

FAITH LIFE TOGETHER

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH // VOLUME 8 // ISSUE 10



December Newsletter

This has been quite a year! I'm just guessing here, but I suspect no one guessed most of Spencer, including our church building, would be impacted by a record-breaking flood in the middle of the year, and spend the rest of the year (plus more to come) cleaning up from said flood. God, of course, can see all the details, and I'm glad I don't have to worry about everything the future holds; only God is truly big enough to see it all and still be God.

It's been quite a year, and we can see ever more clearly now that God has not forsaken us, and will never fail us. With God at the helm, we will end this year strong, and be ready and prepared to conquer whatever lies ahead in 2025.

During this last month of December, we have a few events that bring us closer together as a community, but more importantly also closer to God. **Sunday, December 8**, the children will share their Christmas Program, "**What God Wants for Christmas**". It's always a delight to see the Christmas story through the eyes of our youngest members.



Midweek Advent services will be held **each Wednesday** through Advent, on **December 4, 11, and 18**. The evening begins with a **potluck at 5:30pm**, followed by a brief worship **service at 6:30pm**. We are excited to hear from Gary Klett, Donna Johnson, and Conner Essick this year.

We plan to spread some Christmas cheer to our community by going **Christmas Caroling on Sunday, December 15, from 4-6pm**. Meet at the church at 4pm to split into groups, and then we'll regroup at Faith around 6pm.

Finally, we will celebrate the birth of our Savior during our **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Tuesday, December 24, at 5:30pm**. The service is planned to last about an hour, and will conclude with the traditional candlelight element during 'Silent Night'. There will also be activities for kiddos provided to help them learn about the birth of Christ as well!

May we all take time to slow down and savor the miracle of God sending His Son Jesus to live among us. Hallelujah forevermore!

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 8

Children's Christmas Program - "What God Wants for Christmas"

December 6, 13, 20

5:30 Potluck
6:30 Wednesday
Advent Service

December 15

4-6pm Christmas Caroling. *Meet at Faith to split into groups, regroup at 6.*

December 24

5:30pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 25

Christmas Day
Church closed.

December 31

New Year's Eve

Holy Spirit, Holy Jesus, and You

BY PASTOR BEN UNSETH

I'm nervous about preaching this December. I can talk nonstop about "Jesus" and the "Bible." Some of my friends can carry on for hours about the "Holy Spirit."

Me? By temperament, I'm a "just the facts" person. God has grown my soul in faith. He has stretched me far in trusting him. Yet, when we explore the Holy Spirit, I often feel like I'm on ground that is moving under me. I am cautious. I don't ride a skateboard; it calls for a fluid coordination that eludes me. I fall down hard. Just solid facts for me.



Exploring the Holy Spirit feels kind of like riding a skateboard. Holy Spirit is difficult to pin down, to crisply categorize. However, we are stepping into the Gospel of Luke together. We will focus on Luke every Sunday from now through Easter. Luke loves talking about the Holy Spirit. Luke names the Holy Spirit more in Luke 1-2 than Matthew, Mark, or John do in their whole Gospels! Luke names the Holy Spirit as many times in his one Gospel as Paul does in all of his letters to churches.

How much does Luke like talking about the Holy Spirit? Luke wrote two books of the Bible for us—Luke and Acts. In those two books, he names the Holy Spirit more than all the other books of the Bible do combined.

That leaves me feeling a little unsettled...until I remember a few Scriptures about the Holy Spirit:

- How does the Bible start? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." (Genesis 1:1-2).
- How does the Bible end? "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." (Revelation 22:17).
- How does Jesus comfort his disciples at the Last Supper? "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:26-27).

We do not need to be experts on the Holy Spirit. He was at Creation and will be at the Second Coming, and he is with us today. As Christians, Holy Spirit is already active in our lives. In December, we are celebrating the coming of the Savior and all that he wants to do in our lives through his Holy Spirit.

November Flood Projects Update

BY PROJECT MANAGER PAUL BEHRENS

Faith is progressing forward! Denison Drywall is working on more sheet rock, the mudders at this time of writing this are caught up to the sheetrockers. They will complete the north end and then start in on the kitchen to get that completed so we can install cupboards when they come in. we had a great turn out on Saturday November 9th for a work day. Amazing what we can accomplish when we all join together to work as one!



