



# Courier Dec 2024 – Feb 2025



## **Martin Luther Church Ottawa**

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## **SILVESTER**

Do you know why the last day of the year is called Silvester? That's because Pope Silvester died on 31.12.335. Who was Pope Silvester? I've written a little story for you to find out. Did it really happened that way? Probably not, but the legends have been handed down...

### 31.12.335 Pope Silvester dies

On December 31, anno Domini 335, our beloved Bishop Silvester I went home to God at the age of 77. A new era truly dawned with Silvester I: the era of Christianity.

In 314, Silvester was elected Bishop of Rome as the successor to Pope Miltiades.

The Lord was with Bishop Silvester and allowed him to perform many incredible miracles, all of which led to the spread of Christianity.

I, Marcus, secretary of the late Bishop Silvester, hereby bear witness to the most incredible miracles which our beloved bishop was able to perform, to the glory and praise of God.

In the year 317, Emperor Constantine was afflicted with terrible and inexplicable leprosy. His doctors and healers were at a loss. They had no hope of a cure. In desperation, the Roman pagan priests advised the emperor to bathe in the blood of 3,000 innocent children. This was the only way to cure him. A great uprising of the mothers followed and Constantine finally took pity and abandoned the plan.

The weakened emperor fell asleep. The apostles Peter and Paul appeared to him in a dream. They told him to call the Bishop of Rome, Silvester, because he alone could cure him. After Constantine woke up, he immediately sent for Silvester.

When he reached the emperor, he told him the good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Silvester was also able to convince him that only Christian baptism could save him. Constantine accepted and professed the Christian, Trinitarian faith and was baptized. As a result, his skin rash disappeared and he became healthy again.

In gratitude for this healing, the emperor gave Silvester the city of Rome and the entire western world and allowed him to wear the imperial insignia. This was documented on March 30, 317 in

the *Constitutium Constantini*, the Constantinian Donation. In it, Emperor Constantine granted Silvester eternal rule over the Roman Empire and thus the entire Western world. Thus the world became Christian and the word of our Lord became reality: Make disciples of all nations!

Christianity was no longer one of many persecuted or tolerated religions in the Roman Empire. From then on, it became the only religion in the Roman Empire.

Another wonderful event took place shortly afterwards:

Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, wanted to convert her son to Judaism. Silvester then held an argument with twelve Jewish rabbis to prove which was the true religion. Silvester prevailed in the dispute against eleven of the Jews. Then it happened: the twelfth rabbi had killed a bull to demonstrate the power of his God, simply by mentioning the name of their God. Our Bishop, however, managed to bring the dead bull back to life with the help of our God. Only our God can do that! After this miracle, the twelve rabbis and Helena, the emperor's mother, could not help but be baptized immediately.

Another, almost unbelievable incident proved once again how powerful our God is. He gave our beloved Bishop the strength to fight a dragon. The dragon had been living under the Tarpeian Rock in Rome for a long time. The servants of Vesta made sacrifices to it every month. According to Christian law, all pagan customs were banned, including those of the Vesta virgins. As a result, the dragon no longer received any sacrifices and he became furious. Its poisonous breath killed many inhabitants of Rome, primarily children. Vesta's servants asked Emperor Constantine to continue offering sacrifices to the dragon in order to appease him.

Emperor Constantine turned to Bishop Silvester for advice. He then had a vision of St. Simon Peter, who revealed to him how he could slay the dragon. After intense prayer, the bishop descended into the dragon's lair. I don't know what exactly happened, but the dragon was never seen again. The Bishop later reported that it was just like the archangel Michael when he banished the dragon of the Apocalypse into the abyss, as it is written in the Book of Revelation 20:2 ff: *“2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years 3 and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.”*

Our beloved Bishop was also a master builder. After the world had become Christian, public church services could finally be celebrated. Churches were built specifically to tell people about God, to worship him and to meet him. The first church that Bishop Silvester had built was St. Peter's. It is the church over the tomb of St. Peter here in Rome.

May the angels now guide Bishop Silvester through the darkness of death. May God have mercy on him in judgment, reward him for all his good works and welcome him into his eternal peace.

Rest in peace Silvester, confessor, miracle worker and Bishop of Rome.



