



# DECEMBER/JANUARY Newsletter *Emanuelite* 2025-2026

## Weekly Schedule

### Worship Sundays

8:00 & 9:30am

**Sunday School** 9:30am

**Coftea Fellowship** 10:30am

### Tuesdays

**Emanuel Ringers II**

5:00 - 6:00pm

**Emanuel Ringers I**

6:45-8:45pm

### Wednesdays

**Bible Study**

1:00 - 2:00 pm

**Choir Rehearsal**

4:30 - 5:30 pm

### Thursdays

**Adult Emanuel Ringers**

7:30 – 9:00pm

# Pastor's Message

## A Note from Our Pastor

My husband and I have been on the journey of raising a family since 2020. It's been a long and full 5 years. Through that

time, we have had our rollercoaster experiences: adoptions that have fallen through; the frustration of being passed

over in a screening process; the surrogate whose life gets upended by a family member's medical diagnosis. Our recent acquisition of baby belongings tells part of that tale: The hastily gotten bassinette from my sister-in-law (only to recently discover its story is much more thorough); the St. Patrick's outfit my mother-in-law bought when she thought we were close to adopting a child; the bathing soaps that a congregation member from my previous church gifted to encourage us when we first started this

journey. Like an opened time capsule, each object brings memories and, truthfully, grief.

But now we are days away from our firstborn child and five years almost doesn't seem long enough to prepare physically and mentally for the changes and challenges to come. There's a bustle of activity trying to tie up loose knots at work, complete house repairs, and get in "last moments" of peace. As some have pointed out, our abundance of baby-tailored products are a modern-day phenomenon.

Think of it this way. It could have taken Mary weeks to know she was actually pregnant with early signs of the body; after all, we don't necessarily always believe celestial beings' visits, especially when it seems too amazing to be true.



But eventually Mary would have to face the fact that her changing body is already preparing for something she must have thought she had years to go before this lifechanging moment (she was approximately 12 years old at this time). It would be around this time that she would have to confide in her betrothed, Joseph, the unknown factor in her future security. Would he stay? Would he too think this was too quick? Would he be ok with raising a child not biologically his?

Then comes the coup de' grâce: they would need to travel a long-distance during Mary's third trimester. My husband and I have had long discussions around this very issue, and we aren't even the ones pregnant or, for that matter, going by rickety donkey. Our first child will be born in Kansas; the second one a month-and-a-half later in Florida. Our discussions have revolved around congested airports and congested sinuses versus driving over days with frequent stops that might drive us up a wall as we long just to be back home. But, with the guidance of Mary and Joseph, a parent does what must be done for the family.

For many more reasons, this Advent/Christmas season has all the hallmarks of that first Christmas story, and I take comfort in the fact that Mary and

Joseph probably could relate to the many anxious moments I feel as time becomes short and we will live with whatever comes our way. The only thing I look forward to is that after this long journey in my own life, I will be conscious of the words that any loving parent would say to their child on the day they enter the world: "Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care and fit us for heaven, to live

with you there." (Away in the Manger, vs. 3)

This will be a very special Christmas for my family and we are blessed with such a supportive congregation. From our home to yours, I wish you a truly merry Christmas and a blessed and holy new year.

*-Pastor Kevin O'Hara*



"Good news from heaven the angels bring,  
Glad tidings to the earth they sing:  
To us this day a child is given,  
To crown us with the joy of heaven."

~ Martin Luther

Isn't it great to lift your voice to the heavens and sing a carol? Belting out a resounding **Joy to the World** or **O Come All Ye Faithful**? How about a prayerful **What Child is This**? or **Away in a Manger**... there are so many to choose from and enjoy during this most holy season. As our choirs continue to rehearse for our upcoming Advent season, we also take some time to reflect on the anticipation of Christ's birth celebration—**Christmas!**

The Choir finished up November by singing for the Interfaith Thanksgiving service and will present an anthem on December 7<sup>th</sup> titled "The Light Will Soon Appear". They will also be singing throughout the month and during the later Christmas Eve service. Our ERI bell choir played on Christ the King Sunday and did a wonderful job for both the prelude & offertory. They will also play during the 11pm Christmas Eve service.

