

Address:

605 S. Center St.
Bremen, IN 46506

Telephone:

1-574-546-2332

E-Mail:

church@stpaulsbremen.org

schools@stpaulsbremen.org

Website:

stpaulsbremen.church
facebook.com/stpaulsbremen
vimeo.com/stpaulsbremen

Church Office Hours:

Monday – Friday
8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Sunday Schedule:

Sunday School: 8:30 am
Worship: 9:30 am

Pastor Neil Wonnacott

Office Hours: M, W, TH & F
8:30 – 11:30 am

From Pastor Wonnacott's keyboard:

First of all, I pray that you enjoyed a blessed Christmas; a time for family, friends, and good food. As we realize a new year, 2024, we see our world and the things that are happening, and we sometimes wonder if this is the year the Lord Jesus is coming back.

Are you like me - wondering why everything seems to be getting worse? We see it around the world, in our major cities, in our small towns, and we see it in ourselves. Satan is working very hard to take away our joy, hope, peace, and love that come with Christmas. Satan wants us to not only put away the decorations and gifts of the season, but also to throw out the reason for the season – JESUS!

I ask you to join me, as brothers and sisters in Christ, to remember what Christmas is all about. "In the fullness of time God sent His Son, born under the law to save those who are under the law." US! Remember that the Lord has brought us to this time and place to listen to His voice, grow in our faith as a family of believers, and to proclaim Jesus to everyone with whom we come in contact.

Remember what Jesus' name means: He will save His people! That means you and me! He is Emmanuel – God with us. Jesus saved us from the big three; sin, death, and the devil. He is still with

us now. Our God has brought us through many events this past year, and He grants us faith and courage to prepare us for the new calendar year.

Remember that our Jesus will always be with us, no matter what year it is. He says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Let us continue on the Lord’s path of life together as we wait for His return!

In Jesus’ love and service, Pastor Wonnacott.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE FEBRUARY EPISTLE IS JANUARY 20TH!!! Epistle articles, comments, ideas may be deposited in the epistle box in the Narthex mail slots or e-mailed to Eric Thornton at firemanet@yahoo.com. I appreciate all of your articles, ideas and comments!

OUR OFFERINGS TO THE LORD FROM HIS BLESSINGS TO US

Offerings remind us of the blessings God has given us and are an opportunity to thank Him for what He has done in our lives. Please place your offerings in our Offering Box located in front of the water fountains in the narthex of the church. You may also choose “e-tithing” by having a weekly deposit to St Paul’s from your bank account. If you have questions on e-tithing, please contact the Church Office.

Epistle- School Corner

We hope you had a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

We are officially halfway through the school year, which means we are preparing for winter achievement testing and National Lutheran Schools Week (January 21st-26th). This year’s school theme is “Connected”, as we are connected to God and to each other. Part of showing that connection is by raising money for the Lutheran Church Charity Comfort Dogs Program, through a Bowl-a-thon at Quick’s Lanes in Plymouth on January 24th. The Comfort Dogs bring care and comfort to those affected by crises and disasters. There are over 130 dogs, serving in over 27 states. Please consider donating to this worthy cause through a student.

We will also be hosting a Teacher Wish List Tree in the narthex again in January. Ornaments will have items, or wishes, from our day school and preschool teachers, as well as Extended Care, the Athletic Program, and the library. Please take an ornament for the item you wish to donate and place that item under the tree or at the school office. If you have questions, please contact Jennifer Harman in the school office.