Image: Donation of Constantine. Emperor Constantine I presents Pope Silvester I with the Phrygium and the city of Rome.

## Presidents Report

Dear Parishioners:

The unique incredibly beautiful Canadian fall is coming to an end and we have to prepare for Christmas and the new year.

A few things are happening in our church.

1. First of all regarding our church building, we had to take the following measures:
  - Our furnace received its annual inspection. We want to make sure it works properly and everyone is warm this winter. The two furnaces are over 20 years old and are ok for this year. In the long run, however, we will need to contemplate replacing them. There is a thermostat on each floor and anyone turning the heat up for a special occasion should please also turn it down after use.
  - The city of Ottawa insists that all buildings have a backflow control so that in case of floods the sewers do not back up into the building. Apparently, ours was removed during the kitchen renovations. It was now reinstalled and we meet city requirements.
  - Thanks to Heather's initiative, we now have a new waste bin in the parking lot. It is more solid than the last one and cannot be accessed by prowling racoons and other animals. Please also note that we do not have compostable recycle service at the church. So if there is compostable waste after an event, please either a) take it home and put it in your green box there or b) throw it into the new waste box in the parking lot. Do not leave it in the building.
2. Thanks to Marianne Thornton's initiative, the hedges around the church and the around the pastor's manse will be trimmed. This has not been done for years. Martin Damus' son gave us a friendly quote and both these sites will lose their uncared look.
3. Speaking of Manse, the shower in the manse was leaking and had to be repaired. An inspection revealed that both bathrooms are in need of some upgrade and care. I am getting quotes and then will take the matter to church council.

4. 4. Unfortunately Pastor Kierschke's term ends in summer of 2026. She is eager to return to Germany then where both her kids will then be studying. The process to replace her is lengthy and very time consuming. These are the steps:

- The EKD has to first agree to start the replacement process,
- the ELCIC has to agree to continue the dual call process,
- the position is then advertised by the EKD,
- the EKD makes a pre-selection of three candidates,
- the candidates come to Ottawa hold a service and are interviewed by council,
- the Congregation at a special meeting selects the candidate it wants,
- the candidate accepts and he/she with family comes to Canada in summer 2026
- the successful candidates furniture follow

As you can see it is a long and arduous process. I do not foresee any problems as such but it will take time. Hence with Pastor Kierschke's help I started the first step of the process by sending the EKD the request to start the replacement process. It involved answering a very lengthy questionnaire about every aspect of our church.

5. The Ontario Not for Profit corporations act came into force a couple of years ago and all not for profit corporations had to file amended by laws and constitutions by October 2024. We are a not for profit corporation and thus this act applies to us. The amended constitution and by-law ( in fact just a shifting for the routine operational provisions from the constitution to the by laws) was approved at the last Annual General Meeting in April and filed with the Ministry in the summer. We are thus now in compliance with the law.

This covers the main items I have to report. Looking forward to a peaceful and hopefully white Christmas

Your President

*Konrad*

## Jesus' Birth and Childhood \_\_\_\_\_ Told by Gunther Bauer

The birth of Jesus of Nazareth is told in the biblical gospels by Luke and by Matthew. The date of Jesus' birth is not stated in the two gospels, or in any other secular text. But the date, when he was born, has been estimated through known historical events. The date chosen is between 6 BC and 4 BC.

