



Faith Family

News

December 2023

*In response to God's grace flowing
through Christ, we grow in faith
and show Christ's love.*

“Advent Preparations”

By Pastor Adam

Our annual post-Thanksgiving decorating blitz was a success! Typically, the Sunday after Thanksgiving, we spend the afternoon setting up the Christmas tree, hanging garland and lights, and putting up other various decorations. While the bulk of it is complete, there will be more preparations from making cookies, watching favorite Christmas movies, and rebuilding holiday Lego sets (we have an entire village under the tree!). We also pull out our Christmas books to read again every year. Last night, Desmond and I read “Who is Coming to Our House?” It is a favorite that dates back all the way to baby Marilyn and tells the story of barn animals preparing for special visitors. The pig makes room while the lamb cleans the ground. The goose stacks the hay and a duck lines a manger with down. All the animals chip in to prepare for the guests who turn out to be Mary, Joseph, and the newborn baby Jesus. We spend so much time preparing, from decorating our homes to preparing for the arrival of guests, but advent is about more than that.

The word advent comes from the Latin “adventus” which means coming or arrival. It’s a translation of the Greek “parousia” which means “second coming” and refers to Jesus’ return. Advent, therefore, is both a time of anticipatory celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ and preparation for Christ’s return. This is evident in the purple candles we often see in church advent wreaths. Purple is the traditional color of repentance, a central theme of advent. However, many churches (ours included) have shifted to the use

of blue candles. Blue is the color of hope, another central theme. We find hope in God’s promise fulfilled in the birth of Jesus the messiah, we find hope in the Spirit as Jesus comes into our hearts and lives anew each day, and we find hope in the promise that Christ will come again to redeem all that is broken in the world. How does one prepare for that?!

Here are some suggestions:

- * Decorate your home... with new intention. Mark the changing of seasons by changing your home, but also seek change in your heart. Whether you hang lights or light candles, every time you flip a switch or strike a match, invite the Light of the World to enter into your darkness. Advent wreaths will be available at church for you to borrow.
- * Bake cookies... for others. No, this isn’t a shameless ploy for cookies! Find a way to give to others and share the joy of this season. Sharing with your family, friends, and pastor are great, but who else may need a reminder of God’s love and abundance?
- * Spend time together... with God. We often make time to visit family and friends around the holidays, but this is also a great time to share stories of faith, spend time in devotions, or go to church together. Our family will be reading “Jotham’s Journey” every night during advent... you are welcome to pick up a copy at church and read along!

These are just a few ways to prepare for the arrival of Jesus this Advent. In whatever way you prepare, may God’s gifts of hope, peace, love, and joy be yours.

Pastor Adam

The 75th Anniversary of Faith Lutheran Church

“Rooted in Faith... Growing for the Future!”



What a wonderful 75th Anniversary celebration! We packed the sanctuary with friends of Faith, new and old, giving thanks and praise to God and committing ourselves to our future in ministry together. Our luncheon was an opportunity to enjoy delicious food, catch up with one another, and hear from our Anniversary Team leader Mindy Carlson, our history team leader Larry Kuster, and distinguished guests Bishop Greg Busboom, Bishop Emeritus John Roth, Pastor Linda Strader, and Pastor Adam. Thank you to all who made the day special, and thanks be to God for the privilege and joy of sharing in ministry with one another.

Many Thanks to our entire Anniversary Team: Malinda Carlson, Marilyn Dichsen, Ken Finkle, Carol Freesen, Lillian Korous, Larry Kuster, Jean Welch, Sharon Zuiderveld, and Pastor Adam Dichsen.

