

December 2024



Dear Siblings in Christ,

We are once again at that time of year: December and the season of Advent. Advent means “arrival,” and throughout this season we anticipate and remember the promise that Christ is *Emmanuel*—God with us. Advent is one of my favorite seasons in the church year because it reminds us who we are and whose we are. The Advent season gives space for us to show up as our full selves and bring whatever we are feeling and experiencing in life to God: joy, grief, excitement, fear, malaise, contentment. And, because God is with us, God knows what it’s like to be human, to experience the roller coaster of emotions that come with life. God knows this because God became human through Jesus Christ, an infant born to two refugees who lived in fear of Rome, the greatest empire on Earth. Christ came to the world in the most unexpected manner: as a helpless child who needed the nurturing of his parents to grow into the teacher, prophet, and Savior for the world.

I remember as a child loving this time of year: listening to Christmas music while sitting by the fire at home, eating my fill of cookies, and anticipating my favorite day, Christmas morning. Just like Ralphie in *A Christmas Story*, I planned out my Christmas list for Santa each year and went to sleep on Christmas Eve, eager to wake up and open my presents. One year, I was so excited that I woke up at 2:30 am to discover Santa had arrived: I stayed up until 10 pm that night playing with my toys, much to the exhaustion of my parents...This joy I felt on that Christmas morning is a reflection of the joy we can all hold and proclaim this Christmas: the joy that Christ is already here, active and present in our lives through the Holy Spirit to make God’s love real.

I invite you to get curious this season about those moments in your life where you notice *Emmanuel*: maybe it’s in the warm smile of a stranger, maybe it’s through a phone call or visit you receive from a person who cares about you, maybe it’s in the joy you feel when gathered with a good friend who sees you for who you are, maybe it’s in a song you hear that fills up your spirit, or maybe it’s something or someone that surprises you and causes you to rethink what you thought you already knew about the world.

Hopefully these moments can happen when you join in our regular Sunday morning worship in addition to our 6 pm Wednesday evening Advent services, which are centered on the theme, *The Weary World Rejoices*. Bring whatever you are experiencing or holding to give to God during this time of contemplative worship. An adult forum will meet on Sunday mornings following worship to further the conversation on this theme. And, we will once again hold space for open prayer in the sanctuary on Tuesday, December 3 from noon-1 pm.

So, come as you are. Come and be reminded that God is with us. And, that Jesus sees you and loves you for who you are.

With Peace, Pastor D.J.



First Ev Lutheran Church Council Minutes – November 20, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

Welcome and Call to Order: Vice President Erica @ 6:03pm

Devotions: Pastor D.J. Philippians 4: Rejoice in the Lord always

Present: Pastor D.J. Chatelaine, Erica Aronson, Candy Herrlich, Amy Lee, Carmen Nesseth, Brad Nesseth, Tanya Short, Lindsay Short, Eric Hoversten

Approve Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda Carmen/Tanya/pass

Consent Agenda Items:

Secretary's Report: Reviewed as printed in the October Church Newsletter.

Treasurer's Report: Current giving was very generous in October (includes a few 1x annual giving). Two notable large year-end expenses: We received the invoices for both property insurance and worker's compensation, totaling \$13,216, due 11/23. Last year we paid a total of \$9963 and we included \$10,000 in the 2024 budget. Harris Haugen and Brad Nesseth are working to get a quote from another company as well as a review of our current policy. Companies that cover churches seem to be limited. An agent in Cannon Falls as well as Hartman insurance were unable to place us with any company. There is a payment option, however it carries extensive fees, and I recommend that we pay it all at once to avoid those fees. We have pledged \$8,000 for ELCA general benevolence and to-date we still owe \$5,000 before the end of the year. Organ repair fundraising continues, currently have raised approximately 6% before the addition of any construction required after the repairs are complete.

