

Living Faith



What Do You Fear?

INSISTING ON HOPE THIS ADVENT

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: "In the time of Herod..." With these five words, Luke grounds us in a particular moment of history—a time when people were suffering under power and collective pain. They yearned for the promise of the prophets of old. They longed for hope, peace, and Emmanuel—God with us.

Into this longing, into this yearning, into this suffering, hope did come; but not how they expected. A teenage girl birthed a baby boy in a backwater town, helpless, vulnerable, and just like them. And hope has come—hope, peace, love, and God incarnate, grace en-fleshed, has come to be with God's people.

*As we sing in O Little Town of Bethlehem,
"The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."
Our hope is not flimsy or fleeting. Our hope is gritty determination,
resilient trust, and enduring faith.*

The angel chorus rings with a surprising message: "Do not fear." Again and again throughout the Advent story, the angels speak these words to ordinary people caught up in God's extraordinary work. When Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi are each called into God's redemptive story, they do not deny their fears—they move through them. They ask questions, hold fast to courage, trust the good news, and say, "Here I am, Lord."

As we enter this Advent season, we too find ourselves in fearful times. The question before us: can we acknowledge our fears while also insisting on hope? What if naming our fears helps us see more clearly how God is breaking in and where God is at work? Perhaps by naming what troubles us, we can find our way toward hope, with the angels' voices ringing in our ears.

Let us take seriously the angels' message: Do not fear.
Let us trust that Christ's birth truly is good news of great joy for all people.
Let us find courage to name our fears before the Lord, and then listen for the song of hope that has echoed through the ages. Emmanuel—God with us—has come, is coming, and will come again.

Let us trust God in the face of fear.

Let us insist on hope.

By Pastor Katie Jorgensen



Prayer Shawls

KNITTING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE WORLD

In September, one of our congregation's prayer shawls traveled over 4,000 miles to Leipzig, Germany, as a tangible expression of love and prayer from our community.

Every Sunday during the Prayers of Intercession, we pray for our partner synods, including the Leipzig District of the Lutheran Church in Saxony, Germany. But these partnerships are more than abstractions; our choir toured Germany in summer 2024, and that fall, Pastor Christoph Reichl from Leipzig visited Faith Lutheran, continuing to build real relationships.

This past summer, when we learned that Pastor Christoph's wife, Christiane, was diagnosed with Stage 4 brain cancer, we prayed for her by name for several weeks. In September, when Pastor Adam traveled to Leipzig, he brought one of our prayer shawls for Christiane. Upon receiving it and hearing that Faith in Waconia had prayed for Christiane by name, Pastor Christoph was moved to tears.

Our prayer shawl ministry extends far beyond our walls. Each stitch represents prayers for comfort and healing and the threads that connect us as the global body of Christ. Our prayers and prayer shawl served as a tangible reminder that Pastor Christoph and Christiane are not alone, strengthening bonds across the ocean and reminding us that faith knows no bounds.

We are grateful to all who participate in our prayer shawl ministry—your faithful work is sharing God's love in ways you may never fully know. Thank you for being the hands and heart of Christ.

**If you know someone who could benefit from the gift of a prayer shawl, please reach out to the pastoral team.*

By Pastor Katie Jorgensen



Prayer Shawl being prayed over by our Knit & Natter group



Beginnings & Endings:

CANDIDACY

The typical ELCA path to ordination has three candidacy interviews clustered around your four years in seminary. Entrance, before you start schooling; Endorsement, after two years of classes and before you start your internship; and Approval, near the end of your final year of classes and before your First Call.

Having graduated with my Masters of Divinity degree in 2012, I don't fit this process. I did my Entrance interview in August, and my Endorsement interview is scheduled for December. Depending on the Endorsement interview, the synod's candidacy committee and Bishop Jen Nagel will determine when I can schedule an Approval interview and enter the First Call process.

I don't mind admitting that I've carried a lot of anxiety through this process. What if I fail? I'm scared of any rejection, let alone *rejection from the church*. What if I let you all down? There are days where I want to give into the fear, and play it safe. My thoughts sometimes sound like this: *"Why am I doing this? Why not just find another youth ministry job? That would be easier. I'm good at that. Even if my candidacy process fails, I can always go back to what is comfortable."*

One of the gifts of the call process is the language of internal and external call. I have always loved the church, and never wanted to work anywhere else. I have a sense of internal call to teach the Bible, to preach, to build up community around Christian spirituality and practices. But Faith Lutheran has given me an external call...you have consistently affirmed me as a preacher and worship leader. You have encouraged me as a teacher. Pastor Adam and Pastor Katie have lifted me up and stretched me into new roles. Pastor Adam told me once: "youth ministry is something you definitely can do; but it's not *all* you can do."

