

Lord of Life

DECEMBER 2021 | THE LIFE LINE



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From Pastor Paul

Close to Home

When something hits close to home, it affects us deeply. During the Advent and Christmas season, we journey through scriptures and rituals that are tender, heavy with emotion, and vulnerable. We carry the memories and truths of this season close to our hearts. Close to Home acknowledges the "already but not yet" tension of our faith: Emmanuel is with us, and yet, God's promised day—our everlasting home—is not fully realized. It names our deep longing for God to come close to us.



The Advent and Christmas scriptures are rich with home metaphors and imagery. John the Baptist prophesies about the One who is to come, but reminds us that we are still wandering far from God's promised day; his message hits close to home, especially for those experiencing inequity and oppression. After receiving the angel's news, Mary retreats to Elizabeth's home, seeking refuge and safety. Christ is born in the midst of a journey home, in a crowded dwelling amidst livestock and shepherds alike. The Magi travel far from home to pay homage to Christ, and, having been warned in a dream, they avoid Herod by traveling home another way. In these scriptures, home is both physical and metaphorical, something we seek and something we are called to build. Ultimately, God is our home and resting place. God draws near and makes a home on earth—sacred ground is all around us.

This is the ground we will occupy in the coming weeks as we wait and watch. You can join us in reading the [**Advent devotional**](#) as well. It's free and digital. We will also have some printed copies available at church. I look forward to our journey, together, as we wait and watch together.

Christmas Eve at Lord of Life and Connecting to Each Other

This year will feel a bit more like pre-pandemic times, we hope, as we gather in our sanctuary to celebrate the Christ Child and God's great love crashing into our world. The same, but still different. Some of our friends will not be able to join us in person, but will instead opt for worship at home and online or via the telephone.

We are one congregation with two campuses. We are one people gathered, fed, and sent through the experience of worship. I pray that you, like me, will embrace the uniqueness of our time and understand that no matter "where" we worship, we do so together as God's people. Consider reaching out to people you see online in worship to bid them God's peace and to engage them as you might anyone else in the gathering space at church.

I am excited to see how the Spirit uses our connections with each other as we learn anew to be Christ's church, in this place and in this time.

From Intern Lucy

I can't believe December has arrived. My time with you has gone by so fast! Soon, my internship will come to a close on the 31st and I will no longer be your intern. The good news is that my family and I will still be worshiping here at Lord of Life for the duration of our time in Dubuque. So, I'll save my official intern "goodbye" for next month's newsletter, I just can't believe how fast time is flying.



I also can't believe that we have lived 20 or so months during a pandemic. We have experienced many ups and downs and we are looking forward to the new year with COVID-19 still very prevalent in our area. Once again hospitals are at or near capacity, and healthcare workers are facing long, demanding hours filled with grief and uncertainty. It is hard to believe that we will ever get this virus under control and find peace.

I've only mentioned a couple of things I can't believe, but if I thought about it some more, I bet the list could get longer...much longer. It is so much easier to talk about what we can't believe than what we do believe. So, I ask you...what do you believe in? What gets you through time slipping past us faster than we realize, journeys ending, a turbulent pandemic, or an emotional holiday season?

For me it is the season of Advent. Specifically the Sunday themes of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy, and the gifts of faith and grace through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit remind me of what I believe and why. I know that sounds like such a typical Sunday School or at least a typical seminary student's or pastor's answer...but it's true. In Advent we are reminded of the promises that God has made and how God has kept those promises. As we sing and plead with God for the Emmanuel to come and ransom us captives that mourn, we are reminded of what we can believe.

We can believe in **Hope** because God is with us in all we do and experience. We can hope because in Advent we are reminded that God is really going to come, not to judge but to be with us and experience life with us as a human being. We can believe in **Peace** as we take the time in worship this Advent to pause from the hustle and bustle. We can feel peace as we prepare our hearts for the one who will come to free all of us who are captive to sin. We can believe in **Love**. Christmas and Advent serve as reminders that God loves us so much that God became a baby, wore a diaper, depended on parents and family for survival, and put Godself at the mercy of human beings to demonstrate the depth of God's love. And we can believe in **Joy**. We can find joy because we know that Christmas is not the end of the story, Good Friday isn't even the end. We can believe in joy because we believe the Savior reigns, the Lord has come, Satan does not rule, we have been set free from sin...and for that, all of creation sings with joy!

So I hope you have a blessed Advent thinking about what you believe in and that you find Hope, Peace, Love, Joy and so much more this Advent and Christmas season. God's blessings to you and yours.

Intern Lucy Hardie

A Big Step Forward

When I began my ministry at Lord of Life nearly five years ago, we immediately began discussing our strategic plan for faith formation that spans the generations. We held cottage meetings, listening post sessions, and we offered surveys so that we could listen to our church members regarding what our priorities should be for faith formation and in a staff position for faith formation.

