the details of the account, celebrate it in song and dramatic reenactment, and listen to sermons expounding on what this means to all who hear his call. Isn't it wonderful! Am I the only one who gets emotional when singing *O Holy Night* and the carol crescendos to the verse that rings out, "Fall on your knees!"? I bet not.

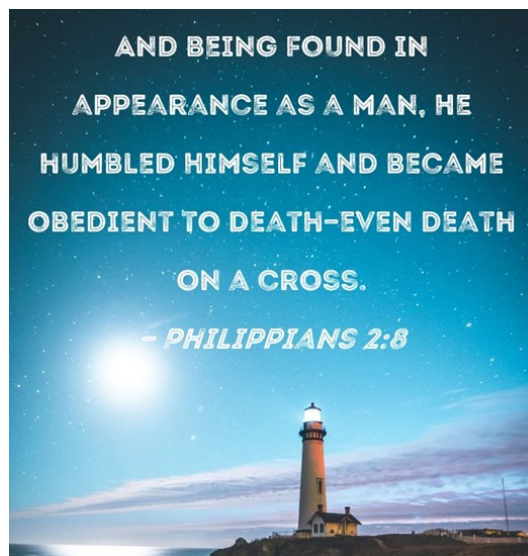
Sadly, however, most people in the world, many of whom celebrate Christmas, do not know the Christ Who is the Star of it all. *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross! **

Therefore, please consider using this holiday as an opportunity to share the truth of our Lord. Here are 3 ways that this might be accomplished:

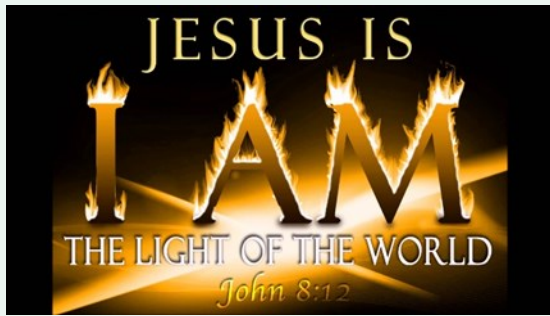
- 1) Send out Christmas cards and instead of just signing them, hand write a line or two (or more!) about how the Christ of this holiday has changed you...or a Bible verse that has been particularly important to you (even if the card has its own verse embedded).
- 2) With family or friends around the table for Christmas, consider doing something different. Instead of reading the traditional story of the birth of Jesus out of Luke, shake it up a bit. Consider reading John's account of the Word becoming flesh (John 1:1-14), or maybe other verses that make reference to this awesome event such as the verse (and surrounding verses) from Philippians noted above.
- 3) At work or in the community, when talking about plans for Christmas with others, tell them that the holiday takes on special meaning for you because of your changed life since you realized that the story of Christmas is true - that God became human to receive the punishment that we deserve that we might live at peace with Him throughout eternity!

These ideas may or may not generate further discussion, or even lead to sharing your testimony. Only remember that we hold truths that the world desperately needs. How can we not try something to make it known? Hope your Christmas is meaningful and joyous!

*Philippians 2:6-8



Women's Ministry—A Women's Heart



Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12

"for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light." Ephesians 5:8

Christ the Savior is born! Every Candle on the wreath lit, light spilling out and banishing darkness. The light of the world, born into a dark, dark world and changing everything forever! Life! Light! Love! That is worth celebrating!

Here is a breath-taking truth. **"For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body" Colossians 2:9.** God with us, in our skin, walking our world, starting out as helpless baby, just like we did. Why? Because God loves us and gave us His own precious Son to save us from certain destruction. Wow!

"Jesus was not a godlike man, nor a manlike God. He was God-man.

Midwifed by a carpenter. Bathed by a peasant girl. The maker of the world with a belly button. The author of the Torah being taught the Torah.

Heaven's human. And because he was, we are left with scratch-your-head, double-blink, what's-wrong-with-this-picture? moments like these:

Bordeaux instead of H₂O. A cripple sponsoring the town dance. A sack lunch satisfying five thousand tummies. And, most of all, a grave: guarded by soldiers, sealed by a rock, yet vacated by a three-days-dead man.

What do we do with such moments?

What do we do with such a person? We applaud men for doing good things. We enshrine God for doing great things. But when a man does God things?

One thing is certain, we can't ignore him. Why would we want to? If these moments are factual, if the claim of Christ is actual, then he was, at once, man and God.

There he was the single most significant person who ever lived. Forget MVP; he is the entire league. The head of the parade? Hardly. No one else shares the street. Who comes close? Humanity's best and brightest fade like dime-store rubies next to him.

