

The Messenger

Volume XLVI ~ Issue 12 ~ December 2024

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church

417 N. Seventh Street, Allentown, PA 18102

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Interim Pastor: Rev. Richard Mathisen: 215-643-9109 | richard.a.mathisen@gmail.com

Sunday Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Music Director: Andrea Berntsen

Sexton: Beth Hickman

Administrative Assistant: Camille Campbell

Outreach Coordinator: Pr. Dr. Genie Watson

The Pastor's Message

The Future of St. Luke's

Since I began my role as Interim Pastor at St. Luke's, the Church Council has shown a strong interest in the future of our Church, which is very appropriate. Recently, this topic has been approached from a different angle. There may be upcoming discussions by the Church Council regarding the Allentown Collaborative Ministries and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. I want to provide an overview of what is happening.

Before proceeding, I want to emphasize that this discussion is still in its early stages. Nothing will happen in the immediate future; I am not going anywhere. Any potential decisions will involve the entire congregation before any choices are made or acted upon.

The term you may hear discussed is "6-2-6-1 Ministry Communities." This is often referred to as the 6-2-6-1 Plan, but that can be misleading since it is not a rigid plan. Instead, it serves as a flexible framework for congregations that wish to collaborate in ministry efforts. Congregations looking to work together can create arrangements that best suit their needs.

"6-2-6-1 Ministry Communities" refers to a collaborative group of six congregations, two pastors, six licensed lay ministers, and one deacon. The purpose of this initiative is for these congregations and individuals to work together in ministry. A key motivation for this concept is the significant shortage of ordained pastors within the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Currently, ELCA seminaries are graduating enough pastoral candidates to fill only about 30% of the funded pastoral vacancies nationwide. This shortage has a notable impact on our synod. If you would like to learn more about 6-2-6-1 Ministry Communities, please visit the Northeastern Synod website and look for the "6-2-6-1" section.

So, where does St. Luke's stand regarding its future? I believe that St. Luke's has been very active since I arrived. The Welcome and Witness Committee, under Chairperson Lynn Weaver, began holding meetings in 2022 that involved the entire congregation. This initiative resulted in the successful Coffee Hour event. The Committee also proposed several other strategies, including a plan focused on increasing worship service attendance. This strategy aimed to double attendance in two years and quintuple it in five years. The Church Council reviewed and approved this proposal.

Furthermore, the Welcome and Witness Committee suggested the reinstatement of an Education Hour from 9:00 to 10:00 A.M. on Sundays. Although implementing this took some time, it is now successfully functioning. The congregation initially faced challenges due to the unexpected loss of our Parish Administrator, Leslie Talago, which temporarily delayed many activities. However, St. Luke's has recently hired Camille Campbell as the new Administrative Assistant to fill that position.

Additionally, the Church created a new role of Outreach Coordinator, appointing Pastor Dr. Genie Watson to this position. Pastor Genie has been quite active in her role. Overall, I would say that St. Luke's has been very engaged and proactive in shaping its future.

St. Luke's has been actively engaged in the city of Allentown in a new way. In 2022, St. Luke's proposed that Lutheran Churches in Allentown collaborate to initiate a Mid-Week Lenten Gathering in 2023. This proposal led to the formation of Allentown Collaborative Ministries (ACM). Initially, the ACM involved six Lutheran Churches in Allentown, but it has since been expanded to include several non-Lutheran congregations.

What is the role of Allentown Collaborative Ministries (ACM) in the discussion of a "6-2-6-1" plan? For the past two years, pastors or representatives from six Lutheran congregations have been meeting monthly. Recently, they have begun to actively explore the possibility of ACM participating in discussions regarding a "6-2-6-1" plan in Allentown. They have asked me about inviting St. Luke's to join this discussion.

What is my role, as an Interim Pastor, in such collaborative discussions about a "6-2-6-1" plan? I have communicated to the Collaborative and the St. Luke's Church Council that I should not be directly involved in making decisions regarding this matter, as such decisions belong to the Council and ultimately to the congregation. I can answer questions and assist, but I have encouraged the Collaborative to extend an invitation directly to the St. Luke's Church Council. They understood my position and sent an official invitation to the Council, which was considered for the first time at the Church Council meeting on November 14.

