

DECEMBER

@ *Spirit of Joy*
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Beloved Spirit of Joy People,



Advent begins a new Liturgical year, at least for us Lutherans. The primary Gospel we will be reading in our worship during the next 12 months is the witness of Matthew.

Matthew introduces a name for the Christ Child – **Emmanuel**, which means “*God with us*”. It is a theme we highlight as we surround the lighting of our Advent Candles each Sunday with a familiar hymn: “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*”.

I can’t think of a more important name for the one who came among us bearing the love, grace, and the intention of God, the greatest Christmas gifts of all. These gifts set the tone for our worship, our study, and our witness in the coming year.

Many might ask: “If the Lord is with us, why does the world contain so much pain, loss, violence and despair?” Others, like me, will simply respond: “Because the world does contain such things, where would we be without the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love that is contained in this wondrous Advent name: Emmanuel?”

As we continue our journey of transition to future pastoral leadership, we need to hear that same word: “Emmanuel”, trusting the Holy Spirit to guide our steps and lead us into the path for which we are prepared to walk.

Jennifer and I look forward to celebrating Advent and Christmas with you this year. May we all together be warmly embraced by the meaning and beauty of this wonderful name for the mysterious reality of God’s divine presence: **Emmanuel!**

In Peace and Love,

Pr. Braaten

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."



DECEMBER

Birthdays

Kimberly Densmore	17	<i>If your special day is missing from our list, please call or email the church office to let us know.</i>
Ronda Hatfield	21	
Barb Piotrowski	22,	
Everett Hoedl	27	
Paul Graham	30	
Russ Haslow	30	



DECEMBER

Anniversaries

Haslow, Russ & Judy	14
Stransky, Kip & Laura	16

Deaths

Please pray for the families of these members and former members who have passed into eternal life:

Nancy Sowarby, Carolyn Ward, George Wells,
Yona Ash, Mary Ann Schulz, Ken Suhr

Recurring Offerings

Want to give a recurring offering to SOJ without writing a check every time? Most banks have a free "bill pay" feature that you can utilize to have a check mailed directly to SOJ or directly deposited.
Contact your bank for more information.

REWARD PROGRAM

Spirit of Joy is the recipient of donations from the Fry's Community Rewards program. You do nothing, other than register, and a percentage of your purchases will be sent to Spirit of Joy to be used by the Altar Guild.

SOJ received \$47.94 for the 3rd quarter 2025. Let's do better and don't forget to designate your rewards when shopping during the holidays!

Call the office for more details on enrolling.



Spirit of Joy LUTHERAN CHURCH



330 Scenic Drive
Clarkdale, Arizona 86324
928-634-4102

Rev. Conrad Braaten
Interim Pastor
prbraaten@gmail.com

Rosie West, Office Manager
officesoj@sojaz.net

Website:
www.sojaz.net

Send prayer requests to:
prayer@sojaz.net

Visit us at:
www.facebook.com/sojaz

Communion Ministry



Please see Pr. Braaten if you are interested in taking communion and/or visiting with homebound members.

COMMUNITY SING- A-LONG WITH THE VERDE VALLEY VOICES!

at
SPIRIT OF JOY LUTHERAN CHURCH
330 Scenic Drive, Clarkdale, AZ
Friday, December 12, 7 pm

A goodwill offering will be taken to benefit
Spirit of Joy's Joy-Pack program feeding
hungry kids in the Verde Valley.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

We are now taking orders for Christmas poinsettias. Purchase a plant to adorn our altar at Christmas Eve worship for \$15 in memory of a loved one or your special intention. Names with intentions will be published in the Christmas Eve bulletin. See the sign-up sheet in the narthex. Deadline is Dec. 14th.



Christmas Day Potluck Dinner and Bingo!

Join fellow church members to celebrate the day with our Annual Christmas Day Potluck Dinner and Bingo gathering following the 9:30am worship. Bring a dish to share and then have fun playing Bingo after dinner.*

Sign-up sheets to bring a dish, and/or to help clean up are in the narthex and Fellowship Hall.

***Prizes are needed for lucky Bingo winners! Please leave your donations of prizes in the marked box in the Fellowship Hall.**



WELCA's "Taste of Christmas"

Saturday, December 6th, 8am—2pm

Christmas crafts, homemade goodies including pickles, preserves, cake, pies, cookies, candy, etc.



