

January
2023



Lord of Life Lutheran

LifeLines

Notes from Curt Matz

Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it. Luke 11:28

Every year near the end of December and on into the beginning of January people greet one another with "Happy New Year." These words are said without giving any real thought to what they mean. When we say them, we are often thinking only of New Year's day and wishing someone a joyful celebration of that particular holiday. Sometimes our minds may wander a bit farther and we might realize that we are also saying that we hope that all goes well for them throughout the coming year.

I prefer saying "Blessed New Year" to people rather than "Happy New Year." "Happy" seems to focus on the self - either ourselves or others. We tend to think that doing certain things or buying certain items or being with certain people will make us happy. In contrast to this, blessings are something that comes to us from outside of ourselves. Blessings are gifts. They are not something we can bring about through our own efforts. I see all of what we refer to as "blessings" as something that comes to us from the hand of a good, loving, and gracious God (see James 1:17).

When I say "Blessed New Year," I am praying that God will surround the person I greet with God's loving presence on New Year's Day and throughout the entire year even if the person may not understand this or even give me a strange look because of this unusual greeting. I am praying that God will watch over them and enable them to experience a life filled with the good gifts of God.

I wish each of you a "Blessed New Year." May your minds, your hearts, and your lives be filled with the presence of God and the love of God. May God enable you to find blessings even in those experiences that may not at first seem to be blessings. May your greatest blessing come from a loving relationship with Jesus whose birth we have just celebrated. May his love fill you with so much love that it flows forth from you to bring God's blessings to all who you meet and interact with throughout this year of our Lord 2023.

*Have A
Blessed
New Year!*

Evening Bible Study: Book of Revelation

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Dates to Note

9th: 7pm Council Meeting
12th: 1:30pm School Lunches
23rd: 6:30pm Potluck/7pm Evening Bible Study

"LifeLines"

Mergers: Not Just for Amazon and Twitter

Merger: The combination of two or more firms, which form a new entity under the banner of one name.

In 2018, three small congregations in Oklahoma City—Ascension, St. Mark and Redeemer—were struggling financially. After Brian Campbell was called as the congregations’ pastor, they started discussing how they might pool resources. They started with combined services on fifth Sundays. Discussions about a formal merger had just started when the pandemic hit.



On March 2—Ash Wednesday—the congregations officially began worshiping together as All Saints Lutheran Church. Services are held at the former St. Mark building; Ascension’s was sold and Redeemer’s building will be a community center. In addition to financial savings, the merger has reduced the number of volunteers needed. In a congregation such as Ascension, with 20 active members, almost everybody had to play some role. Now, in a congregation of 70-plus, members can pick and choose how they serve.

The merger isn’t all puppies and rainbows

Campbell acknowledges that the merger isn’t all “puppies and rainbows.” In fact, it’s a “full-contact game with cuts and bruises.” Members are still trying to figure out how to merge various ministries. People are hesitant to step on toes and are inclined to follow the routines of their ‘old’ church.

John and Winiferd Russell, members of St. Mark and then Ascension for a total of 43 years, lobbied for the merger because membership was dwindling and included no youth or young adults. The congregations were also forced to dip into limited savings to pay monthly bills. “More than half did not transfer their membership or commit to joining All Saints.” Winiferd said. “Our membership numbers are not fixed. Some are still coming and deciding if they want to be members.” Campbell noted.

One unique aspect of the consolidation is that the congregations were quite different. Redeemer’s membership was majority Black, whereas Ascension and St. Mark were majority white. This required close attention as members worked through combining the three cultures. LaTesa Williams is president of All Saints’ council and was president of Redeemer, where she was a lifelong member. “There was a process I had to go through to get to this point. It’s a great deal of change, but without each other, we all fail. We need each other.”

William Carr, chair of the property committee, said the merger involved a significant amount of moving property, from an altar to office supplies to 2,000 pounds of books. Carr also served on the consolidation task force and said it was concerned that no group be “owner and host” to the others as they selected a building for their new worship center. The sanctuary is a symbol of something new; the members have rearranged it twice and incorporated the altars and pulpits from the other two buildings.

“Becoming a new congregation is hard, [which is] ironic for a church founded on change,” Carr said. “The symbolism of the different furnishings and arrangement of the sanctuary has been a very positive image to reinforce the idea that All Saints is something new and, although we retain some of the old from each previous congregation, we wish to move forward with the new one.”

Council Highlights

Bible Study: Growing as God Works in Your Life - Luke 5:34-38

Treasurer's report: Based on 2023 budget projections we are ~\$32,000 short of where we need to be. We are also way below what we budgeted for 2022.