Teaching the Bible, I know that Moses, the prophets, and even Mary were scared of their call. They could have rejected it, and stayed comfortable. But when God called, they answered, even though it meant change, and growth, and leaving their comfort zone behind. I find some measure of peace, knowing that I'm walking the holy journey of call and discernment, following the footsteps of so many Biblical characters. It's the one we all have to walk: "Ok, God, I'm scared. And that's ok. Here I am. Send me."

Through prayer – through searching my own heart – through the affirmation and call you have so graciously offered me – I'm listening for God's call to something new.

Christ be with me - and with us all!

By Shane Marcus



Gathering Expedition

Ministries go through transitions all the time. That is true of us in this season at Faith, but it is true in so many other places as well. The ELCA National Youth Gathering was running smoothly before Covid upended it. With the delay of the '21 event and eventual '22 cancellation, the Gathering lost some critical momentum - practically an entire "generation" of students excited to attend an event their church had always supported. You can see it in the numbers; from averaging 30-40k students, to only 16-18k attending in 2024.

The staff of Gathering is trying to reimagine the Gathering as a cycle - making it less of a mountaintop "moment" and instead working towards a consistent "movement." This fall they hosted three Faith in Motion leadership retreats, with a "Gathering Camp" planned for next summer, and hopes to host similar retreats in every ELCA region next fall. The goal is twofold: 1) to rebuild interest in the Gathering by enabling students and congregations to develop and maintain connections between events; 2) to provide opportunities for supporting youth ministry every summer, not just every three years.

I am one of 11 Regional Representatives hired by the Gathering to work towards this new vision. I had the privilege to attend the most recent leadership retreat in Lutherdale Camp in Elkhorn, WI. Over 100 youth from 5 states attended, learning from Pastor Emily Harkins about how God calls and equips them for the work of Discernment, Identity, and Belonging in Jesus. I have no doubt that these students will return to their own congregations with a new passion for leadership in the church and ministry to the world.



These retreats and camp are a new thing, the brainchild of Deacon Jess Liles - the Gathering director - and her staff. Though the '24 Gathering was smaller than the '18 one, they didn't give into despair, or point fingers. They prayed, strategized, dreamed, and invited new partners into their imagination. They are working, tirelessly, to build something fresh that honors their old, even ancient mission: to bring teenagers into contact with the biggest vision of the church. To make disciples of Jesus Christ.

By Shane Marcus



Future OF THE CHURCH

Minneapolis Area Synod
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

I attended the 2025 week-long ELCA Churchwide Assembly (or the primary decision-making body of the ELCA) in Phoenix, AZ. This year's theme was "For the Life of the World" and was at the forefront of worshipping together and discussions regarding ELCA churchwide policy, budgets and proposals. The Assembly elected Rev. Yehiel Curry as the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA. I believe he is the right person, at the right time, to be our next Presiding Bishop.

The following things I learned from attending the Assembly provide me with hope for the future of the church:

- Often it can feel like we are only one church trying to make an impact. But sitting in a voting hall, full to capacity, with others representing other churches, I realized we are not alone; we are a piece of something much larger and grander than ourselves.
- The Minneapolis Area Synod, which is the synod Faith Lutheran belongs to, is the largest in the ELCA in baptized membership. As we strive to make a positive impact on our neighbors, there are congregations right in our area, striving to do the same.
- Even when we don't necessarily agree with others, there are still many ways we can work together to stand united as one church, one body of Christ.

I'm grateful for the memories and perspectives I gained from attending the Churchwide Assembly and will carry them with me as I work to instill hope for the future of the church in others.

By Matthias Bergstrom



Transition

GOD CALLS US TO THIS WORK, TOGETHER

*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

What is my work as the Interim Pastor?

- ◆ To be a pastoral leader in this congregation: leading worship, preaching, teaching, providing pastoral care, etc.
- ◆ To lead the Transition Team process.
- ◆ To analyze the congregational system to answer:
 - How does this congregation function and why?
 - What is it that you value?
 - What might need to be changed or eliminated?
- ◆ To leave Faith ready for a new pastor to succeed.

What is your work as the congregation of Faith Lutheran?

To answer the following questions: Who is God calling the community of Faith Lutheran to be in this time? What sort of leader will lead this faith community into the future which God is calling?

How is the work going to be done?

The Transition Team will:

- ◆ Host Listening Sessions and ask predetermined questions.
- ◆ Discern ways to listen to the greater community.
- ◆ Hold prayer as important throughout the process, and ask for your prayers as well.
- ◆ Compile responses from the listening sessions and create the Ministry Site Profile (MSP).
- ◆ Receive feedback, finalize the MSP, and pass it on to the Call Committee.
- ◆ All updates and information throughout the Transition process can be found on the website by going to, www.waconiafaithlutheran.com > About > Pastoral Transition

When the Transition Team has finished the MSP, the work will transition to a Call Committee of nine members (size specified in the congregation's Constitution), who will be appointed by the church council.

