



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

MONMOUTH, IL

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**Gathered by God, We Live Our Faith With:
Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy.**

Our Church—This Week :: December 15, 2025

Our Staff

Pastor Jamie Gallagher

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Musicians: Janice Algren

Carolyn Kellert

Preschool and Day Care Director

Bobbi Nees

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Congregation Council

President: Pam Van Kirk

Vice President: Chip Algren

Secretary: Diane Carlson

Pam Best

Adam Sanberg

Kurt Volz

Dee Dee Yez

Dear Friends and Family,

More snow, more frigid temperatures, more yearning for the days we yearned for cooler weather. It's a weird cycle we go through. In hot seasons, we yearn for cooler weather. In cold seasons, we yearn for hotter weather. And it is very much like the season of Advent. The season of Advent is a season of preparation for the coming of Jesus, and our seasonal music is filled with sentimental emotions for the snow, for getting together for warm beverages and snowball fights, all while waiting for a man who lives at the North Pole, the coldest and snowiest possible spot, to joyfully bring toys to good children. And yet, we want this season to be over quickly, to be done with the end of year rituals, the joy of new snow, to start a new year with resolutions we will forget quickly, and to move on to the rest of our life.

Advent does not only represent this living contradiction, it also represents the space of waiting for a promise from God to be fulfilled, all while that very same promise has already begun to be fulfilled right here and now. Yes, we sing hymns heralding the birth of Jesus, hymns that sing of shepherds and angels and wise men celebrating the birth of Jesus, and of sentimental emotions that warm our hearts because Jesus was indeed born. We sing all these songs as we await another coming of Jesus, the return when God's Kingdom will be fully realized. And yet, with the very birth of Jesus all those 2000 + years ago, God's Kingdom has already entered the world in a new way, one that we are already experiencing in the very now moment. Yet much like waiting for the warmer season to come in a few months, we sit pining for what will come later, not knowing when that later moment actually will be.

So perhaps Advent is a needed season of contradictions, a needed time to just sit in the middle of what we are experiencing and what we are waiting for. So be okay with all the sentimental emotions you are experiencing ... and be very okay with the pining for what will come. It is all normal and all very okay.

Sunday Schedule

9:30 AM Coffee

10:00 AM Worship

Bible Study Opportunities

Future opportunities will be announced soon

Wednesday Soup Dinner and Advent Devotion

Join us Wednesdays at 6 PM for a Soup Dinner and Advent Devotion. The devotion series is a calm, reflective series that will help us settle our hectic lives and restless spirits.

Sign up to bring a soup in the Narthex or let Pastor Jamie know you can bring one.

Sunday School

In December, we are planning to have Sunday school again on Sunday, December 21st.

Going forward into 2026, we will continue having Sunday school on the second and fourth Sundays of each month.

January dates will be: January 11 and January 25.

We will begin at 9:45. Sunday school students will join worship in time to share communion with their families.

Facebook Daily Advent Devotions

Join our Facebook page every day through December for daily Advent devotions. Pastor Jamie has an advent calendar that each day is a new plastic brick building set. The set, when complete, will be a full Nativity scene. So far, a horse, donkey, sheep, and cow have been built. Watch the rest of the series throughout the month and interact with the series by commenting as each day prompts.



Revised Congregation Constitution

The revised Constitution is now available on our website for review. Or by contacting the church office for a copy to be mailed to you.

Sunday, January 4th, after worship, we are having a special congregation meeting to vote to approve this new constitution

Sunday, January 25th, we will hold our annual meeting and during the annual meeting vote to ratify our new constitution.

If there are any weather related cancellations, the meeting will be postponed to the following Sunday.

Liturgical Arts Workshop

The congregation council invites you to a Liturgical Arts Workshop on Wednesday, January 14th at 6 PM.

During this Workshop, which will be held in the sanctuary, we are going to begin an evaluation of our current paraments/banners and other liturgical arts. We are considering if we want to renew our liturgical paraments and banners and how we display the banners. This conversation will be a beginning of a process, and no final decisions will be made. But input will be appreciated.

Also, during this workshop, we will be reviewing sacristy tasks such as setting up communion and candle care. Right now these tasks are handled by Chip, and we are wanting others to know how to do these tasks as well.

And then, we are looking for volunteers who would like to take on the role of scheduling lectors, communion assistants, and ushers. This role would also be responsible for recruiting others to volunteer in these roles. This role would need to coordinate with Pastor Jamie when worship assistants are scheduled for listing in the bulletin and newsletters.