Giving to the LSGO has started over for 2024! Since we still use the LSGO to help cover remaining tuition costs for eligible families, we need to maintain funds in the SGO. **Please continue to give, and remember you will receive a tax credit and deduction for your**

donations! You can find several (easy) ways to donate at www.lutheranSGO.org/Donate, or [we also have a link on the church website, stpaulsbremen.church](http://stpaulsbremen.church), under the school drop-down menu. Donations can be given through a check, IRA, stocks, Donor Advised Funds, PayPal, credit card, and **NOW electronic giving!** Benefits to you are a 50% state tax credit for your donation and eligibility for a tax deduction. These scholarships make a big difference for our families. If you desire to mail a check to the LSGO, pamphlets with mailing information are available in the tract rack. **(Checks needs to be written to the Lutheran Scholarship Granting Organization.)**

We also continue to take donations to St. Paul's tuition assistance fund. Checks for tuition assistance can be made out to the church.

Mission of the Month

Our Sunday School continues to send \$75.00 each month to a mission.

January Mission of the Month: Women's Care Center

Mission: Our mission is to help pregnant women from our communities choose life for their babies, have healthier pregnancies, become better parents and take first steps to self-sufficiency.

Our January Sunday School Mission of the Month donation of \$75 will go to the Women's Care Center in Marshall County, 224 N Michigan St., Plymouth IN.

Preschool Postings

What a whirlwind of activities we enjoyed in December! First of all, we used our unit on "Christmas Around the World" to study Christmas customs in Germany, Sweden, Mexico, the Philippines, and England. The children colored the flag for each country, made a Christmas craft associated with it, and took home a mini book about it.

The students also studied the letter people for O, C, and Y; played lots of Christmas games; and made ornaments. Most importantly, the children learned about Advent; the Good News proclaimed by the angels; and the birth of our Savior, Jesus, God's greatest Gift to the world! May you know and believe in the peace He brings to us!

TAX-PLANNING STRATEGIES

As we approach the end of the calendar year, there is still time to implement tax-planning strategies that can help you minimize your tax burden in 2023 and/or longer term.

ROTH CONVERSIONS

The end of the year may be an optimal time to consider a Roth conversion because income and tax brackets can be easier to estimate. Roth conversions allow you to take a portion of your qualified pre-tax retirement account assets (traditional individual retirement accounts (IRAs), rollover IRAs, etc.) and convert them to a Roth IRA. The conversion creates taxable income for the year in which it occurs and cannot be undone. However, despite incurring this initial tax liability, Roth conversions can offer several long-term benefits.

- By decreasing the tax-deferred account balance on which your required minimum distributions (RMDs) are calculated, you reduce your RMDs and thereby reduce taxable income long term.
- Roth accounts act as a long-term hedge against increasing tax rates, whether those increases result from higher income or changes to tax law.
- Not only does reducing RMD income lower taxes long term, it also decreases Medicare premiums during RMD years.
- Assets that are converted to a Roth account grow tax free during and beyond your lifetime, creating a tax-efficient way to transfer wealth to beneficiaries.

CHARITABLE STRATEGIES

If you are currently subject to RMDs, and you have not yet fulfilled your 2023 RMD obligation, you can make Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)¹ directly to charitable organizations. QCDs allow charitable giving directly from an IRA to an eligible charity for up to \$100,000 per person per year. Starting in 2024, this amount will be indexed annually for inflation. The QCD lowers your taxable RMD, which lowers your adjusted gross income (AGI) dollar for dollar—meaning that you do not need to claim the itemized deduction to benefit from this charitable strategy.

NOTE: Before entering into any of these financial transactions we would always recommend checking with your financial advisor as individual circumstances are unique.

Submitted by your Stewardship board.

PTL Fundraisers

THANK YOU to everyone that has supported our fundraisers!

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NOTICE REGARDING VOTERS MEETINGS IN 2024

In the November 27th, 2023 congregational voters meeting, a motion was made and approved to change the schedule for congregational voters meetings in 2024. The change in schedule was made to give members a better opportunity to attend the voters meetings where there may have been schedule conflicts with other activities outside of St. Paul's or

where the normal congregational voters meeting time of 7PM was a problem for members who cannot drive at night.