Lots of painting/priming was done, the worship platform top was put on and much cleaning of figurines(which is being done with a toothbrush, (God bless you for your patience!), and other cleaning around the entire church including restrooms and all the fun sheetrock dust! The decorating team is starting to put things back in the storage room and final painting will begin soon in the Son Room, offices and Sunday school rooms. Thanks to all who have helped with our flood recovery, it takes everyone to make it all happen.

God bless
Paul Behrens

He Shall Reign Forevermore

BY WORSHIP DIRECTOR
GLORIA MCKENNEY

Fun fact: The folks of Talkeetna, Alaska have had a cat for their mayor since 1997. Mayor Stubbs held office at Nagly's General Store from 1997 to 2017. Upon his passing, the town elected Stubb's successor, another cat named Denali. (Granted, the town is unincorporated, and therefore the office of Mayor is only honorary, but still.) Wouldn't life be great if every town had a cat for their mayor?!?

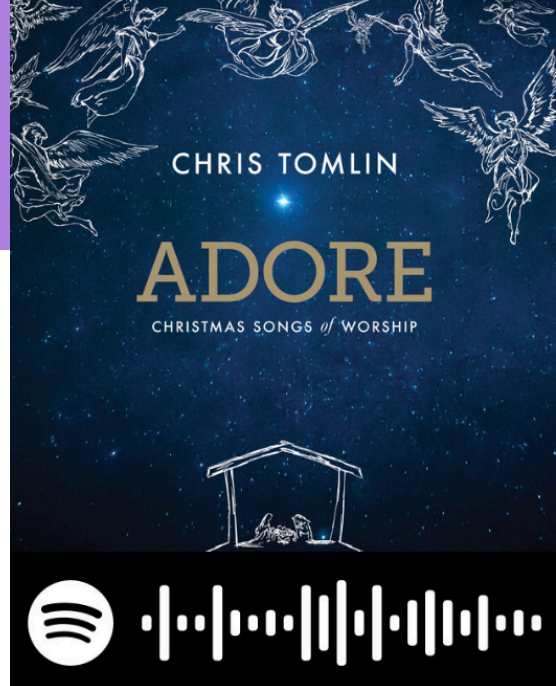
You're probably thinking that I might be crazy (and you might be right). After all, cats don't have much sense of logic or understanding of the world, or even opposable thumbs. It would be silly to hand control of our community over to a cat, even a very cute cat!

But isn't it also absurd to think about handing control over to a little baby? In monarchies where birth determines the next rulers, there have been instances where young children have been appointed as king or queen before they are able to walk. However, even in those instances, there have usually been advisors and guides to keep the country running until the king or queen-to-be is old enough to assume the responsibilities of running a country.

In the case of the Christmas story, though, the Ruler went from an all-powerful, all-knowing God to a small babe able to be carried in His mother's arms. God the Father was still Ruler, of course, and God the Holy Spirit was still active and moving, but God the Son laid in a food trough for His first night of ruling from Earth. "Here within a manger lies the One who made the starry skies."

But maybe there's a deeper meaning here. Babies tend to make life revolve around them, don't they? Having a baby, especially if it's your first, can change where you can go, when you can get there, and even if you and the baby will be able to stay in clean clothes the whole time you are out (unlikely). Your whole schedule changes based on what the baby needs.

What if you allowed Jesus to reign in your life as if He were, indeed, still the baby in the manger? What if you allowed your life to revolve not around you, but around Him? Just like with actual babies, life gets a bit more messy with Jesus. Jesus comes "into our hopes, into our fears." Life gets turned upside down and everything changes. But Jesus isn't coming to make life messy and then leave it like that. He's come to drudge up the old stuff, make room for new, and create a beautiful life. But all that can only happen if you allow Jesus to truly be born in your heart. And then with the angels we can sing: "He shall reign forevermore, forevermore. Unto us a child is born, the King of kings and Lord of lords. And he shall reign forevermore, forevermore."



Stubbs at the West Rib Cafe & Pub in 2006



Denali, current mayor of Talkeetna



'Tis the Season

BY KIM WILSON

Christmas holds a special place on our calendar every year. Gathering with family and friends, eating foods we typically don't, participating in gift-giving, and traveling greater distances to see and do activities out of our ordinary lives, can be on our celebration list.

Unfortunately, we may find ourselves over-stressed because of all the activity. Conversely, if we are isolated and alone, we may feel disconnected and left out of the fun. If we have recently experienced the loss of a loved one, calamities that have taken our home and our sense of security, or had a health scare, emotional pain is magnified.