Sabbatical Update

If you weren't in worship on November 26, you may have missed the official announcement of Pastor Adam's upcoming sabbatical. At our 2023 Annual Meeting, our congregation extended our support to apply for a Lilly Clergy Renewal grant to fund a sabbatical in 2024. While we did not receive the grant, we feel the time is right for Pastor Adam, his family, and our congregation to take time for renewal. He will be taking the months of February-April to unplug from the demands of pastoral ministry and plug into his identity as a husband, father, and Child of God. More details on goals for him and our congregation will be available in January. In the meantime, a "Sabbatical FAQ" sheet has been prepared. You can pick up a copy at Faith and talk to Pastor Adam or any of our Council members for more information (Mindy Carlson, Ken Devlin, Kelly Hartz, Kelly Street, Greg Kimler, Patty Nelson, Mike Oldenettel, and Monica Proefrock). Together, with Pastor Adam, we are grateful to God for the ministry we share and this opportunity for growth and renewal.

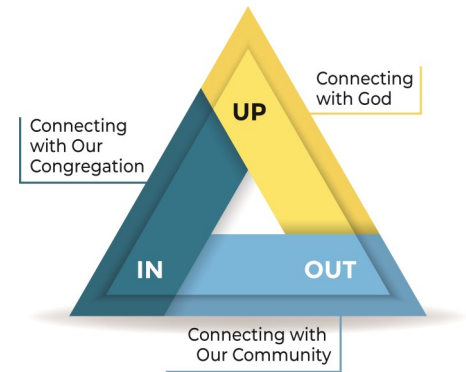
Updated Photo Directory

Thank you to all who submitted updated photos for our directory. You can access a digital copy using the QR code to the right. As you can see, we need more pictures. Please email one to the church office or ask Marilyn Dichsen to take your photo after worship. Christmas is a great time to take a family picture!



Reaching Up... Connecting with God through Worship

Total ministry is a balanced ministry as we reach up, in, and out... connecting with God, our congregation, and our community



Advent: a Season of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy

Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy are the traditional themes of worship during the season of Advent. Come join us as we learn how each is God's gift to us in Jesus Christ.

December 3 – God gives HOPE in the fulfillment of a promised messiah (Jeremiah 33:10-11, 14-18). When Peter is asked who Jesus is, his confession affirms the promise fulfilled (Mark 8:27-29)

December 10 – God gives PEACE in the promise of comfort. Valleys shall be lifted, mountains made low, and uneven ground made level as nothing can stop the coming of the Lord (Isaiah 40:1-11).

December 17 – God gives steadfast LOVE that endures forever. This is the foundation of the temple built in Jerusalem and the foundation of our lives (Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13).

December 24 – God gives JOY through an invitation to help prepare the way for Jesus (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80).

CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Our Children's Choir was a hit at our 75th Anniversary! We look forward to having them lead us in worship as they sing "Away in a Manger" on Sunday morning, December 24. Maria Snodgrass will be leading them and rehearsing with them on Saturday, December 23 at 1:00pm. If your child would like to participate or you would like to help lead, please contact her.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Once again, we will have a short Christmas concert before our 7:00pm candlelight service on December 24th. Please let me know if you might be interested in being a part of that concert.

Jean Welch, Music Director

Contact Jean for more information.

jrwelch53@msn.com or 217-652-7009 (phone/text)

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

"TRUE STORY"

Join us on the evening of December 24 as we gather to hear again the story of Jesus' birth, the true story of God's love and salvation. There will be a Christmas concert beginning at 6:30pm. Following a brief break, worship will begin at 7:00.

CHRISTMAS MORNING WORSHIP

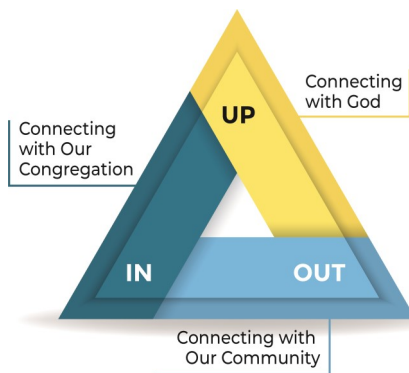
Christmas morning we gather at 9:30 to celebrate that God has brought Joy to the World by taking on flesh. We participate in God's incarnation through Holy Communion in a liturgy set to Christmas Carols. This service will be live streamed for those who cannot attend or prefer to worship from home.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

LESSONS AND CAROLS

Start the New Year with a wonderful morning of Christmas Carols and scripture readings that tell the story of the birth of our Savior.