The Council had requested a meeting with the Synod regarding the future of St. Luke's. This meeting occurred on October 15 and included Pastor Jean Huber, the Assistant to Bishop Christopher deForest, who oversees congregations in Lehigh County. Following the discussion with Pastor Huber, the Council held a brief conversation about the next steps during the Council meeting on November 14.

This discussion is still in its early stages, and there is nothing substantial to report except that a preliminary conversation has just begun. However, since news travels quickly, I want to provide some basic information to prevent misunderstandings. I also want to clarify my role in this matter. I neither support nor oppose the discussion or potential adoption of a "6-2-6-1" type of plan. I believe this decision ultimately belongs to the Council. As your Interim Pastor, I will assist them in their work, but I will not take a central role in the discussions regarding any actions.

On a very different topic, we are approaching the celebration of a hugely important event in the history of the world, the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! Therefore, I want to extend the best wishes of my wife, Barbara, and myself to all of you. We want to wish you all a very Merry and Blessed Christmas!

Blessings to all of you!

Pastor Richard Mathisen

ST. LUKE'S MISSION STATEMENT: St. Luke's is a community of God's people centered around the Gospel and empowered by God's Spirit to be Jesus' disciples now. The Lord calls us to be channels through which His love and acceptance can flow to others. Using our varied gifts, we commit ourselves as a congregation and individuals to be God's presence to our community in both word and deed.

Financial Highlights

Financials as of October 31, 2024

Income	5,933.00
Expenses	-13,827.00

Roof Fund Loans as of October 31, 2024

Memorial Fund Loans	
North Roof	16,000.00
Elevator Addition Roof	10,000.00
Apartment Turret Roof	5,000.00
Apartment Roof	17,000.00
Loan Repay	-9,414.00
Balance	38,586.00

Join us for...

Education Hour
Sundays, 9:00 – 10:00 am

Worship Service
Sundays at 10:30 am



merry christmas



*The December Messenger
is sponsored in honor of
the dedicated Church
members
who have given their many
talents and precious time
to continue the mission of
St. Luke's Church
by
a Grateful Member of our
Congregation*

NEWS AND NOTES

Advent Potluck

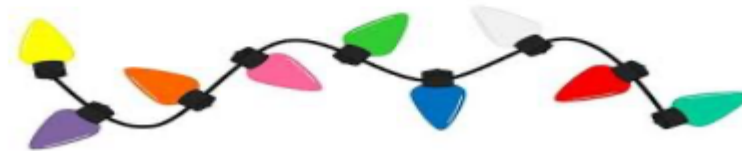
Join us immediately after the 10:30 a.m. worship service on December 8th for our Advent Potluck! Please bring your favorite side dish, salad, or dessert to share. The Church will provide the meat. Susan Simonnet will be leading a craft activity. If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Patterson at 484-633-0333 or via email at robert.patterson@rcn.com. We're looking forward to seeing you!

Sunday, December 8

As part of our Advent Social, we'll once again have a seasonal craft project. We're asking everyone who would like to participate to please bring a clean glass jar (such as a sauerkraut, pickle, apple sauce, large jam or jelly jar), and ensuring it's free of glue and/or residue from the label.

All other supplies for this DIY activity are provided.

Visit our Facebook page on December 2 for a preview of what we'll be making.



Election Day Bake Sale (from left) -

Pic 1: Kathy P., Bob P., Patti E., Bonnie W.; Pic 2: Kathy, Patti, & Beth H.



We were pleasantly surprised when the former Bishop, Rev. Dr. Zeiser, who had also interned at St. Luke's in the mid-1970s, came to worship with us on Sunday, November 17th.

From left: Pastor Dr. Watson, Rev. Dr. Zeiser, Rev. Mathisen, Rev. Dr. Zimmerman.



The Rev. Dr. Ted and Janey Zimmerman
Pr. Zimmerman's 50th Anniversary of Ordination was celebrated at St. Luke's on November 24th.



Pastor Dr. Genie Watson delivered the sermon on Christ the King Sunday.

