



The Cross Word December 2023

From Pastor Lisa

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:5

December. This is the season of darkness in our area. Many go to work or school while it is still dark, and come home when it is dark again. Darkness feels so pervasive, that, when coupled with the cold of winter, it can feel heavy and oppressive.

This feeling is deepened when we consider the state of the world around us. Feeding ministries serving hundreds of people per day. Folks seeking shelter from the cold fill the places that offer it before winter has even turned terrible. War, ongoing war, war in even the holiest of places brings with it many forms of suffering and devastation. So much violence, so much need – we feel inadequate to help enough and overwhelmed by it all.

My husband and I are “older and wiser” enough nowadays that we have given up climbing on the roof to hang lights on the eaves this season. We put red and green bulbs in our outside lantern lights and call it good! However, in this season of darkness, I do really appreciate the lights on houses – whether they go all out, or are lovely and artistic, or are just a string on the porch. Even the small ones, even our few light bulbs, help dispel the darkness, help us see the way.

Noticing that, last night, made me think about the other kinds of darkness in our world. We can't do it all. We do feel overwhelmed. We don't want people to suffer.

In the gospel last week from Matthew 25, Jesus tells surprised followers that whenever they took care of someone in need, they did the same for him. And the same was true whenever they **didn't** take care of someone in need.

I want to say thank you for all the ways you care for others. Even when you're busy; even when you're overwhelmed. Your generosity with your talents, and your time, and your finances – inside and outside of church - is an inspiration to others and fulfilling your call in baptism to serve God's people.

O God our light, may our lives reflect you. May we live peace. Amen.

Blessings to you this Advent and Christmas!

Pastor Lisa

Advent Meals and Worship

Wednesdays in Advent – Nov. 29th; Dec. 6th, 13th & 20th - will feature homemade soups plus bread and desserts. Our confirmation students will assist in serving, and freewill offerings will go to help them attend Bible camp in the summer! Come join in for some lovely warming food, fellowship and worship. Supper begins at 5 p.m. – come when you can, until close to 6 p.m.

Schedule: Dec. 6th: beef barley soup; 6th graders assist
Dec. 13th: chili cook off!!! 7th graders assist
Dec. 20th: homemade chicken noodle; 8th graders assist

Our Advent worship begins at 6:15 pm on these Wednesdays, and features the very lovely sung liturgy called Holden Evening Prayer, which will be led by our Living Water worship team. These brief services will not include sermons, but scripture and a story – our theme is “Stories for the Journey.” Join us at 6:15 pm each Wednesday! Happily, these services will also be livestreamed! So you can watch from our website at that time, or catch up later. Blessed Advent to all!

Chili Cook Off on Dec. 13th!

Is chili one of your favorite cold-weather meals? Mine, too! Last year we tried something that was a big hit: the chili cook off! You are invited to make your special chili, whatever that is, and bring it in a crockpot (or normal pot) on Dec. 13th for the Advent meal. Pots will then be numbered, and diners will be given small bowls to try as many as they like, and then vote for their favorite. Food and fun all in one night!

CHURCH DIRECTORY The **church directory** will be printed starting next week. In fact, there are two directories you will get. One with the photos submitted only and the second one is everyone including the photos. In the “complete” directory, photos aren’t always next to the name but sometimes on the next page due to the information printed on the page. (The secretary has no control over the placement of that.) If you are wondering, yes you may still continue to send in your individual or family picture. They will be continually added into the directory. The directory will be printed in small batches to accommodate the adding in of new photos. If you still wish to submit a photo send the jpeg photo electronically to: churchsecretary@midconetwork.com.

Heat the Church Thank you for continuing this tradition of donating funds towards heating the church. You’ll find the calendar has been placed on the round table in the narthex. Although the cost of heating may have gone up a dime or two, to contribute to this remains the same price as in previous years. November and March is \$10/day. December through February is \$25 day. Choose the date(s) that have special meaning in the lives of your families. Donate in the memory of someone, or acknowledge a special event or purpose. Donations may be mailed or one may choose to use electronic giving.

Altar Focus: Carrie Kids and Good Gifts

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.

Cookie Walk and Caroling are back!!

Two of our favorite experiences! If you are a baker, sign up on the poster in the narthex to bring a couple dozen or more of your Christmas specialty. On Dec. 10, after worship, we will have all the cookies laid out in the multipurpose room, next to the kitchen. You will receive a container and can then choose your goodies. Cost is a donation, with a suggested price of minimum \$5 per dozen. We all get to taste different Christmas cookies, without baking them all ourselves! Win-win! Any left overs will be plated up to take with us that afternoon for **Christmas Caroling!** We will meet at the church at 2 pm, split into groups, and each make a few stops, with cookies to share with the folks we go to! Mark your calendars now, and dust off your baking gear!

Crisis in the Holy Land – How to Help

Included in the bulletin this Sunday is an insert from Lutheran Disaster Response with instructions on how you can give to help those impacted by the war in the Holy Land. For more resources, you can always check the ELCA website: elca.org. There is a big banner across the top right now with a link to a whole page of resources you can read and use. And please: pray.

Book Club Meets the 2nd Wednesday at 1:30 in the Library.

December: Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Gamus

January: The Reading List by Sara Nisha Adams

Consider coming to the Book Club. We have interesting and lively discussions of each book. A variety of subjects are read but usually works of fiction.