These three tasks seem like a lot for a workshop, but we should be able to accomplish these tasks within a hour. Please let Pastor Jamie or Pam Van Kirk know if you are interested in attending this Liturgical Arts Workshop.

Weather Cancellations

Well, we have already tested our system for this season, hopefully that will mean we won't have any more. But in case we do, as you now know, we will have an automated phone call go to every household in our system. If you did not get a phone call for November 30th, please call Pastor Jamie to make sure your correct phone number is listed in the system. Pastor Jamie also sends out an email to our entire newsletter list and will post on our church Facebook page.

When you get these notices, please check with your friends and neighbors who might not have access to email or social media to make sure they received the phone call.

All weather cancellations are decided by our council president, vice-president, and pastor in conversation with each other. And we will take the safety of our members in to consideration each time.

Worship

Advent

November 30 to December 21

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love — these themes of the Advent wreath candles are themes we are experiencing in worship throughout the season of Advent.

On Sunday, December 21st, we light our fourth candle and the candle will proudly represent God's love that never ends for all of God's people.

The Advent Wreath will also shine its brightest, preparing us for the true light from heaven being born in this world, and our hope for that true light to be fully experienced today even as we await for the return of Jesus in the ultimate brightness of God's Kingdom fully realized.

Join us this Sunday as we light the four candles and let your light so shine brightly that others may see your works in Jesus' name and glorify your heavenly Father.

Worship Guild Members

December 21— Advent 4

Usher:	Dee Dee Yez
Reader:	Chip Algren
Com Asst:	Gary Sanberg
Narthex Host:	Linda McGuire
Musician:	Janice Algren

December 24— Christmas Eve

Usher:	Doug Cruce
Reader:	Maddie Blaesing
Com Asst:	Julie Blaesing
Narthex Host:	Linda McGuire
Musician:	Janice Algren

December 28— Christmas 1

Usher:	Ray Golden
Reader:	Kurt Volz
Com Asst:	N/A
Narthex Host:	Linda McGuire
Musician:	Janice Algren

January 4— Christmas 2

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



Christmas Poinsettias

Help us decorate the church for Christmas Eve with live poinsettias. If you would like to bring your own, please bring it by Sunday, December 21st. And you may take it home after Christmas Eve worship or after worship on December 28th.

If you would like the church to buy a poinsettia for you, feel, a form will be in the narthex for you to fill out and place in the offering basket with a donation of \$15. A flower will be purchased the week of December 21st and labeled for you. You may feel free to take it home either after Christmas Eve worship or after December 28th.





Every Sunday

9:30 AM Fellowship Gathering
10:00 AM Worship

Sunday, December 14th—Advent 3

Sun, Dec 14—9:45 AM Family Sunday School

Wed, Dec 17 6 PM Advent Soup/Devotion

Sunday, December 21st — Advent 4

Sun, Dec 21—9:45 AM Family Sunday School

Wed, Dec 24 7 PM Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 28th — Christmas 1

Sun, Dec 28 — Lessons and Carols Worship

Sunday, January 4th — Christmas 2

Sun, Jan 4—11:00 AM Congregation Special
Meeting for Constitution Revision

Mon, Jan 5—6:30 PM Pathways Meeting

7 PM Building/Grounds Meeting

Sat, Jan 10—Joint Pathways and Council
Workshop

Sunday, January 11th — Baptism of Jesus

Sun, Jan 11 — 9:45 AM Family Sunday School

Tue, Jan 13 — 6 PM Council Meeting

Wed, Jan 14—6 PM Liturgical Arts Workshop

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



Dec 16 Michael Pearson

Dec 17 Caleb Sanberg

Dec 17 Jackie Slater

Dec 18 Tyler Osborn

Dec 18 Adam Sanberg

Dec 23 Derek Johnson

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 8 Steve Erlandson

Jan 9 Sue Hanson

Jan 11 Kathy Tate

Jan 12 Evan Shrader

Jan 14 Kathi Cruce

Jan 30 Kay Lovdahl

Feb 11 Becky Terpening

Feb 15 Ross Beedle

Feb 17 Kierstyn Johnson

Feb 17 Gary Martin

Feb 18 Mary Jane Olson

Feb 19 Janet Lowe

For corrections and
updates, please call the
Church office.



