

The Friendly Visitor

First Lutheran Church

December 2024



417 East Broadway
Louisville, KY 40202
(502) 584-4926

Email: fstluth@bellsouth.net
www.thewelcomeplace.com

The Pastor's Message

Happy Advent! Advent is a four-week period leading up to Christmas Day. This year it begins on Sunday, December 1st. Like the season of Lent (the six-week period before Easter), Advent is a time of preparation. We prepare again to receive the birth of the Christchild into our lives and community.

It can be difficult to capture the essence and meaning of Advent and Christmas, especially during these tense times. I hear people complain about the early marketing of Christmas before Thanksgiving. I hear people complain about the rising cost of food. I hear people talk about the challenges of getting together with their polarized family post-election. More than complaining, I think people are struggling to find hope, faith, joy and love this Christmas.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, struggled to find hope. A reading of Mary's Magnificat (Mary's Song – Luke 1:39-55) helps us infer how difficult her life was. And you can hear the hope she places in God:

***He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.***

Mary identifies as weak, humble, lowly, hungry and poor. This is who God chose to give birth to Jesus. God chose to dwell among the least, the lost and the last. This is liberating love incarnate.

Jesus calls this preference for the marginalized Good News. Reading from the scroll of Isaiah, Jesus declares their mission which includes the hope Mary, his mother, proclaimed:

***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:18-19***

I find little hope in politicians, judges, successful businesspeople, social elites, celebrities, bishops or clergy. I find hope in the witness of God's love poured into the lives of people living on the edges of society. The poor and homeless, queer and trans folks, people of color, women, the immigrants and refugees often hear from society, "there is no room for you." Jesus, born in a back alley stable because there was no room in the inn, calls us to love one another. This love insists that no one be rejected or excluded. Living in community with those who are marginalized brings this incarnate love alive for us today.

If you are feeling hopeless this Advent and Christmas, go and be with God's people living on the edges of society. If you are lacking joy, faith or even love spend some time with those on the margins. Break bread with them, listen, learn, seek understanding, welcome them into your life and your hearts. It is in these places that God shows up and the angels proclaim: ***"Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."***

Merry Christmas!

John

The President's Message

I just have some Bible verses that I would like to share with you all this month:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have Everlasting Life. John 3:16.

Let all you do be done in LOVE. 1 Corinthians 16:14.

Forgive and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37.

And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. Luke 6:13.

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6.

As our future days come upon us, let us all pray and believe that GOD will take care of us.

Vicky Frank

Church Council President



Church News

Charlotte Blincoe, wife of Jim Blincoe, entered the church triumphant on December 4. On Thursday, December 12, there will be visitation at the church from 11:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m., followed by the funeral 12:00 p.m. Please keep Jim and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

The Craft Day scheduled for this coming Thursday has been rescheduled for Thursday, December 19 at 12:00 p.m.

The Food Pantry has successfully made the change to a choice pantry. When a neighbor comes, they wait briefly in the hall, then go to our choice pantry and choose their canned goods, dry goods, meats and a good number of items from the donated bread and pastries. Stephanie, Sharon, Mary Rodriguez, Vicky and Caroline Swain take turns hosting in the room. This cuts down on food waste and our customers really appreciate the experience.

On Saturday, December 21st, it will be the longest night of the year. This can be a very lonely and depressing time for those who are in mourning, and even more so for those who are unhoused. When Juni passed away, it brought home to us that the homeless population have little chance to formally remember and pray together for those who have passed on. So on December 21st, Pastor Bell and volunteers will staff a table outside, inviting neighbors to write the names of those who have passed in 2024 on a paper. At 5 pm we will have a simple prayer and remembrance service. If anyone is willing to sit outside for a while with Pastor, please let him know. Allowances will be made for weather.



Vicky Frank and Ada Middleton were awarded the 2024 Valiant Women Awards for Church Women United. Congratulations!

Holiday Closings

Both the Dare to Care Food Pantry and the Catholic Charities will be taking a break between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. The Pantry will resume serving our neighbors on January 2nd and classes and meetings for Catholic Charities will begin again on Monday, November 6th. Below is a list of changes for Catholic Charities.