Balances January through November 30, 2022:

Total Income \$ 112,418.65
Expenses \$ 102,248.53
Net Income \$ 10,170.12
Interest Inc. \$ 2.17
Total \$ 10,172.29

Balances on November 30, 2022:

Undesignated checking: \$ 7,224.44
Designated Checking: \$ 2,836.70
Debit Card Checking: \$ 833.63
Savings: \$ 33,012.80
Total Assets \$ 49,505.45

Funeral for Margery Austin

For anyone who would like to attend, Marge Austin's funeral mass will be at St. Nick's 1 pm Jan. 7th with a gathering afterward at the church

Pastor's report: Evening bible study will not meet in December; video is missing. Kari will take over as pianist in January. Jan. 29 will feature Now the Feast & Celebration order of worship. A notice will be added to livestream to avoid being kicked off Facebook.

Ministry Events Calendar & 2022 Goal Setting/Objectives/Timeline:

- ◆ All ages Sunday school. One student; meets during fellowship.
- ◆ Congregational/Community Events. Ornament party filled two tables; 10-12 ornaments will be given to Adopt-a-Family. About 12 people attended Christmas decorating/cookie exchange.
- ◆ Fuel changeover. Begins Dec. 19th.
- ◆ Ministry Events Calendar.
 - ◆ January. Provide winter activities. Resume teaching. Thank you for support letter to congregation. PFD reminder. ELCA report. Put away Christmas decorations. Lent planning team.
 - ◆ February. Faith formation. New member classes. Research Sunday school materials. Outreach to community for Lent/Easter. Stewardship. Create site profile team.

Ongoing Business:

- ◆ 2023 Tithe Cards. Offering cards will be out in January.
- ◆ Helping AK Surplus Funds. Suggested for cots or bedding.
- ◆ Interim Agreement. Submitted Pastor Curt's extension through June 30. Added one week leave.

New Business:

- ◆ Council 2023. New council installation Jan. 8. Retreat TBD at Jan 9 meeting.
- ◆ Loving Families. Has resumed; HAK hired a new coordinator.
- ◆ Office Manager absence. Will need fill-ins while Jo is gone 2-3 weeks in Feb., primarily on food box days.
- ◆ Biannual Report is due June 2023.
- ◆ Council Contact List. Need to draft 2023 list.



Lord of Life Lutheran Church

North Pole, Alaska

2023 CHURCH COUNCIL

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|----------------------|--|
| President: | Bob Thoma |
| Vice President: | |
| Secretary: | Chris Blais |
| Treasurer: | Dianna Lindhag |
| At Large Members: | Evan Keil John Dart Kevin Powers Allen Griswold |
| Interim Pastor: | Curt Matz |
| Financial Secretary: | Becky Peterson |

Lord of Life Lutheran

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Website: www.lordoflifeak.com

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Pastor Curt's cell: (907) 322-2065

E-mail

Jo: office@lordoflifeak.com

Office Hours

Monday - Friday 9am to 1pm

Mission Statement

"God's word moves us to make connections by welcoming all, strengthening and serving the healthy and hurting."

Next Church Council Meeting: **Jan. 9 @ 7pm**

Newsletter deadline: 20th of each month.
Get the latest on our website:

www.lordoflifeak.com/the-latest

or

Follow our Facebook page, worship live Sundays at 10:30am:
www.facebook.com/lordoflifeak

Special Prayers and Concerns

Birthdays

- 1/7 Katy Castor
- 1/9 Ashley Garrison
- 1/11 Meg Ojala
- 1/14 CJ Villarreal
- 1/23 Riley Maranville
- 1/23 Michelle Powers
- 1/24 Ty Peterson
- 1/30 Liz Sandbo



Prayers for:

- ~ Meg O, on hospice care
- ~ Larry, friend of Addie, fighting cancer
- ~ Lord of Life family—embrace change as pastor search continues
- ~ Those with on-going health issues:
 - Tanya A's son Bryan, jaw cancer
 - Darlene M, continued healing

Contact office@lordoflifeak.com
to sign up for prayer chain emails

Anniversaries

- 1/1 Kelly & Zach Fennell
- 1/11 Evie & Gary Freeman



Is your important date missing? please let us know so we can celebrate with you!



Alaska Synod Prayer Partner for December:

Faith Lutheran Church, Delta Junction, AK

Please pray for:

- ~ Health of pastor and lay leaders
- ~ Guidance for leaders
- ~ Strong connections with Presbytery/ELCA Synod

