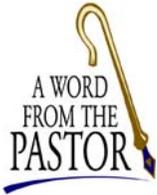


# The Messenger

A newsletter of the people of First Lutheran Church, Waltham

The First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waltham  
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*Advent is upon us once again.*

Amidst all the uncertainty of the pandemic, still unsure what will change with the vaccination of children, not knowing whether things will ease up or if a new variant of the COVID virus will appear ... once again it is here, the season of Advent with its call to wait, to strive to pay attention to the movement of the Spirit, and to reengage hope.

For me, at the center of keeping Advent is making space for prayer and silence. Prayer, because we cannot carry everything ourselves and we really do depend upon God for our future. Silence, because it has the power to reveal God's presence in our emptiness and is essential to the care of our souls.

In order to aid in keeping Advent we are once again providing devotional materials and a weekly mid-week service of Evening Prayer (described on page 2). You are welcome to come to these services in person or to tune in via Facebook. An advantage to coming in person is that you can sit in the sanctuary and be held in the silence and sacredness of the space. An advantage to watching the service via live stream is that you can access it anytime after it has been aired; including in the middle of the night if you struggle with sleep.

God waits to meet us in prayer. God waits to meet us in worship. God waits to meet us in deep conversation and acts of compassion toward others. Sometimes I suspect, God gets lonely waiting for us. I pray you will find an Advent practice of one sort or another through which you find renewal, hope, and rest for your souls.

Faithfully, Pastor Maehl



***The following services  
may be attended in person  
or watched via Facebook Live***

**Christmas Eve, December 24  
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.

**Lessons and Carols  
Christmas Morning  
10:00 am**

This lovely service includes the Christmas story read in eight parts, with verses of a Christmas carol following each. Note the time is 30 minutes earlier than the Sunday morning worship time.

**Sunday, December 26  
10:30 am One Service**

Note, there will be NO service at 8:15 am. We will have one service at 10:30 am and all are welcome.

## Nurturing Faith

### Advent Wednesdays

December 1, 8, 15, 22

7:00 pm

In person and  
via Facebook Live



Advent is a time of waiting, preparing for the coming of Christ who (paradoxically) is already here. Each Wednesday we will gather for a service of evening prayer that will include times of silence, song, prayer, and a reflection on kinds of waiting witnessed by varied Biblical characters.

- **December 1:** With Abraham and Sarah, waiting by living a life shaped by the promise of a blessed future.
- **December 8:** With the prophets, waiting for God to enter into the injustices and struggles of this world.
- **December 15:** With John the Baptist, practicing an active kind of waiting that engages the world around us.
- **December 22:** With Mary, waiting upon Christ who is born in us and comes to make all things new.

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

### Advent Devotional

For those who would like, we have copies at church of an Advent daily devotional book; pick one up any time. For those who would prefer an on-line resource, consider the following:

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

### Adult Forums

Sundays 9:15

Join Vicar Samantha for conversation on the following topics:

**November 28:** Advent 2021; How do we “keep Advent” in this time of pandemic?

**December 5:** Life in a season of waiting

**December 12:** No Adult Forum, come and enjoy the Christmas Sale.

**December 19:** Incarnational living; living in our bodies.

**December 26:** No learning hour, one worship service at 10:30 am.

### Advent Craft Day

November 28

We invite children and youth to join us during the learning hour as we will be decorating Yule Logs for the Advent Season. These will be made from beautiful Ash Wood (*left over from a company that makes baseball bats*). We will be in Founders Hall with the windows open unless weather permits us to be outside.

### Christmas Sale

Sunday, December 12

On December 12th we will be holding a Christmas sale where donated gift items and baked goods, will be offered for sale; with proceeds going to support sending youth to the 2022 National Youth Gathering to be held July 24-28 in Minneapolis, MN. We invite the contribution of hand-made items, baked goods, and other giftable items. Items may be donated between now and Thursday, December 9. On the day of the sale, items may be purchased beginning at 9:15 am (after the early service).

## Nurturing Faith



### *From the Vicar*

Last weekend First Lutheran had its annual Fall Retreat at the Blue Gentian Lodge in Londonderry, Vermont. Something that surprised me when opening

the car door upon our arrival was the silence. On Magic Mountain among the trees, there was no honking of cars on Weston Street, no hammering of construction on Eddy Street, and no buzzing of notifications. With the bright stars shining above the mountains, we stood in the silence that offered a sense of peace that surpassed all understanding.