Dismiss him? We can't.

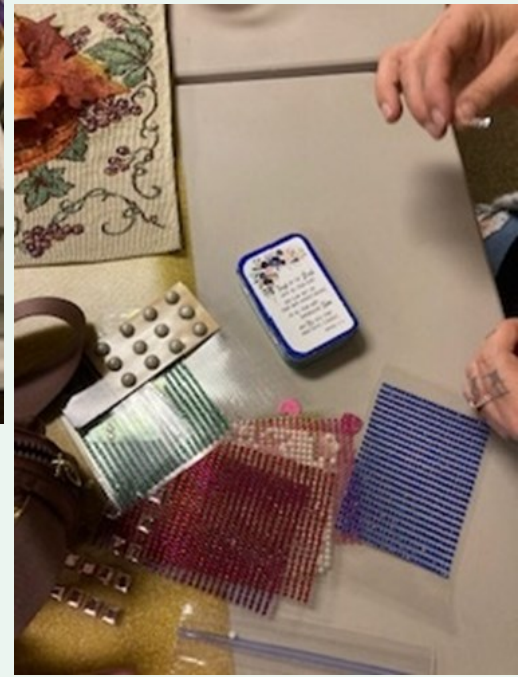
Resist him? Equally difficult. Don't we need a God-man Savior? A just-God Jesus could make us but not understand us. A just-man Jesus could love us but never save us. But a God-man Jesus? Near enough to touch. Strong enough to trust. A next-door Savior." ~ *Max Lucado*

We sure have something to celebrate this Christmas, don't we? This God-man Jesus came to save us, light our lives now and give us a glorious future. In all the fun and excitement of these days remember Who He IS and live as His light, for all those who so need that brightness.

He came as a baby, died as man, rose as a victor and is coming back as king!

*Merry Christmas
From Your Women's Ministry Team*

Church Happenings—The Nest



Church Happenings—Youth Group



Church Happenings—Youth Group



YOUTH GROUP

If you are in middle or high school, join us Sunday nights from 6pm-8pm. We meet at church, unless otherwise posted.

WHAT WE DID LAST MONTH

Thanks to Matt & Hannah Diestler for hosting us for a cookout and launching/smashing pumpkins. It started out a little damp, but turned out to be an amazing afternoon.

We launched and smashed pumpkins from a large trebuchet that Matt built and discovered there was something about the pumpkins Ms. Pam had used for her Air Wisconsin pumpkin decorating contest - because those pumpkins sure knew how to fly.

We continued our study on relationships – this month focusing on romantic relationships, our relationship with God the Father, and our relationship with Jesus Christ.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS MONTH

Date	Time	Location	Event
<i>Sunday, December 1</i>			<i>No Youth Group</i>
<i>Sunday, December 8</i>	6pm-8pm	Church	Regular Youth Group
<i>Sunday, December 15</i>	6pm-8pm	Church	Regular Youth Group
<i>Sunday, December 22</i>			<i>No Youth Group</i>
<i>Sunday, December 29</i>			<i>No Youth Group</i>
<i>Tuesday, December 31</i>	8pm – 12:30am	Church	Christmas & New Years Eve Party!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: ALIYAH MACDONALD



Grade: 9th

How long have you been attending youth group at ACEFC? I have been attending Youth Group for about 2 ½ years (I think).

What do you see yourself doing in 15 years? I could see myself as a school teacher, dance teacher, or theater director, but who knows. I can barely predict what is going to happen tomorrow much less 15 years.

Favorite thing to do in your free time? Probably crocheting.

Favorite Food: Chicken Noodle Soup

What is your favorite memory from Youth Group? I have a lot of weird Youth Group memories...but my favorite was when we went to Fall Fest and brought a stick head of Emmi since she couldn't come.

What is your favorite book? I love reading. My favorite book is either *The Mysterious Benedict Society* or *A Tale of Magic*.

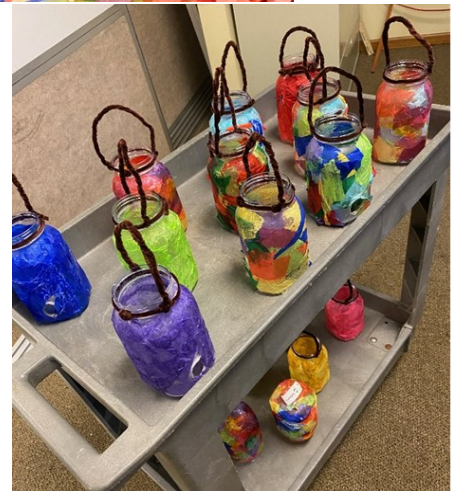
What is the best joke you ever heard? Did you hear the study that shows people eat more bananas than monkeys?