DECEMBER SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES



Advent Mid-Week Worship
Wednesdays, December 3, 10, & 17, 5pm

Blue Christmas Litany Service
Sunday, December 21, 9:30am



Christmas Eve Lessons, Carols, Communion and Candlelight
Wednesday, December 24, 5:00pm

No worship service on Christmas Day

WELCA NEWS

The WELCA meeting was held on November 13th with 17 members present. Carol opened the meeting with a reading “Be careful what you pray for you could receive a kitten!!”

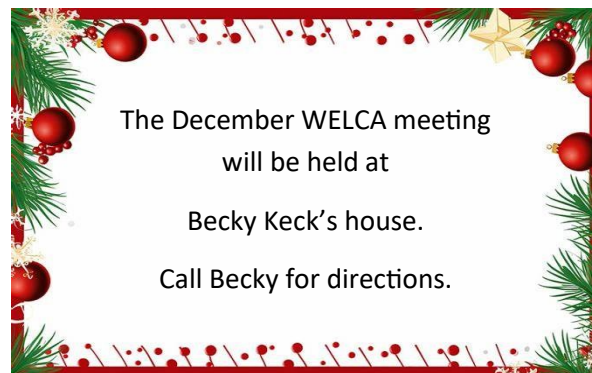


- A collection basket and sign-up sheets were passed around for Fellowship and Taste of Christmas.
- Ellen D led devotions on Gratitude and shared how we could take time each day to up our gratitude.
- Treasurer's report was given by Glenna.
- Loma shared that we received \$100 from the Verde Valley Voices and \$120 from the Ken Suhr family.
- Becky K made a motion to do Christmas gifts of \$250 for Pastor, Mary, Rosie and Nancy. Cindy seconded the motion.
- Ruth made a motion to make a \$2,000 mortgage payment for SOJ. Marlene seconded the motion.
- Mell'O'Dee read the Secretary's report with no corrections or additions.
- Carol S asked for volunteers for officers in 2026. Sue B and Ann M will serve as Co-Presidents, Mell'O'Dee and Deanna as Co-Secretaries, Glenna and Loma as Co-Treasurers.
- Sue B reported on Taste of Christmas, to be held on Saturday, Dec. 6th, 8am-2pm:
 - ⇒ Set-up on Friday, Dec. 5th, 10am-1pm. She shared a list of items to bake or make. Raffle baskets were also discussed.
 - ⇒ Loma has plates for baked items—ingredients should be listed on baked goods.
 - ⇒ Sue, Cindy, Loma and Ann will price items.
 - ⇒ There will be a sign-up sheet for workers.
 - ⇒ Laura's table will have donated items for sale.
- Sue reported that \$160 was spent to repair the refrigerator but not sure if the problem is fixed.
- Noisy Offering is Sunday, November 23rd.
- Blood Drive will be on Wednesday, December 10th, 9am-2pm
- A Community Sing-a-long for Joy Packs with the Verde Valley Voices will be held on Friday, Dec. 12th
- Joyful Crafting is held Friday mornings at 9am. The Quail Quilters donated a quilt that we are selling tickets for to be drawn at Taste of Christmas.
- Our Christmas meeting on Dec. 11th will be held at Becky Keck's house at 9:30am. Bring a paper product.
- Ruth and Deanna will do Christmas bags for kids again this year.
- Prayers for friends and family members.
- Pizza for First Responders in January.
- A fancy tea in the springtime.
- Sue presented Carol with a Thank You gnome.
- Dee Suhr's new address is:
c/o Lara Kraay, 9807 Grand Ave, Omaha, NE 68134

We closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Mell'O'Dee Gaber, Co-Secretary





Patterson Yazzi, NELM Director expressed his many thanks for the generous donations our SOJ congregation provided that were delivered November 11th. The delivery was a successful event.

Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission—NELM

We are collecting items this week (deadline is Dec 11th) for our Winter/Christmas Collection for NELM. Below is a list of suggested items for both men and women adults during this winter season.



Hats & Gloves

Face cream

Jackets

Moisturizer

Pajamas

Hand & body lotion (“Udder Balm” or similar brand for men)

Flashlights

Tools

Scarves are being donated by the SOJ Crafter’s Group.

Please wrap all gifts but label what is inside and size.



IN-REACH / OUTREACH TEAM

The In-Reach/Outreach Team will meet on Wednesday, December 3rd at 10am in the Conference Room.

VERDE VALLEY HOMELESS COALITION

Naomi met with Rhonda recently and she stated that the biggest need will be GLOVES for the homeless this winter. Please leave your gifts in the marked container in the fellowship hall.