The schedule for 2024 congregational voters meetings is as follows:

- Sunday, January 21st after worship service, in the Bethany room/Fellowship Hall
- Sunday, April 21st after worship service, in the Bethany room /Fellowship Hall
- Monday, June 24th – 7PM in the Bethany room/Fellowship Hall
- Sunday, August 18th after worship service, in the Bethany room/Fellowship Hall
- Monday, November 25th – 7PM in the Bethany room/Fellowship Hall

There will be a babysitting service available for families with young children who want to attend the Sunday voters meetings that will be held after worship service. Heidi Wildauer has agreed to organize this. If you have interest in using this service or in assisting in providing this service, please contact Heidi.

If you have questions regarding the congregational voters meetings or schedules for them, please contact Dave Burcham.

Voters' Assembly Information – I have recently been asked about maintaining voting privilege at Voters' Assembly meetings. I'm sharing here a section of what the bylaws of St. Paul's say about Voting Membership. St. Paul's Constitution and Bylaws (Bylaws Article 2 Section 3)

Section 3. Forfeiture of Voting Membership

The Recording Secretary shall keep the voters informed of their voting status via the published minutes of the Voters' Assembly...

A member who is absent from Voters' Assembly for 12 consecutive months without having offered an excuse to the Recording Secretary or Executive Director shall forfeit his voting membership until reinstated in accordance with procedures in Section 1 of this Article.

If you are unsure of your voting status, please check the latest minutes of the Voters' Assembly. The list of eligible voters is attached to the minutes. If there is a meeting scheduled and you know that you will be absent, please contact the recording secretary (Ken Eichinger) or Executive Director (Dave Burcham) to excuse yourself. The minutes are usually available in the narthex the Sunday after the meeting. If there are no copies available in the narthex, contact the recording secretary.

If you would like a copy of the entire St. Paul's Constitution and Bylaws, contact the recording secretary or inquire at the church office. -- Ken Eichinger

UPDATE ON REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

Since the Revitalization Program was started, there has been quite a bit of activity involving the various boards, directors of boards and school staff. Some of these activities are as follows>

* Completion of "Connect to Disciple" workshop by day and preschool school staff, directors of all church boards, Pastor Wonnacott and church and school secretaries. The focus on the workshop was recognizing opportunities in our church, school and communities to create disciples...the mission every Christian has been given by Christ.

* Completion of "Shepherding the Strays" workshop by board of Lay Ministry and Pastor Wonnacott. The focus of this workshop was how to work with church members who have decreased their involvement in attending worship services, Bible studies and church activities in order to assist them in the spiritual walk with Christ.

* Establishment of revised and Vision and Mission statements for St Paul's church and school. These statements are as follows:

VISION

From Strategic Planning Session 9/25/23:

“A Christian family of believers, led by the Holy Spirit, going out into the Bremen community and surrounding areas to make disciples of St. Paul's members and the unchurched.”

MISSION

From Strategic Planning Session 9/25/23:

“Through God's saving grace St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church and School will equip its families to develop and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ so that they may share his good news of salvation.”

* Establishment of Strategic Plan goals that will be completed by the boards of the congregation. These goals and which board is assigned for completion are as follows:

GOALS FOR ST. PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL 2023-2024

1. Get more congregation members participating in school activities (assist with teaching, grading papers, attending sporting events, etc.) 2023-24 school year.

* assigned to School Board

2. Identify how to integrate “outreach ministry” into present community activities (welcome bags to new community members, hospitality meals, Thanksgiving Day meal, “trunk or treat”, ice cream social, Oktoberfest booth, Firemen's Festival booth, etc.) by November 2023.

* assigned to Evangelism Board

3. Develop a plan for advertising St. Paul's Church and School to Bremen and surrounding communities by June 2024.

* assigned to Public Relations Board

4. Develop a plan for providing a personal financial literacy class/program to St. Paul's, Bremen

and the surrounding communities by March 1, 2024.

* assigned to Stewardship Board

5. Make contact and receive responses from all inactive church members by June 1, 2024 and based on responses, update church membership list by October 1, 2024.