Perhaps, thoughts that produce depressive or anxious feelings are present as we struggle to be "happy" when we don't feel like it. Maybe our finances can't handle all the expectations associated with this time of year. Are our relationships with family and friends strained and filled with anger and heartache? In our culture, our idealized "Hallmark" approach to the holidays may be a far cry from what we are truly experiencing. The chase to create that idealized image tends to dim the "real" meaning of Christmas.

When a baby was born to a Virgin in Bethlehem, there was no elaborate food or drink, no gifts, no large family gatherings, parties, decorations, or cards. Yet, this epic event of Jesus' birth has had more significance, attention, praise, and thanksgiving than any other circumstance in our world's history. When we stop and think about the reason for this season, we realize we tend to distract ourselves from its true meaning, don't we?

All the cultural trappings of Christmas may distress us. Could we instead, choose to ponder the humble beginnings of Jesus' life here on earth? Can Mary and Joseph's simple spirit of wonder call on us to celebrate with humility and gratitude? Could the angels' message for peace on earth, goodwill toward men, serve to calm us and reduce our anxiety as we reflect more on His purpose here and what that means for us in our lives?

As disciples of Christ, we can choose a different perspective on the sensory overload of Christmas. As Proverbs 17:22 says: "A merry heart does good like medicine", we have the ability to shed negative attitudes, in favor of encouraging and affirming ourselves and others. "Every good gift, every perfect gift comes from above." (James 1:17) As recipients of the Perfect gift of our Savior, we experience God's love and deliverance firsthand.

Let's take the time and make the effort to find and share the true JOY and peace of Christmas to a waiting world. As the Bible says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him" (Psalm 34:8) Share His promises. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13) To God be the Glory!

Hands-on Mission Day will once again be held at Linda Susie's home, 1514 West 13th St. on Wednesday, December 4. There will be quilts to tie, and school bags to sew and string. We also have supplies to assemble some school kits and personal care kits. Some items we are in need of are bath size bars of soap and bath towels (minimum size 20" x 40"; maximum size 27" x 52"). **Note: There will NOT be a Hands-On Mission Day in January.**



Want to donate to Upper Des Moines Opportunity?

There are many in need in our community! Donations can be left at HyVee in the entryway until we begin collecting again at Faith.

2024 Mission Team Update

BY KIM WILSON

Faith Lutheran Church generously supports the sharing of the Good News in many ways both here and abroad. Through the faithful contributions of our congregation, the Faith Mission Team comprised of Kris Behrens, Chair, Donna Johnson, Alice Nielsen, Brittany Spieker, Julie Williams, and Kim Wilson, oversees the distribution of these funds. Pastor Unseth serves as an informed liaison to other relevant church and community interests that may impact Mission work here at our church.

The Mission Team meets bimonthly at the church to address mission needs and determine partners receiving financial and other assistance with their missions. In 2024, fourteen Mission Partners, who represent local, state, regional, national, and international missions received twelve percent (12%) of the general giving Faith Lutheran determines available for mission activities. Lenten and Advent offering proceeds are also designated to special mission projects.

In 2024, recipients of ongoing assistance included ATLAS, Falls Church, Friends of Madagascar, International Messengers (the Smiths) LCMC National and Iowa District, Lutheran Asian Ministries, the Multi-Church Community Assistance Fund, Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, World Mission Prayer League, Upper Des Moines Opportunity Food Pantry, and YWAM (Marlee Nicholson).

Grand Avenue Community Outreach and the Community Kitchen co-located there, also received first-quarter assistance but have since discontinued operations due to debilitating flood damage. Likewise, LifeKids was also an initial recipient but with suspended activity due to the flooding of the church, the Mission Team is evaluating with their Board their needs for future church mission funding.

Each year, during late October and November, the Mission Team accepts applications from potential Mission Partners, who are asked to share information about their organization or personal request, their mission's focus, their greatest need, how Faith Lutheran funds can help, other funding sources available to help with this need, and any other pertinent information. Complete applications are reviewed at the December Mission Team meeting to determine funding recipients, based on need and projected funding availability. We invite Faith Lutheran members to contact the Mission Team for more information and an application if you know of a mission opportunity you would like the Team to consider.

