



Acts of Faith

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Kewanee, Illinois



December 2024

Volume 24 Issue 12

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The gift of Christmas: Retailers have had their Christmas displays up since before Reformation Sunday. The kids have made their list and checked it twice, or three times or more. It won't be long before the tree will start shedding its needles, the stockings emptied, the gifts unwrapped, toys broken, and the too small or out of style clothes returned. Before we know it, the annual celebration of Christmas will be over.



But for the children of God, we know that the gift of Christmas doesn't ever end. Week in and week out, the Lord continues to shower His gifts on us. Every time the Lord gathers us to His house, and we are led to kneel at His table, the gift of forgiveness is repeatedly granted to us. It is nothing we deserve. It comes to us freely!

To learn thankfulness is necessary. The parents of young children are well-versed in the fact that they must teach their children thankfulness. It does not come naturally. The spiritual genetics inherited from our parents allow us to think that the world revolves around us. When we receive something, there is an inward desire to think that we in some way deserve it.

But there is no way that we deserve anything we get from our Lord. We need that ongoing lesson from God Himself. Thankfulness toward God is worked in us by the Holy Spirit. God's Word works this thanksgiving in us. We need this reminder that Jesus didn't consider "equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself" for us, to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:6). He didn't bat an eye. He paid the price! Our life of stewardship is one of daily and weekly thanksgiving inspired by the Lord Himself.

Because Jesus gave us everything and more, there can be no ownership. The child at Christmas is quick to claim that the newly gifted toy is "mine!" But as Psalm 24:1 asserts, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." There isn't anything in creation that is ours. When we cling to and claim ownership of anything in creation, we are losing out on the continual gifts with which the Lord desires to shower upon us. Closed hands cannot receive anything new. We cling to the old and dead and miss the new thing that the Lord desires to do in and for us.

We are led to repent of the "yours" and "mine" and remove the lie that we have any ownership. In this we have the promise that God will continue to give to us. Not just at Christmas, but every Sunday at the altar in the Lord's house.

"Teach us, O Lord, true thankfulness divine, that gives as Christ gave, never counting cost, That knows no barrier of "yours" and "mine," assured that only what's withheld is lost." LSB #788 Verse 4



Faith's CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

December 24

4:00 pm

*"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).
Matthew 1:23*

Worship Schedule
 9:00 AM, Sunday Worship Service
 Adult Bible Class, 10:15 A.M.



December's Calendar

- Dec. 01** First Sunday of Advent
Worship with Holy Communion
- Dec. 8** Second Sunday of Advent
Worship with Holy Communion
- Dec. 12** WOF Christmas Luncheon 11:45 AM
- Dec. 14** Decorating the Church 9:00 AM
- Dec. 15** Third Sunday of Advent
Worship with Holy Communion
- Dec. 19** Elder and Church Council 6:30/7:00 PM
- Dec. 22** Fourth Sunday of Advent 9:00AM
Worship with Holy Communion
- Dec. 24** Nativity of Our Lord 4:00 PM
Candle Lighting Service
with Holy Communion
- Dec. 25** Festival of Christmas
(No Service)
- Dec. 29** First Sunday after Christmas
No Communion
- Dec. 31** New Years Eve (No Service)

Dec. 01	Mary Hahn	Blue
Dec. 08	Leah Weber	Blue
Dec. 15	Sharon Larson	Blue
Dec. 22	Marilyn Sturtevant	Blue
Dec. 24	Kari Tavares	White
Dec. 29	Leah Weber	White

ELDER'S LIST:

- Kevin Hull: 309-852-0801
- Ron Larson: 309-853-5111
- Ted Sturtevant: 309-853-8203
- Gary Hahn 309-854-2203

USHER'S LIST

- 1st Sunday: Ted Sturtevant
- 2nd Sunday: Nick Phillips
- 3rd Sunday: Gary Hahn
- 4th Sunday: Kevin Hull
- 5th Sunday: Jim Cook

Portals of Prayer devotional booklets are now available for the first quarter of the year (January-March) in small, medium, and large sizes. Please pick up a copy for yourself and others you might know .

Those For Whom We Pray: Please include the following in your thoughts and daily prayers.

Our Faith family: Allison Leezer, Cari Bridgewater, Nancy Tudder, JoAnne Behnke, Peggy Faber, Bonnie Nuding, Nancy Gillespie and Vanda Hallock.

Friends: Lacey Hammons, Jim Tudder, Steve Faber, Art Rosencarter, and all military personnel and first responders.

CID: Our campus, prison, deaf, and Hispanic missions in the District need your prayers and support.

Inactive Members: Pray the Holy Spirit bring them to the understanding of their need to be in regular worship in church on Sunday, and that we as their brothers and sisters in Christ would reach out to them.

Our World: Citizens of and those in Ukraine and Israel that peace may come to these lands.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy



Prayer Requests: Have someone or something that you would like Pastor to include in either his personal prayers or in our public Prayer of the Church on Sunday morning, please fill out a prayer request, place in an envelope, and leave it in the office or hand it to Pastor.



Birthdays

Joy Hernandez Butler	12/02
Carol Cook	12/03
Sandra Phillips	12/05
Madison Carpenter	12/07
Lisa Huseby	12/08
Cheryl Snyder	12/13
Corey Tavares	12/13
Ashley Phillips	12/15
Ernst Heinrich	12/16
Nicholas Leezer	12/16
Kaitlin Johnson	12/22
Oliver Blume	12/27

Baptism Dates

Judy Bridgewater	12/19
Justin Carper	12/05
Jacob Hernandez	12/18
Linda Jacobs	12/23
Corey Tavares	12/22
Micah Tavares	12/23
Kim Tudder	12/29



Wedding Anniversaries

Lorie & Brian Elgin	12/13
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Bulletin Announcements: If you have an announcement for the church bulletin please submit it via email to kltavares21@yahoo.com by Thursday prior to Sunday.

