



The CrossWord

December 2021

From Pastor Lisa

Perhaps you read blogs and listen to podcasts. Perhaps not. I am not a master of all technologies or social media, myself, but I have – in my attempts to become the best steward I can be - tried to read and listen and learn about simplicity, generosity, and stewardship. I am trying to declutter and find minimalism intriguing. Maybe more on that another time.

Anyway, I do read a blog by Joshua Becker called Becoming Minimalist. He is a guru on minimalism, has written some helpful books, and most interestingly to me, he is the grandson of a pastor. I appreciate the way he thinks about a lot of things. Joshua wrote an article recently which really struck me deeply. I wrote to him, and share it with you now. (Let me know if you'd like more info on how to read his blog regularly. I commend it to you.)

Sometimes Life Requires Heavy Lifting by Joshua Becker

The other day I went for a walk. While walking, I noticed a line of ants crossing the sidewalk in front of me. I stopped to watch.

There were hundreds of them. All in a single line walking from one side of the sidewalk to the other. I don't know where they were going or where they started, but they seemed to be walking with a purpose.

As I was watching, I noticed one ant carrying a leaf. And then I noticed another. And then another.

The ants carrying the leaves were walking the same direction, and seemed to be keeping up, but the longer I watched, the more I noticed they were walking a little slower than the others. I don't know much about ants and I have no idea how they decided which ants have to carry leaves and which got to walk unencumbered.

All I noticed was that some ants were walking peacefully while others were carrying a heavy burden.

And it reminded me a little bit about life.

Sometimes we walk peacefully. But other times, life requires heavy lifting.

There are some seasons in life where the path is easy and the burdens are light. Health is good, money is in the bank, relationships are healthy, and our habits are serving us.

But there are other seasons where the burden is heavy. Our kids are making unwise choices, employment is hard to find, our physical body is failing, our closest relationships are turning against us, bad news continues to mount with no end in sight.

We look around and everyone else seems to be fine, unencumbered, enjoying their path through life, celebrating successes. But we're stuck carrying this heavy leaf. We're trying our hardest to keep up, but the burden of this season is heavy, and we feel like we're falling behind. Meanwhile, nobody seems to notice.

I wish I had the words to take it all away for you. But I do not. There are helpful steps to take certainly: talk to someone who has experienced what you are experiencing, rely on others, accept help when offered, remove competing distractions, remember that seasons change, and turn to your faith are such examples. But those words only do so much good.

Instead, I'd like to challenge everyone else—those of you rushing swiftly, from one point to another unburdened, without a leaf. Take time to notice those with heavy burdens.

There is a temptation when our burden is light to not notice the heavy lifting being done by others. Or to assume that we have somehow accomplished something impressive on our own. But many times, those with the heaviest burdens are the ones serving society the greatest. As the old adage goes, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle."

Today, and even more as we enter the holiday season, look closer at your fellow travelers. And let's be quick to offer a kind word, a helping hand, or a meaningful gift. Some have been carrying that leaf quite a distance.

Blessings to you as you ponder these words, this Advent and always.

I look forward to seeing you in church!

Pastor Lisa

New Bulletin Format The order of service is back in the paper bulletin – be sure to grab one at the back. The booklet also contains the prayer list, calendar and important announcements. You are welcome to take it with home with you, if you like. Otherwise, a basket for recycling is found near the front door.



The Reason for the Season



Heat the Church for a Day is here already! Heat for a Day donations are now being accepted. A monthly calendar is available for contributors to pick a day(s) to help heat the church. Fill out the calendar yourself or call the secretary to indicate which days you are taking on, and include if the donation is in memory of someone, or acknowledging a special event or purpose. Donations may be mailed or one may choose to use electronic giving. Thank you in advance for continuing this tradition by way of taking care of your church building.

Book Selections for the Book Club.

ORDINARY GRACE by William Kent Kruger Dec. 8

THE GIRL WITH THE LOUDING VOICE

by Abi Dare

SOOLEY by John Grisham

Jan. 12

Feb. 9

Join the Book Club. It's a fun group and has been meeting here for years but is always on the lookout for new people and a variety of books to discuss. It meets the second Wednesday of each month here at LCC at 1:30pm.

Carrie Kids; Altar Focus for December

Carrie Kids will be the Altar Focus for the month of December. A Christmas tree is set up in the narthex with jean ornaments listing the sizes of K –6th grade boys. Jeans are the primary focus with other items such as socks and underwear are needed. Carrie Kids is a local organization working with 150-200 children and adolescents weekly who are homeless or at risk with a variety of programs, events, groups to reach them.