Poinsettias: To purchase a poinsettia to help decorate the church for Christmas, please sign up at the counter by the Coffee Sales and drop your check (or cash) into the decorated box; the cost is \$10.00. Please make your check out to Faith Lutheran Church, with a notation for *Poinsettia*, or call or email the church (245-8919 or faithlutheran62650@frontier.com) **by December 24** and send your check to the church (1385 W. Walnut St., Jacksonville, IL 62650). Please indicate if the poinsettia is in honor or memory of someone special.



Reaching In... Connecting with our Congregation through Discipleship and Fellowship

Advent Allegro Concerts

We have a great lineup for this year's Advent Allegro concert series.

- December 6: "The Extension Chords" (with Jean Welch)
- December 13: Jacksonville High School Madrigals
- December 20: Matthew Nall on piano

The brief concerts will last approximately 30 minutes and begin at 12:15pm. Lunch of soup, chips, fruit, and dessert will be served at 11:30am and after the concert for \$5.

We could use some help with serving the meal and providing cookies and soup. If you would like to pitch in, contact the church office (245-8919 or faithlutheran62650@frontier.com) or **sign up on the sheet on the counter by the coffee sales.**

Discipleship Group

Our next gathering will be Wednesday, Dec. 20 at 10am. If you have any questions about our group or are curious about how we spend our time together, please call Kelly Hartz at 217-502-1979 or email khartz@sompo-intl.com.

Women of Faith Fellowship Night

Women of Faith will not be meeting in December. Look for information about our January gathering soon!

Book Group - "Jotham's Journey"

Our book this month is a bit different from those of the past. This month, you are invited to read "Jotham's Journey," by Arnold Ytreeide. It tells of the adventure of 10-year-old Jotham, separated from his family, on a mission to find them again. His journey brings him face to face with thieves, robbers, and kidnappers, but also wise men, shepherds, and innkeepers until at last he finds his way to the savior born in Bethlehem. Pastor Adam's family has read this numerous times. Read a chapter each day of Advent, along with the thought-provoking reflection, and prepare your hearts for Christmas.

Christmas Caroling

Join us as we head into the community to visit friends of Faith for caroling and Christmas joy. Meet at Faith at 2:00pm on **Sunday, December 17** to fill up your mugs of hot chocolate. We will carpool around town and return to Faith by 3:30.

Devotional Apps

Here are some apps for your phone that will direct your Bible study and prayer life; both are short and worthwhile:

Lectio 365: focuses on P.R.A.Y.= *Pausing* to be still, *Rejoicing* with a Psalm and reflecting on a Scripture; *Asking* God to help us and others, and *Yielding* to His will in our lives.

Our Daily Bread: a daily devotional, Scripture reading, and prayer.

Abide: focusing on blessing, forgiveness, anxiety, sleep, and others. — *Sharon Zuiderveld*

Hot and Cold Caroling

Join us at "Now and Then" coffee shop on the square in Virginia on **Friday, Dec. 15**, from 5:30-6:30. Everyone receives a free scoop of ice cream and cup of hot chocolate. Some from Faith will be leading the singing and sharing the Christmas story.

Sunday School

Sunday School continues through Christmas, but no class on December 24.

Men's Breakfast

Come and connect with other men as we share our faith and enjoy some good food on **Saturday, December 2**. Come help at 8:00 and eat at 9:00.

We Remember Don Benz

Donald R. Benz died on September 29 and a memorial graveside service was held on October 7 at Ashland Cemetery. Our prayers are with his wife, Betty Jo. We give thanks to God for our partnership in ministry and for the hope we share in eternal life.