The council then developed a five-year strategic budget plan that included a part-time position for a coordinator for faith formation. Our recent Share Our Abundance Campaign included a position for faith formation as a desired outcome. This position will scale to eventually include a full-time staff position.



Maria Troftgruben

Today, as a result of your commitment to the campaign and to the operational budget for Lord of Life, I am pleased to announce that we have hired Maria Troftgruben to serve as our part-time coordinator for faith formation. Maria brings with her a vast knowledge of how our Sunday School and children, youth, and family faith formation programs have been run in recent years.

Maria currently serves as our congregational council representative for education and will transition off of council after the first of the year after completing two terms and heading our education programming.

What's next? First, we will invite you to participate in a ministry team for faith formation. If you have children, you are encouraged to consider how you can serve in this vital ministry to benefit all of our kids at Lord of Life. Second, Maria and I will evaluate how we do faith formation as a congregation and ask for feedback from our members to make the best possible choices moving forward. Third, Maria and husband Troy have already been offering youth activities and we plan to continue to make Lord of Life a place where our youth feel valued and welcome.

I invite you to join me in welcoming Maria to her new role at church. Pass along encouragement in the form of a note or card, volunteer to be a part of the planning team, participate in faith formation for yourself and for your children. Our goal is to grow in our understanding of God as we follow Jesus, together.

In peace and hope,

Pastor Paul



From Our Council President

The church of Christ, in every age
Beset by change, but Spirit-led,
Must claim and test its heritage
And keep on rising from the dead
ELW 729



Advent is the season of new beginnings and hope. As we enter a new church year, let's think a bit about change. Once the pandemic recedes, what will church look like? Will our families return in full force? Will our membership continue to worship solely on-line? What does that mean for the fellowship of our congregation? How can we create a connection for those who don't worship inside the building? Who will do the work of the congregation?

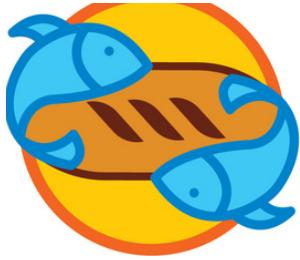
I believe that our congregational life may be different in the future. I don't know the answer to how it will change. I do know that the church has survived every age, no matter what challenges it faced. Our task is to continually explore and experiment with how we make church happen in people's lives.

As we face new challenges in the coming year, please pray for your congregation council and committees. Some ideas may be wildly successful, others will fail. What's important is that we continue to work with each other and welcome the experiments. If you have ideas, talk to Pastor, myself, or a council member!

Financial Report

<u>October YTD</u>	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2021 Budget	2021 Total Budget
Member General Giving	198,077	197,018	216,670	260,000
Hunger	888	1,561	1,250	1,500
Lent/Advent	913	615	1,000	1,300
**Other Giving/Income	703	25,235	1,730	2,000
Total Income	200,582	224,429	220,650	264,800
Benevolence	15,800	15,160	17,420	21,000
Evangelism	0	80	1,430	1,700
Stewardship	855	885	1,050	1,250
Music & Worship	19,757	18,494	18,330	22,000
Faith Formation	269	266	13,550	16,700
Ministry/Pastoral	97,508	101,128	98,860	118,114
Church Home	31,133	30,871	37,790	44,000
Administration	27,497	30,569	29,170	34,997
Mortgage	0	4,167	4,170	5,000
Total Expenses	192,819	201,619	221,770	264,761
Net Gain (loss)	7,763	22,810	-1,120	39
Mortgage - Non-Operating	62,772	60,873	60,870	73,048