Jesus' life starts with his birth in Bethlehem in Galilee. His mother Miriam, Mary as we know her, was about thirteen years old, the age of Jewish maidens of that time would marry. Jesus' father, the widowed Joseph, came from nearby Bethlehem probably to repair the house of Mary's parents. Joseph was a journeyman, a roofer, stone mason and rough carpenter, all in one person. The attraction between Joseph and Mary must have been immediate, since Mary's family had agreed to a contract of marriage with Joseph. The wording in the New Testament, although written many years after the event, attests to this in Matthew (1:18) and that Mary was pregnant before the couple lived together. This early pregnancy touched off vicious rumours in Nazareth by some and by miraculous statements by others. So, Joseph brought Mary to his hometown Bethlehem, where he had lived before with his first wife, to shield Mary from the wagging tongues in Nazareth. There are good reasons to consider that the Bethlehem to which Mathew refers to was in Galilee, about six miles from Nazareth, and not the Bethlehem in Judea, near Jerusalem. One consider that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Damascus, eighty years after the birth of Jesus. Bethlehem in Hebrew means "house of bread", a common name for settlements with mills capable of producing fine flour, rather than the coarse grain flour most Israelites used for their daily needs. After eight days of Jesus' birth, Mary handed her firstborn to Joseph for the ritual of circumcision, as mandated by the Torah in the book of Genesis (17: 9-14). The weather at that time of the year in Galilee was probably cool. Family members and guests were invited to this event. They greeted each other with *Shelama*, the Hebrew equivalent for *Shalom* "peace". The ritual was performed without the presence of women and children and happened probably inside, because of the cool weather. Joseph and Mary shared one of the two or three mud and stone houses with clay floors, that surrounded a common courtyard. Generous meals followed major family and community celebrations. Guests would have brought their own cups, plates and cutlery. Lamb or goat butchered for the feast was fried on a spit and served by hand on a round, flat bread. The bread was baked from the coarse flour ground with a mill that every household had. Mary herself did not cook and was forbidden to serve her guests. Leviticus stated that for forty days after delivering a male child, the mother was freed from

household work and working in the field. Mary probably also knew that her son would be teased and shunned due to his suspected paternity. Such men and women lived in a caste apart from the established mainstream of religious life in Israel.

The two gospels did not tell us when the new family moved back to Nazareth. Galilean Jews had scant personal possessions. Joseph collected his clothing and tools and left behind the fields he had tended. The new family consisting now of Joseph, Mary, Jesus, and Joseph's two sons James and Josef, from Joseph's previous marriage. They walked back to Nazareth. Mary carrying the newborn Jesus in a woolen sling around her neck. Joseph was reluctant to return to Nazareth, where embarrassing rumours about Jesus' paternity were still told. Few in Nazareth could read, but everyone knew what the Scriptures said about a person whose paternity or maternity is not clearly known, such a person shall not enter the congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:3). That means, Jesus could expect to be ostracized by the elders of Nazareth. Joseph has always openly acknowledged his paternity and never shun his young son. As Jesus got older, he was kept from going to the Temple on Sabbath, whereas Jesus' half-brother James became a well-liked person with the village elders. James in the New Testament is portrayed as a person giving advice concerning divine wisdom and healing (Acts 15:13-27). All his life, Jesus was intense in his personal vision and determined in company. These habits of temperament develop early. All the insults Jesus received in his young life in Nazareth, helps to explain why he came to see God as his father, his Abba in Aramaic. If Joseph's fatherhood was in doubt, God's fatherhood was not. Jews of this time have recognized themselves as God's children and addressed God as "our father, our redeemer is your name" (Moses 5: 32-6 and Isaiah 63: 16). This metaphor signified that God had entered a special relationship with the people of Israel. In the New Testament Jesus called God three times his "Father" (Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6). This metaphor became systemic in Christianity. When prayed and worshipped in Christian churches, God becomes everybody's father, instead of an intimate one, as with Jesus.

Since Jesus was not allowed to go to the Temple, where did he learn about God? Probably, where all young children learn their first impressions from their mothers. Once, Jesus was looking at a mustard plant that had spread over all other plants in Mary's garden. "What is it my son?", asked Mary, "*Malkhuat dalaha*", replied Jesus, "The Kingdom of God". At another time, Mary was kneading yeast into the dough and she noticed Jesus was watching her. She asked again, "what is it my son", she got the same answer. These parables about seed and yeast, linked to the "Kingdom



of God" are told by Luke (13: 18-21). God was for Jesus not only his Abba, but his Kingdom that he could see and touch. This became Jesus' message throughout his adult life.

Jesus eventually left his mother's side to become an apprentice as a journeyman with Joseph (Mark 6:3). The physical work of cutting wood, hauling stone, mixing mortar, working with mallet and trowel would have strengthened Jesus' arms and shoulders. Jesus must have been about twelve years old, when his father died, probably from a deadly disease such as malaria and tuberculosis, that plagued Galilee. His father's death must have had a steering effect on Jesus. Joseph was buried the same day, under ancient Jewish practice (Deuteronomy 21:23). The synagogue would have still excluded Jesus from the burial ceremony. Probably because of the synagogue's disdain for him, Jesus showed later in his life a deep skepticism about religious authority (Matthew 23:23).