A Thank you Note from Rev. Dr. Ted Zimmerman

A very heartfelt "Thank You" to the whole St. Luke's congregation for the surprise lunch in honor of the 50th Anniversary of my ordination on November 24th. I greatly appreciate it, and it was a complete surprise. Janey and I truly value all the members of the St. Luke's community. God bless you all!

Ted Zimmerman

A Thank You Note from Kathy Patterson

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who sponsored altar flowers and bulletins over the past year. Your support enabled us to keep fresh flowers on the altar, brightening the day for many. Thank you also for contributing to our special flower programs for Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. I appreciate the sponsors of our monthly newsletter as well. I hope that all of these sponsorships will continue in 2025.



In this season of giving, I thank all who have shared their blessings by donating items or making monetary contributions to the Christmas Ingathering. Your generosity has made the holidays brighter for those less fortunate, particularly for those in need of assistance from our local agencies, the Rescue Mission and Turning Point. A detailed report will be included in the January Messenger.

November has been a hive of activity here at St. Luke's. We kicked off the month with our Election Day Bake Sale on November 5th, followed by our Veterans Day brunch on November 10th. A huge thank you to Bob Patterson and Beth Hickman for helping me host the brunch in honor of our Veterans. Above is a photo of the veterans at our Veteran's Day luncheon at St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, from left: Marty Westman, Robert Patterson, and Barry Scholl.

Additionally, the 8th Ward Neighborhood Group and St. Luke's members partnered to organize a Spaghetti Dinner in our Fellowship Hall on November 23rd, with proceeds benefiting Family Promise and the 8th Ward Group. A report on this event will follow in next month's newsletter. We have also begun hosting individuals from Daybreak at the Church on Friday nights, providing a warm place to stay for two hours before they head to the YWCA warming station for the night. THANK YOU TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED TO MAKE THESE EVENTS HAPPEN! GREAT TEAMWORK, EVERYONE!

Thank you to all who have sponsored our Coffee Hour each week after our worship service. This special time of fellowship is enjoyed by many, and it's true that sharing food helps bring us closer together. It's a good opportunity to share our joys as well as our concerns. I am very thankful to everyone who contributes to the success of our other food events throughout the year. I'm looking forward to seeing you at our Advent Social on December 8th.

This past year has been challenging in many ways, but we should be grateful for the numerous blessings we have experienced. It has been a fulfilling kind of "busy" here at St. Luke's. We are striving to respond to God's call to put the needs of others before our own.

Wishing you a blessed holiday season,

Kathy Patterson

St. Luke's ESL Classes now on Wednesdays only

Beginning the week of December 2nd, free English classes will be offered on Wednesdays from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM in St. Luke's Fellowship Hall. Classes will no longer be offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Extra help is available after class. Please note that class cancellations will continue to follow the schedule of Allentown public schools. For example, ESL classes will also be canceled if Allentown schools close for a snow day.



Mid-Week Advent Bible Study

Wednesdays at Noon
Simple Lunch Included
December 4th, 11th, and 18th
Christ Lutheran Church
1245 Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18104

Wednesdays at 7PM
December 4th, 11th, and 18th
Church of the Nativity
4004 Tilghman Street
Allentown, PA 18014

Park in the lot across the street from the church and enter through the handi-cap entrance on 13th. There is an elevator available to the left or you may use the steps to travel downstairs to fellowship hall.

Park in the Church lot. Enter through the main doors and find your way to fellowship Hall.



Exploring Families of the Bible

Reminders

Volunteers Needed

Homeless neighbors will arrive at St. Luke's red gates at the parking lot entrance on Fridays at 4:30 PM after their supper at Daybreak. They need a warm place to stay for about two hours until they can walk to the 15th Street YMCA Warming Station. We invite you to consider volunteering on Fridays from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM to assist with this effort and help with clean-up.

We also invite you to join us on Wednesday, December 18, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM (note that the date and time are tentative) for a heartwarming "Toys for Tots" evening dedicated to bringing joy to our neighbors. Your involvement will make a meaningful difference! For up-to-date details, please contact Pastor Genie at 484-761-2770 or via email at outreach@stlukesluth.org.

Altar Flowers and Bulletin Sponsorship

To sponsor altar flowers (\$16.00 per vase) or weekly bulletins (\$12.00), contact Kathy Patterson:
484-633-0333
robert.patterson@rcn.com

Many thanks to those of you who regularly sponsor flowers.