**Upcoming:** Children's Christmas Pageant with music (December 21<sup>st</sup>) and our 5pm Christmas Eve Family Service with soloists. Also, don't miss guest organist, John Nurmi on Christmas Day!

Care to join us for an impromptu sing during Advent/Christmas? Just let me know! We'd love to have you.

Enjoy this most blessed season~

Musically in Him,

*Debbie Jones-Norberto*

Director of Music



*Bell* NOTES

ANNUAL BENEFIT

# HANDBELL CONCERT

KATONAH CELEBRATION RINGERS & EMANUEL RINGERS I



BENEFICIARY



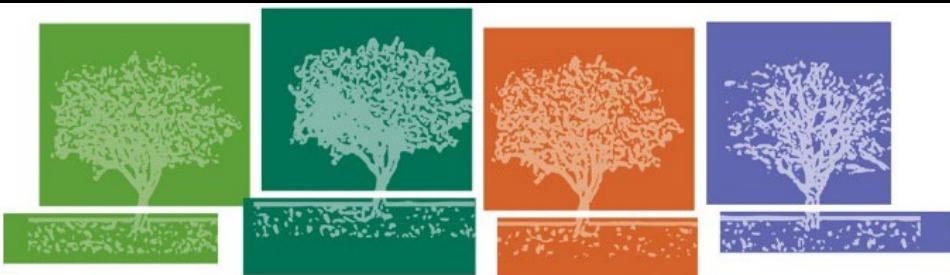
FREE WILL OFFERING TO BENEFIT  
OUR "COMMUNITY WHERE ALL  
PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO THE  
FOOD THEY NEED TODAY, AND  
THE FUNDAMENTAL RESOURCES  
TO BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW"

**EMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

197 MANVILLE ROAD PLEASANTVILLE, NY 10570

**DEC 7TH 2025, 4PM**

# *The Bells Rang at the Thanksgiving Interfaith Service - It Was Wonderful!*



## **ANNUAL MEETING**

Join us on February 8<sup>th</sup> for our Annual Congregational Meeting  
after the 9:30 am worship service.

This will be both in person and online.  
Come hear about the successful 2025 year!

\*Snow date: February 15th

# Social MINISTRY

**An Advent-ure in Giving!!!**



**This Advent, give a gift that makes a difference! Good Gifts Ornaments**, part of ELCA Good Gifts, are a great way to provide critical support for ELCA World Hunger programs and projects. Each of these gifts can make a life-changing difference to our siblings in Christ who are challenged by hunger—not only because they face a shortage of food, but also

because they are coping with the root causes of hunger, like poverty, lack of access to education, health care, and job training.

Once again, an anonymous donor has promised to **match each Good Gift that is given, dollar for dollar.**

To participate:

- Select an ornament from the tree on the narthex table for the gift you would like to give.
- Write your name on the ornament and hang it back on the tree.
- Pay for that gift through Emanuel (cash, check, or electronic transfer) in the amount represented by the ornament and designate it **for Good Gifts**. For checks and cash, you can use one of the envelopes on the table and put it in the offering plate.
- If you are making this gift in honor of someone, you can choose one of the cards to let them know about your gift. (Some cards are specific to gifts, like bees and goats, and other cards are generic, i.e. Your Gift Was Hard to Wrap.)



**Thank you for helping our neighbors around the world!**

*Deacon Karen Nurmi*

Chair, Social Ministry Committee



# Finance COMMITTEE

As the end of 2025 nears, our end-of-year giving picks up. Our year-round gratitude, fueled by abundant blessings, is amplified by Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas.