Christmas Worship

Our **Church School Christmas Program** will be integrated into worship on Sunday, Dec. 17th. It involves children from toddlers up to confirmation age and some adults, too. If you or your children/grandchildren would like to be involved, you are welcome! Please let Deb Carpenter or Pastor Lisa know of your interest! We will have one rehearsal on Saturday, December 16th at 10 a.m. to make sure of costumes and to do a quick run through.

Christmas Eve, as it happens, is also the fourth and last Sunday of Advent this year as well. That means we will do a normal **4th Advent service at 10 a.m.** on Dec. 24th (It will include Christmas carols!) Our **Christmas Eve services will be at 5 p.m. (with a half hour musical prelude beginning at 4:30 p.m.)** and a **Lessons and Carols with Candlelight service at 10 p.m.** Both services will include communion.

Cookie Walk and Caroling on Dec. 10th!

Thanks to all our bakers who signed up to bring their specialty holiday favorites for the Cookie Walk on Sunday, Dec. 10. This event will be lots of fun! You will receive a glove and a box or clamshell container and may then walk around the tables in the multipurpose room to choose your goodies. We suggest a minimum donation of \$5 per dozen to honor the hard work all the bakers have put in – AND to benefit the Heaven's Helpers Soup Café. You can support an important feeding ministry in our community and have great holiday treats, too!

Then, at 2 pm, come back to church to meet up for caroling! We'll split into groups and each make 3-4 stops (grouped near one another.) We have some simple song sheets with a few verses of Christmas favorites. We'll take some plates of goodies from the Cookie Walk and bring some joy and cheer to friends who can't get out much! We should be back in an hour. All ages are welcome – bring friends if you like! Please sign up on the clipboard next to the Cookie Walk signup so we know how many groups we can send. (Spontaneous joiners still welcome!)

Camp of the Cross Benefit Breakfast on Dec. 3!

The weather is cooperating, and we hope you can come to church for Sunday's delicious pancake and Wishek sausage breakfast after worship! Your free will offering will help the camp purchase a new tractor, which they desperately need. This is a special project that was initiated by our very own men's Bible study group, and we would like to help them accomplish it! Lee Jensen is our residential expert and can tell you all about the desired tractor. Deacon Janie will be preaching in worship and will have other camp staff with her. Come greet them and support our great camp!

The **poinsettia order forms** are at the back of the church and next to the church directory/heat the church calendars. Please fill the form out and return it to the plastic bin next to the secretary's office or place it in the offering plate.

There is a wonderful opportunity coming to get in the Christmas spirit! A combination of LCC singers from the River Team and Living Water will be performing in the **8th Annual Interfaith Community Christmas Concert**. This is a FREE Interfaith Christmas Concert and people of all faiths are invited to attend! The concert is an opportunity to reflect on the reason we as Christians celebrate Christmas - the joy of Jesus Christ's birth. In addition, there will be wonderful music from a variety of Bismarck musical groups. This concert is Dec. 8th at 6:30 pm. The location is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1500 Country West Rd., Bismarck. Please join us!

Angels Among Us

You may have been in worship or watching online on Nov. 26th as we honored our angels for this month: our long time “sound guys”, LaVern Hanson and Terry Grenz. LaVern is an electrician and helped set up the very first sound board here, and was very involved ever since. He consistently volunteered to come set up microphones and monitors for special events and worked to help worship go smoothly. He also volunteered wiring many other projects at church through the years. Terry got talked into helping with sound when the sanctuary was remodeled and has been a steady and caring hand at the sound board every since. He took special care to watch the battery levels so the clip-on microphones would always be working. We have been so blessed to have these gentlemen behind the scenes for years. Terry and LaVern, we are grateful for you!!!



Christmas Services 2023

Christmas Eve

Prelude Music 4:30pm

Festive Service 5pm

Communion

Candlelight Service 10pm

Communion



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
December 2023 Altar Focus: Carrie's Kids—boys jeans	Altar Focus: Good Gifts				1 Wired Word 1:30pm	2 Men's Bible Study 10am River practice 4p
3 10:00 River Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour	4 Needlework Group 9am	5	6 5:00p Advent Supper 6:15p Worship 7p Church School, Confirmation, River practice	7 7:30pm AA Mtg	8 Wired Word 1:30pm	9 Men's Bible Study 10am River practice 4p Set up /Drop off Cookies 3pm
10 10:00 River Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 11:00 Cookie Walk 2:00 Caroling	11 Needlework Group 9am	12	13 Book Club 1:30pm 5:00p Advent Supper 6:15 Worship 7p Church School, Confirmation, River	14 C. Council 6:30 AA Mtg 7:30p	15 Wired Word 1:30pm	16 Men's Bible Study 10am Christmas Program Practice 10am River party 3pm
17 10:00 River Worship Christmas Program 11:00 Coffee Hour	18 Needlework Group 9am	19	20 5:00p Advent Supper 6:15 Worship 7p Church School, Confirmation, River	21 Gather Study 10:30a 7:30pm AA Mtg.	22	23 Men's Bible Study 10am River practice 4p
24 10:00 River Worship 11:00 Coffee Hour 4:30/5:00 Christmas Eve 10pm Candelight Service 31 New Year's Eve	25 Needlework Group 9am Knitting 4 Oth- ers 1:30pm	26	27 River practice 7pm	28 7:30pm AA Mtg	29	30 Men's Bible Study 10am River practice 4p



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E-News

Worship Times:

Wednesday Worship
6:15pm (School year)

Sunday Worship
The River Service
10:00am

Lisa Ahlness, Pastor

Office Hours:

M -TH 8-4pm

Fri. 8-noon School Year

Summer Hours 8—noon

Mon.—Fri

Making Jesus Known by Sharing our Gifts