



December Cross Beams



www.englishlutheranchurch.org

Our Vision: A Christ-centered, serving community.



Children's Choir
Singing during
worship



CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Sunday, December 24

9:00 am Family Worship

*4:00 pm Candlelight
Worship*

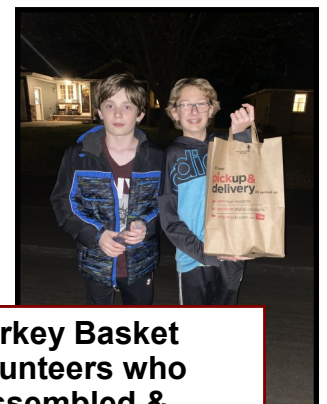


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Turkey Basket
volunteers who
assembled &
distributed the baskets!



Do Kindness



The pastor in me says that I shouldn't start my letter like this, but what the heck.

Merry Christmas!!!

One of my favorite secular Christmas songs is "*It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!*" There's just something about hearing Andy Williams singing that song that instantly brings joy to my heart. And if you haven't been in our church building yet, you might notice that I kind of like Christmas. Like A Lot!!! There are Christmas Trees all over the place (but there is always room for more, let me know if you have an extra/old artificial Christmas tree that you want to get rid of) The lights and decorations help lift the spirits in what would otherwise be a dark period of time with the days getting shorter and shorter.

We had a wonderful time this past Sunday, November 26, decorating the sanctuary during the worship service and we sang some of our favorite Christmas Carols and Advent Songs. And we will continue with our unique and festive worship services throughout the Advent and Christmas Season. We are adapting the liturgy to use the music from Christmas Carols and Advent Hymns to help us worship in a way that we may not be used to. Our choir has been working hard on a Christmas Cantata, which is a mixture of a worship service and choir concert. That will be on the 10th. On the 17th, we will once again have our No-Practice Christmas Pageant and we have new costumes for this year! Come and join in on the fun, relive the old days of being a kid and dress up for the annual Sunday School Christmas Pageant. And Sunday, December 24th, will of course be Christmas Eve. Technically, Advent is the four Sundays before Christmas Day, but I decided to extend the Christmas season by starting Advent a week early. That means that we will have a Christmas Eve service in the morning of the 24th at our normal 9:00 am worship time and a candle-light service at 4:00 PM. Basically, what I'm saying is that each Sunday will be a different worship experience and I invite you to join us as we get ready to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

But I also know that this can be difficult time of year for many people. It is okay to not always feel in the festive mood. Whether it is because you are grieving the loss of that special someone in your life or you have bad memories of Christmas past, I want to offer you the space to simply be and think or feel how you may need for your soul. On Wednesday nights, we will worship at 5:30 PM using the Holden Evening Prayer Service. This is a calmer and more meditative service that can offer space for peace and quiet. And I invite you to come in during other times as well and sit in the sanctuary for prayer and meditation. One of my favorite activities throughout the year is go into the sanctuary and listen to God and feel the Spirit's presence. If you want someone with you, let me know, I'll be happy to help.

I pray that you will find peace and joy during the Advent Season, and I can't wait until Christmas Eve, when we sing with the angels that we have heard on high and tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born. Merry Christmas!!!

Pastor Pete



Advent, Christmas and Epiphany blessings to you from Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson, Synod Ministers, Elizabeth Bartsch, Sara Villarreal Bishop, Diane House, Lidixe Montoya, Randy Olson, Laura Ramlow

Mary the Brave: Mary the God Bearer

As a young pastor and working mom, I struggled with the challenges of balancing work and home life, often while carrying a child in my womb, arms, on my hip, in a front or back baby pack, or car seat. Now my children are adults, and I have the joy of watching them carry my grandchildren. They do it differently than I did, their car seats are much nicer than the ones we had, but like us, they carry their children with much love.¹ I am still carrying my adult children and grandchildren and will always carry them, in my heart with much love. This Advent and Christmas season I'm reflecting on Mary, the God bearer. (In Greek it's Theotokos².) Mary carried Jesus. Like all parents she carried her child with love, but she is also the God bearer. It was a brave thing Mary did to bear God into the world.

To love is a brave thing. It is a brave thing to become a parent. Mothers put their own lives at risk bearing a child in their womb and giving birth. It requires a measure of bravery for parents to bring a child into this world filled with the bad news of climate disasters, gun violence, war, political upheaval, racism, food/water insecurity, and escalating health and higher education costs.

History has painted Mary to be quiet, meek and mild, submissive to God's will, but a closer read shows us that Mary was brave. Mary was neither meek nor superhuman.³ She had grit. She was faithful, courageous, strong and brave. Most of all, she was human. Her encounter with the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God made her brave. She knew that her pregnancy was dangerous and she could die giving birth. She also knew that as an unmarried teenaged mother it would cause upheaval in her family and community. She would give birth to Jesus during Roman occupation, a time of political unrest. Mary was *brave*. Her encounter with the living God made her brave

Her encounter with God gave her bravery and the faith to see that if God was calling her God would also protect her. It revealed to her that God chooses the people on the margins, those overlooked and underestimated. Bearing God in the world was to bring good news and hope to those oppressed. May Mary, the God Bearer, inspire us all to be brave!

