



Our Church—This Week
for December 4, 2023

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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FIRST LUTHERAN MONN MOUTH
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Our Staff

Pastor Jamie Gallagher
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Custodian
Chris Algren

Musician
Janice Algren

Preschool and Day Care Director
Bobbi Nees
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Congregation Council

President: Pam Van Kirk
Vice President: Ray Golden
Secretary: Diane Carlson

Pam Best
Adam Sanberg
Mark Shrader
Chip Algren
Brian Elliott

** one seat remains vacant in honor of Evelyn Volz, until our next election meeting in May, 2024

Dear Friends and Family,
My family enjoyed a wonderful weekend with our daughter once again at her college. This was her senior recital, a very big deal concert, where she performed several solo pieces and was the lead in a couple small group performances. She will be getting a video of the concert and at an appropriate time we will announce a time when we will share this so others can see and enjoy her musical gifts.
Now my attention can fully turn to the rest of the Advent season, a season of wonder and joy, a season of bright colors and decorations and lights. What brings you joy this season?

Advent and Christmas Schedule

Join us throughout the season for these great worship opportunities:

Saturday, December 9th, we will have a Family event to prepare for Sankta Lucia Day. Join us at 2 PM for ornament making and treat baking as we prepare gift bags to take to folks on December 10th.

Advent 3—Sunday, December 10th, Sankta Lucia will be celebrated as we bless our gift bags and take them to those who need the light of Sankta Lucia

Advent 4—Sunday, December 17th, due to a scheduling conflict, the Day Care and Preschool will now join us on Dec 17th to share a Christmas Pageant

Christmas Eve—Sunday, December 24th

Both 10 AM and 7 PM worship services will be Christmas Eve worship services. Candlelight will be offered only at the 7 PM service.

New Year's Eve—Sunday, December 31st

During our 10 AM worship we will have a service of lessons and carols and we will have a blessing for the new year beginning.

Coming in January

It's hard to think that January is right around the corner, and with all the emphasis on everything Advent and Christmas, we still need to prepare for what is coming next month.

Our Annual meeting will be on Sunday, January 21 following the worship service. A weather-back-up date is January 28th.

The watch party for the TV Show "The Chosen" will return on a weekday morning, a time will be announced soon.

A new Bible study called "So That's My Bible" is coming—Pastor will use this to introduce stories in the Bible that don't get heard much and use those as a way to talk about the history, writing, translating, and so much more, of the Bible. A time will be announced soon.

The season of Epiphany begins on Sunday, January 7th with the Baptism of our Lord and will continue through Sunday, February 11th. Ash Wednesday will be celebrated on Wednesday, February 14th. And I am sure there will be many jokes about Jesus' expressing his love for you on Valentine's Day with the gift of ashes. (And its okay if you roll your eyes at me, my kids do it all the time.)

Rooted and Built Up In Christ

Over the last three months our congregation has met in Bible study to talk about how we are rooted and built up in Christ.

These conversations have demonstrated that First Lutheran Church has deep roots in worship, faith education, service, and community. Our congregation council will now be taking the notes from our conversations and crafting them into a mission identity statement and core values that will guide our congregation going forward.

For our congregation to go forward, we will build upon the foundation that are our roots, we will reimagine how we live faithfully in worship, education, service, and community, and we will find ways to share with others the ways God is at work in and through our congregation.

This has been a great opportunity for study and for exploring the future and I thank everyone who contributed to the conversation and was part of this three part-study.

Sankta Lucia

Saint Lucy is a martyr who represents light and service to others. While much of her life is now the stuff of legend, those legends inspired many early Christians to stand for their faith in the face of impossible odds.

Today, we in the US do not have such imposing odds stacked against our expressing our faith. Yet, a moment of goodwill still goes a long way.

Our Sankta Lucia tradition is growing beyond a simple pageant of the youth in our congregation. Today, we use this day to model the very acts of service Saint Lucy represents.

To that end, please join us on Saturday, December 9th at 2 PM for an afternoon of simple ornament making and baking. We will prepare small gift bags. These will be sent home with us on Sunday, December 10th.

A small group of the gift bags will be designated to go to our homebound and shut-in families and other families of the congregation who have not been able to attend worship recently. The rest are for worshipping members to step out and follow Saint Lucy's guiding light and bring a gift bag to someone—a friend, a family member, a neighbor, a stranger you come across while running errands—anyone for whom a gesture of goodwill may brighten their day.

Naomi Circle

Naomi Circle meets December 5th at 6:00 p.m. for the annual Christmas dinner at Tippy's Restaurant, 112 South 1st Street, Monmouth.

Dessert and gift exchange will follow at the home of Pam Van Kirk.