Also, mark your calendar for the 2nd Annual Dinner with the Homeless” on Thursday, February 12th, 2026.

Naomi Barcanic

GATHER BIBLE STUDY

December’s Gather Bible Study will meet on Thursday, Dec. 18th at 2pm.

We will be using the Gather magazine Study Guide for December.

Until further notice, we will meet at the Dunns, 245 Rogers St, Clarkdale.

Judy will call and check a few days before the scheduled meet and if it needs to be changed, she will call those who attend. All are welcome to join us!



SOJ’s MEN’S GROUP



The Men’s Group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at Red Rooster Café in Old Town for fellowship and to discuss that week’s Gospel. This month, they will meet only once on Thursday, December 11th, due to Christmas. For more information contact Tom Berlage, 1-218-576-8861.

FOOD BANK SUNDAY



Non-perishable food items will be collected Sunday, December 7th for our local food bank. Leave your food items in the grocery cart in the narthex.

If you participate in the Green Bag Program, please leave your filled bags at this time under the table in the narthex. Please remember to check the expiration dates on food before donating.



DAYTIME BOOK CLUB

There will be no book discussion for December. In January, we will meet on January 22nd. Note there are five Thursdays in January. It will be great to return to discuss our first book of the new year. If you missed our November discussion, watch the newsletter for the January book choice. Listed below are possibilities for books to read in 2026.

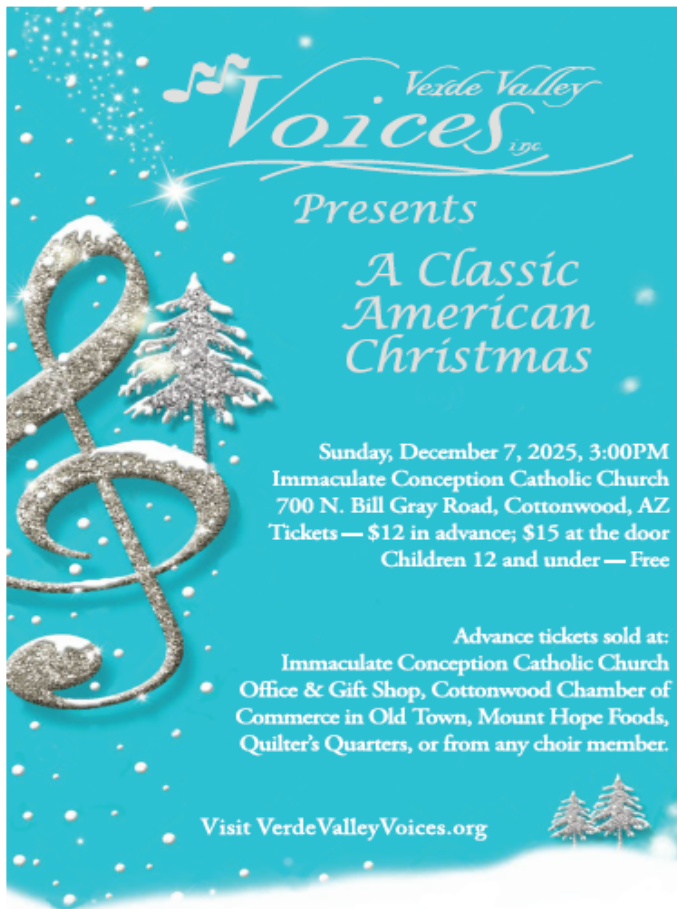
1. ***Miss Julia Stands Her Ground***, Ann B Ross YLY: Large & Regular Print
2. ***Broken Country***, Clare Leslie Hall YLN: audio on CD, Large & Regular Print, CD Book, e-audio book, e-book, Kindle
3. ***The Strawberry Patch Pancake House***, Laurie Gilmore, Patty's recommendation, YLN: Regular Print, e-book, Kindle
4. ***Desert Noir, a Lena Jones mystery***, Betty Webb (AZ University Professor), Rita's recommendation, YLN: Regular Print
5. ***Flying Angels***, Danielle Steel YLN Reg and Large Print, ebook
6. ***When We Meet Again***, Kristin Harmel YLN Reg Print
7. ***Cutting for Stone***, Abraham Verghese YLN Regular Print, Audio on CD, e-audio book, ebook, Kindle
8. ***The Book of Longings***, Sue Monk Kidd YLN Reg and Large Print Audio on CD, ebook, Kindle
9. ***The Winter Garden***, Kristin Hannah YLN Reg and Large, Audio on CD, e-audio book, ebook, Kindle
10. ***Salt to the Sea***, Ruta Sepetys YLN Reg and Large Print Audio on CD, e-audio book, ebook, Kindle
11. ***The Glass Castle***, Jeanette Walls YLN DVD video only
12. The ***Book Woman***, Kim Michelle Richardson YLN—no listing
13. ***The Anxious Generation***, Haidt, Jonathan YLN Regular Print, Audio on CD, e-audio book, ebook, Kindle

ATTN Avid Readers: This is an ambitious list; when/if you read one of these, please share with the group if you liked/disliked the read. That facilitates our future book choices each month.



