

Called by Christ to Give Thanks



“See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:15-22

Thank you. Those two words are often overlooked, underestimated, ignored, and yet they carry a tremendous amount of power. Thanking someone is a way to recognize they have done something for you. They have made the burdens of life easier; they have served you in some way, they have noticed you, they have cared for you. All of that and more is rolled into two simple words “Thank you.” Yet even so how often do we in society take time to thank everyone for doing something? Do we thank the person who bags our groceries, so we don’t have to? Do we thank the person who takes time to wait and hold a door for us because they want to show us love, respect, and courtesy? Do we thank the person who takes our garbage, delivers our mail, etc. or do we just take these services for granted?

In his first letter to the church in Thessaloniki, the oldest New Testament work, St. Paul tells them to rejoice always and give thanks no matter what they are going through / experiencing. St. Paul is writing this to Christians who are experiencing real persecution. They are routinely being excluded from jobs because of their faith, they are being mocked, stereotyped, physically assaulted, and in some cases murdered for their faith in Christ. What is St. Paul's advice for them? Don't get mad, get even? An eye for an eye? No. St. Paul tells them that under no circumstances should they meet evil or sinful actions with the same. If someone does evil to them, they are to respond with goodness. Even harder St. Paul tells them to give thanks (to God) in all things. So, whether things are going well in their lives or poorly, they are to give thanks and praise to God.

November is a month where we are called to reflect on what it means to give thanks as a Christian. On Thanksgiving many in our society, religious or not, will take time to reflect on what they are thankful for in their lives. As Christians we are called in our baptisms to do this every day. The truth is this is a spiritual discipline and can only be done with the grace of God. It's easy to give thanks when you come into unexpected money, pay off a debt, are healthy, etc. It's hard to give thanks and praise to God when you are struggling with debt, when you get a diagnosis you didn't expect, when a loved one dies, etc.

Yet we are called in our baptisms to give thanks and praise to God for his goodness no matter what we are going through. Why? Because giving thanks in all things reminds us and others of our inherent dignity as human beings who bear the image of God, strengthens our faith in the promises of God, reminds us of God's deep and abiding love for us and all creation, shows the love of Christ to others, and can inspire others around us.

Thank you. When is the last time you said this? Who might you have overlooked in saying these powerful words to? As we are preparing to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, I hope that you and your loved ones have a wonderful and safe Thanksgiving. I hope that you take some time to pray

together and reflect on what you are thankful for in your life, what blessings God has given you, and what your hopes are for the coming year. I hope that you will find comfort that in Word and Sacrament the Triune God freely offers you endless grace that by the Holy Spirit you can be freed to give thanks in all things. I hope above all you know how deeply thankful I am to have each of you as part of my life and that of my family.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Happy Thanksgiving!

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Nicole

A Thanksgiving prayer for personal or communal use

“Almighty God our Father, your generous goodness comes to us new every day. By the work of your Spirit lead us to acknowledge your goodness, give thanks for your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.” (Sundays and Seasons)



**North/West Lower
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Election Anxiety

I write this as we prepare for Election Day and the aftermath of a presidential election. I expect the election is all we will be talking about for the next few weeks. I find wisdom in contributing to the conversation prior to knowing the outcome of the election.

In my fairytale imagination, the anxiety many of us felt over politics disappeared with the relentless run of political ads. The outcome of the election was undeniable and resulted in a quick concession speech. As a result, in the week after the election, our nation united behind our next president, whomever it is. As I said, my fairytale imagination.

In my honest imagination, I wonder how long we will wait after Election Day to learn the results and how rigorously those results will be challenged and discredited. I worry about how long we will live under the threat of political violence and how we will respond if and when political violence occurs. On this side of Election Day, I pray for the safety of poll workers and those who certify elections. I pray that the vote will not in any way be suppressed. I pray for a peaceful transition of power. Mostly I look to God for help because I am afraid of what this election will reveal about us as a nation.

I find hope in an image that Pastor Zachariah Shipman of University Lutheran Church in East Lansing offered his congregation. Picture a blue donkey on the left and a red elephant on the right. Above them reigns a white lamb. The message is clear. On the day after the election, as on the day before, God is still God. Jesus loves and reigns in the world. The Holy Spirit is at work among us and in our country.

In the weeks after the election, perhaps more than anything else, we need Jesus to save us from division. We are divided in our politics. We are divided over what constitutes the truth. Common ground appears impossible to find; compromise is regarded as anathema. Polarization and tribalism are the norm. We have lost our ability and our appetite to overcome our division.

Jesus gives us a new identity we can embrace, a future we can live into, and power to do both. Jesus unites us as God's children: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Christ empowers us to strive to overcome rather than contribute to division by claiming this identity for ourselves and regarding others, first and foremost, as also one with us in Christ. We regard no one from a human point of view. For "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Corinthians 5:16-19).

This is not a fairytale. This is the gospel, the good news our nation needs the church to bring today. As children of God and disciples of the Lord Jesus who are empowered by the Holy Spirit, our vocation is to hang onto this hope and to share this hope with others. By virtue of our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, we are to be both a "prophetic presence" and a "reconciling and healing presence" in the world, both denouncing sin and mediating conflicts to serve the common good (*Church in Society*, pp. 3-4). We are to take up and participate in the essential work of repairing a divided nation, work that is just beginning. We are to remain steadfast in pursuing God's call to care for others and be united in Christ.

But for today, perhaps the best we can do is to heed words of Jesus: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27). We can be of strong heart and good courage because, no matter who wins in the battle of the elephant and the donkey, the lamb will forever reign.

With you in Christ,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop



Director of Evangelical Mission

On November 2, our synod celebrated the ministry of Pastor David Sprang, bid him farewell, and asked God to bless and keep him. Thank you to everyone who joined us!



While Pastor Sprang will officially retire on November 30, his last day at work will be November 20. He will then spend Thanksgiving week on vacation with his family.



Starting November 21, please send anything you would normally send to Pastor Sprang to the new DEM email address: dem@mittensynod.org.

The Synod Staff will be checking this email address daily and will get back to you. You may also contact Bishop Satterlee or Pastor Bright by calling them directly.