Advent
Sunday, November 26 to
Sunday, December 17

Advent Wreath Candles are one way we count the Sundays leading to Christmas. The increasing light is a symbol of the increasing light of Christ that enters our world in a time of darkness. Darkness can be a real thing, like at night when the sun is set. Or darkness can be a metaphor to describe our emotional state of grief or anxiety or fear or anger or a whole host of emotions we don't like to talk about very much. These emotions come because of loss of a loved one, loss of health, or the overwhelming news cycle that seems to always highlight all the bad things happening around the world. And in the midst of all this the light of Christ increases offering peace, hope, love, and mercy and much more that guides us in faith.

Join us in worship this holiday season. You may not feel like getting up for worship. You may not feel connected to the hymns or the prayers. But when you see that light of the Advent Wreath increase, you will experience the light of Christ increase within you.

Worship Guild Members

Dec 10 — Advent 3

Usher: Diane Carlson
Reader: Doug Cruce
Com Asst: Adam Sanberg
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire
Musician: Janice Algren

Dec 17 — Advent 4

Usher: Ted Hanson
Reader: Maddie Blaesing
Com Asst: Julie Blaesing
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire
Musician: Janice Algren

Dec 24 — 10 AM Worship

Usher: Pam Van Kirk
Reader: Pam Best
Com Asst: Dee Dee Yez
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire
Musician: Janice Algren

Dec 24 — 7 PM Worship

Usher: Steve Erlandson
Reader: Wendy Anderson
Com Asst: Paula Buban
Narthex Host: Linda McGuire
Musician: Janice Algren



Worship Liturgy

Throughout the year, you will notice we change up how we experience the liturgy. Sometimes we change the hymn of praise or which hymnal setting we use for communion. Other times, we change how many readings we hear from the Bible or when we stand and sit.

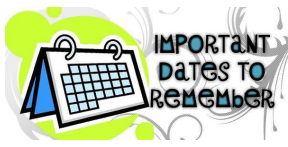
Some of our tinkering with worship liturgy is because different seasons of the church year lend themselves to different expressions within worship. Other times we are responding to comments and feedback from the congregation about how they experience our worship service.

Join us in worship. Come and experience the words and music of worship. Feel the different ways throughout the year we express ourselves in worship of God.

The Biblical Name John

When John the Baptist is born, friends of the family expect Elizabeth to name the child after his father. But instead he is given the name John. Zechariah confirms the name by writing it on a tablet, and then he is able to say “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.”

The Hebrew name John means “God looks favorably”. Read more about Zechariah’s expression of faith after his son was born in our Bible reflection on the last page.



Every Sunday
9:30 AM Fellowship Gathering
10:00 AM Worship



For corrections and updates, please call the Church office.

Sunday, December 3 Advent 2

Mon, Dec 4 9:30 AM Sarah Circle
 7 PM Building and Grounds
 Committee meeting

Tue, Dec 5 6 PM Naomi Circle Christmas
 Dinner and gift exchange

Sat, Dec 9 2 PM Sancta Lucia Family Day

Sunday, December 10 Advent 3

Tue, Dec 12 6 PM Council meeting

Sunday, December 17 Advent 4

Tue, Dec 19 6 PM Council Bible Study

Sunday, December 24th Christmas Eve

10 AM and 7 PM Christmas Eve Worship

Office closed December 25th; and Pastor Jamie will be sporadically available the rest of the week—it is always best to call first before stopping by the church office.

There will be no Our Church published the week of December 25th or January 1st.

Notice something missing from the calendar? Please contact the church office, and we will add it to next week's newsletter.

Pastor Jamie's typical day off is Friday, though with covering occasional office duties, this time off may vary throughout the week. You are always welcome to call Pastor Jamie on his cell phone.



- Dec 5 Carol Hanson
- Dec 10 Don Reynolds
- Dec 10 Kevin Sprecher
- Dec 13 Kathy Erlandson
- Dec 13 Ben Sanberg
- Dec 16 Michael Pearson
- Dec 17 Caleb Sanburg
- Dec 17 Jackie Slater
- Dec 18 Tyler Osborn
- Dec 18 Adam Sanberg
- Dec 21 Kaye Johnson
- Dec 23 Derek Johnston
- Dec 26 Janice Algren
- Dec 28 Emma Nuckles
- Dec 30 Gary Sanberg
- Jan 3 Elizabeth Hippen
- Jan 3 Ellen Shrader
- Jan 4 Kay Bailey
- Jan 5 Neal Heerwagen
- Jan 5 Mike Jurgens
- Jan 5 Dennis Terpening
- Jan 7 Nancy Hanson
- Jan 9 Steve Erlandson