In need of prayer?

Please direct all prayer requests to Laura at klstransky@gmail.com or call 970-749-2270.



Spirit of Joy Holiday Blood Drive

Wednesday, December 10th
9:00 am to 2:00 pm

Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church
330 Scenic Drive, Clarkdale, AZ

For an appointment, please visit RedCrossBlood.org
Or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Sponsor Code: Joy

Give Something that Means Something®

1-800-RED CROSS | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

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WORSHIP SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec 7: Isa 11:1-10; Ps 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matt 3:1-12

Dec 14: Isa 35:1-10; Ps 146:5-10; James 5:7-10; Matt 11:2-11

Dec 21: Isa 7:10-16; Ps 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matt 1:18-25

Dec 24: Isa 9:2-7; Ps 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

Dec 28: Isa 63:7-9; Ps 148; Heb 2:10-18; Matt 2:13-23



2025 SPIRIT OF JOY CHURCH COUNCIL

Officers

Kellie Sanders—President
ksanders0410@gmail.com, 815-751-1133

Laura Stransky—Vice President
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Pam Moody—Secretary
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Sue Bro—In-Reach/Outreach
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Ex Officio
Pr. Conrad Braaten
prbraaten@gmail.com, 202-213-4235

ELCA GOOD GIFTS

As members of the ELCA, we believe that God's love in Jesus is a gift. ELCA Good Gifts is just one way you can share that love with others. Your Good Gift this holiday season can support work in 86 countries.

See the bulletin insert on December 7th or pick up a flier in the narthex for more details. Ornaments can also be taken from our Christmas tree in the narthex to be given to someone as a gift.

Not only can you give gifts through God's Global Barnyard, but donations can also be used for:

- Clean Water
- Women and Children
- Agriculture
- Health and Nutrition
- Help in Times of Crisis
- Leaders and Change-Makers
- Grow the Church
- Give Where Needed Most

To place an order, use the order forms in the narthex and mark the gift chosen. Make your check out to "Spirit of Joy" with a notation on the memo line for "Good Gifts" and specify your gift. Place your check inside the folded order form and place it in the special basket designated for "Good Gifts".

God's Global Barnyard

An animal can make a world of difference for a family in need. Animals provide food to eat, fertilizer to grow crops and offspring to sell at the market. With one gift, you can help a family escape the cycle of hunger and poverty for good.



Cow

A cow's milk, meat, fertilizer and calves can quickly strengthen a family's financial security.

\$500



Chicks

Chicks begin laying eggs at just a few months old, offering nutritious, protein-rich meals for families who are hungry.

\$10



Goat

Fresh milk from a goat is very nutritious and can be used to make products like yogurt and cheese to sell at the market.

\$50



Honeybees

Bees pollinate plants and boost crop growth — helping the wider community. Soaps and candles can be made from their wax and sold at the local market.

\$20



Pig

Within months after birth, piglets grow to weigh over 200 pounds — bringing a big payoff at the market.

\$30



Fish Farm

A fish farm and training in good business economics can provide a lifetime of meals for a community.

\$250

VERDE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER—COMMENTARY

November 4, 2025

Come, see what love looks like in action.

Editor:

In a world so often overwhelmed by hate, fear and division, the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America (ELCA) in the Verde Valley are choosing a different path, one grounded in the love and teachings of Christ.

We invite you to come and see the amazing Christian values being lived out right here in our community.

At our local ELCA congregations, we strive each day to reflect Christ's heart through caring for one another, showing compassion to those in need, and extending empathy and forgiveness in all we do.

From supporting local food banks and families in crisis, to walking alongside those who are hurting, we believe faith is best shown through action.

We are far from perfect, but we are faithful and committed to living out the simple yet profound command to love our neighbors as ourselves.

If your heart longs for a community that believes love is stronger than fear, and that kindness still matters, we invite you to come and see for yourself.