Pastor Sprang shares a message of thanks to the Synod:

I am deeply moved by the many ways you all have recognized and given thanks for my 44 years of ministry and for my work on the Synod Staff. I give thanks for the gifts, cards, support, and for those who were able to be present at the celebration event on November 2, 2024.

It was a wonderful experience to have family, friends, representatives of the synod, especially Bishop Satterlee, and former parishioners gather at Christ the King in Gladwin, where I served as pastor from 1996 to 2014.

As I move into retirement, I continue to look back over those years and give thanks to God for the ways individuals, families, and congregations have invited me into their lives and ministry. The greatest gift has been to share the Gospel story of Jesus and to bring a word of grace to those who need to hear it.

I will retire on November 30, but take Thanksgiving week off to be with family. My last official day in the office will be November 20. I have agreed to be the contracted pastor at Prince of Peace, Rose City where I will preach a few times a month and provide pastoral care and parish administration.

Preaching Jesus as Savior Retreat

Pastor Chrisy Bright, Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Candidacy

Thanks in part to financial support from Ms. Christine Allen, a group of rostered ministers and lay leaders met at the St. Francis Retreat Center in Dewitt in October for a two day preaching and learning retreat: Preaching Jesus as Savior! Led by Dr. Robert Krieg and Bishop Satterlee, the group explored classic and contemporary theories of atonement and how they relate to the modern day church. We also explored many strategies for preaching Jesus as Savior, especially in light of a world that seems starving for good news.

In addition, as retreat chaplain, Bishop Katherine Finegan of the Northern Great Lakes Synod, led us in worship and an exploration of the entire passion story in each of the four gospels, which was illuminating for all of us.

The retreat also had plenty of time for conversation and fellowship, as well as delicious snacks and treats provided by Cathy Satterlee.

I came away from the retreat feeling intellectually and spiritually full and, while I can't speak for everyone, I think the feeling was mutual for many of us. It's always great to spend time learning, worshipping, and conversing with colleagues and friends.

On behalf of everyone that attended, thanks to Bishops Satterlee and Finegan, Dr. Krieg, Cathy Satterlee, Ann Stavros, and Christine Allen for a great event!



Living Lutheran Returns

Last year, it was announced that *Living Lutheran*, the ELCA's magazine, would end its print run. Since then, the ELCA has been working to create a new experience at LivingLutheran.org, which it hopes to unveil in 2025.

During this process, the ELCA reached out to former magazine readers and current website users to better understand what people want to see and read. One thing that stood out was that they missed the stories in a print magazine and wanted to feel connected to the church through a regular publication that focused on stories about what it means to be a Lutheran in today's world.

Beginning in 2025, *Living Lutheran* will again appear as a print magazine, published quarterly. This frequency will allow people to reconnect in a way that makes them feel part of the ELCA while keeping costs efficient and effective to produce the magazine.

2023 Mission Support Thank You

ELCA's members, congregations, synods and churchwide organization are called to be church together. Every year around \$1.6 billion is shared as regular offerings to ELCA congregations and worshiping communities. Over 5% of that generosity is shared with the ELCA's 65 synods, a portion of which is then shared with the churchwide organization. This is called Mission Support.

In FY2023, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod shared \$609,345 directly in Mission Support for ELCA churchwide ministries. Whether utilized locally, regionally, nationally or internationally, Mission Support enables us to have a greater impact in communities — working together to share God's abundant grace with others.

View a summary of how our synod's 2023 Mission Support was used by churchwide ministries: <https://bit.ly/48MWrFr>

Making Advent and Christmas Evangelistic

Pastor David Sprang, Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission

During the Advent and Christmas seasons, many churches offer a variety of activities including community meals for folks that have nowhere to go. As we invite folks to church for meals and other activities, what if we ask them about their lives, listen to their stories about their faith, joys, and sorrows, and also tell them who we are and why we serve? What if we tell them about Jesus?

- Where have you seen Jesus at work in the community?
- What has Jesus been poking you to do?
- How has Jesus given you hope?
- Invite them to worship in a community of Jesus

Luke 2:20 says, "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they have seen and heard." We imagine them telling everyone they met the amazing story of the birth of Jesus. How will we share the story in this season?

ELCA Evangelism Network shares a list of ideas:

- Take worship, or a carol sing to places in your community - a nursing home, park, with first responders, the hospital, a mall, a pub, or other community gatherings. Invite others to join in and sing.
- Go to places to listen to people's joys and sorrows, laments, and struggles and tell of Jesus welcome and comfort. Use the example of Jake Jacobson's Christmas Front Porchin'. Take time in a public place with a sign and a small table and chairs: "Tell Me A Christmas Story."
- Stage a Live Nativity or a Christmas Walk telling the story of the Word Become Flesh.
- Host a walk like the Stations of the Cross, but stations in the Christmas story. It can be signs and Bible verses at each stop, or a narrator or actor at each stop. Culminate with a campfire and hot chocolate with a Christmas Carol Sing.
- Bless people – find ways to pronounce a blessing upon the people being served at a community dinner or food distribution and pray for/with them.
- Invite friends or other family members to serve with you in holiday community service.
- Post invitations on social media or send or hand out invitations. Check out the free [Christmas Communications](#) resources from the ELCA.
- Invite all the people you encountered to come to worship on Christmas Eve/Christmas Day.
- Ask people to tell you their faith journey story – find ways to invite them into further conversations.
- Recruit a listening team to accompany volunteer workers so some are working/serving and others are listening to those being served.
- Ask those being served what they think are things the church should be doing to help the community or what are important community needs.
- Adopt families through local charities that the church can sponsor.
- Plan worship services that include familiar music and that use a variety of ways/media of telling the Christmas story.
- Above all else – tell the story – make Jesus the reason for the season.
- Host a community Blue Christmas Service.
- Advertise activities on social media and local newspapers.
- Plan Christmas dramas for kids or adults.
- Light the church driveway with luminaries.
- Have parking lot greeters or carolers for Christmas Eve worship.
- Pay attention to the Sunday after Christmas and invite new folks to come back for more Christmas next week.
- If a congregation has a family service, focus on kids with stories, activities, and action.
- Work with the neighborhood association to partner on holiday events.
- Consider having a family service earlier on December 24 or even December 23 so that it does not conflict with family events on Christmas Eve.

