



December 2023  
#748

# The Chimes

First Lutheran Church  
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## From Pastor Bill

Every Christmas season I seem to communicate the same message. And maybe that is okay, since it is a message that needs to be spoken, heard, and acted upon.

For us Christians, Christmas is fundamentally about *incarnation*, the truth that God meets us in everyday life, that the extraordinary is encountered in the ordinary. It's a wild claim that can easily be forgotten. For some reason, many of us associate God with that which transcends ordinariness. But Christmas is a reminder that the opposite is true. God is always drawing near to us in cattle stalls, unknown towns, newborn babies, working class shepherds.

Grasping this will help us celebrate Christmas more authentically and in keeping with the spirit of incarnation. My observation is that sometimes we celebrate the season in a way that suggests that God is met only when life looks fancy and perfect.

I've claimed this before, and I will repeat it again, the problem with our celebrations of Christmas is not that they are too materialistic, but not materialistic enough. That may surprise some of you, knowing that I often speak of our preoccupation with "stuff." But I think what I am arguing is true. When it comes to Christmas, we think we have to create the perfect one, have to emulate the Christmases of Hallmark, have to find the perfect present and create the perfect food, and decorate the perfect house.

As many have said, perfection is the biggest enemy of the truly good. And frankly, perfection is not materialistic at all. Perfection is a matter of idealism. And idealism is not where any of us live.

Don't worry about the perfect present, the perfect house, the perfect Christmas gatherings. Don't let perfection stop you from inviting others over for dinner, from joining with others in singing the songs of the season, even if they are done off key. Don't let it make you crabby.

Find yourself enjoying the ordinariness of the season. Bake some cookies. Go caroling with us. Emphasize experiences, rather than costly, perfect presents. Surprise people not with your presents, but your presence. Rub elbows with real people. Leave behind the anxiety that is all about idealistic perfection. And then laugh a lot. Eat some good food and listen to great music.

This is a great time of the year! Let the simple joys of the season be yours. Allow Christmas be a reminder to you that the ordinary is indeed the location for the extraordinary.



## From Pastoral Assistant Paula

Christmas. A time in the church where candles are placed in the window sills, garland is draped across the balcony, twinkling lights glisten, bells ring, children sing and the hymn, *O Holy Night*, lends itself to a sense of wonderment and peace. I love the warm feeling I get when the church building is decorated during the Christmas season. There is a cheerful glow that penetrates this space and permeates hope within my heart. But it is the *Advent season* that is catching my attention more and more these days.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Advent season is a season of waiting, but our whole life is an Advent season, that is, a season of waiting for the last Advent, for the time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.” The apostle Peter writes that we wait for a new heaven and a new earth in spite of all the forces that stand in the way. It seems like every year there are forces that stand in the way of peace on earth and the world often seems like a miserable and tragic mess. The people of Russia and the Ukraine have been at war six hundred and thirty-two days. There have been 560 mass shootings in the US in 2023 and yet gun policy remains divisive. Our halls of justice have been sparring arenas, our healthcare system leaves the marginalized and minorities without proper access to care and we are increasingly divided between abject poverty and obscene wealth. Natural disasters occur so frequently that we are immune to the devastation unless it hits close to home and most recently, the gruesome images out of the Holy Land beg one to ask, “Where is God in all of this?”

Yet, in the face of the invitation to despair, Isaiah cries, “Be of good cheer, be strong even in the face of disaster and humankind’s unfaithfulness.” You see, God *is* working his ancient promises out and the reign of God *is* emerging even now, even in the midst of despair. However, we are called to be patient in the midst of the darkness. We are being called to... Advent. Bishop Katharine Schori wrote, “Patience is above all the ability to abide, even when it hurts like hell, knowing that God’s road keeps rolling out ahead of us, leading onward to healing and wholeness in the face of things we cannot understand.”

It is painful to wait and truth be told, patience is not my greatest virtue. The root of the word patience means to suffer or endure. I don’t want to do that. I want to languish in the warmth of the lights and the wonderment and awe of the birth story of Jesus in a sleepy little town called Bethlehem.

Yes, the world seems like a miserable and tragic mess right now and for the first time in modern history, there will be no Christmas tree or Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem. The birth of the Prince of Peace will be celebrated in holy services only. That breaks my heart and quite frankly, I hope it breaks yours, too. Because living in a deep awareness of God’s intimacy is the source of patience, and it gives us courage, strength and hope to endure and act in solidarity with the world’s suffering.

I often wonder how Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land live in hopeful anticipation during a season of suffering and fear and uncertainty. How do they experience the unrelenting hope of

*(Continued on page 3)*



## From Shar Music Director

As you may know, we traditionally do a “mini-concert” of sorts prior to each Christmas Eve service. Particularly at the 7:00 p.m. service, I LOVE to include young people who are looking for opportunities to play Christmas music!