Room	Orientation/Class	Schedule/time	Attendance
<u>MONDAYS</u>			
Junk room	ESL class	8:30 am-4:30 pm	25
Craft room	ESL class	8:30 am-4:30 pm	25
Bridal Lounge	Early Childhood Education (ECE) PACT time	10 am-12 pm	15
<u>TUESDAYS</u>			
Junk room	ESL class	8:30 am-4:30 pm	25
Craft room	ESL class	8:30 am-4:30 pm	25
Luther Hall Wing	ESL class	8:30 am-12 pm	25
Dining Room	Refugee Orientation	9 am-2 pm	30
<u>WEDNESDAYS</u>			
Junk room	ESL class	8:30 am-4:30 pm	25
Craft room	ESL class	8:30 am-4:30 pm	25
<u>THURSDAYS</u>			
Junk room	ESL class	8:30 AM-12:00 PM	25
Craft room	ESL class	8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	25
Luther Hall Wing	ESL Class	8:30 AM - 12:00 PM	25
Bridal Lounge	ECE PACT time	10-11 AM	15
Dining Room	Refugee Orientation (<i>2nd Thursday only</i>) Haitian Orientation (<i>Every three Thursdays</i>)	9:00 AM - 2:00 PM	30
<u>FRIDAYS</u>			
Luther Hall	Work Orientation (ends 12/20/2024)	9-11:00AM	50-100

Monthly Staff Meetings 2024-2025 Where: Luther Hall / Attendance: 80 / When: 2nd Thursday, 2:30-3:30 pm



At First Lutheran Church we believe that God delights in the diversity of all creation. As a Reconciling in Christ community, we welcome all into fellowship; recognizing the dignity of every human being regardless of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, economic status, race, or any other identifier. You are accepted and welcome here, no matter where you are on your spiritual journey.

If you need to contact one of the church's committee chairs, here is a list of all the committees and their chairs. Please let them know if you have any problems, suggestions for improvements, or compliments.

Building Users	Vicky Frank
Christian Education	Lori Caron
Endowment Funds Subcommittee	Harley Butler
Finance	Drew Wartschlager
Food Pantry	Sharon Lillie
Membership	Vicky Frank
Property	Paul Nellis
Social Ministry	Stephanie McCoy
Vision and Outreach	Paul Nellis
Worship and Music	Nancy Brian



THE FRIENDLY PUZZLER

Find the underlined words amongst the letter grid at the bottom.

The remaining letters will reveal a hidden message.

Luke 3: 7-18

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, "What, then, should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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Y L U F R E W O P N R T H S E W B A
P Q T D O O R B A P T I Z E D I S T

December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10:30am Worship Service	2 Food Pantry closed 8:30am Catholic Charities 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	3 8:30am Catholic Charities 10:00am Food Pantry 7:30pm NA	4 8:30am Catholic Charities 10:00am Food Pantry 4:30pm LYG Staff Meeting 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	5 8:30am Catholic Charities 4:00pm Food Pantry	6 Food Pantry closed 9:00am Catholic Charities 6:00pm LYG	7 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
8 9:30am Breakfast 10:30am Worship Service	9 Food Pantry closed 8:30am Catholic Charities 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	10 Food Pantry closed 8:30am Catholic Charities	11 8:30am Catholic Charities 10:00am Food Pantry 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 6:30pm LYG 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	12 8:30am Catholic Charities 12:00pm Craft Day 4:00pm Food Pantry 7:00pm Worship and Music Committee Meeting	13 Food Pantry closed 9:00am Catholic Charities 6:00pm LYG	14 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
15 10:30am Worship Service 12:00pm Council Meeting	16 Food Pantry closed 8:30am Catholic Charities 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	17 8:30am Catholic Charities 10:00am Food Pantry 7:30pm NA	18 8:30am Catholic Charities 10:00am Food Pantry 4:30pm LYG 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 7:00pm Chancel Choir rehearsal	19 8:30am Catholic Charities 4:00pm Food Pantry	20 Food Pantry closed NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 9:00am Catholic Charities 6:00pm LYG	21 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
22 10:30am Worship Service	23 Food Pantry closed 8:30am Catholic Charities 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	24 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry - closed 7:00pm Christmas Eve Music 7:30pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry - closed 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial 6:30pm LYG	26 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry - closed	27 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	28 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire
29 10:30am Worship Service	30 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry closed 5:30pm NA - Why Are We Here 7:30pm LYG	31 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry - closed	1 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry - closed 4:30pm LYG Staff Meeting 6:00pm NA - Escape from Denial	2 Catholic Charities - closed 4:00pm Food Pantry	3 Catholic Charities - closed Food Pantry closed 6:00pm LYG	4 12:30pm NA - Lose the Desire