Reaching Out...

Connecting with our Community through Outreach

Salvation Army Giving Tree

Faith Lutheran has "Adopted a Family" through the Salvation Army this year. Our family is a single mother of 3 boys and 1 girl. Please look for the display in the gathering area and select a card with a gift idea. All cards will have a gift number. Please write down your name and phone number next to the gift card number you selected on the display spreadsheet. Please bring the unwrapped gift along with the card back to the church **no later than Sun., Dec. 17**. Thank you and God bless! *Kay Schnitker*

Pillars Giving Tree

The giving tree for Pillars of Africa Children's Ministry orphanage and school in Uganda is set up in the gathering area. There are currently 56 children living at Pillars, and Christmas is coming. On the tree, you will find an ornament with the picture and name of a child/young person who lives at the orphanage. The ornaments explain that a donation of \$35 provides a Christmas gift of shoes, pants, and shirt, or dress, underwear, and a suitcase for a child. Christmas gifts at Pillars are very practical. There are also ornaments available for selection if you would like to provide a special Christmas meal for the orphanage residents. If you are led to give, please choose an ornament to hang on your tree at home. Making your check payable to HUGS, a 501c3 charitable organization makes accounting simpler for the church financial assistants. All donations are so appreciated no matter the amount. HUGS (Hearts United in God's Service) is so thankful for the support of our Faith Lutheran family.

Doorbell Dinners

Our next times to deliver are **Christmas Day—Dec. 25** and **Jan. 8-12**. A sign-up sheet is available in the gathering area on the counter by the Coffee Sales.

A Note of Great Thanksgiving

We closed the doors of the **Giving Boutique** last Sunday thoroughly grateful and gob-smacked (or, perhaps, more accurately, "God-smacked") by the results.

Together, we raised the following amounts for the six organizations we selected: Faith Lutheran Youth Group, \$1,272; HUGS, \$2,323; "Share the Light" ministry, \$1,214.50; Foster Care Closet, \$412.50; Lutheran World Relief, \$415; and Jacksonville Food Center, \$385.

The Giving Boutique raised a grand total of \$6,022.

We give thanks to the Faith community who supported this effort and highlighted the importance we place on giving to our neighbors so generously. God is Good!! *Karen Dean*

Count Up to Advent in Our REVERSE ADVENT PROJECT

It is that joyful time again for our Reverse Advent project. Reverse Advent adds up rather than counting down to Christmas, by adding a different food item each day of Advent. Take home a festive bag located next to the Working Cross in the Gathering Area and collect food. You will find the suggested list of food items and suggestions in each bag.

Consider reaching out to friends to participate with us. Take them a bag and let them experience the joy of sharing the spirit of the holiday. Then volunteer to bring their bag back to church. Better yet, invite them to an Advent Allegro concert or a worship service, and they can place their bag with the others.

If you find your bag too small for all your items, just take another one. Tie the handles together when you return your bags to the church.

We hope to fill the area under the Working Cross with bags for our neighbors. Please bring your bags to the church by Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. If you would like to help deliver them, contact Hallie Mayner.

Jacksonville Food Center

The number of families needing help with food has increased from 446 families (1,046 people) in September to 630 (1,562 people) in October. This help involves bimonthly food boxes containing enough food for two weeks. Daily bakery and produce choices are available once a week (423 people in October). Costs in October for these two services are \$81,805.00, and \$3,530.00 respectively.

On Friday, November 17, 100 turkeys and 100 hams were delivered by State Senator Jill Tracy's office to be given away on November 20. Also involved were State Senator Frese and State Representative Davidsmeyer.

Sign up for the yearly Christmas boxes offered by the Food Center is occurring in November.

In October, the churches contributed \$2,810.27 in money and \$447.50 in food donations. Our Faith Lutheran church donated \$295. The Food Center especially needs egg cartons. Egg donations from large food stores come in large boxes.