Living Water Ministries Executive Director

The Living Water Ministries Board of Directors is proud to announce that Nicole McCarthy has been selected as our new Executive Director. Earlier this year, former executive director C.J. Clark accepted a leadership role with the Southeast Michigan Synod, prompting the Board to initiate an extensive nationwide search for a successor. In partnership with various synods, the American Camping Association, and the Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Network, the Board received applications from across the country and the wider church community.

After carefully reviewing resumes and references, the search committee conducted interviews with the top candidates, ultimately recommending Nicole for her strong background and expertise in outdoor ministry. The Living Water Ministries Board unanimously approved her appointment and she is now transitioning into the role.



Nicole McCarthy

The role of Executive Director of Living Water Ministries is more than a job, it is a calling within the Church. For the past eight months, Nicole has done an outstanding job serving as interim director, bringing her lifelong Lutheran faith, a genuine commitment to the ministry and a deep understanding of the important role camp plays in the faith formation of all of God's children. A former Living Water Ministries camper herself, Nicole has been part of the full-time, year-round staff since 2015, where she has played a key role in program development, staff training, and camper engagement.

Living Water Ministries provides outdoor ministry programs for the North/West Lower and Southeast Michigan Synods of the ELCA, drawing participants from various backgrounds, including youth and adults from the Episcopal Dioceses of Michigan, adults with developmental disabilities, children in foster care, and those without a church affiliation. To learn more visit elcalivingwater.com

Peace,
Adam Michoski
Living Water Ministries, Board President

Capital University Christmas Festival

Join Trinity Lutheran Seminary and Capital University for the 95th Capital University Christmas Festival! For nearly a century, this beloved event has been Capital University's gift to the community, showcasing the internationally renowned Capital University choirs. Let the voices of the Chapel Choir, Choral Union, Cantabile, Consort, and Philomel, alongside talented instrumentalists from the Conservatory and the Columbus arts community, fill you with the spirit of Christmas.

Set in the beautiful and intimate Mees Hall, this immersive concert experience blends music with storytelling through poetry, prose, and scripture. Every corner of the hall will come alive with song, creating an atmosphere that surrounds you with holiday magic.

Concerts will be held on December 5 at 7:30pm, December 6 at 7:30pm, December 7 at 7:30pm, and Sunday, December 8 at 3:30pm. Tickets are available online: <https://bit.ly/3YPguP5>

ELCA Good Gifts

ELCA Good Gifts offers new gift options for the 2024 holiday season! Choose from over 60 charitable gifts to give in honor of friends and loved ones this Christmas! New gifts include [safe birth](#), a [climate resilience kit](#) and [supporting a Young Adult in Global Mission for a month](#). Each gift goes on to make a difference in the world and share the love of Christ with our neighbors in need. Shop at <https://goodgifts.elca.org>.

ELCA Fund for Leaders Scholarships

Each year the ELCA's Fund for Leaders awards approximately 30 full-tuition scholarships to future ELCA pastors and deacons who are planning to attend an ELCA seminary. In spring 2025, the Fund for Leaders will once again offer scholarships to ministry candidates pursuing seminary study. **The application window for full-tuition scholarships will be open from December 2, 2024, through February 21, 2025.**

Scholarships are no longer reserved for full-time students. Candidates who need to study part-time are encouraged to apply! Eligible applicants must be planning to enroll in seminary in fall 2025. Applicants must one in the process of seeking candidacy for rostered ministry in the ELCA. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3Z4BwKN>

Application information is available at [ELCA.org/FundForLeaders](https://elca.org/FundForLeaders). Contact the Fund For Leaders Team at fundforleaders@elca.org or 800-638-3522 with any additional questions.

Rethink the Three Rs

Pat Vance, Environmental Stewardship Task Force

We all know about the three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. But what if this holiday season we change the three Rs to Rethink, Revisit and Refuse?

Rethink our overly affluent lifestyle. *Rethink* our purchases by considering the product's origin and packaging. *Rethink* what natural resources are expended to have those items we want.

That leads us to *Revisit*, to consider what we really need. Perhaps don't ask yourself, "Do I need this?" but rather instead ask, "Can I live without this?" Luke 12:15 tells us to "take care and be on guard against all greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."

Refuse to be an uneducated participant in a consumption-driven culture that results in millions of landfills. *Refuse* to squeeze nature out in favor of urban sprawl or another golf course. *Refuse* to literally consume plastic packaging – the latest studies show chemicals from plastics are in everyone's bodies. *Refuse* convenience at the expense of the earth. *Refuse* pesticides, fertilizers, huge green lawns, the latest fashion fads.

And one more R – *Renew*. *Renew* your relationship with God's creation.

Changes to Humana Medicare Advantage and MyMichigan Medical

The Synod Office has been advised that, for those who subscribe to Humana Medicare Advantage, all services at MyMichigan Health facilities will become "out-of-network" as of:

- **January 23, 2025:** MyMichigan Medical Centers in Alpena, Saginaw, Sault Ste. Marie, Standish, Tawas, and West Branch
- **July 1, 2025:** MyMichigan Medical Centers in Alma, Clare, Gladwin, Mt. Pleasant and MyMichigan Medical Group

This change means MyMichigan will bill Humana as an "out-of-network" provider and that those who participate in Humana Medicare Advantage may be billed for the remainder of the costs that insurance does not cover. This means that the Humana Medicare Advantage offered through Portico of the ELCA may cost more than other Medicare Advantage Programs that MyMichigan Health treats as "in-network."


For more information and to consider other Medicare Advantage programs, call Humana (888-445-4788) or Portico (800-352-2876). The deadline to switch Medicare Advantage programs for 2025 is December 7, 2024.

Adult Theological Education: Jesus and the Little Children Winter 2025

NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD ELCA

ADULT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

JESUS AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN



Join The Rev. Dr. Amy Lindeman Allen, Indiana Christian Church Associate Professor of New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis for a six-week course based on her book *The Gifts They Bring: How Children in the Gospels Can Shape Inclusive Ministry!*

TUESDAYS STARTING JANUARY 14!
ZOOM

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod announces the next session of our Adult Theological Education program: Jesus and the Little Children. Join the Rev. Dr. Amy Lindeman Allen, Associate Professor of New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary, for a six-week study starting January 14, 2025!