We don't often get this gift of silence in our everyday lives. The past year and a half of the pandemic has been filled with an immense amount of noise that has exhausted us. Even as we journey into the holiday season, some of us may already be feeling exhausted by all the noise around us.

While on the retreat in the silence of the mountains, I was reminded of a blessing by John O'Donohue that I have leaned on often throughout the pandemic, called: *A Blessing for One Who is Exhausted*. In this blessing, O'Donohue writes, "Draw alongside the silence of stone until its calmness can claim you. Be excessively gentle with yourself." Yet, this time, I heard John's blessing differently. Rather than just us being the ones to cultivate silence in our lives and being excessively gentle with ourselves, maybe it is God too who meets us in silence and is excessively gentle with us?

In scripture, we find that the Hebrew word for God is "Elohim." The first letter of the word "Elohim" begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet "aleph", which is a completely silent letter. What "Elohim" shows us then is that God begins with silence. Silence is not the absence of God, but rather the presence of God. God is the one meeting us in the gift of gentle silence.

As we journey into the season of Advent, a season of waiting, may we take comfort knowing that God meets us in the silence of waiting and is excessively gentle with us. May we be reminded that in community, God invites us to listen in the silence together and to wait for the coming of Christ. In the midst of the silence and in our waiting, Christ will always meet us where we are. Thanks be to God.

-Vicar Samantha

### Fall Retreat Update

A group of 15 participated in our annual Fall Retreat at the Blue Gentian Lodge in Londonderry, Vermont. During our time together we worshipped, prayed, and reflected on how God continues to provide in "wilderness" times. We also enjoyed great food, games, conversation, and one another's company. Note that each participant took an at-home COVID test before travelling. Our next Fall retreat is scheduled for November 11-13, 2022.



### Calumet Winter Retreat

February 25-27

Our annual winter retreat to Camp Calumet is scheduled for Feb. 25-27. Everyone is welcome to this retreat, children and adults. As with the Fall Retreat, we will be asking participants to take an at-home COVID test (available at Walgreens and CVS) before traveling; then masks will be optional during the retreat. Mark your calendars and watch for more details about signing up coming in January.

### New Members

We rejoice that the following persons will be received into membership during worship on Sunday, November 21:

- Emile Citrone
- Chris and Stephanie McGoldrick, with their children Ellie and William
- Anthony Rivera
- Leslie Waters



We thank God for weaving us together into this community of faith, for providing for us so lavishly, and for equipping us to be a blessing to others.

## Doing Justice and Serving Others

### Stewardship Update

We have had a wonderful response to our annual stewardship appeal. To date, we have received 46 pledges to the general budget totaling \$298,886. Last year we received 44 pledges totaling \$281,596. Thus we have an increase of \$17,290! Additionally, we have received 23 pledges to the Intern Fund totaling \$37,242. These pledges will enable us to craft a budget for 2022 that fully funds our varied ministries and takes into account increased costs.

Thanks to all who support this ministry of First Lutheran with time, talent, and treasure; and thanks be to God who continues to provide through the faithfulness, the generosity, and the love of so many in this this community.

### Gifts to Refugee Families



Ascentria  
CARE ALLIANCE

Ascentria Care Alliance, (formerly Lutheran Social Services) is currently working to resettle hundreds of refugees from Afghanistan in Western Massachusetts and New Hampshire. They are in need of many items to help families set up households, and they are using Amazon to fulfill these needs. If you would like to contribute, you can find a wish list at the following link: <https://www.ascentria.org/our-services/services-for-new-americans/help-welcome-afghans> Purchased items will be sent directly to Ascentria,



### Chaplains on the Way Gift Cards

Once again we are collecting \$5 or \$10 gift cards to Dunkin' Donuts or McDonalds, as well as \$8-\$12 Charlie Cards (for transportation). 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.

### Property Update

In early September there was a heavy rain-storm that flooded our Sunday school rooms in the basement and revealed leaks in the roof over the offices. It was then also discovered that we have a significant mold problem in the offices and in the small vestibule outside of the basement bathrooms. Additionally, we found that underneath the carpet in the small vestibule outside the bathrooms there was asbestos tile; (note there was no asbestos under the Sunday school carpets). Since then members of the property committee and Interior Care Team have been working to remediate these problems.