**Payroll Protection Loan of \$24,900 from 2020 was forgiven in June 2021



SHARE our ABUNDANCE

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

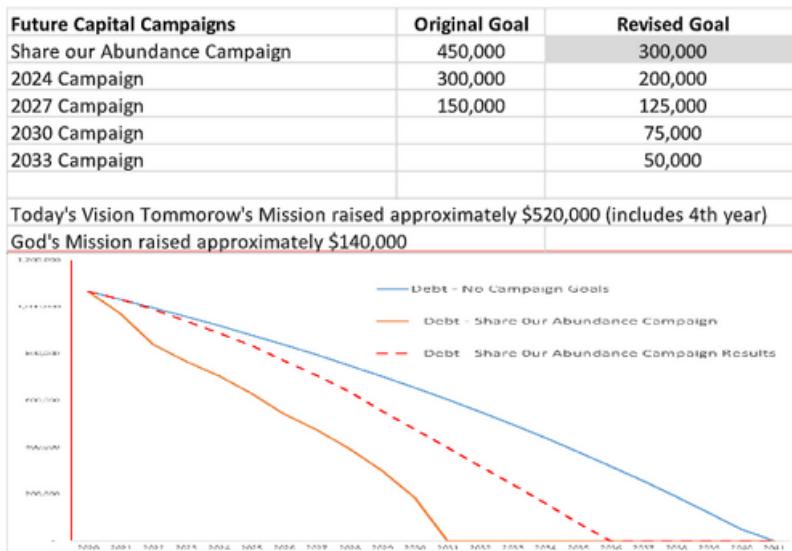
The Results Are In

Earlier this year Lord of Life's stewardship campaign, "Share Our Abundance" took place. The campaign was designed to raise funds for the annual operating budget and to reduce debt from the expansion of our building.

We are happy to report that the campaign totals included pledges for **\$202,860** to support our annual budget and **\$291,653** to reduce building debt. The total pledges in the campaign amounted to **\$494,512**. What a tribute to the generosity of our congregation!

The campaign was chaired by Mike Donohue and Pat Friedman. They were aided by committee chairs Joan Decker, Kris Stache, Paul Erickson, and Kevin Curoe. At least forty others joined the committee chairs in making this campaign a big success. (Thank you all!)

While the "Share our Abundance" campaign was successful, the results were less than the goals presented in our "Share Our Abundance" campaign booklet. As you will see from the charts below, the actual results show the debt will now be retired by the end of **2036** and employing a full-time faith formation director will be re-evaluated after the 2024 campaign. However, the church council has re-affirmed our commitment to honor our mission congregation origin through benevolence targeted at supporting a new or recently formed mission congregation.



Thank you to all who contributed to this campaign. You have made it possible for Lord of Life to continue to serve the congregation, community, and our world. Intent cards and campaign information remain available in the gathering space at church and via our website.

Education News

Important dates for Children (3rd to 5th) and Youth (6th grade and up):

Children and youth are once again going to participate in **Advent Worship on December 12th** at **10:30am**. We need volunteers to read be readers during worship (scripture, prayers, call to worship, etc.), usher, run tech, and provide music. Talk with your children about how they might like to be involved. All children will have opportunity to participate in the service in some way.

December 12th will also be **Cross Generational Sunday School**. We are going to get out the costumes and have a little fun learning about the story of Christmas. Plan to join us at 9:15 in the sanctuary! After Sunday School everyone is invited to help sing some Christmas Carols which will be recorded for use in a service that will be available online Christmas morning.

The fun continues on **December 19th!** During the Sunday School hour, we will be sharing a Christmas movie--likely VeggieTales. Join us for a comfy, cozy, movie kind of day!

December Youth Event (6th grade and up):

Come join us for Christmas caroling on **December 12th at 3pm**. Confirmation students are encouraged to invite their mentors as well. We will spread some Christmas cheer to the surrounding neighborhood and then return to church to decorate some cookies. Cookies will be provided. Anyone is interested in donating frosting and/or decorations, please talk to Maria.

January Youth Event:

Let's go to a Saints game! Sunday, January 2nd is a Faith and Family day. The game is at 3:05pm against Cedar Rapids. Watch for information about signing up and reserving a ticket. Let Maria or Troy know if you will be needing transportation.

Worship Update

As cases of COVID-19 continue to grow at a rapid pace, once again, the Worship and Music Team, Council Executive Committee, and Pastor Paul are evaluating our worship practices. Since the onset of the pandemic we have had a plan. At each major step along the way, we have been blessed to be able to refer to the response plan and to have in-depth conversation together.

Currently, Lord of Life is requiring masks for worship and any time spent inside the building. This practice is not likely to change before Christmas based on the spread numbers and projected surge in cases. The good news (aside from Jesus, of course) is that we are able to continue to worship together, in person and online. Our current practice of communing from our seats will continue for the immediate future.

We are incredibly grateful to you for your partnership in keeping our people as safe as possible by wearing masks and following the basic guidance we have adopted.

Care in Our Congregation

In Our Prayers...

We pray for all for whom the holidays will be different this year. For those who've lost a loved one in the past year, our prayers are with you.

Special Worship Opportunity

The longest night falls on or around the same day before Christmas each year. In this service we acknowledge that Christmas and the holidays are not completely filled with joy, but also carry with them the reality of our losses and pain. Join us as we pray, sing, and worship by candlelight in this powerful service of hope and remembrance.



Care in Our Community

Christmas Baskets for the Dubuque Food Pantry

3-5 lb. hams are needed to help fill Christmas baskets for the Dubuque Food Pantry. Please sign up in the church narthex if you wish to donate a ham. Place your ham in the upper level refrigerator on or before December 12. Thank you for making Christmas dinner a little brighter for some of our neighbors in need.