Feb 22 Kenny & Nancy
Reynolds

Mar 1 Phil & Trudy Bergren

Mar 11 Cecil & Kay Lovdahl

Mar 14 Jim & Tammy Slater

Apr 2 Don & Kathy Fillman

Apr 25 Todd & Kris Champion

Apr 28 Ron & Deb Manuel

May 5 Craig & Brenda Jones

May 6 Chuck & Connie
Larimer

May 21 Ted & Sue Hanson

Jun 4 Gary & Judy Sanberg

Jun 7 Angela & Kathleen
Bradley Volz

Jun 7 Dennis & Becky
Terpening

Jun 8 Ben & Jenny Sanberg

Jun 12 Neal & Jackie
Heerwagen

Jun 13 Michael & Barb Pearson

Jun 14 Doug & Kathi Cruce

Jun 14 Rich & Nancy Hanson

Jun 15 Rob & Tammy Ravel

June 19 Stan & Diane Carlson

Jun 23 Mike & Susie Jurgens

Jun 23 John & Pam VanKirk

Prayer Requests

Ila Roseberry, Kathi Cruce, Dean Sandstrom, Emily Agema, Janet Lowe, Wes Lovdahl, Doug Moulden, Marlene Moulden, Teresa Eyler, Pat Clark

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

Vision

2025

PURPOSE

Vision and Purpose Giving

December is our month to support Jamieson Community Center. We have the grocery cart in the Narthex for non-perishable goods. All financial donations may be given through the Vision and Purpose jar.

During the holiday season, times are already tough. With uncertainty surrounding government social safety programs, the times are even tougher and Jamieson Community Center has seen an increase in the number of clients in recent months.

Thank you for all the ways we support the Jamieson Center and all our Vision and Purpose causes throughout the year.

January, Strom Center == \$250.00

February, Lutheran Disaster Response == \$515.00

March, ELCA World Hunger == \$2,609.00

April, Special Olympics == \$410.00

May, Recharge Center == \$407.00

June, St. Jude Run (Wendy Anderson) == \$772.00

July, LWR School Kits == \$270.00

August, Kiwanis Club == \$460.00

September, Out of Darkness Walk == \$412.00

October, Mosaic == \$261.00

November, Lutheran Day Care and Pre-School, \$468.00

December, Jamieson Center,



29 "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word, 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." — Luke 2:29-32, Simeon speaking upon seeing the baby Jesus

The story of Jesus coming to the Jerusalem Temple as an infant is found in Luke's gospel. We are told they are fulfilling the ritual of presenting Jesus to the Lord. There in the crowded spaces of the Temple, Mary and Joseph have an encounter with Simeon who prophesizes about Jesus. Then they meet Anna, who also tells the crowds all about the baby Jesus. So, for Luke, the angels have proclaimed Jesus to the shepherds who rushed to see him. The outcast, those who were excluded from Jewish worship life, are now included. Then immediately afterward, in the Temple, prophets proclaim Jesus to all who are there, the insiders, those who have the privilege of standing in holy spaces, even if they don't understand what it means to stand in holy spaces. So, the world—represented by the outsiders (shepherds) and insiders (the prophets and Temple crowd) is hearing about this baby and who he is. And for Simeon, Jesus is a light for revelation to the gentiles and a light for glory to God's people, Israel.

As we wait for Jesus' return, there continue to be outsiders and insiders in our world today. We may not use these words exactly, but we do have more repulsive expressions for people we do not want to include, expressions like calling someone "garbage", solely on the basis of their ethnicity or nation of origin. In our Biblical narrative about Jesus' birth, the ancients would have considered shepherds to be garbage, they would have considered gentiles garbage. Yet at Jesus' birth, the angels went to the shepherds. The prophet Simeon declares Jesus as light for revelation to gentiles. God ends the divisions we humans put on each other. In Jesus, the lines of separation that lead us to call another human "garbage" is ended. In fact, Simeon would go on to say that the light of Jesus will expose the inner thoughts of people, revealing where we have gone astray in thinking lines of division are okay.

This Advent season is a season of being restored to the light of Jesus. It is a time to let the light of Jesus cleanse us from the ways we divide people into categories. As we light the candles on our Advent wreath and let that light burn brighter each week, may we be restored to God's joy of one large human family where all belong, where none are excluded, where all have value and worth and dignity. And may we rejoice together in this huge diverse and equal and inclusive family from now until Jesus returns.

Peace, Pastor Jamie