I mean, it makes sense, not many people eat monkeys.

(It might take a while for you to get it....)

What has God been teaching in the past year? God has been leading me to dive deeper into His word. I have started to become more interested in the Bible and spend more time reading it. I have come to know God in a more personal way and I hope to continue growing in my relationship with him.

Church Happenings-Thanksgiving Potluck



Church Happenings-Hanging of the Greens



Pastor Appreciation Thank You—Pastor Greg & Pastor Andy



*In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
—1 Thessalonians 5:18*

To everyone in our ACEFC family!

Thank you so very much for your generous gifts during Pastors' Appreciation month. We are humbled by your kindness! We especially appreciate this because it helps to cover some of our unexpected medical costs following Donna's surgery. May God bless you for being a blessing to us.

With prayer & gratitude,
Pastor Greg & Donna



Thank you to all who blessed us both with the financial donation and your prayers for our family. It was such a wonder and unexpected honor. We were able to put a sizeable dent in an order to replace a couple kitchen items that were in a sorry state. Our family was truly touched by your generosity. Thank you again!

Andy, Becky & Family

Church Happenings—Pastor Appreciation



Church Happenings—Hanging of the Greens “Decree”



Some Prayerful Thoughts from Pastor Greg

Christmas !!! The Most Wonderful Time of the Year???

-OR-

The Most Worshipful Time of the Year???



Recently I've read about some interesting happenings regarding the way stores & businesses are dealing with Christmas & their employees' right to express their faith. One involved a store clerk who was fired for wearing a faith based symbol on her name tag. Upon receiving a letter from a Christian Legal organization, the employee was reinstated. Some stores have apparently changed their policies about saying "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy Holidays." Other stores have recognized that their willingness to acknowledge the idea that Christmas is the birthday of Jesus is "*better for business*" because followers of Jesus appreciate it & for the most part those who aren't necessarily focused on Jesus don't really care.

As I pause to think about this, I'm reminded that when Jesus was born, there were very few people who paid any significant attention, but those who did took time or made an effort to worship & praise God for this special event. For example:

Angels & Shepherds {found in Luke 2:8–20}

Magi from the East {found in Matthew 2:1–13}

Mary & Joseph; Simeon & Anna {found in Luke 2:21–38}

This also makes me wonder how much we can become distracted away from worshipping the Lord by all the various events, the responsibilities we "think we have, or simply the busyness & massive amount of information that invades our lives.

In my personal devotions I ran across a study I once did from Ecclesiastes 5:1–7. Here are five truths about worship that I found in that study. I hope these are as much of an encouragement to you as they were to me when I reread them.

—1— Worshipping God is the most important thing we do as followers of Christ.

This should be our highest & most precious priority

—2— Worshipping God requires us to be teachable & receptive to what God says because when we worship Him we are acknowledging that He has absolute authority over our lives!

—3— Worshipping God is not simply an obligation we fulfill; It's an opportunity to express our love, gratitude, honor & praise to Him for Who He is and what He has done for us!

—4— Casual worship & praise that is insincere or mindless is an insult to God!

—5— Promises, vows, & commitments to God are serious. When we express our praise to Him in worship, we should pause & carefully think about what we tell God we will do to serve & honor Him.

Christmas (& Easter) are undoubtedly a wonderful time for worshipping as a testimony of our faith & love directed toward God!

With praise for God's grace and prayer for His glory,
Pastor Greg



Mission of the Month— Forest Lakes District

Forest Lakes District of the EFCA- *We Are Better Together!*

Our MISSION:

We exist to strengthen our member churches so that together we may multiply transformational churches among all peoples.

Our strategic values:

- Connect: Create environments for relationships.
- Equip: Offer resources and training.

Multiply: Support the multiplication of disciples, leaders and churches.

Our VISION is to enable multiplication by:

RELATIONSHIPS

The foundation of everything we say or do is our personal relationship with all pastors and lay leaders in the District.