Please consider sharing your musical gifts with the congregation this year. If you play an instrument or sing, I would love to include you. Contact me via the church: [shar@firstlutheranmuskegon.org](mailto:shar@firstlutheranmuskegon.org) OR anywhere: [sharbourdon@gmail.com](mailto:sharbourdon@gmail.com). Phone number (231) 750-6275. I look forward to hearing from you!

# Confirmation

Confirmation students and youth 6-12 are invited to a Christmas party and participation in our December service project.

**When:** Sunday, December 17 at 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

**Where:** First Lutheran

**What to bring:** One pair of Christmas socks filled with items not to exceed \$10 - \$15

**What to wear:** A crazy Christmas sweater

**What we will do:** Enjoy a Christmas dinner, games, assemble packages for local animal shelters

Our dinner will be hosted by Alice Habina this year

\*\*\*Please RSVP to Paula by December 13;  
[paula@firstlutheranmuskegon.org](mailto:paula@firstlutheranmuskegon.org) or call:  
231.343.2644.

*(Continued from page 2)*

Christmas, joy in the midst of sorrow, a love that knows no bounds, and a transcendent peace amid a world on fire. Where is God in all of this? Munther Isaac says, “God is in the rubble.” So to my dear family in Bethlehem - Nisreen, Anton, Lubna, Nataly, Bishara, Layal and Basel Nassar, we wait with you in Advent. To the Israeli families who lost loved ones on October 7, we wait with you in Advent. To those in dark places and broken relationships, we wait with you in Advent. We wait, in solidarity, with the pain and suffering of the world in Advent. Blessings to us... who wait.

Paula

## Thrivent Dollars

Are you wondering what to do with your Choice Dollars as the year comes to a close? Here’s an idea: You can designate the money to help Dar Al-Kalima school in Bethlehem, Palestine. The dollars are designated via First Lutheran and then transferred to the mission fund where it will be sent to the school!

See Paula for further information!

[paula@firstlutheranmuskegon.org](mailto:paula@firstlutheranmuskegon.org) 231-343-2644

## FOR THE YOUTH



PK-5th grade Christmas party 12/10 after church in the gym



Re-Charge gathering December 10 at 5:00 p.m. in the gym (follow-up gathering for middle- and high-school kids who went to Charge)



National Youth Gathering Meeting  
December 10 at 7:00 p.m.  
For youth and parents

## Weekly Offerings

### Week ending 10/1/23

General Fund: \$7,583.05  
Building Enhancement Fund: \$385.00  
Dollar-A-Day (for new sign): \$296.69  
Building Rent: \$148.00

### Week ending 10/8/23

General Fund: \$10,710.36  
Building Enhancement: \$220.00  
Building Rent: \$1,522.40  
Dollar-A-Day (for new sign): \$90.00  
Noisy Offering (for Quilt Group): \$199.80

### Week ending 10/15/23

General Fund: \$6,354.89  
Building Enhancement: \$125.00  
Building Rent: \$177.31  
Dollar-A-Day (for new sign): \$62.00  
Noisy Offering (for Quilter Group): \$305.60

### Week ending 10/22/23

General Fund: \$8,770.87  
Building Enhancement: \$165.00  
Building Rent: \$219.00  
Noisy Offering (for Quilt Group): \$179.12

### Week ending 10/29/23

General Fund: \$9,343.81  
Building Enhancement: \$335.00  
Building Rent: \$195.80  
Noisy Offering (for Quilt Group): \$177.68  
Abiding Memorial: \$20.00



Sunday	Weekly Scripture Readings
12/3	Isa 64:1-9, Ps 80:1-7, 17-19 1 Cor 1:3-9, Mark 13:24-37
12/10	Isa 40:1-11, Ps 85:1-2, 8-13 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8
12/17	Isa 61:1-4, 8-11, Ps 126 1 Thess 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28
12/24	2 Sam 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:46b-55 Rom 16:25-27, Luke 1:26-38
12/24 Christmas Eve	Isa 9:2-7, Ps 96 Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-14, [15-20]
12/31	Isa 61:10-62:3, Ps 148 Gal 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40

## Christmas Season Schedule

*December 6* **Advent Service**—6:30 p.m.

*December 13* **Advent Service**—6:30 p.m.

*December 17* **Christmas Program**  
10:30 a.m. Worship

*December 20* **Christmas Caroling** —5:30 p.m.

*December 21* No Thursday night Worship.

*December 24* **Worship Service\*\*** - 10:30 a.m.