Based on Dr. Allen's book, *The Gifts They Bring: How Children in the Gospels Can Shape Inclusive Ministry* (WJK, 2023), sessions will include presentations on the following topics:

1. The Gift of Participation: Little Children as Proprietors of the Realm of God
2. The Gift of Proclamation: The Bethlehem Shepherds
3. The Gift of Advocacy: James and John, Fisherfolk
4. The Gift of Listening: Mary at the Feet of Jesus
5. The Gift of Sharing: The Child with the Fish and Loaves
6. The Gift of Partnership: A Son and His Mother at Nain

The Rev. Dr. Amy Lindeman Allen is Indiana Christian Church Associate Professor of New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She is an ordained minister in the ELCA and has served three ELCA and one Episcopal congregation. She and her husband J. Erik Allen, also an ELCA pastor, were married in the Northwest Lower Michigan Synod at Trinity Lutheran Church in Kalamazoo, MI. They now reside in Brownsburg, IN with their three children and two dogs. Dr. Allen's research interests center around the Synoptic Gospels, especially the Gospel of Luke, and its intersections with people on the margins. She is especially interested in the presence of children in the gospels and how reading with attention to children both in the biblical times and today can inspire more inclusive ministry. To this end, she also serves as the director for a new Lily funded grant entitled *Growing in God's Word*, a part of the *Nurturing Children through Worship and Prayer Initiative* intended to implement child-centered storytelling in parishes.

The class will meet on six consecutive Tuesday evenings: January 14, 21, 28; February 4, 11, 18, 2025 from 7:00 – 8:15pm ET via Zoom. This course is open to all adults, both laypeople and rostered ministers, and is free of charge. Registration is required and will close on January 6, 2025. Sessions will be recorded and available to those registered for one week. Register: <https://forms.gle/exuao3ntjq1DBXr7>

Boundary Training for Rostered Ministers

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod will be offering Boundary Training for Rostered Ministers as a four part series via Zoom. These 1-hour sessions will be held on February 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025 from 11:00am-12:00pm.

Participants are required to attend all four sessions. Pastor David Sprang and Pastor Rosanne Anderson will lead these sessions.

Boundary Training is required every three years for all Rostered Ministers in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. Rostered Ministers should complete the online form to register. Registration will close on January 31, 2025.

A Zoom link will be emailed to those registered on Monday, February 3, 2025.

Register: <https://forms.gle/ZVmxgXrKiagqfKtW8>

You Are Witnesses of These Things Youth Retreat

Join Bishop Craig Alan Satterlee and Pastor David Sprang for a one day retreat that will help youth (7th-12th graders) name Jesus's presence in their lives and give them the ability to share their story with others.

This retreat will be held on Saturday, January 18, 2025 from 9:00am – 3:00pm at Zion Lutheran Church in Cadillac, MI.

Registration cost is \$10 per person (for lunch). Please register by sending an email to zionlutherancadillac@gmail.com or by calling 231-775-9821.

The deadline to register for this event is January 9, 2025.

Synod Financial Summary - September 2024

Financial Position Indicators	9/30/24	9/30/23
Cash (Comerica and MIF Checking)	247,241	482,483
Investments (CDs and Money Market Account)	670,818	459,633
Cash Flow Reserve Fund (NTE 16% of subsequent year budgeted expenses)	200,710	14,620
Book Net Worth (Fund Balance - All Funds)	3,557,563	3,167,064

Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund Activity (General Operating Fund)	Current Year				Prior Year			
	September		Year to Date		September		Year to Date	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Mission Support Revenue (50% goes to ELCA Churchwide)	87,796	101,079	703,901	707,553	94,069	110,000	789,806	880,000
Synod Assembly Revenue	0	0	4,920	5,000	0	0	40,550	60,000
Other Revenue	14,144	11,519	165,895	154,481	14,984	10,194	55,757	57,802
Total Revenue	101,940	112,598	874,716	867,034	109,053	120,194	886,113	997,802
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	43,898	50,540	395,848	404,320	47,034	55,000	394,903	440,000
Synod Assembly Expenses	0	0	5,642	5,000	0	0	54,655	60,000
Other Expenses	66,326	63,102	501,413	485,168	63,775	70,760	434,745	525,828
Total Expenses	110,224	113,642	902,903	894,488	110,809	125,760	884,303	1,025,828
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue less Expenses)	(8,284)	(1,044)	(28,187)	(27,454)	(1,756)	(5,566)	1,811	(28,026)
Transfers as directed by Synod Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beginning Fund Balance	126,837		146,740		517,039		509,326	
Ending Fund Balance (at 9/30/24 & 9/30/23)	118,553		118,553		515,282		511,137	

Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated*	1,051,265	600,895
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related**	1,013,939	730,081
Temporarily-Restricted	338,258	322,404
Permanently-Restricted	1,035,547	1,002,547
Total Fund Balances at 9/30/24 & 9/30/23	3,557,563	3,167,064

*Includes Synod Endowment Fund, Cash Flow Reserve, Synod Staff Support Fund

**Reflects unrealized gains/losses on investments and unspent distributions

Pulpit Supply and Mileage Reimbursement

Bishop Satterlee and Pastor Bright preach and preside in congregations throughout the year as part of their respective roles in our synod. We appreciate your financial contributions to support their time and travel expenses, and we invite you to refer to the [compensation guidelines](#) posted on our website for suggested pulpit supply and mileage reimbursement amounts.

It is helpful when congregations make their checks payable to North/West Lower Michigan Synod rather than to the individual. This removes the need to sign the check over to the synod and reduces the chances of our bank returning the check as "re-presented." As always, we thank you for your faithful generosity, support, and encouragement as we partner together in ministry!

Publicly Engaged Church Table Grants

Each year the North/West Lower Michigan Synod's Publicly Engaged Church Table makes available funds to encourage and support ministries serving local communities. These grants may be used as "seed" money to begin a new ministry, or to continue an established ministry, or to expand and enhance an ecumenical effort.