This Advent and Christmas season, I invite you to be Theotokos, God Bearers. I invite you to carry the good news of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection to all those we meet on this journey of life and the love of Jesus in your hearts always.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Luke 1: 26ff In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you..." "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, ... the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God... For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

¹ Robert Munsch, *I'll Love You Forever*, Firefly Books (September 1, 1995)

² Since the 3rd century, Christians had referred to Mary as theotokos, "God-bearer." The first documented usage of the term is in the writings of Origen of Alexandria in AD 230. [Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God | uCatholic](#)

³ [Mary the Brave: Neither Meek nor Superhuman - CBE International](#)

Sweet Treats for a Sweet Purpose

It is my pleasure to announce that for the third year in a row we will be continuing my annual non profit charity bake sale. As always the proceeds will be going to the radiothon on December 8 benefiting Minnesota's Masonic children's hospital and Gillette children's hospital.

I need as much help as I can get to help lots of kids get the treatment they need. Whether that's buying baked goods, bringing in baked goods or helping us bake.

If you would like to bring in food please bring in food by 12/2/23. The baking days are Friday December 1st from 4:00 to 9:00 and Saturday December 2nd from 9:00 to 5:00 come to church to help food will be provided.

The bake sale will be here at church on Sunday from 8:30 - 11:00 and @ common man from 12:00 - 6:00. If you have any questions feel free to contact me via email Nockerfamily4@gmail.com



I HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

-Piper Van Nocker

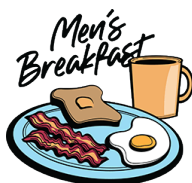
Supplies needed:

- † Rice chex
- † Peanut butter
- † Semisweet chocolate chips
- † Pretzel rods
- † White almond bark
- † Any baked goods from your kitchen (we will price)

Men's Breakfast

Pastor Pete will be cooking breakfast on Thursday mornings for the guys. We will gather in the church kitchen at 8:00 am for a breakfast with a rotating menu and fruit with coffee and orange juice.

The suggested donation is \$5.00 to help cover the cost of food.



Christmas Tree of Spirit

There are many within our community who are in need of help. Please consider joining our effort to share the spirit of generosity this Christmas season with local families through the Ellsworth Community School District Gift Box Program. English Lutheran is sponsoring 5 families this year.



Please consider selecting a star from the Tree of Spirit, and donate an item from their wish list!

All donations need to be turned into the church by Sunday, December 10.

Advent Holden Evening Prayer Services

This year, we will have a Holden Evening Prayer Service on Wednesday nights during the season of Advent. It will be a brief worship service that starts at 5:30 PM. We will read through the first chapter of Luke's Gospel and sing about the angel announcing to Mary that she has been chosen to bear the Savior of the world and how she responds to it.

Take a quick break on Wednesday nights to come and worship! And there may be a special surprise after worship each week!

Christmas Worship Services

English Lutheran's Christmas worship schedule will be:

9:00 am Family Worship

4:00 pm Candlelight Worship

We look forward to seeing everyone!



CHURCH NEWS, YOUTH UPDATES

Women's Bible Study

Women's Bible Study will meet at 9:30 am on Wednesday, December 13 in the Fireside Room.

We will discuss the last part of our pilgrimage. What happens to us on our journey through life?

We will all bring a treat and make up Christmas cookie boxes for our members that are unable to be with us.

Hope to see you there!

-Nancy Ellefson



Christmas Cantata

Our choir has been working hard on a Christmas Cantata, which is a mixture of a worship service and choir concert.

The Christmas Cantata will be on Sunday, December 10 during the worship service and at 4:00 PM.

We need volunteers to donate cookies and bars for a reception we will host after the afternoon performance.



Thank You Notes

Thanksgiving Baskets

This year we were able to provide Thanksgiving meals for over 30 families in our community!

Thank you to everyone who helped assemble and distribute the baskets, and who donated to this project. Also, thank you to our confirmation students who picked up donations from the surrounding neighborhoods.

Quilting Group

Thank you so much for the beautiful quilt. It is very pretty and keeps me warm. Thank you very much.

Thank you,
Emily Groen



Holly Jolly Holiday Event

Join us for Caroling, S'more's, Hot Cocoa, Sparklers, Live Nativity, Bonfires, Festive Lights and Santa & Mrs. Clause at the East End Park in Ellsworth from 4:30 – 6:00 PM for the Holly Jolly Holiday Event!



English Lutheran will be hosting the live nativity and leading the Christmas music!

See you there!



No Practice Christmas Pageant

Do you remember the hours that you used to spend in Sunday school, practicing for the annual Christmas Pageant? Did you dread having to memorize lines? Well, you don't need to worry about that anymore.