In early November, all of the carpets were removed in the Sunday school rooms and outside of the basement bathrooms. On November 18-19 we are scheduled to have the asbestos tile professionally removed. Following that we will be using a mold fogger with non-hazardous, environmentally safe product to kill any left over mold spores. Then new flooring will be installed in the vestibule and Sunday school rooms.; this will be vinyl plank-ing (not carpet).

As for the offices, we have met with an insurance adjuster to see if we are entitled to any insurance benefits. We have discovered leaks around an air conditioning unit, and that unit is now covered with a tarp. In the next month, we will be seeking to determine what next steps are needed.

Our thanks to **Norman Adams, Steve Hoff, LuAnn Kimker, Brad Nederhoff, Susan and Paul Pintus, and Alan Sieving** for their extraordinary efforts and teamwork over the past two months! Also, thanks to all who have made contributions to the Capital Improvement Fund that is being drawn upon for much of this work; and to the Memorial Fund that has been used to pay for the new flooring.

## Walking Together in God's Love

### Prayer Concerns



**Members of our First Lutheran Community:** Sarah Allen; Jen Biter; Joan Clemens; Rosy Hebert; Eddie Hughes; June Jahrling; Erika Jerram; Steve Latter; Kathryn McCowan; Cynthia Niiler, Joan and Jüri Niiler, Sandra Schwab.

**Friends and Family:** Adekemi (*friend of Sarah Rauhut*); Heather Budd (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Greta Carlson (*friend of Connie Danielson*); Elaine Chan (*aunt of Catherine Pinch*); Emily Clemens (*niece of Joan Clemens*); Lavara Clemens (*mother of Joan Clemens*); Pam & Ken Cochran (*COTW partner*); Leslie Crowe (*friend of Connie and Jeanette Fagone*); Handel Dixon; Donna (*friend of LuAnn Kimker*); Chuck Flinner (*father of Kat Flinner*); Norma Huisman (*aunt of Brad Nederhoff*); Ellen Katterheinrich (*LuAnn Kimker's mother*); Sylvia and Chris Lee-Thompson (*friend of Susan Pintus*); Chris Lochran (*friend of Connie and Jeanette Fagone*); Peter Melanson (*brother-in-law of Matt and Erika Jerram*); Jason Mihalko (*friend of Matt Jerram*); Pappas family (*friends of Jennifer Lambert*); Sally Raymond (*Jen Biter's mom*); Susan Raymond (*sister-in-law of Jen & Bill Biter*); Stacey Reed (*sister of Penny Alexander*); Margarita Rivera (*friend of Rachel Nederhoff*); Margie and Roger Schroeder (*Curt Schroeder's parents*); Ann Sewich (*sister of Meg Maehl*); Doug Sewich (*brother-in-law of Meg and Tom Maehl*); Maria Silva (*aunt of Olga Jimenez*); Matthew Stanhope (*partner of Jane Danielson*); Wayne & Carol Sukow (*parents of Cathy Sukow*); Tara Waters (*family of Penny & Marquette Alexander*); 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.*

### Book Drive

For the next few weeks, we are collecting new children's books (newborn to age 3) to be given out by Christ Episcopal as part of their December diaper distribution. We are hoping to collect 130 books so that each of the roughly 65 families with children ages 0 to 3 might received two books. Note that a link to a list of age appropriate books with diverse representation will be published in the This Week From First Lutheran or can be found at

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/booklist/lets-talk-about-babies-books-young-children>

The deadline for dropping off books is Sunday, December 12.



**Order Your**  
**Poinsettias**

Poinsettias are used to decorate our sanctuary for Christmas Eve. It is also a way to remember and honor loved ones. This year you can order poinsettias, which you then may take home after our Christmas Eve service. You also may choose to make a contribution towards the beautification of our sanctuary. This will be used as needed for poinsettias, other seasonal décor, or will be put towards our Parament Fund.

I/we would like to make a contribution to:

Red Poinsettia(s)                       White Poinsettia(s)

at \$8.00 a plant for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I/we would like to make a contribution  
towards the beautification of the sanctuary.                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

***Please recognize my gift in the Christmas Eve bulletin:***

As a Memorial Gift  
In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
Given by \_\_\_\_\_

As a Living Tribute  
In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_  
Given by \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email (or Phone #) \_\_\_\_\_

THE DEADLINE FOR ORDERING POINSETTIAS IS  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5

Please complete this form and return it with your payment to the church office or you may put it in the offering plate.