Blessings on your birthday

December 2 *Annette Haffl*
December 14 *Ross Crawford*
 Dolores Lewis
December 25 *Paul Bonnici*
December 31 *Dassia Bembridge*

Have we missed anyone?
Please call the Church office if you would like to be added to our birthday list.

Prayer Requests

Please keep in prayer those who are sick, suffering, homebound, or grieving the loss of loved ones, especially:

FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

November Barton-Moore	George Kratzer, Sr.	Zachary Strouse
Rev. Richard Baumann	Dolores Lewis	Carl Swoyer, Jr.
Anthony Bosket	Keith Lewis	Elizabeth Swoyer
Mary Davis	Erica Lopez	Mary Swoyer
Eduardo Fernandez	Carol Mayers	Emily Talago
Donald Helm	Cathi Murphy	Carol Vasko
Frederick J. (Jim) Kern III	Donna Recker & family	Susan Wyman
	Margarita Rodriguez	Marge Yarnall

The families of Jim Kondravy, Linda Zeiser, and Janet Stump on their loss

FOR OUR HOMEBOUND

Elva Bachman	Jackie Gehringer	Elwood Shanton
Ruth Brinker	Vivienne Ho	Charlie Talaber
	Miriam Schuon	




THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!



Lay Ministers December 2024					
Dec	Offering Collector	Scripture Reader	Worship Assistant	Communion Assistant	Greeter
1	B. Mathisen	C. Bachman	M. Westman	M. Westman	B. Mathisen
8	K. Baker	M. Westman	J. Zimmerman	J. Zimmerman	R. Patterson
15	D. Skinner	B. Mathisen	K. Baker	M. Westman	J. Zimmerman
22	J. Zimmerman	S. Simonnet	L. Weaver	L. Weaver	B. Engler
29	T. Zimmerman	M. Tucker-Morgan	C. Bachman	M. Westman	E. Hickman

Lay Ministers January 2025					
Jan	Offering Collector	Scripture Reader	Worship Assistant	Communion Assistant	Greeter
5	B. Engler	D. Skinner	K. Baker	T. Zimmerman	K. Baker
12	E. Hickman	M. Westman	M. Tucker-Morgan	J. Zimmerman	B. Mathisen
19	K. Baker	S. Simonnet	B. Mathisen	L. Weaver	R. Patterson
26	R. Patterson	J. Zimmerman	M. Westman	M. Westman	J. Zimmerman



Merry Christmas
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR

*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
(Isaiah 9:6 NRSV)*

December's Bible Readings

WEEK 1

- *Jeremiah 33:14-16* *A righteous branch springing up from David*
- *Psalms 25:1-10* *To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. (Ps. 25:1)*
- *1 Thessalonians 3:9-13* *Strengthen hearts of holiness for the coming of the Lord*
- *Luke 21:25-36* *Be alert for the coming of the Son of Man*

WEEK 2

- *Malachi 3:1-4* *My messenger is a refiner and purifier*
- *Luke 1:68-79* *In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us (Lk. 1:78)*
- *Philippians 1:3-11* *A harvest of righteousness on the day of Jesus Christ*
- *Luke 3:1-6* *Prepare the way of the Lord*

WEEK 3

- *Zephaniah 3:14-20* *Rejoice the Lord is in your midst*
- *Isaiah 12:2-6* *In your midst is the Holy One of Israel (Is. 12:6)*
- *Philippians 4:4-7* *Rejoice, the Lord is near*
- *Luke 3:7-18* *One more powerful is coming, baptizing with fire*