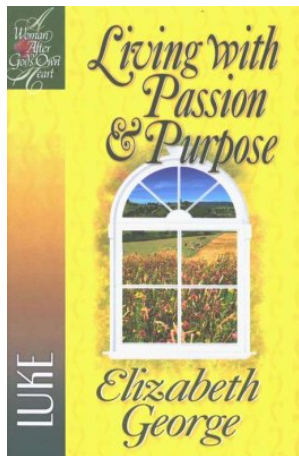
Throughout the year, the Mission Team requires updates on the investment Faith Lutheran Church has made from funded Mission Partners. Progress and concerns from each Mission Partner are shared throughout the year through in-person contact, videos, letters, and other forms of correspondence to keep the Team and the congregation informed. This information is featured on the Mission Team's Bulletin Board, newsletter features, during worship, speaker presentations, and displays, to tell the congregation about their funding at work.

Despite the financial impact due to our recent flooding, Faith Lutheran Church members continue a steady stream of financial and prayerful support of our church's activities, including our commitment to Missions. We praise God for His blessings and thank you, as His messengers, for your support of these vital opportunities to share the Gospel and His love with the world through these called and faithful servants.



Women's Bible study will be Tuesday, December 10 at 1:30 p.m. at Countryside Condos, 1102 St. Luke Dr. in the community room on the 2nd floor.

As we look at Luke 21 we find Jesus continuing on His way to the cross - His purpose. He has a passion for those who do not know the good news. He is running out of time on earth. We read Jesus' instructions regarding our giving and listen to some urgent words and warnings He has for his followers. Whom do you know who needs to hear about the Savior? How can you choose to spend your time so that the lives of others are enriched? Come and join the discussion! **All are welcome!**



September Birthdays & Anniversaries

Happy Birthday to...



Happy Anniversary to...

12.2 Emily Hoppe

12.3 Nicole Griffin

12.4 Tim Eglund

12.5 Cryss Quanbeck

12.5 Piper Pratt

12.7 Gene Englin

12.8 Dan Lockhart

12.10 Reid Tigges

12.10 Mallory Anderson

12.11 Troy Rosendahl

12.12 Isaac Brockshus

12.12 Bruce Simons

12.12 Larry Wigen

12.13 Donna Frederick

12.13 Charles Rouse

12.14 Olivia Schuster

12.14 Connie Jenkins

12.16 Stan Andersen

12.16 Justin Heikens

12.16 Mark Freeman

12.17 Cherie Banks

12.17 Marci Sandven

12.17 Carl Simons

12.18 Jerome Christianson

12.18 Del Christman

12.18 Syndee Patten

12.20 Ross Kreutner

12.22 Kyle Rouse

12.24 Cayann Knor

12.25 Randy Enge

12.26 Greg Lear

12.26 Jake Treybal

12.27 Abigail Sedlacek

12.27 Lacey Johnson

12.27 Fallon Pratt

12.28 Conner Essick

12.28 Gavin Patten

12.30 Lori Wire

12.30 Naomi Rosendahl

12.31 Adam Dotson

12.3 Bruce and Gayle Simons

12.17 Pete and Andrea Crew

12.28 Mike and Kim Wilson

12.30 Steve and Jean Oleson

12.31 Patrick and Kate Morrow



Faith Lutheran Church Council meeting minutes - November 13, 2024

The meeting was called to order by VP Justin Spieker at 7:02 PM and opened in prayer.

Members present were: Nancy Ketchum, Pam Hanson, Pastor Ben, Kirby Fueston, Dave Susie, Justin Spieker, Lance Storley, Gloria McKenney, Barb Solberg, Kris Behrens, Eric Tigges, Ross & Beth Brockshus, & Emily Hoppe.

Devotions were given by Kirby Fueston.

Prior months minutes were reviewed. Motion to approve made by Eric Tigges. Beth Brockshus seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Prior months financial statement – For the month of October we were in the black. We are still behind on our budget but we are spending less than budgeted. Admin costs have decreased due staff having surgery & just being more efficient. Motion made by Emily to approve. Kris seconded the motion. Motion carried.

TREASURER’S REPORT – Flood Money - \$133,672.36 in the account currently. We have committed to drywall \$50,000, carpet \$26,000, cabinets \$42,000.

PASTOR BEN’S REPORT – Pastor shared some highlights: Pastor has a wedding at Zion. We have four people applying for membership this fall. Jacob Weeks, Connie Conlon, Nancy Taylor & Kaleigh Pearson will be joining our church this month.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT (Pam Hanson) – See the attached report. Discussion regarding chairs for the sanctuary as we are running short on Sundays. Nancy Ketchum has some that she can bring from her home or we may reach out to Clay County Fair to see if we can borrow some.