* assigned to Board of Lay Ministry

6. Identify talents and abilities of congregation members to match needs of all church boards by March 31, 2024.

* assigned to Stewardship Board; input required from all boards to Stewardship Board that list the needs of each board. These lists to be provided to Stewardship by November 20, 2023.

Sunday School Offerings – January/February

Your New Year's Resolution, "to daily study God's Word," can start right here with Sunday School and Bible Classes! Join us every week, 8:30-9:15 a.m.

Pre-K – Grade 2 (Nazareth Room)

We will learn what it means to be a "disciple" and hear about the amazing authority and power of Jesus! . . . taught by Wendy Coxey

Grades 3-5 (Mrs. Roger's Classroom)

Learn more about people and events of the Old Testament including – The 12 Spies, The Bronze Snake, the Fall of Jericho, Gideon, Samson, and Ruth. Taught by Jeanette Rettinger

Middle School (Grades 6-8) (Mr. Miller's Classroom)

Parents/Guardians and youth, join Mark and Heidi Wildauer for a valuable and informative Bible Study entitled, "Launch." This study is intended to help parents have meaningful conversations about puberty and adolescence, and to encourage our youth to understand God's plan for them in the relationships they have as they develop from adolescents to young adults. Contact the Wildauers with additional questions.



High School (Jerusalem Room)

“Christians in a Woke World: A Call to Courage, Confession, and Love” is a study analyzing “woke” ideology from a Biblical perspective and reveals God’s answer to such challenging times in our society. . . . taught by Andy Wildauer

Adult Bible Class (Bethany Room)

a study of I & II Kings

More Opportunities for Bible Study

New Member Class 2.0

Designed for newly confirmed adults (those confirmed since the pandemic) to study “Lutheranism 101,” along with the Catechism. It’s also for members who want to delve deeper into the Catechism. We will meet in the Bethany Room on Thursdays at 7 p.m.

. . . taught by Pastor Wonnacott

Men’s Wednesday Morning Bible Study

Lively discussions every other Wednesday morning at the Bremen Hospital cafeteria
6:30-7:30 a.m.

Thursday Morning Ladies Bible Study (Jerusalem Room)

Ladies work together to complete the **LifeLight Bible Study: Matthew, Part 1.**

. . . led by Barb Middaugh, 9:30-10:45 a.m.

Indoctrinating Your Children

by Peter Scaer

“I won't indoctrinate my children but will let them decide for themselves.” Non-

believers boast that their children are free and critical thinkers, taught to be kind and non-judgmental. Remarkably, though, these free-thinking children end up just like their supposedly free-thinking parents. Those not "indoctrinated" with biblical values end up with other kinds of indoctrination, offered up by the schools, TikTok, and the like. Nature, after all, abhors a vacuum.

Yet Christians fall for this way of thinking, saying that they want schools that don't indoctrinate, but rather teach their kids the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Okay, but what are they reading? Should it be "Billy Has Two Daddies"?

Or should it be dry training manuals, so that children will be taught to read, but have nothing that will feed their souls, minds, and imaginations? Raising children is always a value-laden

enterprise, as is education. For Chamber of Commerce Republicans, it's not about raising up a citizenry capable of keeping a constitutional republic, it's about training a workforce. For Democrats, it's about just about climate change, diversity, equity, and inclusion. That's their spirituality, and that's their dogma, which they wish to inculcate into your children.

And yet parents say that they will let their children choose their own path. What they are really saying is that the world, with all its -isms, can better teach their children. Say what you will, but all education has content and purpose. Classical education recognizes that we do well to draw from deeper wells. If we wish to ensure the blessings of liberty, educational content matters, and that includes not only our founding fathers, but the material that motivated them, with proper due give to the democracy of Athens and the Republic of Rome. If we wish poetic souls, you can't do without a thorough grounding in Shakespeare. No person can rightly be called knowledgeable without a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

If you skip church, you are teaching your children that God doesn't matter. If you know Christ is the Great Physician, and don't take your children to Him, you practice the worst kind of negligence. The secularists can at least pat themselves on the back for raising "free thinking" children who think just like they do. Christians who hand their kids off to the media and the school system will find that their own children will be just as "free-thinking" as those of their agnostic neighbor.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Scaer is chairman and professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.

