

The Messenger

A newsletter of the people of First Lutheran Church, Waltham

The First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham
The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
www.firstlutheranwaltham.org

December 2020
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Therefore, keep awake - for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake." (Mark 13:35-37)

Advent comes with its persistent call that we wake from sleep and stay awake. Stay awake for what?

In the way Mark presents the call as quoted above (*part of the Gospel reading for the 1st Sunday in Advent*), it sounds like Jesus is calling for us to stay awake for his end-time dramatic return. In the midst of environmental crises and a pandemic, some may wonder if in fact the end time is near; but I don't think that's what this is about.

These words of Jesus are spoken just days before his arrest and crucifixion; in a way, it is the 'end time' for Jesus that is approaching. Yet on Easter morning, God rose him from the dead! Jesus ascended to heaven, and then poured out his Spirit so that now he, the master, is returning with regularity. What we are called to keep alert for, stay awake for, is the appearance of Jesus through the working of the Holy Spirit in our ordinary day to day lives.

This Advent, we are offering Sunday morning adult forums, Wednesday evening prayer services, and a daily devotional for the home, all focused on strengthening our ability to stay awake to the movement of Christ's Spirit in, through, and among us. (*see page 2 for more details*)

I encourage you to engage one or more of these resources. In this time of pandemic, in the midst of the burdens and challenges you face, may your spirits be renewed in Hope.

Faithfully, Pastor Maehl



*Christmas
Worship Opportunities*

**Christmas Eve - Outdoor Worship
In Parking Lot
3:00 pm**

**Christmas Eve - Virtual Worship
Via Facebook Live
7:00 pm**

**Christmas Day - Lessons & Carols
Via Zoom (or Facebook Live)
10:00 am**

See Page 2 for more Information

December 27

First Sunday of Christmas

The church staff will be on vacation. Please watch the "This Week" email in mid-December for an other recommended services to attend.

Nurturing Faith

Advent Wednesdays

December 2, 9, 16, 23
7:00 pm



On these Advent Wednesdays we will return to a lovely setting of prayer that we have used during Advent in past years.

Amidst the challenges of the pandemic and/or the demands of the holiday season, consider turning in via Facebook Live as we attend to Advent hope.

Advent Adult Forums

Sundays 9:00 am
Via zoom

We will be offering Sunday morning Adult Forums via zoom led by Pastor Maehl. Drawing upon the Advent call to “wake from sleep,” these forums will focus on ways of paying attention to the interior life of the spirit. Each week will have a particular theme, as follows:

Nov. 29: Awake to Grace
Dec. 6: Awake to Fear
Dec 13: Awake to Memory
Dec 20: Awake to Hope

Each weeks forum will include opportunities for small group conversation via zoom breakout rooms. A zoom link will be provided in the “This Week from First Lutheran” e-news.

Advent Devotional

An Advent daily devotional written by Pastor Maehl will be made available via our e-news, and a copy will be posted on our Web Site. These devotions, based upon Ephesians, will focus on God’s invitation to “stay awake,” amidst the joys and challenges of daily life.



Christmas
Worship Opportunities

**Christmas Eve
Outdoor Worship
In Parking Lot
3:00 pm**

We are planning an in-person, outdoor Christmas Eve service (weather permitting). This service will be focused on the singing of Christmas carols, the reading of the Christmas Gospel, and the offering of Holy Communion (bread only). We expect the service to last roughly 30 minutes. A few notes:

- Please wear masks!
- We will be singing (with masks); come only if you are comfortable with that.
- Bring your own seating. Chairs can be set up socially distant from others
- If the service is cancelled due to weather, we will post on our web site at least 1 hour prior.
- The parking lot will be reserved for seating, please park on the street.

Christmas Eve Virtual Worship

7:00 pm

Via Facebook Live

This service will include much of our traditional Christmas Eve liturgy (with the exception of Holy Communion); including the Christmas Gospel read by candlelight and sermon. Tune in via Facebook live at 7:00 pm, or watch anytime after.

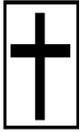
Christmas Day - Lessons and Carols

10:00 am

Via Zoom (or Facebook Live)

This lovely service includes the Christmas story read in eight parts, with verses of a Christmas carol following each. Opportunity for sharing in the readings will be offered to those participating via zoom. A zoom link will be sent via our e-news in mid-December.

Walking Together in God's Love



*From the
Vicar*

Advent is a time of eager anticipation as we long for the coming of Christ, Emmanuel, God with us. I have always loved how we begin the church year, not with Christ's and Christmas' arrival, but rather with eager anticipation of the arrival. This causes me to prepare by taking stock of what is and what is to come.