*December 24* **Christmas Eve Candlelight  
Worship Services\*\***  
7:00 p.m.—Nursery provided  
11:00 p.m.—No nursery

*December 25* Church Office Closed

*December 31* **Worship Service\*\*** - 10:30 a.m.

*January 1* Church Office Closed

*\*\*Will be streamed on Facebook and YouTube*

## Calling First Lutheran Members!

In celebration of First Lutheran's 160th celebration, we need interviews from our members to play in our church services from January to August 2024. We need you to record your interview on your phone and send it to Lisa Ziemelis at [lisa@firstlutheranmuskegon.org](mailto:lisa@firstlutheranmuskegon.org) as soon as possible. We are asking you to answer 2 questions.

What brought you to First Lutheran?  
What do you enjoy about First Lutheran?

The interview should be 1-2 minutes.

We need all ages of members to be involved with this event. If you do not know how to record on your phone, Carl Luther or another person will be at the church to do this in the Fellowship Hall on the first Sunday of the month, starting in January. If you can not do this after church, please call Carl Luther at 231-750-6737 to set up a specific time you could meet.

Please join us in honoring our memories here at First Lutheran with your videos. If you have any questions, please call Deb Roest at 231-744-1936. Thank you.



**Men and Women's  
Breakfast Groups**

December 16  
8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

*Join us!!!*



**FREDERIK MEIJER**  
Gardens & Sculpture Park

**and**

**GRAND  
RAPIDS  
DOWNTOWN  
MARKET**

On December 2, the Fellowship Ministry is sponsoring a trip to Frederik Meijer Gardens for the Festival of Trees and the Grand Rapids Downtown Farmers Market.

The market will have its first Christkindl Market. This is a European Market filled with food and wares and plenty of entertainment all in the indoor market.

We will be leaving from First Lutheran at 10:30 a.m. Bring a snack if you wish but we will be having dinner at the market.

The cost is \$14.00 for tickets to the gardens, \$5.00 for gas and your dinner. Come join us for the day to celebrate the holiday season.

Questions? Call Deb Roest at 231-744-1936 or Diane Kroll at 231-557-4637.

## First Congregational Church Candlelight Concert

December 20, 2023  
7:00 p.m.

First Congregational Church  
1201 Jefferson St  
Muskegon, MI 49441

Come hear the Motet Choir, brass and bells



## Wednesday Night Dinner to Benefit Dar Al-Kalima School December 13 at 5:30 p.m.

*Proceeds to help Dar Al-Kalima School in Bethlehem, Palestine!*

Menu to include baked chicken, salad, side dish and Mediterranean appetizers served at the table. Yum!

**\*\*\*Dinner will also include a holiday auction!**

Stay tuned for the many items you can bid on to make your the holiday gatherings special! *Hint:* Debby's famous baked French toast, Joe Dick's amazing lasagna, cookies by Ellen Bisson and Emma Johnston and a beautiful display of Christmas cards made with love by Evie DiPiazza and much, much more!!!

**\*\*\*Contact Paula if you would be willing to help out this night or make a donation!**

Don't  
Miss  
This!



## Advent by Candlelight *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Join the women of First Lutheran for light refreshments and a time to reflect as we learn to wait in the season of Advent.

**When:** Sunday, December 3 at 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

**Where:** First Lutheran Church

**How it works:** Table hosts have been assigned. If you would like to join us, please contact: [paula@firstlutheranmuskegon.org](mailto:paula@firstlutheranmuskegon.org) or call: 231.343.2644





*Thanks to Dave and Theresa Buchan who assembled the November Chimes.*



The family of Matthew Trulsen would like to express our thanks for the support and prayers from our Family at First.

Tina, Jennie and Erik Trulsen  
Ted Coffman



Thank you to all of my First Lutheran family for celebrating my 90th birthday with me. Special thanks to the Mayberry Group for the wonderful coffee hour they hosted in honor of my birthday. You all made my birthday very special!

Sincerely,  
Barb Bonifield

## From the Fellowship Ministry

Thank you so much for all who attended the Wednesday Night Dinner Halloween Party. We had a wonderful evening filled with fun, great food, and entertainment. Thank you to all who dressed up too. We have some creative people here at First and the costumes were fantastic.

A special thank you goes out to Burnished Brass with Shar leading the entertainment. We are so blessed to have her as our music and worship leader. Thanks to Jim Sutton and Tim Rodriguez for helping prep and clean up. Thank you to Kaitlyn Sutton for helping and managing the kitchen. She has agreed to be on the Fellowship Ministry and will be a big asset as she knows her way around a kitchen with all her experience.