As the Spirit moves you this season to make unrestricted offerings to Emanuel (vital to support day-to-day operations), additional gifts may be made to specific funds that support Emanuel's mission and ministries. These funds include:

**Building, Grounds & Facilities (“Capital”)** – investments for the upkeep of church properties.

**NEW Initiatives (“Grow Emanuel”)** – seeds new trial programs (such as a Youth Leader) for a period.

**Music** – monthly “Noontime at Emanuel” concerts and guest musicians.

**Ringers** – concert programming and instrument expansion and care.



**Mary & Martha** – extra support for social ministry needs in and around our community.

**Pastor’s Discretionary** – for Pastor’s use to support requests that align with Emanuel’s mission.

**Memorial** – receives gifts honoring a person’s life for use by the Church Council to support needs.

**ELSSA Seminarian** – provides scholarship support for ELCA seminarians.

Contact Treasurer Denise Rempe ([denise@rempe.us](mailto:denise@rempe.us)) to learn more about these funds.

You may also give to Organizations through Emanuel. The list includes Coachman, ELCA World Hunger, Koinonia, Lutheran Disaster Response, Pleasantville Food Pantry, Good Gifts, and Seafarers.

May we be faithful stewards of God’s gifts.

Other Ways to Donate:  
**“Tax Optimization Strategies”**

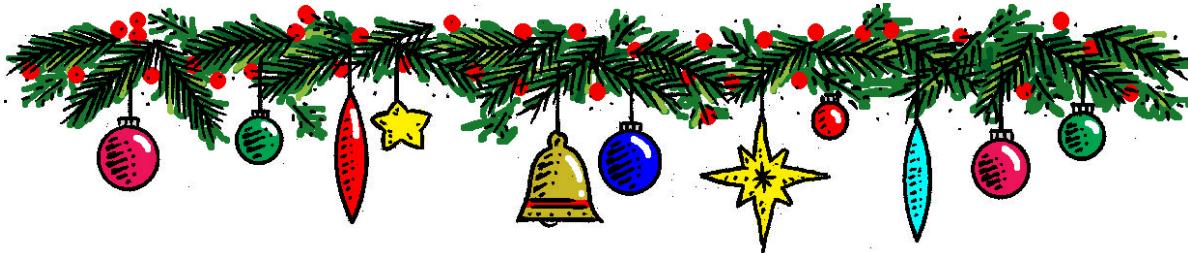
- Donating appreciated securities directly to Emanuel avoids capital gains taxes and provides a charitable deduction on your 2025 Federal and NYS tax returns.
- For 73 and older, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your traditional IRA made directly to Emanuel is not considered a taxable distribution. It reduces your income, dollar for dollar.

- For donors who itemize, starting in 2026, only charitable contributions in excess of .5% of adjusted gross income are deductible.

Contact Treasurer Denise Rempe ([denise@rempe.us](mailto:denise@rempe.us)) if these strategies are of interest.

*-Denise Rempe*

Treasurer



## The Benefits of Being an Emanuelite!

We love all people, those close by and those far off. As one connected to our church, here are a few items worthy of noting:

- *Living Lutheran Magazine* is back in quarterly print edition. Instead of being sent to your house at this time, we are offering 25 quarterly complementary copies to the congregation. You can ask for one to be saved for you specifically or pick one up on the back table as you leave from worship. They are available on a first-come basis. Please let us know if you don't receive one but wanted it. Just so you know: *Living Lutheran Magazine* is also available for free online with bonus content. The print magazines cost about \$20 for a year's worth when shipped to your house. If you want, to can help offset this cost by designating \$20 to the church.



- *Christ in Your Home* is a daily devotional that comes out 4 times a year. This is also available on the back table and we have plenty of copies left over every season. In as little as 5 minutes, you can reflect on a passage of scripture and be guided for the rest of the day. These are also offered complementary and we encourage you to give to friends and neighbors.
- Stewardship envelopes are available in the back for your convenience. They are marked by day for ease of recording. Please make sure to designate your name somewhere on the envelope or on the check so we can record your offering. Of course, you can also give online.



