



Our theme this year at Bethany Lutheran in Long Beach is “Generous God...Generous Life” based on 1 Timothy 6:17b-18: *Put your hope in the living God, who generously provides us with everything for our benefit. Therefore be rich in good deeds, generous and willing to share.* The imagery that we use for our theme verse is a tree carved with a cross whose branches are filled with hands that are ready to pray and to worship Him faithfully (Acts 2:42) and as we are in the Word be formed spiritually (Colossians 1:10-14). They are hands that are ready to serve (Ephesians 2:10), give (Luke 21:1-4) and share (Matthew 28:19-20) His great love for us with others. (See Bethany Blueprint www.bethanylutheran.org). They are hands that are open to receive from

God and extended to give to our neighbor (LSB). It’s a beautiful visual reminder that when we grow in Christ (John 15:5), we will bear the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and be prepared to serve others with good deeds and kind words (Matthew 25:35-36, 40) that by the power of the Holy Spirit, they too might know His saving grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Advent is perhaps the time of year that we see this “Generous God...Generous Life” so intentionally in our own lives. Advent is a time of preparation. We prepare to celebrate the generous gift that God gave us through His Son, *For God so loved that world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16), by being in Word and Sacrament at Advent Services, in our own devotions and in prayer that the Holy Spirit might build faith and union in us with Him (Romans 10:17). We prepare for giving gifts and cards to others, spending time with loved ones, and donating to charities (John 15:1-17).

Being an Advent Christian every day of the year is one who has embraced the power of “Generous God...Generous Life.” One who is in prayer, Word and Sacrament as a part of everyday preparation (2 Corinthians 8:5). One who prepares for the good works that share His love to those around us intentionally planning ways (1 Corinthians 16:2) each day to joyfully serve others in thought, word and deed (2 Corinthians 9:7) to bring glory to God (2 Corinthians 9:11-13). What might this look like in your daily life? How might we structure each day at our school to give opportunities for staff and students to have a close relationship with our generous God? What habits, attitudes, and plans could we intentionally build into our day that give students the opportunities to exude a joyful, generous life of giving, sharing, and service to those around them?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, We pray that we might be Advent Christians every day, close in relationship with our generous God and living a generous life with others, that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they might come to know You. We also ask that in our vocations as leaders and teachers, we might integrate intentional worship and service into our days so that they might become a way of life for the students in our care, that through them, by the power of the Holy Spirit, others may know You, too. In Your Holy Name we pray, Amen.