Our **second altar focus** for December is *Good Gifts*, which is a program of our denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We have catalogs available on the table by the fountain in the narthex, and ornaments on the small tree and a table in the narthex as well. You can choose something, make the appropriate donation to LCC and memo it "Good Gifts" (there are cute cards on the table for you to send the recipient as well), or you can do everything online at www.elca.org/goodgifts. These gifts are great teaching tools for kids (who are excited to know how the honeybees, or goat, or chicks they have given will help a family across the world live better), and perfect for the person who has everything! There is something to suit everyone's interests, from animals, to tuition, to counseling, to vaccinations, to plants and trees, and much much more. Here's a way to add meaning to your Christmas, and to someone else's as well.

Angels Among Us

If you come to worship at 6:15 pm on Wednesdays in Advent (starting already this week!), you will see our angel for this month in action. She is Gerri Sarsten, accompanist extraordinaire, who plays the lovely Holden Evening Prayer liturgy in Advent alongside our Living Water singers. Gerri has been playing piano in church since she was a young teen at her home congregation in Montana! You will see her occasionally singing and playing with the River, especially for Christmas and Easter. Gerri's spouse is Kraig, and they are the parents of three young men: Layn, Zak, and Jared. Thank you, Gerri, for lending your talent and leading beautiful music here at LCC!

A Message from Bishop Craig

December 2021



Sisters and brothers in Christ across the Western North Dakota Synod, in this Advent season, grace and peace to you from our Savior Jesus.

O God, you show forth your almighty power chiefly by reaching out to us in mercy. Grant us the fullness of your grace, strengthen our trust in your promises, and bring all the world to share in the treasures that come through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

The prayer we just shared together is the Prayer of the Day for the first Sunday of Advent this year. It speaks to where my heart and mind as we enter this holy season in 2021. I've been reflecting on the thousands of ways I've witnessed the sharing of our treasures during my first year serving as your Bishop.

It is an incredible joy and honor to serve as your Bishop in this synod. It is a remarkable time in the life of people of faith. A time unlike any other in human history. And, in spite of all that stands before us, we continue to be invited to share our treasures in order for the gospel of Jesus to be abundantly shared.

When I was serving in a local congregation, I would offer thanksgiving every time our tithes and offerings were gathered during worship. As part of that thanksgiving, I would say, "It is the gifts of our hands, feet, voices, and financial resources that enable God's work to happen through us." In other words, it's the sharing of treasures that we have first received from God that allow God's work to happen through us.

Thank you for the many ways you have shared your treasures to bring blessing upon your local congregation! Thank you for the many ways you have shared your treasures through Mission Support and direct financial gifts to the synod that bless the work of our synod and the global church! Thank you for the many ways you will share your treasures as God's grace enfolds you and Christ's presence in your life strengthens you in all that you say and do in the days and years to come!

Blessed Advent. And, very soon...Merry Christmas!

Bishop Craig

Children Youth & Family Ministry

December 2021



Confirmation Schedule

December	1	Large Group Night Theme: Jacob and Esau/Parents Night <i>Please read: Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-45; 28:10-22; 32:22-33:4</i>
December	8	Large Group Night Theme: Joseph <i>Please read: Genesis 37-50</i>
December	15	Large Group Night Theme: Moses and Pharaoh <i>Please read: Exodus 2:23-24; 5:1-9; 7:14-12:42; 14:21-31</i>
December	22	No Large Group—Christmas Break
December	29	No Large Group—Christmas Break
January	5	Large Group Night Theme: Wilderness to Land <i>Please read: Exodus: 16:1-15; Joshua 24:14-18; Deuteronomy 6:4-9</i>

Church School Schedule

November 28 No Church School	December 1 Christmas Program Practice
December 5 Christmas Program Practice	December 8 Christmas Program Practice
December 12 Christmas Program Practice	December 15 Christmas Program Practice
December 19 Christmas Program practice/and program	December 22 No Church School
December 26 No Church School	December 29 No Church School
January 2 No Church School	January 5 Boy Jesus in the Temple

Advent Dinners

We are starting something new this year. Confirmation Students will be serving meals before each Wednesday Service in Advent. Stop in between 5:15 and 6:00pm for a home cooked meal and support a good cause. A free will offering will be taken to help raise funds for camp scholarships.