Grab a costume and come join the fun on Sunday, December 17th as we have our No-Practice Christmas Pageant.

People of all ages are invited to join in the fun.

And there may or may not be pancakes after church that Sunday.



Kingdom Kids

Kingdom Kids is for Elementary age students on the first Wednesday of the month after school 3:30 to 5:00 PM.

We will have a bus bring the EES kids right from school. We will have a snack, sing songs, play games and learn about God!

Dates: December 6, January 3, February 7, April 3, May 1

Confirmation

Classes: Our lessons will be based on the Old Testament. It is a 3-year rotation where everyone learns the same thing each year, Old Testament, New Testament and then the Small Catechism. We will also have a discussion guide for the small groups each week. Our schedule for class times is below:

Schedule - 6:00 Meal

6:20 Announcements

6:30 Whole Group Lesson

6:45 Small Group Time

7:00 - 7:30 Activity/Game

Dates -

Dec. 6 - Class

Dec. 20 - Christmas Party - bring a \$5 gift for the exchange game



Sunday School

Sunday School has started! Children ages 3 through 6th grade can join us on Sunday mornings following communion during the worship service for about 30 minutes. Times will be 9:45 to 10:15 am. Children will worship with their families and then when they go up for communion or a blessing with their families they will be dismissed with their teachers to classrooms. Class times will include some large group lesson time, large group activity, and music.

Important Dates:

-December 10 - Christmas Party & Sunday School students sing in church

-No Sunday School class - December 17, 24, & 31



November Council Meeting

- † Property committee is requesting bids for an automatic door opener for the two front doors.
- † Working on hiring Communications & Finance coordinator replacements.
- † Piper Van Nocker presented her request for use of the church kitchen to support her baking fundraiser.
- † Decision was made to purchase new roundtables for the back of the sanctuary.
- † *The next council meeting will be **December 19th at 6:30 pm.***

Financial Update

October 31, 2023 Cash Balances:

General Fund = \$104,742.98

Dedicated Fund = \$103,077.01

Total = \$207,819.99

Thrivent = \$95,491.44

October General Fund:

Income = \$22,892.84

Expenses = \$16,693.48



*The next finance meeting will be **December 12 at 6:30 pm.***

December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 9:00 am Worship 9:45 am Sunday School 10:00 am Fellowship 4:30 pm Holly Jolly Event	4	5	6 3:30 pm Kingdom Kids 5:30 pm Midweek Advent Service 6:00 pm Confirmation	7 8:00 am Men's Breakfast	8	9
10 9:00 am ELC Choir Cantata Service 9:45 am Sunday School 10:00 am Fellowship	11	12 6:30 pm Finance Meeting	13 9:30 am Women's Bible Study 5:30 pm Midweek Advent Service	14 8:00 am Men's Breakfast	15	16
17 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Fellowship	18	19 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting	20 5:30 pm Midweek Advent Service 6:00 pm Confirmation	21 8:00 am Men's Breakfast	22	23
24 Christmas Eve 9:00 am Family Worship 10:00 am Fellowship 4:00 pm Candlelight Worship	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28	29	30
31 New Year's Eve 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Fellowship						



English Lutheran Church
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Find us on Facebook!
EnglishLutheranEllsworth

Staff

Pastor Pete Warren

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Sydney Durfee- Communications Coordinator & Finance Administrator

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Julie Baggenstoss- Custodian

Music Director: Missy Kowalchuk
music@englishlutheranchurch.org

Accompanist: Ava Maxwell



Healing:

Liz Krohn
Mikey Krohn
Judi Nielsen
Tucker Thoen
Larry Larabee
Dean Mewes
Judy Nunn
Donna Tutor
Phyllis Kinneman
Elaine Hines

Military service:

Johnathan Bergman
Josh Bechel

Congregation Council

President: Eric Van Nocker
Vice President: Melba Smith
Treasurer: Gary Brown
Secretary: Greta Larson
Denise Hager
Jill Hague
Lynette Winger
Dennis Swanson

Office Hours

Our office hours are:

Tuesday-Thursday
9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Stop in, call, or email. Sydney will
be working from home Monday's
and in the office Tuesday-Thursday.



Deaconess

The role of the Deaconess consists of
sending thoughts, well wishes, and
congratulations to members of our church to
let them know we are thinking of them.
Please notify the church office or any
deaconess worker with any prayers.

Deaconess for December~ Vicki Nelson

Long-term:

Lila Larson
Sherry York
Judy Morrow
Deb Pierce, Trina Groen's Mom ~ Alzheimer's
Mackenzie Marks, Connie Gossett's Granddaughter
Tomi Erlandson ~ Seizures & Health
Marianne Melstrom
Mary Dee Prokop, Mother of Eileen Mewes
Wendy Wegerer
Janet Arndt
Rob Mathis
Jim Hines