Grant applications are now available and must be submitted by January 10, 2025.

Download application: <https://bit.ly/3xi2jVv>

Christmas Worship Videos

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod will be rereleasing the synod produced Lessons and Carols worship video for congregational use. Bishop Satterlee will also record a sermon for Sunday, December 29 for congregational use.

If your congregation would like to receive access to these videos, please complete the form linked below. Videos will be emailed to those registered on Monday, December 9, 2024.

Register: <https://bit.ly/3AZi8VX>

Lutheran Summer Music

Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) is a faith-based residential music academy for high school students (grades 8-12) who come together from all over the country to immerse themselves in musical excellence and build an intentional, supportive, and fun community.

LSM 2025 takes place at Valparaiso University in Indiana from June 22-July 20 (Full Session) or June 22-July 6 (Half Session). Priority Enrollment is open now through December 1!

Learn more at <https://www.lsmacademy.org/>

ELCA Mission Support Memo

The ELCA's November 2024 Mission Support Memo shares a story about how the Accident-Friendsville Parish, in the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, was able to equip their rural congregations with digital technology to reach out to members near and far.

It also includes information on the "Theology and Practicality of Space Usage" webinar on November 18, 2024.

Read Now: <https://bit.ly/3YJ4Dls>

2025 Synod Assembly

The 2025 North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly will be held in-person on May 18-20, 2025 at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Mt. Pleasant, MI under the theme "Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling."

Initial information pertaining to the 2025 Synod Assembly is available on the Synod's website.

Interest forms for workshops, display tables, greetings, and choir must be submitted by January 15, 2025.

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3E6VYzP>

Upcoming Events

November 20	Being a Dementia Friendly Congregation Webinar	Learn more: https://bit.ly/4fl3jwg
November 22	Election 2024: What the Results Mean for Immigrants and Refugees	Learn more: https://bit.ly/4fKqgsw
November 28	Thanksgiving	
November 28-29	Synod Office Closure	
December 24	Christmas Eve	
December 25	Christmas Day	
December 31	New Year's Eve	

Congregations in Transition

Note: We include congregations on the public list when the called pastor or rostered leader completes her or his ministry in the congregation. Thus, congregations in which the pastor has resigned but is still serving are not listed here. We also do not post calls that are accepted until Bishop Satterlee signs the Letter of Call.

Bay Conference	Pastor Emily Olsen-Brandt, Dean	Kalamazoo Conference	Pastor Travis Wilson, Dean
Prince of Peace/Rose City	Pastor David Sprang, Contract Pastor	Messiah/Constantine	Stated Supply / Interviewing
		Saron/St. Joseph	Supply Pastors / Interviewing
Capital Area Conference	Pastor Neil Brady, Dean	Stony Lake Conference	Pastor Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Grace/Lansing	Pastor Brian Schneider-Thomas, Interim		
Faith/Okemos	Interviewing	Sunrise Conference	Pastor Megan Crouch, Dean
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Pastor Julie Schneider-Thomas, Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg, Co-Deans	New Life/Alcona County	Supply Pastors / Interviewing
Settlement/Gowan	Discerning Future	St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor
Trinity/Grand Rapids	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Jonathan Niketh (New England); Installation December 4	Traverse Conference	Pastor Jonathan Reid, Dean
St. Paul/Greenville	Congregational Vote November 24		
Mamrelund/Kent City	Supply Pastors / Seeking Candidates		
Two Churches/Kentwood	Episcopal Church taking lead in transition		
Zion/Woodland	Supply Pastors / Seeking Candidates		

Stewardship Message

November 2024

As we enter the holiday season remember Hope's outreach ministries—Christian Neighbors, Sylvia's Place, Good Hands Plainwell, and Bridges of Hope. OR Hope itself. ELCA Good Gifts is a wonderful alternative for those on your list who already have too much *stuff*.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRAYER AT HOPE

Prayer Chain - this Prayer List is for Urgent or Special requests for prayer. This list is confidential. To be listed in the prayer chain please contact Judi Gage.

In Our Prayers List - this list is for general or on-going needs for prayer. It is published in the worship bulletins, and the Together Newsletter. They are also read out loud during worship. Please make sure the person / persons you want prayed for have given their permission to be listed and are aware our services are streamed online. To be listed in our prayer list please contact Pr. Nicole.

Tuesday Bible Study Prayer List - The Tuesday Bible Study Group meets at Hope at 9:30 am and prays for various prayer requests. To be listed in the Tuesday bible study prayers please contact Judi Gage or Pat Vance.

Giving to Hope Lutheran Church

At Hope we seek to grow in our faith in Jesus Christ and to share the good news of Jesus Christ in our community and world. This happens because of the faithful giving of so many. Thank you so much for your support!

Give by Check

Checks made out to Hope Lutheran may be safely sent to:

Hope Lutheran Church
290 12th Street, Plainwell, MI 49080

Give Online

Give safe and securely with PayPal! Simply scan the QR Code below and you will be directed through making an online donation to Hope.



Christian Neighbors

Items We Always Need Are:

- Oatmeal
- Jelly
- Pancake Mix
- Pancake Syrup
- Instant Mashed Potatoes
- Applesauce
- Canned Fruit
- Snack Items (chips, pretzels, granola bars, etc.)
- Canned Ravioli
- Women's Deodorant
- Items for those with dietary needs: low sodium, no sugar added, sugar free, gluten free, vegan.



