

The Messenger

A newsletter of the people of First Lutheran Church, Waltham

The First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham
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Earlier this week, I attended a meeting at McLean Psychiatric Hospital in Belmont, MA. It is the number one ranked psychiatric hospital in the country, known both for its programs and for its research.

One of my learnings from the day was that there has been a good deal of research on spirituality and mental illness. At one point in our conversation, the facilitator handed out 20 note cards, each with one piece of data related to that research. Here is what was written on two of those cards:

Church attendance & active religion were found to be protective to vulnerability for depression.

Parents who were more involved in church activities were more likely to have harmonious marital relationships and better parenting skills. This in turn enhanced kids' competence, self-regulation, psychosocial adjustment and school performance.

This of course does not mean that participation in church guarantees mental health and harmonious relationships, but I believe it does over time deepen and strengthen us.

I am aware that many in our community are carrying heavy burdens. I encourage you to keep inviting God into your joys and struggles, and let the worship, prayer, and community of First Lutheran be part of that. On Sunday December 3, we begin a new liturgical year with the first Sunday of Advent. We will light the candles and prepare for the coming of Christ at Christmas; but also for Jesus coming along side of us now, amid all the struggles and challenges of life: physical, spiritual, and emotional. Whether in-person or on-line, I urge you to join us.

Faithfully, Pastor Maehl



Christmas Eve Morning 10:30 am Worship

As Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year we are trying something new. We will be holding a child focused service in which we will tell the Christmas story, sing verses of familiar hymns, and share communion. People of all ages are welcome!

Christmas Eve, December 24 6:40 pm Pre-service music 7:00 pm Worship

Join us on Christmas Eve for our traditional worship with special music, candle lighting, carols, Holy Communion, and the proclamation of the Christmas Gospel. Pre-service music will begin at 6:40 and there will be light refreshments following. Consider inviting friends who may not have a worship home, and consider bringing a refreshment to share.

Christmas Morning, December 25 10:00 am

Join us for a service of lessons and carols with Holy Communion.

Nurturing Faith



Advent Wednesdays

December 6, 13, 20

7:15 pm

On the Wednesdays in Advent we will have a contemplative evening prayer service beginning at 7:15 pm, followed by refreshments. Each week we will focus on a way of listening for God.

Consider carving out this time to attend to the prayer, and hopefulness to which the season calls us ... and at the same time mysteriously offers.

Learning Hour in December

Dec. 3 – Sunday school at 9:15 am. No Adult Forum due to the Christmas Sale

Dec. 10 - Sunday school, confirmation, and Adult Forum at 9:15 am.

Dec. 17 – Sunday school and confirmation. No Adult Forum as both Vicar Eric and Pastor Maehl will be with the confirmands.

Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 - No Learning Hour

A Christmas Goat



This December we are inviting children and youth to bring offerings in worship and contribute toward the purchase of a goat (at a cost of \$50). This will be given to a family in need through the ELCA Good Gifts program.

Also, we will have Good Gift catalogues available with more than 50 different gift-giving options including cows, pigs, honeybees, and more. Gifts such as these help persons in struggling communities around the world. More information at:

goodgifts.elca.org.

Stewardship Update

This fall we engaged in our annual stewardship appeal in order to prepare a budget for 2024. I am so grateful for all who were able and willing to make financial commitments. Here is a summary of the response:

- We received 49 pledges totaling \$299,403
- Last year we received 49 pledges totaling \$312,110
- Due to people dying, moving, or finding themselves needing to reduce their pledge there were decreases of \$36,994 from those who pledged for 2023.
- Thanks to new and greater pledges there were increases of \$26,487 for 2024.
- This leaves us \$10,507 behind last year.

Looking at the numbers above I find myself filled with gratitude at the abundance. Yes, there is a bit of a deficit and that will be a bit of a challenge; however notice, we could have had a huge deficit and we do not. I give thanks for all who were willing and able to make commitments!!