The Menu is:

December 1st: Cabbage Roll Soup with sweet rolls	Dec 8th: Chicken Wild rice soup with sweet rolls
Dec 15th: Beef Barley Soup with rolls	Dec 22nd: Rustic Italian Tortellini soup with rolls

2022 Mission Trip Youth Gathering July 23rd-28th

Needing to know what to do next summer? Want to go on a mission trip? Join thousands of other youth at the ELCA National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis!



Worship in December

Our Advent Wednesdays kick off this week. We will enjoy dinner together from 5:15 – 6 pm, with worship to follow at 6:15 pm. Worship will feature the beautiful Holden Evening Prayer service, with no sermon, but a brief meditation. You won't want to miss it.

Christmas Eve, Friday, Dec. 24, we will have two worship opportunities: 5 pm Worship (prelude music begins at 4:45) and 10 pm Lessons and Carols service with candlelight and communion.

No worship services at LCC on Christmas Day.

Sunday, Dec. 26: "Pajamas Optional" Sunday! Come and enjoy Christmas carols and an impromptu "best Christmas pageant ever." You are welcome to come in your pjs if you like!

November Altar Focus report:

Many have asked, so here are some numbers. As of today, we have collected 58 teddy bears, which have been blessed multiple times and will soon go to first responders for children in crisis.

We packed up 80 pillows, 51 pillowcases, 34 sheet sets of various sizes, and multiple other sheets, mattress pads, comforters, blankets, and even bed skirts. These items are just from LCC; there are more that were brought as in-kind offering to the Thanksgiving Eve service with our ecumenical partner churches at Faith Lutheran.

Thank you for your generosity with both of these projects!

Christmas Flowers for the Sanctuary

It's December already! The Altar Guild is offering the poinsettias again this year. Traditions are important even in these trying times. Cost will be the \$13 a plant. The order blanks are found in the narthex and in the back of the church. Place the check and the slip in the offering plate or in the secretary's plastic bin next to her door. Please place the word "poinsettia" on the memo line. Thank you for helping to make the sanctuary beautiful for Christmas.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
December 2021			1 Advent Supper 5:15pm Church Service 6:15pm Christmas Practice 7pm Confirmation 7pm	2 Quilting 1pm 7:30pm AA Mtg.	3 Wired Word 1:30pm	4
5 9:00 Christmas Practice 10:00 Worship Service 11:00 Coffee 5pm Wed music practice	6 Needlework Group 9:30am	7 Staff Meeting 10am	8 Book Club 1:30— Ordinary Grace Advent Supper 5:15pm Church Service 6:15pm Christmas Practice 7pm Confirmation 7pm	9 Quilting 1pm Church Council 6:30pm 7:30pm AA Mtg.	10 Wired Word 1:30pm	11
12 9:00 Christmas Practice 10:00 Worship Service 11:00 Coffee 5pm Wed music practice	13 Needlework Group 9:30am	14 Staff Meeting 10am Gather Bible Study 1:15pm	15 Advent Supper 5:15pm Worship 6:15pm Christmas Practice 7pm Confirmation 7pm	16 Quilting 1pm 7:30pm AA Mtg.	17 Wired Word 1:30pm	18
19 Christmas Practice 10:00 Worship Service Christmas Program Baptism 11:00 Coffee	20 Needlework Group 9:30am	21 Staff Meeting 10am	22 9:00 Women' Bible Study 9am Advent Supper 5:15pm Church 6:15 NO School/Confirmation	23 7:30pm AA Mtg.	24 Christmas Eve 5pm Service 10pm Service	25 Christmas Day No Services
26 No church school 10:00 Worship Service Baptism 11:00 Coffee 5pm Wed music practice	27 Needlework Group 9:30am Knitting 1pm	28 Staff Meeting 10am	29 No church activities	30 7:30pm AA Mtg.	31 New Years Eve No Wired Word	



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E-News

Worship Times:

Wednesday Worship
6:15pm (School year)
Church School 7pm
Confirmation 7pm

Sunday Worship

The River Service
10:00am
Church School 9:00 am

Lisa Ahlness, Pastor
Janie Hague, Deacon

Office Hours:

M - TH 8-4pm
Fri. 8-noon School Year
Summer Hours 8 to noon
Mon.—Fri

Lutheran Church of the Cross

The Church Council meets once a month; the second Thursday at 6:30pm. The Council meetings are open to the congregation and all are encouraged to attend a meeting or to visit with a Council member if you have questions or concerns regarding the church.

**"Making Jesus Known by
Sharing our Gifts"**