**Review of the last three months (with lots of pictures)**

We had a lovely neighbourhood party in our garden in September and took some pictures of art.





Emmett Shoemaker was baptized in our church on 23th of September.



Together with the Catholic St. Albertus church, we celebrated the German Erntedankfest in the garden of the German Embassy!



We celebrated lovely Services full of wonderful music!



We worked in our church garden!



Confirmation class started again.



Once a month we have a delicious soup (or something else) and a pleasant talk!



And we had the German St Martin Lantern walk with lots of kids and colourful lanterns!

## ADVENT CALENDAR

As we have done for the last two years, we will collect food donations in our church this December and donating them to the Carlton Community Chaplaincy at the beginning of January. Below are some ideas that you are welcome to drop off at church again. Thank you very much!



## **ONLINE ADVENT CALENDAR**

But there is another calendar this year and it is online.

Every day I will send you a link by email where you can watch a short video with music or a story featuring people from our community. Let yourself be surprised!

## **Movie service - what is it?**

On January 26, you will see a movie service in the service schedule. Let's try it. January 27 is Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 1999 film “Jacob the Liar”, an adaptation of a novel by German author Jurek Becker, fits the theme. We will watch excerpts from the movie and reflect on it.



**Dates in the Martin Luther Church (December - February)**

01.12. 1. Advent	10 am Joint service with Baptism And Advent Coffee afterwards	10 Uhr gemeinsamer Gottesdienst mit Taufe und anschließendem Adventskaffeetrinken
Saturday, 7.12.	3pm Christmas Hymns sing along. Come in the church and sing Christmas Hymns with us!	3 Pm Weihnachtslieder singen in der Kirche, kommen Sie und singen Sie mit!
07.12.		5 pm Krippenspielprobe für Kinder
08.12. 2. Advent	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
10.12.	12pm Soup and Talk	12 pm Soup and Talk
14.12.		5 pm Krippenspielprobe für Kinder
15.12. 3. Advent	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
15.12.	2pm Christmas Concert St Albertus	2pm Christmas Concert St. Albertus
19.12.	7 pm Zoom Bible Study	7 pm Zoom Bible Study
21.12.		5pm Krippenspielprobe für Kinder
22.12. 4. Advent	9.30 am English Service	11 am Deutscher Gottesdienst
24.12.		3 pm Deutscher Weihnachtsgottesdienst mit Krippenspiel
24.12.	4.30 pm English Christmas Service	
24.12.	9 pm Lessons and Carols	9 pm Lessons and Carols
25.12.	10 am Joint Christmas Service	10 am Joint Christmas Service
29.12.	10 am Joint Service	10 am Joint Service



05.01.2025	10 Joint New Years Service with Reception afterwards	10 am Joint Service mit Empfang im Anschluss (deutsche Predigt)
12.01.	9.30 English Service	11 Deutscher Gottesdienst
14.01.	12 Soup and Talk	12 Soup and Talk
19.01.	9.30 English Service	11 Deutscher Gottesdienst
23.01.	7pm Zoom online Bible Study	7 pm Zoom online Bible Study
26.01.	10 am Joint Service Movie Service „Jakob the Liar	10 am Joint Service Film Gottesdienst „Jakob der Lügner
02.02.	10 am Joint Service and Coffee afterwards	10 am Joint Service and Coffee afterwards
09.02.	9.30 English Service	11 Deutscher Gottesdienst
11.02.	12 Soup and Talk	12 Soup and Talk
16.02.	9.30 English Service	11 Deutscher Gottesdienst
20.02.	7 pm Zoom online Bible Study	7 pm Zoom online Bible Study
23.02.	9.30 English Service	11 Deutscher Gottesdienst
02.03.	10 am Joint Service and Coffee afterwards	10 am Joint Service und anschließend Kaffee

**We are here for you:****Church Address:** 933 Smyth Road, Ottawa ON K1G1P5

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