**FEED THE
HUNGRY**

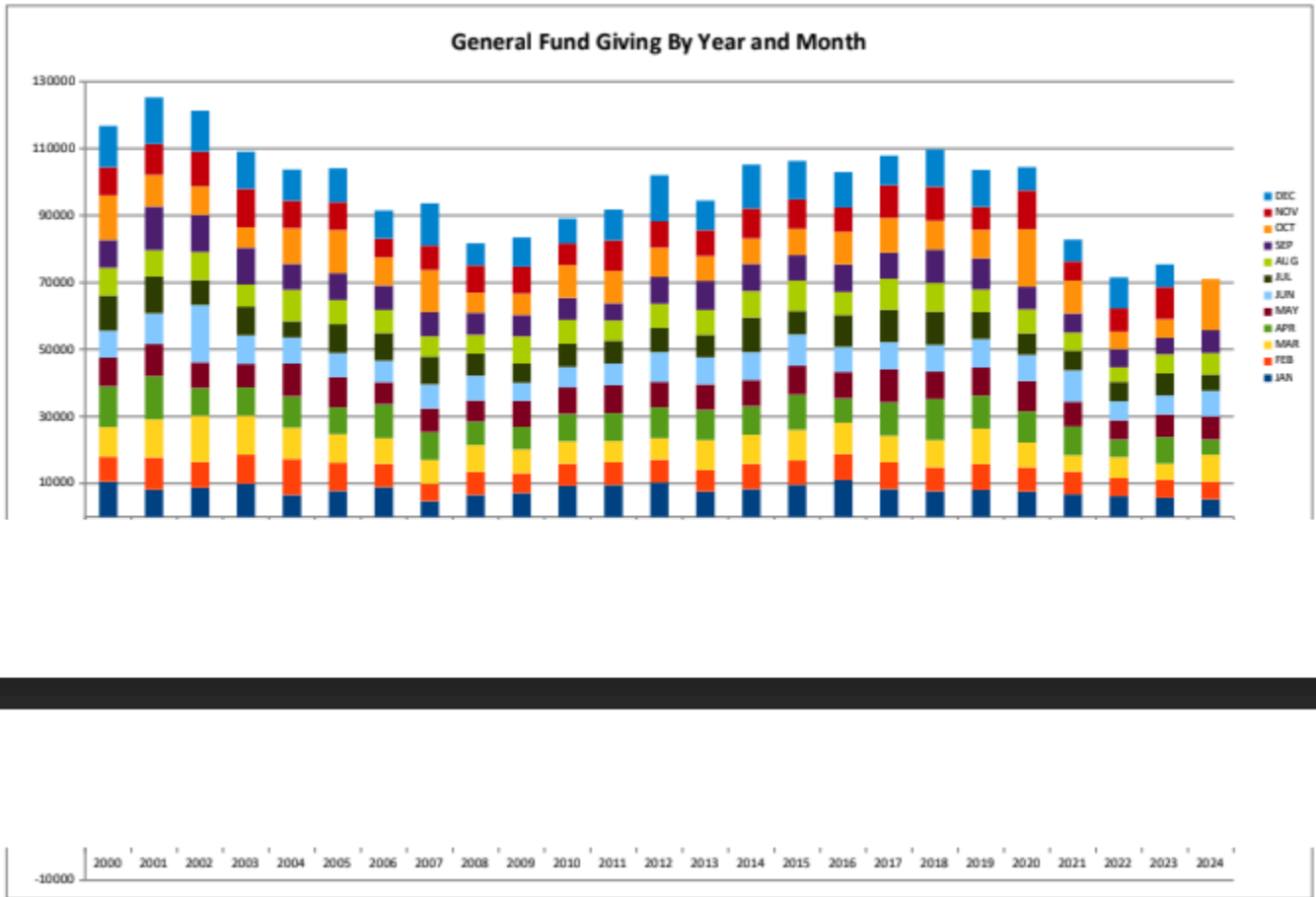
October Council Highlights

The new automatic door openers have been installed.
The next council meeting will be Tuesday, December 17th at 5:00 p.m.

October Financial Report

THE MONTHLY REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY		OCTOBER 2024		
GENERAL FUND	THIS MONTH	YEAR TO DATE	LAST YEAR TO DATE	CHANGE
GENERAL FUND	\$15,231.74	\$71,037.01	\$59,061.55	\$11,975.46
LOOSE OFFERING	\$72.05	\$321.38	\$221.34	\$100.04
GENERAL FUND TOTALS	\$15,303.79	\$71,358.39	\$59,282.89	\$12,075.50
DESIGNATED GIVING	THIS MONTH	YEAR TO DATE	LAST YEAR TO DATE	CHANGE
ADMINISTRATING EUCHARIST	\$0.00	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$250.00
AV EQUIPMENT	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
BASEBALL TICKETS	\$0.00	\$32.00	\$0.00	\$32.00
BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$0.00
COMMUNION WINE	\$70.00	\$140.00	\$140.00	\$0.00
FLOWER FUND	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10.00	-\$10.00
FUNERAL FUND	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$143.00	-\$143.00
KITCHEN FUND	\$0.00	\$481.00	\$0.00	\$481.00
LEAF BLOWER	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
MEMORIAL	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,615.00	-\$1,615.00
OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$0.00	\$35.00	\$0.00	\$35.00
PASTORAL TRAVEL EXPENSES	\$400.00	\$650.00	\$0.00	\$650.00
PASTORAL VISITING	\$300.00	\$1,450.00	\$0.00	\$1,450.00
RETREAT	\$1,900.00	\$2,570.00	\$1,849.00	\$721.00
SUNDAY SCHOOL/CHRISTIAN EDUCATIO	\$28.09	\$79.53	\$48.19	\$31.34
STAFF GIFTS	\$0.00	\$400.00	\$270.00	\$130.00
STUDYING EUCHARIST	\$0.00	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$250.00
TORNADO RELIEF	\$0.00	\$175.00	\$0.00	\$175.00
ZOO TRIP	\$0.00	\$516.25	\$0.00	\$516.25
DESIGNATED GIVING TOTAL	\$2,848.09	\$7,178.78	\$4,125.19	\$3,053.59
EXTERNAL MINISTRIES	THIS MONTH	2587.87	LAST YEAR TO DATE	CHANGE
CHRISTIAN NEIGHBORS	\$50.00	\$3,195.87	\$2,661.05	\$534.82
CROP WALK	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$0.00	\$10.00
ELCA FUND LEADERS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10.00	-\$10.00
GOOD HANDS PLAINWELL	\$40.00	\$410.00	\$255.00	\$155.00
LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$598.34	-\$598.34
NOISY OFFERING	\$13.27	\$82.41	\$63.54	\$18.87
PROJECT HOPE XICHIUAN (GSF)	\$0.00	\$350.56	\$575.00	-\$224.44
SEMINARY FUND	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
SYLVIA'S PLACE	\$40.00	\$410.00	\$220.00	\$190.00
SYNOD DEBT ASSISTANCE	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$12.00	-\$12.00
WINGS OF HOPE	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$12.00	-\$12.00
EXTERNAL MINISTRIES TOTAL	\$153.27	\$4,458.84	\$4,406.93	\$51.91
		5.24%	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL GIVING DESIGNATED FOR EXTERNAL MINISTRIES	
OTHER REVENUE	THIS MONTH	YEAR TO DATE	LAST YEAR TO DATE	CHANGE
REFUND	\$2,067.25	\$2,067.25	\$203.29	\$1,863.96
THRIVENT	\$24.00	\$24.00	\$0.00	\$24.00
NON GIVING TOTAL	\$2,091.25	\$2,091.25	\$203.29	\$1,887.96
GRAND TOTALS	\$20,396.40	\$85,087.26	\$68,018.30	\$17,068.96
General Fund Giving Past 12 Months:	\$87,401.01	Monthly Average \$7,283.42	Weekly Average \$1,680.79	