Christmas poinsettias will once again be used to decorate our Sanctuary to enhance the beauty of God's house this Christmas. It is a wonderful opportunity to remember loved ones in memorial or tribute by dedicating one or more of these plants.

The price will be approximately \$10 each, and you may take them home following the December 29th worship service. Please sign the sheet in the Narthex by Sunday, December 15, if you would like to purchase one. You may use a general offering envelope, but please include your name, amount, and indicate that it is for the Poinsettia



Women of Faith: The ladies will hold their annual Christmas luncheon at 11:45am on December 12th hosted by Mary Hahn at her home at 42 Edgewood Drive. Bring a dish to pass and a white elephant gift; a meat entrée will be provided along with Christmas games and fellowship. Let Mary know if you will be attending.

In December your mites go for the Lutheran Family Service, a \$106,000 Mission Grant. They are launching the "Healthy Together" campaign to support church workers and those they serve throughout the greater Midwest. Church workers and their families can receive Christian professional help to meet the increasing need for mental health, marriage, and family counseling. These professional services are provided on an ability-to-pay basis through support of individuals and congregations without funding from the Synod or government funding to not limit their Christ-centered ministry. This grant will help increase their ministry team of masters-level, licensed therapists who will provide marriage and family counseling that is Christ-centered. Thank you for your mites and your prayers for this Mission Grant.

2024 Operation Thankful is a program sponsored by our Faith congregation this Advent season to assist the Kewanee Food Pantry. Members are encouraged to bring donations of non-perishable food items or dollars to worship services during this season. Soup and cereal is most needed at this time. This has been approved as a Thrivent Action project and \$250 has been received. This is a wonderful way for us to show our Christian love for the fellow citizens in our community. Items will be collected thru December.



Church Council Report: The treasurer's report was distributed and Sue reported that the general fund has \$54,333.66 which includes the \$2955.32 proceeds from the Oktoberfest, the Memorial/Dedicated Fund has \$15,792.41 for a total of \$70,126.07. The church extension fund balance is \$118,597.17. The Jim Nuding memorial monies totaled \$1090.00. The church's insurance for 2025 has increased \$34.31 per month. The door collection for the Prisoner Fellowship Ministry Angel tree at Zion-Taylor Ridge totaled \$112, and the \$13 was added to sponsor 5 children's names.

Pastor reported Nancy Gillespie and JoAnn Behnke are now residences in Court Yard Estates, Kewanee. He announced a 70 year old woman from Effingham, IL is now living at Royal Oaks nursing home and would appreciate a ride to church on Sunday morning. Pat Lugerhausen has mental impairment, but enjoys worshipping. Any volunteers willing to serve should contact Pastor for her brother's phone number.

The council decided to not pursue the solar energy project due to its initial cost outlay.


Council unanimously approved registering Pastor Weber for the DOXOLOGY training program to be held in Middleton, WI in 2025. The cost is \$2500 and covers 16 days of instruction, materials, food and lodging in three separate sessions. The program comes highly recommended.

The council recommended the purchase of a new vacuum cleaner for the church, and retirement of several old machines. Sue Cervantez will purchase it.

A 2025 budget and nomination of officers will be on the agenda for next month's meeting.

CID News: Congregations of the Central Illinois District will gather in convention at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield on July 13-15, 2025, under the theme "Witnessing Christ to the People." Any member of a CID congregation may nominate a pastor, commissioned worker, or layperson for one of the 28 positions to be elected at the convention. See the convention website (www.cidlcms.org/Convention2025) for more information. Faith's Lay delegate will be selected at the January Voters' meeting.

Plans call for the Small Church Summit (SCS) to offer a program on February 22, 2025 at Trinity Lutheran Church, 700 S. 4th Street, Pekin, IL (61554-4504). CID Evangelism Executive Ken Schurb will be the plenary speaker before lunch.

 We will be electing church council members at the January 2025 voters' assembly. Nominations are being accepted for Chairman, Secretary, trustee, and two elder positions. If you are willing to have your name on the slate, please contact any of the elders or church council members. New faces and ideas are always welcomed. Thank you to the existing council members for their many years of devoted service to our congregation.

Thank you **Thanks** for everyone who volunteered and helped maintain and clean our facility and campus area this year. Special recognition to Joe Cervantez and his mowing machine this summer.

Advent
A Season of Hope & Expectation

Concordia –Geneseo is holding mid-week Advent services at 7:00 pm on Dec. 4, 11, and 18th. The third service is their Sunday

School children's program.

Q: Should Christians display Christmas trees based on Jeremiah 10: 3-4 "for the customs of the peoples are vanity. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move"?

A: The warnings contained in Jeremiah 10 (and similar passages) have to do with "worshipping" physical objects as "gods" and seeking help and guidance from these false idols. Nowhere does Scripture condemn the proper use of religious art, symbolism, etc. to remind us of the true God and His blessings. It would certainly be wrong to "worship" Christmas trees, pray to them, seek help from them, or attribute to them any spiritual "power." But there is nothing wrong with simply using them as reminders of the beauty of God's creation and of the wonder of His incarnation in Jesus Christ, who "became flesh" for us so that we might be saved.