"Perfect Love"

(Jesus said) " . . . Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." John 14:27b

Fear.

Read the paper and you will be forced to confess: it's hard to beat back feelings of fear. Maybe that's why so many people aren't reading the paper any longer.

In recent years, fears have taken on a global, national, and neighborhood scale. Indeed, there doesn't seem to be any way we can escape fear. That's true for the common person, as well as the individual who has managed to make it to the top of the human heap.

Would you mind an example? I hope not.

Although he was one of the most powerful men in the world, Joseph Stalin, dictator of Russia, lived in constant fear of being poisoned or murdered. He had eight bedrooms -- bedrooms in which he could lock himself up -- bedrooms where he was as safe as if he had been in a bank vault.

Why eight bedrooms? He wanted to make sure nobody ever knew in which of those bedrooms he would sleep on any given night.

As I've gone around the country I've noticed most of our Daily Devotion readers don't have the kind of house that allows them to escape their fears by moving around from bedroom to bedroom.

True, some of us have equipped our homes with burglar alarms; some carry guns or mace, and most of us try to stay out of neighborhoods where we know we won't be welcomed. Still, after all our excellent precautions have been made, we are forced to admit: fear remains.

This is just one of the reasons we need a Savior. Of course, knowing Jesus does not mean everything becomes sweetness and light. It doesn't mean there is no cause to be afraid.

On the other hand, if Jesus is your Savior; if He remains Your constant Companion, you are assured that none of the evil in this world will have the final word, or keep the upper hand.

Remember, Jesus is the one who conquered sin, Satan, and death. His victory assures us this world simply does not have a match for our divine Protector.

And that, dear readers, is the special source of comfort we all need in this world of fear.

From a devotion originally written for "By the Way"

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, You are so much more powerful than all the evils in this world. For having committed Yourself to my deliverance and protection, my thanks. In Your Name I give thanks. Amen.

In Christ I remain His servant and yours,

Pastor Ken Klaus

We Need You! Our Euchre Parties continue Friday, January 12th from 7:00-9:00 pm in the Bethany Room. Anyone 16 and older can join us for fun and fellowship, and please bring a snack to share. Beverages will be provided. Come and bring a friend! This is a Parish Fellowship sponsored event.

Our next Breakfast Potluck is January 14th at 8:00 am in the fellowship hall. Please bring your breakfast item to the Fellowship Hall and then stay for the Bible class at 8:30. This is a Parish Fellowship sponsored event.

Thank you and peace be with you!!

WANTED: SMALL CATECHISMS

Christ in the hearts of Liberian children

Joe Boway founded the Liberian Children's Ministry in 2004. This ministry is now supporting 6,000 students in 15 Lutheran schools in Liberia, Africa. Over 75% of the new students are from a non-church background. To help the children learn about Jesus and the Christian faith, Joe's goal in 2023 is to collect used and new Small Catechisms to send to Liberia for each student to read in English.

Your congregation and/or school or Sunday school could adopt collecting Luther's catechisms as a mission project. They can be used or new in any edition as long as it is in English. Establish a collection site on your campus and publicize it. You can also purchase catechisms at ebay.com and from used book dealers, such as thriftbooks.com. For more information, contact Joe and Glendora Boway at 260-447-7639 or boway@aol.com. (Article in October Lutheran Witness)

This was discussed at our Christian Board of Education board meeting. We would like to support this mission. It is amazing the schools have grown so much in less than 20 years. The Lord has certainly blessed these schools and the leadership of Joe Boway. There will be a container in the back of the Narthex marked "Catechisms for Liberian Schools." If you have extra catechisms at home or wish to purchase new or used copies, we will get them to Joe Boway for these children hungry for the Gospel!