TOTAL NUMBER OF DONATIONS	67	561	562	-1
NUMBER OF DIFFERENT DONORS	26	46	56	-10



	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
2000	\$10,537.00	\$7,422.00	\$8,843.00	\$12,217.00	\$8,556.00	\$8,058.00	\$16,577.00	\$8,272.00	\$8,306.00	\$13,283.00	\$8,453.00	\$12,306.99	\$116,788.9
2001	\$8,108.00	\$8,615.00	\$11,418.00	\$12,982.00	\$9,471.98	\$9,178.04	\$11,812.00	\$7,796.00	\$13,872.50	\$9,414.00	\$9,288.00	\$13,868.25	\$125,296.0
2002	\$8,658.00	\$7,700.00	\$13,860.00	\$8,202.00	\$7,778.00	\$17,304.80	\$7,502.24	\$8,103.00	\$11,111.88	\$8,517.37	\$10,384.52	\$12,208.04	\$121,940.0
2003	\$9,888.00	\$8,653.00	\$11,717.13	\$8,365.38	\$7,133.00	\$8,458.72	\$8,585.00	\$6,623.54	\$11,891.75	\$6,124.00	\$13,519.86	\$11,942.91	\$109,890.3
2004	\$6,578.00	\$10,745.88	\$8,379.00	\$8,403.48	\$8,729.87	\$7,723.40	\$4,913.63	\$9,397.68	\$7,714.00	\$10,642.78	\$8,307.00	\$8,213.00	\$103,700.7
2005	\$7,712.00	\$8,413.34	\$8,563.34	\$8,055.00	\$8,423.30	\$7,173.48	\$8,622.48	\$7,216.00	\$8,106.34	\$12,860.00	\$8,343.92	\$10,031.46	\$104,877.7
2006	\$8,877.00	\$8,916.00	\$7,670.00	\$10,177.92	\$6,830.00	\$6,346.00	\$8,366.83	\$6,828.00	\$7,360.65	\$8,424.24	\$5,595.00	\$8,343.00	\$91,510.4
2007	\$4,721.28	\$5,138.50	\$7,379.36	\$8,335.00	\$7,872.71	\$7,230.00	\$8,308.50	\$6,005.40	\$7,260.00	\$12,598.50	\$7,374.19	\$12,610.00	\$93,095.5
2008	\$6,518.00	\$6,858.64	\$8,877.50	\$7,001.38	\$6,334.00	\$7,347.00	\$6,621.26	\$5,680.00	\$6,568.86	\$6,008.00	\$8,136.90	\$6,593.00	\$81,722.3
2009	\$7,142.00	\$8,880.00	\$7,329.00	\$6,736.00	\$7,659.00	\$5,547.00	\$5,678.00	\$8,151.30	\$6,422.89	\$6,343.88	\$8,075.72	\$8,701.34	\$83,408.8
2010	\$9,244.00	\$6,615.00	\$6,673.00	\$8,255.31	\$7,844.00	\$6,101.13	\$6,975.00	\$7,170.00	\$6,524.25	\$9,793.00	\$6,541.00	\$7,385.00	\$89,132.7
2011	\$9,537.00	\$8,696.00	\$6,461.00	\$8,243.00	\$8,335.00	\$6,562.00	\$6,802.42	\$6,026.00	\$5,138.00	\$9,688.00	\$9,196.00	\$8,161.00	\$91,844.4
2012	\$10,257.00	\$8,828.00	\$6,413.44	\$8,230.00	\$7,399.46	\$8,801.00	\$7,216.00	\$7,258.82	\$8,048.00	\$8,695.00	\$7,885.00	\$13,790.00	\$102,872.7
2013	\$7,561.28	\$6,374.00	\$8,862.00	\$8,060.00	\$7,826.35	\$8,078.00	\$6,788.00	\$7,407.00	\$8,634.00	\$7,383.00	\$7,811.42	\$8,842.00	\$94,525.0
2014	\$8,301.00	\$7,488.50	\$8,734.00	\$8,571.00	\$7,936.00	\$8,358.00	\$10,124.00	\$7,913.58	\$8,135.00	\$7,617.00	\$8,966.00	\$13,055.20	\$105,272.3
2015	\$9,593.22	\$7,188.00	\$8,200.25	\$10,580.00	\$8,683.00	\$9,334.00	\$6,990.00	\$9,112.00	\$7,586.00	\$7,926.00	\$8,737.00	\$11,574.00	\$106,381.4
2016	\$10,874.00	\$7,793.00	\$8,390.00	\$7,316.87	\$7,884.52	\$7,477.28	\$9,593.77	\$6,811.00	\$8,221.24	\$9,746.43	\$7,360.00	\$10,529.00	\$103,009.1
2017	\$8,295.18	\$7,953.21	\$8,812.00	\$8,961.15	\$8,736.44	\$8,175.12	\$9,727.78	\$9,211.28	\$7,799.00	\$10,425.00	\$9,773.00	\$8,781.17	\$107,980.3
2018	\$7,668.00	\$7,122.00	\$8,317.00	\$12,354.05	\$8,322.00	\$7,916.82	\$10,877.00	\$8,498.19	\$9,987.00	\$8,624.00	\$10,135.36	\$11,076.44	\$109,731.8
2019	\$7,988.00	\$7,712.00	\$10,668.00	\$8,885.00	\$8,370.00	\$8,505.00	\$8,101.89	\$6,715.00	\$9,355.00	\$8,501.00	\$6,886.10	\$10,980.00	\$103,639.9
2020	\$7,616.00	\$7,173.00	\$7,385.00	\$8,383.34	\$8,685.00	\$7,725.00	\$6,490.00	\$7,100.00	\$6,784.40	\$17,264.90	\$13,545.60	\$6,804.00	\$104,450.3
2021	\$6,758.00	\$8,715.00	\$4,830.00	\$8,553.30	\$7,461.00	\$9,278.00	\$5,931.00	\$5,415.00	\$5,746.91	\$9,820.00	\$5,091.37	\$6,485.00	\$82,800.8
2022	\$6,171.18	\$5,398.00	\$6,290.00	\$5,276.00	\$5,741.54	\$5,658.00	\$5,775.00	\$4,395.00	\$5,485.00	\$5,168.00	\$6,901.63	\$8,276.00	\$71,516.3
2023	\$5,515.00	\$5,228.00	\$4,887.00	\$7,881.15	\$6,826.48	\$5,575.00	\$6,647.00	\$5,678.00	\$4,946.00	\$5,578.00	\$9,603.00	\$6,781.00	\$75,425.5
2024	\$5,231.00	\$5,278.00	\$8,877.86	\$4,576.00	\$6,882.25	\$7,558.80	\$4,896.00	\$6,442.50	\$6,856.00	\$15,231.74			