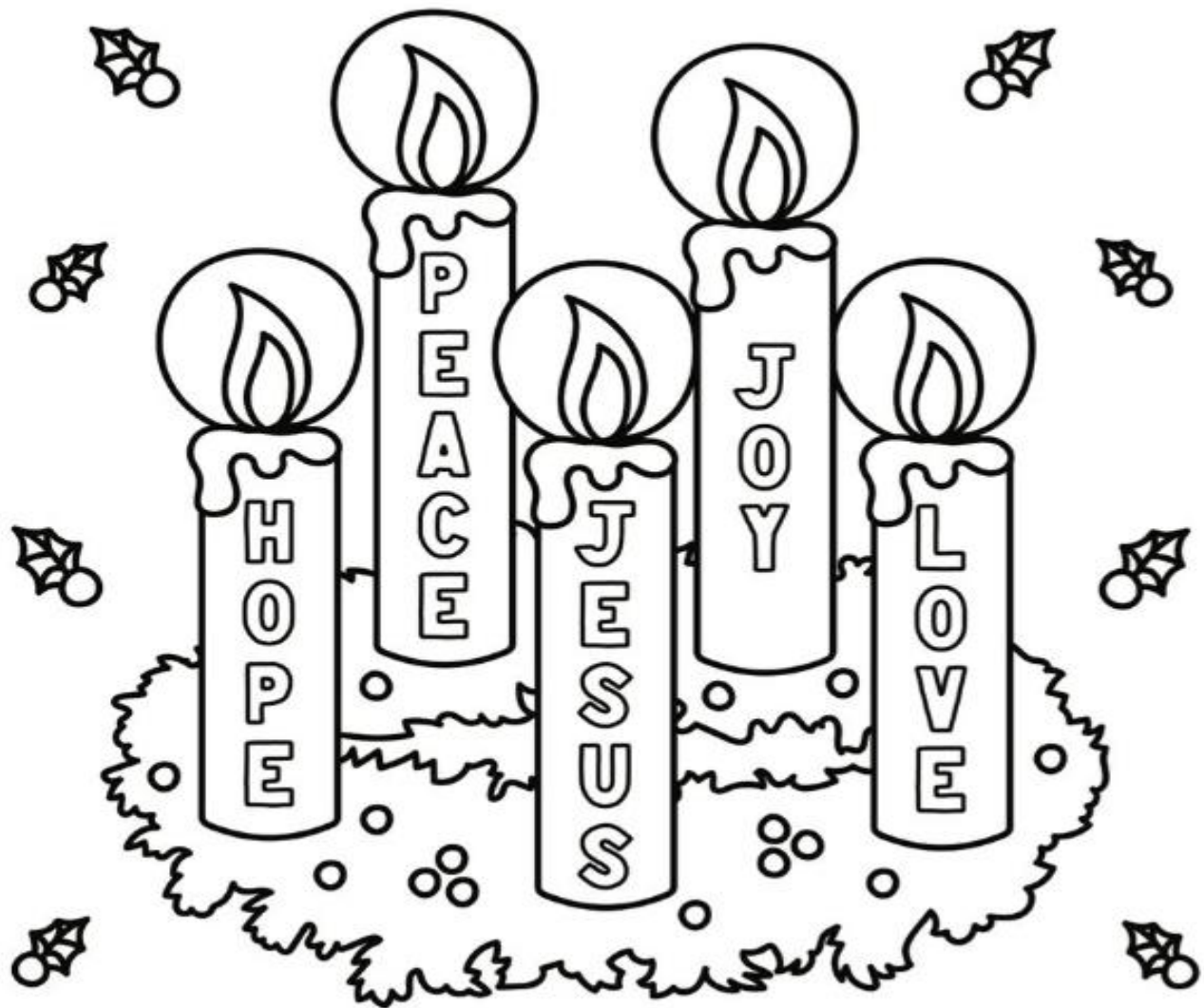
WEEK 4

- *Micah 5:2-5a* *From Bethlehem comes a ruler*
- *Luke 1:46b-55* *You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly. (Lk. 1:52)*
- *Hebrews 10:5-10* *I have come to do your will*
- *Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]* *Blessed are you among women / My soul magnifies the Lord*

WEEK 5

- *1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26* *The boy Samuel grew in favor with the Lord and the people*
- *Psalms 148* *The splendor of the Lord is over earth and heaven. (Ps. 148:13)*
- *Colossians 3:12-17* *Clothe yourselves in love; let the peace of Christ rule your hearts*
- *Luke 2:41-52* *The boy Jesus increased in wisdom, and in divine and human favor*

ADVENT



**GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH
PEACE, GOOD-WILL TOWARD MEN!
LUKE 2:14**