Kellie Sanders
Member, Spirit of Joy in Clarkdale

FINANCIAL REPORT—October 2025

Operating Fund—October

Operating Fund Income	Operating Fund Expenses	Pastoral Call Fund Adj.	Net Income
\$ 23,154.60	\$ 15,709.19	\$ 3,883.44	\$ 3,561.97

Year-to-Date (Jan-Oct)

Operating Fund Income	Operating Fund Expenses	Pastoral Call Fund Adj.	Net Income
\$ 185,607.11*	\$128,846.47**	\$ 41,683.44	\$ 15,077.20

*Fundraising Income— \$775.95; Youth—\$700.00; Shoe Drive—\$3,268.00; Joy Pack Grant—\$3,926.00

**Youth \$800.00; Shoe Drive \$2,234.91

10/31/2025 Ending Balance

General Fund	\$91,763.16
Mortgage Fund	5,871.81
Restricted Ministries	<u>13,471.20</u>
Ending Balance	\$111,106.17

Board Restricted Fund—October

Income	Expenses	Restricted Fund Transfer	Net Income
\$ 0.00	\$ 4,524.00	\$ 41,683.44	\$ 37, 158.44

Year-to-Date (Jan-Oct)

Income	Restricted Fund Transfer	Expenses	Net Income
\$ 7,804.00*	\$41,683.44	\$ 28,230.14**	\$ 21,257.30

*Thrivent Choice Dollar	\$1,154.00	**Youth Camp Fee	\$250.00	Parking Lot	\$5,415.00
WELCA for Chairs	\$5,000.00	Piano Tuning	\$700.00	Landscaping	\$1,100.00
Donation for Chairs	\$1,650.00	Building HVAC	\$9,145.73	Chairs	\$7,095.41
Restricted Fund Transfer	\$41,683.44	Roof Repair	\$4,524.00		

10/31/2025 Ending Balance

Building Fund	\$ 0.00
Landscaping Fund	0.00
Mortgage Principal	2,066.00
Organ/Piano Fund	2,300.87
Reserve Fund	41, 683.44
Restricted Undesignated	<u>10,039.37</u>
	\$56,089.68

Bank 11 month CD	\$ 10,000.00
Mission Investment Fund Savings Balance	\$ 2,427.02
Mission Investment Fund Mortgage Owed	\$110,440.11

MEMORIALS, HONORS & GIFTS

*If you have felt blessed by someone,
give a gift in their honor or memory.
You are sharing that blessing
with others.*

NOVEMBER 2025

JOY PACKS

Deanna Codner—in Memory of
Ken Suhr & Connie Taylor

Kim Densmore

Fred & Sally Huff

Anita Young

Anonymous—with
Thanksgiving for our SOJ family

GIFTS

Mick & Marcia Shanahan —
in Memory of Ken Suhr

Kip & Laura Stransky—
in Memory of Ken Suhr

JOYFUL MUSIC MAKERS

Join us as we Make a
Joyful Noise every Sunday.

9:00am—Joyful Music Rehearsal

9:15am—Hymn Sing

11:15am—Joyful Music Rehearsal

All singers, instrumentalists
and noise makers of all ages
are welcome!



Spirit of Joy LUTHERAN CHURCH

330 Scenic Drive
Clarkdale, Arizona 86324
www.sojaz.net



December Highlights

- 3—In-Reach/Outreach Team Mtg (CR), 10am
- 6—WELCA's Taste of Christmas Event (FH), 8am-2pm
- 7—Food Bank & Green Bag Sunday
Verde Valley Voices Concert, Immaculate Conception Church, 3pm
- 10—Blood Drive (FH) 9am—2pm
- 11—Men's Breakfast Group @ Red Rooster Café, 8am
WELCA Christmas Meeting at Keck's, 9:30am
- 12—Community Sing-a-long with Verde Valley Voices, 7pm
- 13—Green Bag Food Collection at Mtn View, UMC, 10am
- 17—Church Council Meeting (CR), 1pm
- 18—Gather Bible Study (Dunn's) 2pm
- 21—Blue Christmas Litany Worship, 9:30am
- 24—Christmas Eve Lessons, Carols, Communion and Candlelight Service, 5pm
- 25—Christmas Potluck Dinner and Bingo (FH), 11am
- 26—Office Closed



SOJ Weekly Worship Schedule

Mid-Week Worship—
Wednesdays 5pm

Worship—Sundays 9:30am
Fellowship—following
Sunday worship