Highest Month: \$17,264.90 October 2020
 Lowest Month: \$4,395.00 January 2007 & August 2022

2000's GENERAL GIVING BY YEAR

Year	Amount	Change from Previous Year
2000	\$116,788.99	
2001	\$125,296.69	7.28%
2002	\$121,340.95	-3.16%
2003	\$109,090.26	-10.10%
2004	\$103,730.73	-4.91%
2005	\$104,077.72	0.33%
2006	\$91,510.44	-12.07%
2007	\$93,695.53	2.39%
2008	\$81,722.34	-12.78%
2009	\$83,468.93	2.14%
2010	\$89,132.73	6.79%
2011	\$91,844.42	3.04%
2012	\$102,072.72	11.14%
2013	\$94,525.05	-7.39%
2014	\$105,272.26	11.37%
2015	\$106,381.47	1.05%
2016	\$103,009.11	-3.17%
2017	\$107,890.34	4.74%
2018	\$109,731.86	1.71%
2019	\$103,639.99	-5.55%
2020	\$104,450.24	0.78%
2021	\$82,800.98	-20.73%
2022	\$71,516.36	-13.63%
2023	\$75,425.55	5.47%
2024	\$71,037.01	-0.67%

Current Pace For This Year (General Giving): \$85,244.41

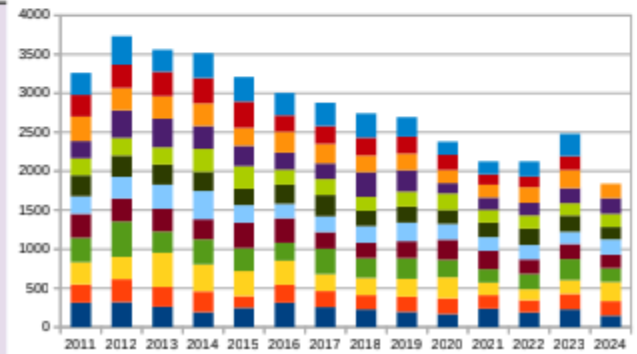
Last Month's Attendance

October 6, 2024	47	Last Month's Total Attendance:	184
October 13, 2024	45	Last Year Same Month:	231
October 20, 2024	44	Year To Date Attendance:	1839
October 27, 2024	48	Last Year To Date Attendance:	2016
		Change From Last Year:	-177

Average Per Week:

Last Month:	46.0	Year To Date:	43.8	2023 Year Average:	48.8
Last Year-Same Month:	46.2	Last Year To Date:	45.8		

Total Attendance By Year



Newsletter Information

Published 12 times per year
 Do you want information in the next monthly newsletter?

- Email media.hopeplainwell@gmail.com
- Deadline: The 10th of each month.

Feel free to email pictures, announcements, or any other information you would like to share with the congregation in next month's newsletter!

December Calendar

SUN Dec 1	MON 2	TUE 3	WED 4	THU 5	FRI 6	SAT 7
Rev. Nicole Smith First Sunday of Advent ● 10:30am Worship		● 9am Coffee with Vets ● 9:30am Bible Study ● 3pm Men's Bible Study				
8 Rev. Nicole Smith ● 10:30am Worship	9 Feast of the Immaculate Conception	10 ● 9:30am Bible Study ● 10:30am News Articles Due	11	12 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe	13 ● 4pm Longest Night Service	14
15 Rev. Nicole Smith ● 10:30am Christmas Program ● 10:30am Worship	16	17 ● 9:30am Bible Study ● 5pm Council meeting	18	19	20	21
22 Rev. Nicole Smith ● 10:30am Worship	23	24 Christmas Eve ● 4pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28 ● 10am EPS Foam Recycling
29 Rev. Mike Kemper ● 10:30am Worship	30	31 ● 9:30am Bible Study	Jan 1	2	3	4

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

- Sunday School (all ages) 9:15 A.M. (no classes during the summer months)

- Worship 10:30 A.M. (in person and on Facebook Live)

290 12th Street

Plainwell, MI 49080

Phone: 269-685-1348

Office email: office.hopeplainwell@gmail.com

Pastor Email: hoperlutheranpastor@gmail.com

Webpage: hopeplainwell.org

Hope's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HopeLutheranPlainwellMI>

Office Hours: Tuesday: 9:00 a.m. - noon, Wednesday: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., Thursday: 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

The office is closed whenever Plainwell schools are closed and for major holidays.