Lillian Korous and Pat Glyshaw

Worship Assistants

Chancel Committee

Dec. 3 Kim Heise
 Dec. 10 Pat Glyshaw
 Dec. 17 Kris Roth
 Dec. 24 Martha Krohe (am)
 Dec. 24 Martha Krohe (pm)
 Dec. 25 Karen Sibert
 Dec. 31 Karen Sibert

Coffee Hosts

Dec. 3 Karen Sibert
 Dec. 10 Barb Davenport
 Dec. 17 Kay Schnitker
 (cont'd)

Dec. 24 Martha Krohe
 Dec. 31 **need volunteer**

Communion Assts.

Dec. 3 Kay Schnitker
 Dec. 10 Barb Davenport
 Dec. 17 Hallie Mayner
 Dec. 24 **volunteer (am)**
 Dec. 24 **volunteer (pm)**
 Dec. 25 Hallie Mayner
 Dec. 31 Karen Sibert

Greeters

Dec. 3 Barb Fishback
 Dec. 10 **need volunteer**
 Dec. 17 Liddy Stark
 Dec. 24 **volunteer (am)**
 Dec. 25 Judy D. & Vicki R.
 Dec. 31 **need volunteer**

Readers

Dec. 3 Patty Nelson
 Dec. 10 John Williams
 Dec. 17 Liddy Stark
 (cont'd)

Dec. 24 **volunteer (am)**
 Dec. 24 **volunteer (pm)**
 Dec. 25 **need volunteer**
 Dec. 31 **need volunteer**

Ushers

Dec. 3 Larry Kuster
 Dec. 10 Pat Glyshaw
 Dec. 17 Hallie & Tacy
 Dec. 24 Patty Nelson (am)
 Dec. 24 Paul & Sarah (pm)
 Dec. 25 **need volunteer**
 Dec. 31 **need volunteer**

If you would like to help with assisting for the 9:30am worship services, please contact the church office (faithlutheran62650@frontier.com) or **sign up in the gathering area** at the podium by the east doors.

Altar Plants

(\$15 donation appreciated)

Plants are placed in the chancel that remain for an extended period of time.

If you would like to donate, please call or email the church office (245-8919 or faithlutheran62650@frontier.com) or **sign up in the gathering area at the podium by the east doors**; please make checks payable to Faith Lutheran Church (1385 W. Walnut St.).

Dec. 3 By Carol Rauen in honor of Kris Roth
 & By Theresa Savoie in memory of Louise Savoie on her birthday
 Dec. 10 **Open for donation**
 & **Open for donation**
 Dec. 17 By Pat Glyshaw in memory of Bob's birthday on December 19
 & **Open for donation**
 Dec. 24 By Gayla Smith in honor of her baptismal birthday
 & By Vicki Robson in memory of Kelly Robson
 Dec. 31 **Open for donation**

Financial Assistants

Dec. 3 Kelly Hartz, Monica Proefrock, & Marilyn Dichsen
 Dec. 10 Mindy Carlson & Ken Devlin
 Dec. 17 Ken Devlin & Kelly Hartz
 Dec. 24 Greg Kimler & Patty Nelson
 Dec. 31 to be determined

Friends From Faith

A ministry team led by Naomi Hahn: on the last Sunday of each month, everyone is welcome to send a greeting card. **On December 31**, visit the tall white table just outside the sanctuary where you can select a card, sign a card, or deposit a card in the mailbox to send. Cards and stamps are provided for your use. If you have extra cards or stamps to spare, please bring them and donate them in the provided jar.

Plastic Caps & Lids

We found a source to make the caps and lids we have been collecting into a bench for us... maybe two!

We will stop collecting caps and lids as of December 10.

Thank you for your donations and for your help in sorting and washing them to get them ready for delivery — you are blessing!

Newsletter Deadline

December 17