Christmas Caroling

Come join us for Christmas caroling on **December 12th at 3pm**. Confirmation students are encouraged to invite their mentors as well. We will spread some Christmas cheer to the surrounding neighborhood and then return to church to decorate some cookies. Cookies will be provided. Anyone is interested in donating frosting and/or decorations, please talk to Maria Troftgruben.

Care in Our World

ELCA Good Gifts Program

The Mission and Outreach Committee is collecting donations to benefit the ELCA Good Gifts Program and we invite all our congregants to participate!



The ELCA Good Gifts Program is a celebration of giving and the holidays are a great time to remind ourselves of what we have been given - both in terms of gifts and opportunities. When we think back to the best gifts we have received, it is not the gift itself that we honor with fond memories, but the meaning behind the gift that makes it special.

The items available for "purchase" through the ELCA Good Gifts Program are very special because they afford those in need of an opportunity for a better life. Imagine receiving a goat that provides milk and cheese for your hungry children, or chickens that produce enough eggs to feed your family with some left over to sell at a market. Now, you have food to eat and a source of income as well!

We have the opportunity to provide this kind of help by simply making a donation that allows the ELCA to bestow a beloved barnyard animal to those who are in need.

Please help us give a gift of opportunity and wellbeing to our world neighbors by choosing an ornament from the tree in the narthex and making the corresponding donation. All checks should be made out to Lord of Life with a notation in the memo area indicating the type of barnyard friend you wish to buy. That's it! It's easy and there is no wrapping paper necessary - because for this gift, the wrapping is represented by our love for our neighbor and our CARE FOR OUR WORLD.



ELCA
GOOD
GIFTS

Preparing to Update Constitution & Bylaws

As I've stated in previous newsletters, the council is working on updating our constitution and bylaws. The last update was in 2006. Since then, there have been many changes to the ELCA's Model Constitution for Congregations, a document which provides guidelines for our constitution. The council is reviewing language in preparation for the annual meeting.

Background

ELCA church constitutions contain two types of language, required language and flexible language. Changes are voted on at Synod Assemblies. Required language changes are to be amended in a congregation's constitution without alteration. Many of the proposed amendments to our constitution are changes to required language.

The Model Constitution also provides suggestions for flexible language. The council is reviewing these sections and will make recommendations to be addressed at the annual meeting. In addition to the constitution, changes to our bylaws are needed to either align with language in the constitution or to remove duplicated language.

Process for change

At the annual meeting, we will vote on required language changes. Once adopted, those changes go into effect without a 2nd vote. Council's recommendations will be sent to membership no less than 30 days before a congregation meeting. You can expect to receive recommendations in December.

We will also vote on changes to the flexible language provisions. If those changes are accepted, a ratification vote will occur at another congregation meeting (date to be determined.) Since many of the revisions to our bylaws relate to changes in the constitution, bylaws will be amended at a later date.

Communicating Recommendations

Because there are numerous changes, a document with all changes, both required and flexible, will be available in the church office.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns. I'm always open to conversation!

Susan Hansen

Advent 2021



CLOSE TO HOME

Watch and worship with us via our website at www.lordoflife.online this Sunday and the first four Wednesdays in December.

December 22nd will be our Longest Night service. A much loved tradition at Lord of Life.

Join us each week as we journey through Advent, together. Our Sunday sermon series will tackle some big texts and themes to prepare us for the coming Christ.

Wednesday evenings we will use the much beloved Holden Evening Prayer liturgy to nourish our souls along the way. We'll have messages by seminary students, which are sure to challenge us and remind us of God's great love for us.

We plan to livestream all of our services in December.

Holden Evening Prayer
Wednesdays in Advent
7:15pm



Christmas 2021 Worship Plan

Christmas Eve December 24th.	4:00 PM & 6:00 PM	In-Person and Livestream Online Service including candlelight singing
Christmas Day December 25th	9:00 AM	ONLINE ONLY Recorded choir music and readings
Sunday December 26th.	10:30 AM	In-person and Livestream Online ONE SERVICE ONLY - Lessons and Carols
Sunday January 2nd	8:00 AM & 10:30 AM	In-person and Livestream Online

Coming Events

Christmas Eve Services

4 & 6 PM In-person and Online

Christmas Day Service

Online only via Facebook and YouTube

Sunday, December 26th

ONE SERVICE AT 10:30AM

Lots of other activities at church and in our community! Check the church calendar at www.lordoflife.online



Ministry Opportunities

God blesses each of us with our time and the talents we have. We believe that an important part of being a Christ follower is our service to others. Pick up the materials at church or find them on our website: www.lordoflife.online/serve.html



Lord of Life
Lutheran Church

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