We have a unique gift to offer this world: the ability to hold despair and destruction in tension with hope and creation. This Advent season, I will anticipate God made flesh by taking the worries and troubles of myself and this world seriously. I will take time to notice my loneliness, my privilege, my weeping, and my waiting amid a global pandemic that never seems to end. I will reflect on how my self-centeredness and mistrust leads to broken relationships, bearing in mind how my participation in systems of power leads to the planet's and humanity's destruction. And I will hope.

I will hope that all who are lonely and grieving will be comforted by the presence of angels (*who are you and me*). I will hope that I can create relationships of trust while softening the ever-persistent force of my ego. I will hope that cooperation and care for the common good will lead to the flattening of the curve and a vaccine. I will hope that with God, we can create systems where all genuinely have abundant life.

During this season of Advent, we eagerly anticipate the coming of Christ by witnessing to God's presence among us, amid our despair and destruction. In eager anticipation, we also courageously hope and create manifestations of the dream of God's intending.

- Vicar Wylie

Justice and Service Update

We have been working closely with Waltham Mutual Aid since August to support families in the Waltham community experiencing food insecurity. Unfortunately, as COVID numbers continue to rise, so does the list of families in need.

For Thanksgiving, instead of a food drive we'd like to provide community members with grocery store gift cards so they can have their holiday favorites on the table. Our goal is to provide for at least ten families, but we'd love to serve more!

This is where we need your help. If you'd like to support our efforts, you can donate to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund on our website, <https://firstlutheranwaltham.org/donate-2/>, or by clicking below. All donations to Pastor's Discretionary through Thanksgiving will be used for this purpose. You can also send a check to the church marked for "grocery gift cards." Donations received by Thursday, November 26 will go toward this Thanksgiving drive; donations received after will be used to support a December food drive and/or to aid those in need in other ways.

If you have any questions, please contact Emily, Signe or the church office at firstlutheranwalthamoffice@gmail.com. We are grateful for your support!

- Emily Citrone & Signe Johns

"Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take everyone on Earth to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale." - from the poem "You Were Made for This" by Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Doing Justice and Serving Others

Stewardship Update

We have had an incredible response to our annual stewardship appeal. In early October a letter was sent to church members and partners inviting pledges. In the letter, it was noted that primarily because of the pandemic, some in our church were going to be in a place of needing to significantly decrease their financial contribution to the church. The hope was stated that others might be able and willing to give more.

To date, we have received 42 pledges to the general budget totaling \$278,536. There were decreases, as expected, totaling \$17,100. What was not shared in that letter was that we are also estimating a roughly \$10,000 decrease in income from other churches and groups that had been using our building pre-COVID. There were also new and increased pledges totaling \$28,536! This is roughly the precise amount needed to cover the projected deficit and modest increases to our insurance premiums. That the net result almost exactly meets our projected need can be deemed a miracle; a quiet miracle of God providing through the faithfulness, the generosity, and the love of the community.

Thanks to all who make contributions to the ministry of this congregation, through which Christ is at work caring for many.

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

Thanks to all who have made contributions to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. To date over \$16,000 has been shared with persons in need for rent, food, transitional aid; and also helping to provide food, shelter, diapers, and more through partnerships with local organizations. **Gifts to this fund are welcome any time!**

Waltham Partnership for Youth Trivia Night

A team consisting of **Emily Citrone, Signe Johns, Jen Lambert, Katie Maehl** and **Rachel Nederhoff** represented First Lutheran at the Waltham Partnership for Youth's annual Trivia Night fundraiser. Their team raised \$1,170 in sponsorships, placing them second out of 22 teams for most money raised! Thanks to all who sponsored; and thanks be to God for the important work done by the WPY.

Intern Update

Prayers of thanksgiving for Pastor Rachel Manke, our former intern (2010-2011) who has been called to serve as pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. May God bless her new ministry.

Congratulations to Courtney Smith, our former intern (2019-2020) who has been approved for ordination. She is expecting to be assigned to a synod in the Spring, plans to graduate from United Lutheran Seminary in May, and hopefully will be called as a parish pastor sometime shortly thereafter.

Our thanks to those who made pledges toward the intern fund for the next year. We have pledges of \$27,522; plus a generous pledge of \$11,000 from the board of the Nelson Memorial Apartments. Thus, our total is \$38,522. Our goal is \$41,000 to fully fund the next intern. We hope to gain additional support over the next month, so that we can apply for an intern for the 2021-2022 academic year. If you are planning year-end charitable contributions, please consider the First Lutheran Intern Fund.