Pastor's Report: Home visits ongoing- every 6 weeks or so; held first open prayer time on 11/5- 3 participants and lots of engagement on Facebook page. Will host again on 12/3. Will participate in Kenyon area Thanksgiving service on 11/26 and was invited to lead the prayer before the tree lighting ceremony during Christmas in Kenyon on 12/14. Planning to attend various KW athletic and music events. Leading confirmation classes in partnership with Intern Yvonne, acolyte training completed and will begin on 12/1. The website continues to be updated and staff bios recently added. Completed the mandatory Power and Boundaries workshop on 10/29 and participated in a First Call Theology retreat on 11/14. Attended Feed my Starving Children on 11/2. Met with the families of Mary Skundberg and Mel Kirchoff to plan services. Planning Wednesday night advent services to be held in December. They will center on truth, compassion, restoration, and justice. Sunday morning adult forums will dovetail from these services for more in-depth discussion. Planning a family staycation in Minneapolis 1/1-1/3. Mileage & other expense from 10/17-11/20= \$176.22
Motion to approve the consent agenda including mileage and other expense reimbursements. Erica/Amy/pass

President's Report: I was invited to represent our church at the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) meeting. I may make it to the council meeting later and will report on what I learn there. Please be thinking and working on your end of year reports as you are able. I need to say Thanks to a few people: Erica for presiding at the meeting tonight, Brad for getting the blinds taken care of and working on the steps, Tanya for stepping up to lead the Organ fundraising, Pastor DJ for helping on a tough conversation with concerned members, and all of you for everything you've been doing to make this run as smooth as possible!!

Ongoing Items:

1. Website & Facebook: Pastor D.J. continues to add to and edit the website and Facebook page. Anyone wanting to add stories, happenings, or pictures please send them to Pastor D.J.
2. Organ Repairs Fundraising: An organ repair fund committee is being formed. Tanya Short has volunteered to chair the committee. Current members are Chris Cordes, Eric Hoversten, Susan Hoversten, Carmen Nesseth, and Heidi Haugen. Others are welcome to join. Please send fundraising ideas! A request for donation was sent to the Kenyon fire relief association and an answer is still pending.

Youth Rep. Report: High school play- 12 angry jurors- performed 11/22 & 11/23; Annual band benefit dinner served 11/22; speech, boys' and girls' basketball, wrestling, and knowledge bowl seasons have begun. The high school holiday music concert will be 12/9. The council mentioned how great the band & choir sounded at the Veterans Day presentation this month.

Committee Reports:

FLCW- FLCW continues to support various church activities including Thank offering service, Mitten tree, SS Christmas shopping, and lefse making. We also support, with the help of Love Day, Good Earth Village. Pat and Tammy will remain co-treasurers, Sherry as secretary. Renaming leader position to chairperson and looking for volunteers (preferably 2

chairpersons) to fulfill that position. Due to the Holidays, upcoming Love Days will be on 12/5 and 12/19 at 1pm. Will return to 2nd & 4th Thursdays in January. Susan Hoversten has offered to serve as vice president- thank you! Keep the mitten tree in mind when you are out shopping and watch for more information about a Christmas family we will support.

Worship/Evangelism- Christ the King Sunday (11/24): Will utilize readings/ scripture. Pastor DJ will reach out for volunteers to read. Advent: Will have Kate Bowler themed Wednesday evening service with paired adult Sunday forum. Weekly themes include: Truth, Compassion, Restoration/ Justice. Cookies served following service. Provided Pastor DJ with Christmas service traditions at First. Discussed blended service with a possible survey to determine what people want as well as trialing a few ideas to determine efficacy. Discussed possible options for organ repair funds.

Property and Management- Projects/items worked on this past month: Sprayed main church property for broadleaf weeds. Removed brush and mowed southeast most corner of property after receiving complaint. Installed window blinds in Pastor DJ's and the intern's office. Experienced another issue with church boiler. Set up service call to evaluate. Have also secured a bid to replace one of 3 current boilers. Still considering options to retread Ed-Wing stairwell. Awaiting pricing from Hiller's Flooring in Rochester. Currently awaiting a proposal/quote from a 2nd Property/Liability/WC insurance carrier.

Stewardship- Stewardship Challenge envelopes are still being turned in. These funds have been designated to the Organ Repair Fund. Stewardship members participated in filling boxes for Samaritan's Purse-Operation Christmas Child. 21 boxes were filled and delivered to the local drop off location in Faribault. Thank you to all who participated, donated items and/or gave money to help with shipping and handling. Items that have been donated for the Food Shelf have been dropped off as they come in. Organ Repair Fundraising Committee seeking interested individuals or ideas for raising funds for the Organ Repair. Contact the church office.

Youth and Education- Had 8 volunteers that attended the Feed my Starving Children packing event; packed 21 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child; still need volunteer Sunday school teachers- PLEASE consider! Assemble simmer kits followed by pizza party on 11/20. Planning for Sunday school Christmas shopping and costume fitting on 12/8, family movie during Christmas in Kenyon on 12/14, and Christmas program/Live nativity on 12/22. Volunteers are needed for all events. Please contact Bryana or the church office for information. Youth email address: flcyouth45@gmail.com

KAIC- No report received.