Charitable Gifting

(Note: This information was extracted from a recent newsletter from Thrivent. It is being presented for informational purposes only).

What constitutes a gift to charity?

A gift to charity is simply a gratuitous transfer of property to a charitable organization. There are several different types of property that can be donated to charity.

How do you decide whether to donate to charity?

The decision to donate to charity is a personal one. The IRS does not require that you have any charitable motivation when you donate to charity. You can do it strictly for the tax benefits.

What are the tax benefits of donating to charity?

Most every charity depends on individual contributions to remain financially solvent. As a result, charitable giving has become interconnected with the tax laws. Congress has set up rules taxpayers who donate to qualified charities need to follow. First, you generally receive an income tax deduction in the year you make the gift. Second, you do not have to worry about gift tax. Third, charitable gifts serve to reduce your taxable estate.

What options do you have for donating to charity?

An outright gift

Split interest gift in trust

CRAT (charitable remainder annuity trust)

CRUT (charitable remainder unitrust)

Pooled income fund

Charitable lead trust

Bargain sale

Private foundation

Community foundation

Donor-advised fund

As you can see, charitable donations are every complicated and require the use of a financial advisor, tax lawyer or your insurance representative.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

January 2024

ANNIVERSARIES

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 1 | Hank & Gloria Kiefer | 18 | Terry & Ardith Ahlemeyer |
| 8 | Doug & Rhonda Owens | 31 | Joshua & Deana Miller |

BIRTHDAYS

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 6 | Eric Foster
Rebecca Mejia
Erin Sarber | 22 | Thomas Harman
Giovanni Mejia
Josephine Miller |
| 7 | Jaylyn Dobbins | 24 | Aiden Eby
Cody Miller
Elliott VanSoest |
| 9 | Brody Beasley
Goldie Buckner
Sandy Kiefer | 25 | Carter Miller
Candy Perkins |
| 10 | Terri Bickel
Keith Russell
Beth Schmitt | 26 | Jared Nielsen |
| 11 | Jerry Smith | 27 | Carole Sahlhoff |
| 12 | Janet Miller | 30 | Conner Perkins
Dorothy Walter |
| 14 | James Mitchell | 31 | Angela Hughes |
| 15 | Sharon Latzke | | |
| 16 | Marian Yoder
Melody Farnsworth | | |
| 17 | Kayli Ann Miller
Phyllis Sahlhoff | | |
| 18 | Brittney Pittman
Tony Venable | | |
| 19 | Keegan Robbins
Lilly Rogers | | |
| 21 | Carly Dietl
Kyle Hinds | | |



St. Paul's Lutheran Women's Missionary League

As Lutheran Women in Mission, we joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions,
and equip women to honor God by serving others. Adopted 2021

LWML Ingathering for FT. WAYNE SEMINARY Many thanks to all who
donated! And thank you to Ken Eichinger for delivering the items!

Many Thanks to all who contributed items for "Cheer
Boxes;" and to the carolers who delivered them.

LWML: FEBRUARY 5, at 7:00 PM, in the Bethany Room. Program will be a
Bible study, led by Pastor Wonnacott on the hymn, "Salvation unto Us Has
Come." Afterward, we will pack "Goodie Boxes" for St. Paul's college
students. MAKE SURE THE CHURCH OFFICE HAS AN ADDRESS FOR YOUR
COLLEGE STUDENT. NO address means NO box! Anyone wishing to
contribute should bring at least 1 dozen individually-wrapped items to the
church kitchen on February 4. Better yet, come to the Bible study & bring
them along! All ladies are invited, and guests welcomed.

The Eyeglasses & Eyedroppers ministry for M.O.S.T. is ongoing. Any type, in good
condition is needed. Please place in the box beneath the "Bulletin Table." Thank you.