December Appeal

In response to the deficit noted above, the Church Council is inviting contributions toward a December Appeal. A letter is being drafted that will be sent to a wider audience than those active church members who receive invitations to pledge. We hope that those in our virtual community, those who receive our newsletter, and those within our active membership who have the means will consider making a contribution.

Thanks be to God who gives us all we have, who then invites us to share in the ministry of the church where through worship and prayer, serving our neighbors and sharing our resources, Christ Jesus is at work: nurturing faith, deepening relationships, and blessing us and others.

- Pastor Maehl

Walking Together in God's Love



*From the
Vicar*

Late-Fall Greetings,

Advent is a peculiar time, both on our calendars and theologically. We feel it in our bodies, as our planet tilts those of us in the northern hemisphere away from the sun's light and warmth. The winter solstice is coming close now – a time of the year when the boundary between earth and the heavens feels so “thin” – these long nights more often than not bring a deep dis-ease to my spirit. Yet, this anxiety is only one half of the picture. Advent is a time of anticipation, but for me that anticipation is two-fold. Half is the anxiety and worry I have already named. Advent is a time of seeing the world's brokenness – something which has caused every generation for millennia to look at Advent's end-time texts and think, “this must be it”. The tragedy in Gaza, Ukraine, rising authoritarianism, stubborn inflation – you hear the pundits and see the headlines. The end feels ever-near.

But what sort of ending?

Because the other side of Advent anticipation is warm excitement. It is the mystery of a coming Savior declared by his mother, a teenage refugee – it is her voice rising in song, declaring that the evils of this world will break against God's love. The other side of Advent is anticipating rich food with dear friends and family. It is anticipating laughs, games, and music. It is warm glow of fire, gold-Christmas-lights-on-tinsel, and sparkling light through bubbly champagne. The anticipation of Advent is anticipation of deep and joyful fellowship amid anticipation of the dark embrace of longest night. In that embrace there is an ending, but that ending is not cold and fear-filled, it is welcoming into our broken world a Savior whose loving-kindness changes everything. It is coming closer now – let us wait for it together.

In Peace,
Vicar Eric

Virtual Offerings



In the weeks to come we will be including this scan code in our Sunday bulletins (both for in-person and online participants) that links to our online donation service. We will also include the following words:

Our church provides both spiritual, physical and emotional nourishment for all who attend in person and online. As a member of our community, we invite you to consider donating to support the mission of our church, as we work to support programs in the church, in the community, and for the online community.

Contributions to our December Appeal may be designated to the General Fund. Gifts to other funds are also most welcome at any time.



Christmas Caroling is back!

Join us on Saturday, Dec. 16 at 3:00 pm. We will gather at church and then carpool to a few homebound members to share some Christmas cheer.

Christmas Toy Drive

We are partnering with Santuario to collect Christmas toys for children. Please bring donations of unwrapped toys for children, newborn - age 12 to church **by Thursday, December 7.**

Chaplains on the Way Gift Cards

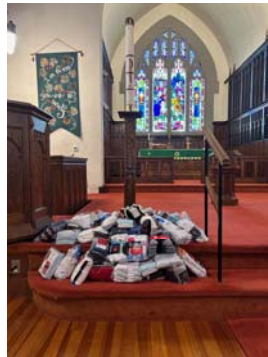


Once again we are collecting \$5 or \$10 gift cards to Dunkin' Donuts or McDonalds. These will be given to persons in need in our community through the ministry of Chaplains on the Way. Gift cards may be mailed or dropped off in the church office.

Doing Justice, Serving All

Drop-off Your Drawers Underwear Drive

Thanks to all who contributed gifts of socks and underwear during the month of November. A carload of donations was dropped off at the Waltham Community Day Center on Tuesday, November 29. Several guests of the Day Center helped to unload; and both staff and guests were delighted with the donation.



Thanks for Giving Food Drive

Thanks for all who contributed food items during November, allowing us to keep our food box outside the church regularly stocked.



We continue to welcome donations of non-perishable food. We recommend any of the following:

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|---------------|------------------------|
| Pasta | Jarred or canned sauce |
| Rice | Canned beans |
| Tuna | Canned soup or stew |
| Canned Fruit | Canned vegetables |
| Peanut Butter | Oatmeal or cereal |

Thanks for sharing!