This time of transition is an “in-between stage;” it is a crossing of a threshold where you have an idea of what is to come, but don't yet really know what that is—very similar to Advent. While transition and Advent are inherently uncomfortable times of uncertainty, they are also times of discovery, hope, and new possibilities. Let's be willing to wait for the good news of Christmas, and for the right choice to lead this congregation forward, confident that God is still active in this world. God is coming, and God is preparing someone to lead this community into the future God has prepared. Our hope lies there as we live in our faith through this time of transition.

May Christ walk with us during this transition time.

By Pastor Jacob Burkman

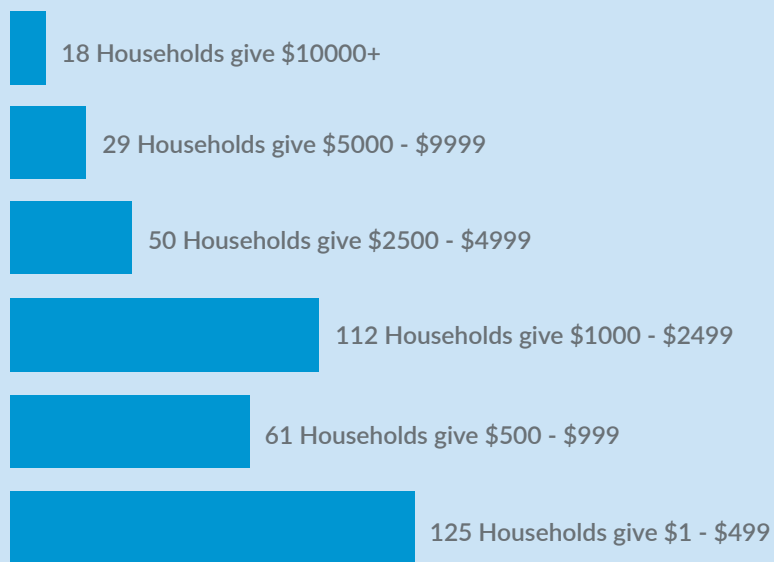
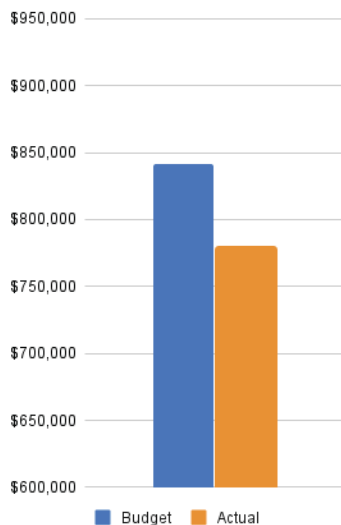


Financial Update

If you want giving to be recognized on your 2025 giving statement, please have it delivered to the church office no later than Monday, December 29, 2025 at 9:00am.

Income

Budget vs. Actual



In 2024
69% of member households have given to the General Fund & the average member household gave \$1,612.



Come Worship with us!

Sundays at 9 & 10:30am

Prime Time Wednesdays at 6pm

www.waconiafaithlutheran.com // @f

952-442-2101



Pastor Katie Jorgensen

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Pastor Jacob Burkman

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what we
can do

responding to
God's generosity

Please return your pledge card!

This stewardship season, we invite you to consider:

What has God made possible through you?

What will you make possible through your faithful response?

What can we do together?

WAYS TO GIVE

- Cash or Check
- Credit Card (Online and Text to Give)
 - Stock Gifts
 - Charitable Trusts
- Directly from your Retirement Account as a Tax-Free Distribution

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact Kim Sop at kim@waconiafaithlutheran.com



Make your Pledge in Real



Set Up Recurring Giving or Change Current Giving



FAITH
LUTHERAN
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CHRISTMAS EVE AT FAITH LUTHERAN

DECEMBER 24

10:30am

Christmas Eve Worship

5:00pm

Lessons & Carols with Faith Choir

7:00pm

Candlelight & Communion Worship

Save the Date!

Join Faith for an
ALL CHURCH SERVICE NIGHT!

February 11, 2026
at Feed My Starving Children, Chanhassen

**FEED MY
STARVING
CHILDREN**

3 shifts available:

2:30-4:15pm

5:00-6:30pm

7:15-8:45pm

Ages 5-99+ are welcome to volunteer!

There are various volunteer opportunities - packing food, working the warehouse, and labeling bags (you can sit for this one!).

If you are over 18 and need transportation, carpool options will be available. Sign Up is coming soon!