Psalm 100:2a "Serve the Lord with Gladness" LWML motto

St. Paul's 178th LITURGICAL YEAR † January 1, 2024 – January 31, 2024

Worship Opportunities To Bless Our Lives

✦ Celebration Of Holy Communion

Sunday 9:30 a.m.

Jan 7 The Feast of The Epiphany

Jan 21 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Jan 14 ☐ 1st Sunday after Epiphany

Jan 28 ☐ 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

*January MAJOR Festival: 6 The Feast of The Epiphany of Our Lord ● MINOR Festivals: 18 The
Confession of St. Peter ● 24 St. Timothy, Pastor & Confessor ● 25 The Conversion of
St. Paul ● 26 St. Titus, Pastor & Confessor ● COMMEMORATIONS: 2 J. Johann K. Konrad
Wilhelm Loehe ● 10 Basil The Great of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, & Gregory of
Nyssa ● 20 Sarah ● 27 John Chrysostom, Pastor 347-407 ●*

The Twelve Days of Christmas, December 25 - January 5, followed by Epiphany Day.

Originally a poem written by Catholic priests in 16th century England, when anyone caught
instructing their children in Catholicism (declared illegal when England went Protestant
under Queen Elizabeth I) could be drawn and quartered, this carol forms a "coded message,"
used as a teaching tool, with each gift portraying an important truth of faith. + Here they are
from *Stories Behind the Great Traditions of Christmas: On the first day of Christmas my true
love gave to me... . The 'true love' of this carol is God, who gives all gifts, including faith.
Those who receive them are those who have received Jesus as their Savior. "Greater love has
no one than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are My friends if you do
what I command you."* John 15:13,14 + 1st, a partridge in a pear tree: the only bird who will die

to protect its young represents Jesus, who died to save us from our sins. + 2nd *two turtledoves*: represent the Old and New Testaments Available to all is the complete Scriptural account of God's plan of salvation. + 3rd, *three French hens*: represent faith, hope, and love. *I Corinthians 13* + 4th, *four calling birds*: signify the 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. + 5th, *five golden rings*: first 5 books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. + 6th, *six geese a laying*: from Genesis, each egg laid represents a day of creation, when it was formed ('hatched') by God. + 7th, *seven swans a swimming*: birds represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit - prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, compassion. + 8th, *eight maids-a-milking*: from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus came to save and bless us all, even the lowliest among us. At this point in time, being a milk maid was one of the worst jobs one could have. Believers blessed by Christ's coming include: the poor in spirit, the meek, those who mourn, the merciful, those who hunger for righteousness, the pure in heart, peacemakers, and those persecuted for the faith. + 9th, *nine ladies dancing*: the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), goodness (generosity), kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. *Galatians 5:22,23a* + 10th, *ten lords-a-leaping*: the Ten Commandments. English 'lords' were often judges, charged with upholding the law. + 11th, *eleven pipers piping*: How many apostles did Jesus have? Twelve; but only *eleven* were faithful - Judas Iscariot was lost; so *eleven* of the original Twelve went out into the world; preaching about our Lord, planting churches and training pastors; until all but John met a martyr's death. The apostles are remembered through days on the Church Calendar. + 12th, *twelve drummers drumming*:

refers to 12 points of doctrine taught by the Church, as found in the Apostles Creed: The Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit); 6-day Creation; The Incarnation of Jesus (only begotten, made man); The virgin Birth; The Humiliation of Christ (suffered, crucified, died, buried); The Exaltation of Christ: (resurrection & ascension); The Second Coming; The Judgment of the living and dead; The Church (apostolic, true, invisible & the communion of saints - all believers in Jesus living and dead); The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; The Life Everlasting (heaven).

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth... And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, for now He shall be

great to the ends of the earth; And this One shall be peace." Micah 5:2-5

"Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. ... So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger." Lk 2:4,6-7a

"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel..." Numbers 24:17a

"Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." Matthew 2:2