Thank you to Laura Lucht and all the youth volunteers. We enjoyed you all serving the food and refilling supplies and helping with the clean up too. The youth group was given all the profit from this Wednesday night to help with the cost of the youth gathering next year.

Thank you to all the persons who signed up to bring the Halloween desserts. We can always count on our church family for tasty donations.

We also could not do this event without the help of Barb Bonifield for all the tableware and the decorations. Her group set up the entire Family Life Center the day of the event and she come back to do the beverages and set up the desserts too. Thank you, Barb, for all you do here at First Lutheran.

Thanks again to everyone who made this Party a huge success.

Sincerely,  
Deb Roest and Diane Kroll  
Fellowship Ministry

## Chimes Articles

Articles and information for the Chimes should be submitted via email to Rhonda Smith at rhondak33@comcast.net or placed in her mail box next to the church offices no later than the **15th of the month.**

## Official Acts



### ***Baptisms***

October 29, 2023

*Andrea Leigh Simerick*

Date of Birth: 3/27/1980

Parents: Kevin & Andrea Simerick  
Randy Slater

Sponsors: Jerry & Robbin Dibble

*Lauren Nicole Slater*

Date of Birth: 1/11/2010

Parents: Kevin & Andrea Simerick  
Randy Slater

*Connor Grayson Simerick*

Date of Birth: 6/3/2010

Parents: Kevin & Andrea Simerick  
Kate Dibble

### ***New Members***

November 5, 2023

Kathryn Hall - Sponsor: Mary Beth Liskey

Toni Mackay - Sponsor: Sandy Hutchins

Amia Mackay - Sponsor: Sandy Hutchins

Richard Miller - Sponsors: Larry & Mary Rop

Jan James - Sponsor: Barb Bonifield

Kevin & Cindy McClurken - Sponsors: Bonnie Nolan and Phil Sielski

Kevin & Andrea Simerick, Lauren Slater & Connor Simerick - Sponsors Amy Morris-Jones & Mike Jones

### ***Deaths***

*James (Jim) Davenport*

Born: 8/25/1933

Died: 9/14/2023

*Kenneth R. Kadrovich*

Born: 4/30/1939

Died: 10/24/2023

*Elsie Peterson*

Born: 12/14/1930

Died: 10/14/2023

*Thomas James Karafa*

Born: 3/27/1946

Died: 11/4/2023

## December Birthdays!

- |    |  |    |   |    |                                      |
|----|--|----|---|----|--------------------------------------|
| 1  | Connor Goodwin   | 12 | Kristine Anderson<br>David Cooke<br>Paula Dusseljee | 25 | Brittani Christensen<br>Dona Gilbert |
| 2  | Elsie Klint  |    |   | 27 | Michael Thomas                       |
| 3  | Taela Plekes<br>Carol Anderson                                   | 14 | Merle Hanson<br>Ann Metiva<br>Marsha Stewart        | 30 | David Aker<br>Diane Werling          |
| 4  | Keith Stapel   |    |   | 31 | Sande Borushko<br>Megan Ball         |
| 6  | Nadine Vanderstelt   | 15 | Stewart Veeck                                       |    |                                      |
| 7  | Micah Uetrict  | 16 | Norma Kanaar<br>Steven Habina                       |    |                                      |
| 8  | Iris Rodriguez   | 19 | Joe Labiak<br>Jane Redline                          |    |                                      |
| 9  | John Jack<br>Elizabeth Lucht<br>Emily Lucht                      | 21 | Marci Neel<br>Robert Frey                           |    |                                      |
| 10 | Connie Pluger<br>Stanley Shank<br>Emily Schlager<br>Marilyn Fisk | 22 | Mary Warden<br>Delaney Dahlstrom                    |    |                                      |
| 11 | Mary Rop<br>Joe Schmitt  | 24 | Deborah Majkol<br>Dominic Tyler<br>Merijo Dulyea    |    |                                      |



## Keepers

### **Nancy Hazekamp**

1350 W Hackley Apt. 215  
Muskegon, MI 49441

### **David Kleis**

Overon House—Room 48  
9160 W 64th Ave  
Arvada, CO 80004

### **Pat Mullinex**

*Mailing Address:*  
2284 Riverwood Drive  
Twin Lake, MI 49457

*Home Address:*  
Sanctuary at McAuley  
1380 Sherman Blvd  
Muskegon, MI 49444

### **Warren Robinson**

1845 Moulton Ave  
Muskegon, MI 49444-3127

### **Keith Stapel**

1228 Lawrence St  
Muskegon, MI 49442

### **Dave Walborn**

18552 W Spring Lake Rd  
Spring Lake, MI 49456

### **Mary Warden**

1740 Village Dr. Apt 222  
Muskegon, MI 49442-4283