Long Range Planning/Personnel/Endowment/Committees- did not meet.

Next Meeting: December 18th, 7 pm

Devotions: Tammy

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn Carmen/Tanya/pass Time: 7:10 pm

Closing with the Lord's Prayer

Respectfully submitted, Amy Lee, Secretary



Our Stewardship challenge...

God urges his faithful people to be generous. Growth in generous giving is a spiritually healthy behavior. Growth in generous giving accomplishes great things for God's purposes. In September the Stewardship Committee gave the congregation a Stewardship Challenge along with some "seed" money to increase their giving and to share how they would do this. Members rose to the challenge and we more than tripled the amount that was given out, along with increasing some of their monthly offering. Thank you, members for rising to this challenge. The money is going toward our Organ Repair.

Stewardship Committee

ADVENT-CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Dear Friends,

Happy new (liturgical) year! (Yes, I will 100% start January's letter with a similar greeting.) Getting to be with y'all in the KAIP for the last three months has been such a joy and a labor of love. Thank you for letting me be a part of your communities and congregations during harvest dinners, affirmations of Baptism, and the highs and lows of life.

As we enter into this December, we bring our whole selves: what's changed since last year at this time, the memories of past years, the weights of our world, and myriad unique concerns. I invite you to dwell in some of why we celebrate the birth of Christ in the ways we often do in our culture:

- Trees/Wreaths/Garlands: ever-green with new life, a fragrant (if you still use a real tree, unlike your intern, who is allergic to pine!) reminder that God makes all things new, even in the dead of winter;
- Angels: whether atop the tree, an ornament, window cling, or music box, these winged reminders call us to remember the angels' appearance to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born;
- Stars: if you put a star topper on the tree or outside your home, remember the star that shone on the dwelling place of Jesus and his family, according to Matthew's Gospel;
- Lights: these remind us of the light of Christ entering the world in a human body, as well as to allow ourselves to shine the light of God into all the world in all of our various hues;
- Gifts: Jesus Christ is the ultimate gift. We show our care for others by giving gifts.

This month, as things get busy and snowy and cold and frantic, direct your gaze to one of the beautiful holiday decorations and recall why we celebrate the ultimate joy, the light of God, the great God-with-Us here in our midst. This is an amazing thing we believe!

Happy Advent & Merry Christmas! Vicar Yvonne



May the Christmas Story
shine God's Glory
in your Heart
and Home !


First Lutheran Staff

December 2024



Seasons of ADVENT and CHRISTMAS

New dates for
Dec Love Day

1 Advent 1 9 Worship 10 Tech Training 101 10 Sun School 10 Coffee 10:15 Adult Forum 2-5 Jean Hiner 100th Birthday Open House	2	3 12-1 Open Prayer Time- In Sanctuary	4 6 Advent Contemplative Worship & cookies? 6:45 EdYou Mtg	5 1 LOVE DAY 7 AA <i>See Cookie Sign Up Pgs</i>	6	7
8 Advent 2 9 Worship 10 Sun School <i>Christmas Shopping & Costume Fitting</i> 10 Coffee 10:15 Adult Forum	9	10	11 6 Advent Contemplative Worship & cookies?	12 7 AA	13	14 <i>Christmas in Kenyon</i> Family Movie Night - 6 pm - concessions available
15 Advent 3 9 Worship 10 Sun School 10 Coffee 10:15 Adult Forum	16	17	18 6 Advent Contemplative Worship & cookies? Council Mtg	19 1 LOVE DAY 7 AA 5:30 Sons of Norway	20	21
22 Advent 4 9 Worship with S/S Live Nativity 10 Coffee 10:15 Adult Forum	23 9 A.M. January NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	24 Chr Eve 4 pm Candlelight Service	25 Christmas Day CHRIST IS BORN 	26 7 AA	27	28
29 Christmas 1 9 Worship 10 Coffee NO Sun School	30	31 DUE!! Annual Report Submissions	LOOKING AHEAD . . . <i>Sat Jan 18 or 25 Family Tubing, Mazeppa Steeplechase</i> <i>Sun Jan 26 ANNUAL MEETING</i>			

♪ On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me . . . ♪



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December

NEWSLETTER



Blessed be the LORD God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people
and redeemed them. Luke 1:68