- Feb 22 Kenny & Nancy Reynolds
- Mar 1 Phil & Trudy Bergren
- Mar 11 Cecil & Kay Lovdahl
- Mar 14 Tammy & Jim Slater
- Apr 2 Don & Kathy Fillman
- Apr 25 Todd & Kris Champion
- Apr 28 Ron & Deb Manuel
- May 5 Brenda & Craig Jones
- May 6 Connie & Chuck Larimer
- May 21 Ted & Sue Hanson
- May 22 Butch & Kaye Johnson
- June 1 Rodger & Linda Ellison
- June 4 Gary & Judy Sanberg
- June 8 Ben & Jenny Sanberg
- June 11 DeeDee & David Yez
- June 12 Neal & Jackie Heerwagen
- Jun 13 Michael & Barb Pearson
- Jun 14 Doug & Kathi Cruce
- Jun 15 Rob & Tammy Ravel
- Jun 19 Stan & Diane Carlson
- Jun 23 Mike and Susie Jurgens

Our celebrations list reflect current membership. To request someone not on our current membership list be added to our celebration lists, please contact the church office.

Prayer Requests

Linda Ellison, Ila Roseberry, Kathi Cruce, Erica Lancaster, Dean Sandstrom, Emily Agema, Chris Buban, Ann Enstom, Gary Eyler, Cecil Lovdahl, Janet Lowe, Brian Elliott

Please let the church office know any updates that are needed to our prayer list.

Vision and Purpose Giving Update

Our Vision & Purpose



Throughout December, our congregation will support the Recharge Teen Center here in Monmouth.

Located on South Main Street, the teen center is open weekdays from 3 PM to 6 PM. It provides a place for high school teens to hang out, develop life skills, and for those in need, to receive a warm meal, have laundry services, select from donated clothing items, and more.

Our endowment committee donated \$500 which Pastor Jamie was able to present to the center already. Now this month, our congregation has an opportunity to match what the endowment committee did. Can we reach that goal this season?

Throughout this year, we have been quite generous with our Vision and Purpose Giving:

January: WIAR, \$15

February: Missionaries, \$95

March and April: Janet and Taylor Lowe, \$370

May: Loving Bottoms, \$55

June: LSSI, \$45

July: Wendy Anderson and the St. Jude Run, \$425

August: Jamieson Center, \$30

September: the Suicide Prevention Walk, \$8

October: LWR School Kits, \$73

November: Jamieson Center, \$5

December: Recharge Teen Center

Weekly Devotional



“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.”

Luke 1:68

Elizabeth gives birth to her son. Her family and friends are ready for her to announce the name of the child, and she declares, because her husband is still mute at this time, that the boy's name is John. Those gathered to celebrate with them are astonished, no one in their family has this name. But Zechariah was able to write on a tablet, and he confirmed that John would be the boy's name. Then Zechariah's mouth was opened. Finally, after nearly a year, he was able to speak, and what he said was immensely profound. It begins with the verse quoted above.

Notice the quote speaks as if God has already accomplished something. God has looked favorably. God has redeemed God's people. John is minutes old, Jesus is not yet born. And Zechariah is praising actions that God has completed. Sure, to our ears today it makes sense. Jesus was born, Jesus was killed on a cross, Jesus was raised from the dead, Jesus now sits at God's right hand, Jesus will come again. These actions tell us that God has acted and salvation has occurred. But for Zechariah holding his newborn son, none of those actions have yet taken place.

What a great expression of faith for Zechariah to know that God has indeed acted even without seeing those actions yet. In fact, while we cannot say for certain, it is quite likely that both of John's parents will have died before Jesus even begins his ministry some 30 years later from these events. So they will not even see him be baptized by their son, give any sermon, be arrested and undergo the crucifixion. Yet for Zechariah, his faith sees God's actions as completed already. God promised a savior, God has brought a savior into the world, a savior John will precede and prepare the way for. Zechariah is as sure of God's promises happening as he is sure that the sun will rise once again tomorrow. Imagine living with the kind of faith of Zechariah. Trusting the promises of God so intensely that you can declare all God has done even before seeing it happen.

For us today, it might look like trusting God through a health crisis, through a loss of loved one, in the midst of cultural darkness that lingers like a gloomy cloud that only rains on us. For us today, it might mean trusting that despite evidence to the contrary, the church is not dying but experiencing rebirth and a new glory day will happen and rival the glory days of our memories. For us today, it means since our trust is so complete in God, we can be generous to a fault, we can be merciful to an extreme, we can be loving and welcoming of those who have been cast aside by others. And we can do all that without fear of repercussions, because it is God who has accomplished redemption for us, and for all those to whom receive our generosity, mercy, love and welcoming spirit.

This season we are reminded that God has looked favorably on his people and has redeemed them. And our faith is renewed to live with the same certainty of Zechariah.

In Peace, Pastor Jamie