- Personal contacts between District staff and pastors/lay leaders

RESOURCING

- Consulting and coaching
- Training
- Staff issues (hiring, evaluating, compensation, etc.)
- Disciple-Making, Leadership Development, Elder Training
- Crisis Intervention and Conflict Management
- Conferences, Retreats, Special Events

REFOCUSING

- Church Health Assessment
- Visioning and vision casting
- Pastoral Health (Ministry Support Program)

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Placement Services (including interim pastors, pulpit supply)
- Credentialing (licensure and ordination)

Discipline

The Forest Lakes District is VALUE DRIVEN:

In all that say or do, the FLD is driven to provide value to local churches as they seek to fulfill their mission. The idea of being “driven” brings to mind being compelled, forced, pressing ahead, relentless exertion, setting in motion, energized, determination, no detours, and mission accomplished. Value is taken from the Latin valere; “to be worth”. Value is further defined as “relative worth, utility or importance; degree of excellence; something intrinsically valuable or desirable.” We are value driven.

We are value driven:

- To build relationships with and between churches, pastors and leaders that ...
- To offer or recommend resources that ...
- To help maintain or refocus the efforts of the local church so that ...
- To fulfill our responsibilities in a way that ...

enhances the leadership and ministry of each pastor, leader and church member toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Our mission here at Appleton Community EFC is to lead all people in a growing relationship with Christ

Growing together in Christ we value:

Biblical Truth

We depend on the Bible as our source of authority in what we believe, what we teach, and how we live. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Worship

We believe that we are created by God to worship Him. Therefore, we live in worshipful response to God's character and activity. (Psalm 86:11)

Prayer

We believe that daily prayer is essential in the life of a believer and as such we pray with expectancy knowing that God is actively involved in our world. (Colossians 4:2)

Evangelism

We believe in sharing the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ with honesty and humility. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Fellowship

We believe that accountability, caring and a sense of belonging are essential for each believer to grow in their relationship with Christ. (Philippians 2:1-4)

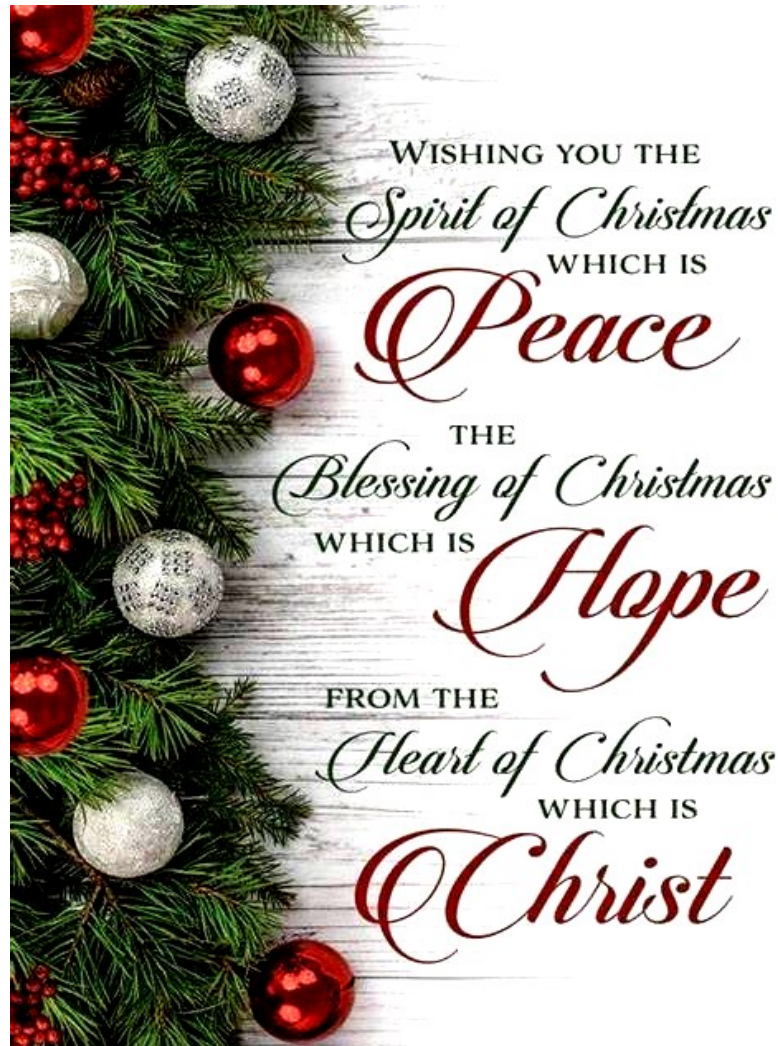
Encouragement

We believe we are responsible for caring for and encouraging one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)



Appleton Community
Evangelical Free Church
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Appleton, WI 54914
Phone 920-735-9971

We're on the Web!
applefreechurch.org



Church Office Hours
Closed Mondays
Tuesday—Friday
8:30 - 2:30