TECHNOLOGY REPORT – The projector is ordered. Carey’s is working on some parts for one of the floor boxes on the platform. Lance is going to work on getting some youth in the Tech Booth.

COUNCIL REPORTS

- Evangelism (Eric Tigges) –
- Missions (Kris Behrens) –
- Worship (Pete Crew) –
- Stewardship (Emily Hoppe) – Time & Talent sheets are coming in!
- Discipleship (Barb Solberg) –
- Children’s Ministry (Kirby Fueston) –
- Youth Ministry (Matt & Steph Essick) -
- Caring Ministries (Ross & Beth Brockshus) –
- Fellowship (Lee & Nancy Ketcham) – Sunday Fellowship has been going good with donuts and some homemade goodies as well.
- Music & Creative Arts –
- Properties () –

OLD BUSINESS

- Goals/Priorities/Upcoming Steps to repair building; Bids for work; Grants; Funds; Insurance – we met with FEMA regarding applying for funding but we would need to be flood insured for the length of the life of this building. Insurance would be around \$16,000/year & this would increase over the years. We are not pursuing getting any funding from them due to this. We should be reporting volunteer hours to the City so we can help the community by not having to pay back as much to FEMA for the funds the City will be getting. Becky has been working on getting a better rate on our insurance. More to come on that.
- Sending out quarterly statements through Simple Church vs Mail – haven’t heard any negative feedback on this.
- Communion Railing, idea was discussed but not enough interest to proceed – we have dismissed this idea at this time.

Faith Lutheran Church Council meeting minutes - November 13, 2024 (cont'd)

- Mission Giving – 12% in Constitution was removed by mistake. Adding to Congregational Meeting January 26 to put back in – In order to get this back into place, Barb made a motion to do a Continuing Resolution of 12%. Kris seconded the motion. Pastor noted this will require a 2/3 majority vote by the Congregation when presented to them. Motion carried. Kirby made a motion to bring the Amendment to reinstate using 12% of the General Funds to Missions to the Congregation. Emily seconded this motion. Motion carried. This must be presented to the Congregation 30 days prior to the Congregational meeting (Annual meeting).
- Copier buy-out \$13,986.00 – this was decreased to \$10,892.90.
- Replacing projector – vote – PASSED!

NEW BUSINESS

- Thanks-For-Giving Sunday; November 24 – Emily is working on the workers for this...maybe the highschool youth??
- Advent/PotLuck dates: Dec 4, 11th & 18th - potluck served out of the kitchen prior to the service around 5:30. Nancy will get people together to do set up, serve & clean up for those dates. Justin & Pam volunteered to help also.
- Budget work – Council was given a draft to review. Total of the draft is at \$356,866.00. We are hoping to have a final draft for Council at the December meeting. If any Council members have questions on this draft, they should reach out to Justin, Pam and Carolyn.
- Pastor Ben Housing Allowance – This had been \$11,000 in prior years to cover his apartment. But since he bought a house, he'd like to revise it to \$26,000 for 2024 & \$46,000 for 2025. Eric Patten is also eligible for this and will get us a number next month. This does NOT change what we pay Pastor, just changes it for tax purposes. Eric made the motion to make these changes. Kirby seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- LCMC District meeting 11/16 @ Faith; church clean up prior – work night will be Thursday night (11/14) around 5:30.

Concerns and/or Celebrations

Justin wanted to give a SHOUT OUT to Pam & Dave for all of their efforts and work to get through this year. Pam was also appreciative of everyone that has done so much for our Church and our community.

Jared Hansen & Barb Solberg have given their resignations as the leads for the Creative Arts & Discipleship committees. We thank them for their time and talents in these positions & will be looking for their replacements.

Adjournment – Kirby made the motion to adjourn. Nancy seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.

Closing Prayer was given by Pastor Ben.

Respectfully submitted,

Jolene K. Hansen, Church Council Secretary

Faith at a Glance (November 2024)

Baptisms:

Kora Hines - November 10

Births

Confirmed

Deaths

Marriages

New Members

Connie Conlon, Kaleigh Pearson,
Nancy Taylor, Jacob Weeks

2024 Giving and Flood Relief Report

2024 BUDGET: \$420,894.00

	November	Year to Date
General Giving	\$26,354.19	\$336,497.55

	YTD Flood Giving	YTD Flood Expenses*
Flood Recovery Fund	\$230,294.41	\$136,122.79

*includes only bills paid. Much work is billed upon completion, so work in progress may not be included in this total.