Youth Leaf Raking

Raking leaves can be a big job, especially here in New England. Back at the beginning of November, a few of our youth helped tackle the yards of a few First Lutheran members on a Saturday morning. It was a cool, crisp fall day – perfect for the task at hand. It was still amazing to see how quickly and efficiently the leaves ended up piled and in bags. It’s such a blessing to be a part of a faith community where our care spans all aspects of our lives – especially to the least of “leaves”!

Thanks to Jake and Vicky Villalta, Lukas Binggeli and Hazel Maehl for all your effort. - Vicar Eric



Family Resettlement Opportunities

Our team of 25 volunteers continues to work together helping to resettle a family seeking asylum from Haiti. The team could use more drivers to help get family members to appointments (for more information contact the church office).

Also there is an ongoing need for size 5 diapers (Pampers preferred) and size large pull ups. Watch the “*This Week from First Lutheran*” for more ways to help.

1619 Project Watch Party January 14, 2024

The Justice and Service team invites you to join us on Sunday, January 14 at 11:45 (following our 10:30 am worship service). We will gather for a pizza lunch to watch and discuss part 2 of the six-part 1619 project. Note, the 1619 Project chronicles ways in which African Americans have been at the heart of American culture, politics, music, and more; in spite of 400 years of systemic oppression. Join us.



Walking Together in God's Love

Prayer Concerns



Members of our First Lutheran Community: Joyce Anderson; Sarah Allen; Jen Biter; Eddie Hughes; June Jahrling; Erika Jerram; Steve Latter; Kathryn McCowan; Don & Britta McNemar; Kerry Meaney; Cynthia Niiler, Joan and Jüri Niiler, Marlene Nordstrom, Wayne Sukow, Alexa Turner.

Friends and Family: Adekemi (*friend of Sarah Rauhut*); Kate Benbenek (*friend of Inpakala Pandian*); Doak Borst (*cousin of Ann Sjodin*); Elaine Chan (*aunt of Catherine Pinch*); Emily Clemens (*niece of Joan Clemens*); Lavara Clemens (*mother of Joan Clemens*); Pam & Ken Cochran (*COTW partner*); Steve Codner (*father-in-law of Emily Codner*); Leslie Crowe (*friend of Connie and Jeanette Fagone*); Emily Dallman (*friend of Dianne Poulos*); Donna (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Chuck Flinner (*father of Kat Flinner*); Sylvia and Chris Lee-Thompson (*friend of Susan Pintus*); Marybeth; Peter Melanson (*brother-in-law of Matt and Erika Jerram*); Skip Moyer (*grandfather of Samantha DiBiaso*); Pappas family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Sally Raymond (*Jen Biter's mom*); Stacey Reed (*sister of Penny Alexander & Leslie Waters*); Margarita Rivera (*mother of Anthony Rivera*); Margie and Roger Schroeder (*Curt Schroeder's parents*); Maria Silva (*aunt of Olga Jimenez*); Tara Waters (*family of Penny & Marquette Alexander*); Jim Wroe (*cousin of Carol Hansen*).

For those who grieve: the family and friends of:

- Clark Schuster (*brother-in-law of Tom and Meg Maehl*)
- Mary White (*friend of Paul & Susan Pintus*)

For our partners: Santuario Luterano, the Spanish speaking Lutheran congregation in Waltham, and for their interim leader: Rafaela Radcke. For other organizations we actively support: the Waltham Family School, the Waltham Community Day Center, Chaplains on the Way, the Waltham Alliance to Create Housing, Camp Calumet, and ELCA World Hunger. And for our efforts to resettle a refugee family.

If you would like to add/remove a name to/from the prayer list, please inform the church office.

Advent Devotional

An Advent devotional book is available at the church. For those who would prefer an on-line resource, consider the following:

<https://www.luthersem.edu/advent/>

If you are sensing the need for a more structured prayer time, consider using a daily devotional during Advent.