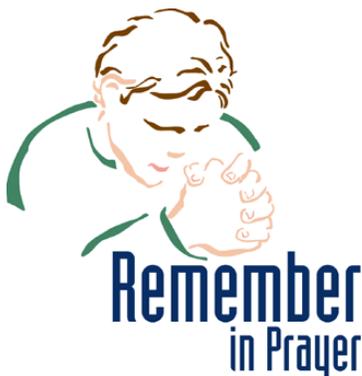


Thanks to **Alan Sieving** and **Curt Schroeder** who set up and broke down our sound system for each and every one of our outdoor parking lot worship services September 12 through October 31. Thanks also to **Steve Hoff** for loaning the equipment.

Thanks to **Emily Citrone** and **Signe Johns** for coordinating our October food distribution, and to all who donated food. At an October 31 Halloween party, several youth (along with Signe and Emily) packeted boxes of food that were then delivered to 10 families. The distribution was part of Waltham Mutual Aid.

Walking Together in God's Love

Prayer Concerns



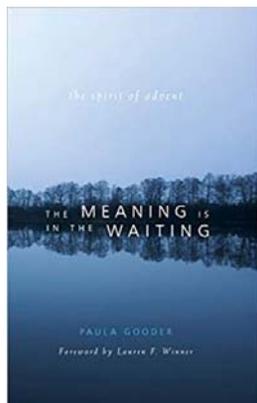
Members of our First Lutheran Community: Marquette Alexander; Penny Alexander; Sarah Allen; Jen Biter; Connie Danielson; Connie Fagone; Rosy Hebert; June Jahrling; Steve Latter; Lorne MacArthur; Kathryn McCowan; Cynthia Niiler, Joan and Jüri Niiler, Pam Sperry.

Friends and Family: Adekemi (*friend of Sarah Rauhut*); Greta Carlson (*friend of Connie Danielson*); Christiansen family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Emily Clemens (*niece of Joan Clemens*); Lavara Clemens (*mother of*

Joan Clemens); Donna (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Marlin Emschweiler and his family (*cousin of Joyce Anderson and Bud Crouse*); Chuck Flinner (*father of Kat Flinner*); Norma Huisman (*aunt of Brad Nederhoff*); Ellen Katterheinrich (*LuAnn Kimker's mother*); Robert Leddon (*family friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Sylvia and Chris Lee-Thompson (*friend of Susan Pintus*); Myles Martins and parents (*infant nephew of Cat Niemann*); Velma Maurer (*great aunt of LuAnn Kimker*); Tom Maxwell (*brother-in-law of Meg and Tom Maehl*); Jason Mihalko (*friend of Matt Jerram*); Sally Raymond (*Jen Biter's mom*); Stacey Reed (*sister of Penny Alexander*); Margarita Rivera (*friend of Rachel Nederhoff*); Margie Schroeder (*Curt Schroeder's mom*); Doug Sewich (*brother-in-law of Meg and Tom Maehl*); Maria Silva (*aunt of Olga Jimenez*); Matthew Stanhope (*partner of Jane Danielson*); Jim Wroe (*cousin of Carol Hansen*).

For our partners: Santuario Luterano, the Spanish speaking Lutheran congregation in Waltham, and for their interim leaders: Pastor Cassandra Chavez and Vicar Hector Lugo Cuadrado. 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.

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



Advent Book Study

Joan Clemens is inviting anyone interested to join her in reading The Meaning is in the Waiting, The Spirit of Advent, by Paula Gooder. There could be a weekly conversation about the reading perhaps on Sunday afternoon, or another mutually agreeable time during the week. If interested please email Joan or the church office at firstlutheranwalthamoffice@gmail.com.

You can find the book here:

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1557256624/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o01_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1

Christmas Gifting

Looking for alternative gifts that might bless others? Check out ELCA Good Gifts for ways of giving pigs and goats, school fees and supplies, disaster relief and more at:

<https://goodgifts.elca.org/>

Or consider a donation to Lutheran World Relief: <https://lwr.org/>



First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham

Ministers: The people of the congregation

Staff: The Rev. Thomas E. Maehl, Pastor
tmaehl@rcn.com

Ms. Cynthia Niiler,
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Vicar Wylie Cook, Intern
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Council: President: Ann Sjodin
Vice-President: LuAnn Kimker
Secretary: Susan Pintus
Treasurer: Scott Niemann

Holly Diaz
Sammy Kalisa
Janice Ostrander
Susan Pintus
Curt Schroeder
Julie Weeden

Worship:

Sundays: 10:30 am

Wednesdays: 7:00 pm Evening Prayer
both via Facebook Live

Visit us on the Web at:

www.firstlutheranwaltham.org



Find us on
Facebook

and on Facebook at First Lutheran
Church - Waltham, MA

Our Mission: We discern that Jesus Christ is calling us to:

Walk together in God's love: nurturing faith, doing justice, serving all.