If you have any questions, please speak to Pastor Kevin or Dee in the office.

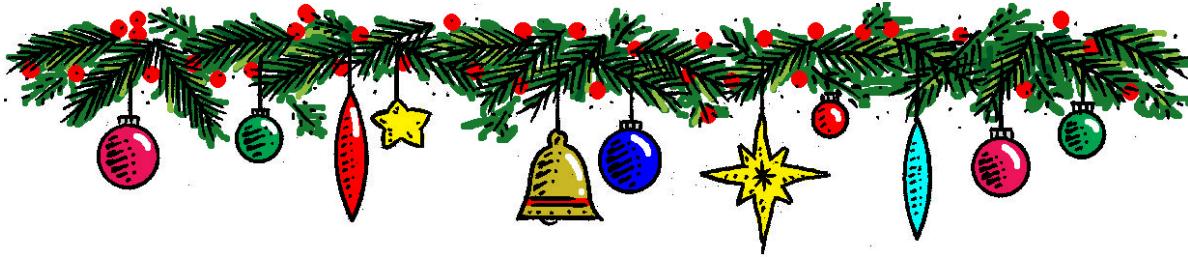
# Christian FAITH & LIFE

## Our Sunday School Gets Into the Giving Spirit

The Sunday School will once again this year, be collecting gift certificates to contribute to the Youth at the Coachman. The Coachman is a family homeless shelter for families in White Plains. You can purchase a gift card through the Ringers on December 7th or leave a check made out to Emanuel in my mailbox and we will buy them for you. We would like to give 52 teenagers \$50 so you can purchase \$25 or \$50 VISA gift certificates or \$25 McDonalds gift certificates. We will be setting up a tree in the narthex and when you buy the certificates or leave us money, we will give you an ornament to put onto the tree. The children have been very happy in the years past, as this may be the only gift they receive for Christmas. Thank you for your support in this wonderful charity!



*Helayne McDonnell*  
Sunday School Superintendent

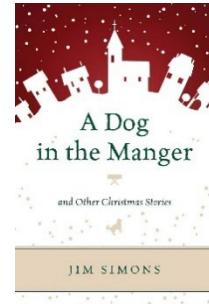


## COME JOIN OUR BOOK CLUB

After the worship service on Dec. 7, a group of us will gather to reflect on the November book pick the Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride. Come join us during Coftea!

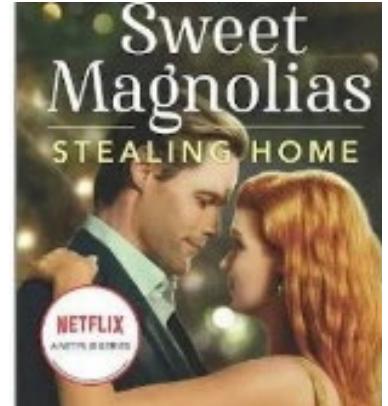
Our December book pick is *A Dog in the Manger and Other Christmas Stories* by Jim Simons. It includes 12 unique short stories that lift up the Christmas season. As you read, think about these questions:

- 1) Which story did you enjoy the most?
- 2) Is there a story that particularly surprised you?
- 3) Which story encapsulates the spirit of the season the best?

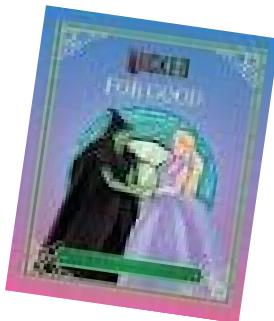


As this is also our January newsletter, our book for the new year is *Sweet Magnolias: Stealing Home* (book 1) by Sherryl Woods. *Sweet Magnolias* is also a Netflix drama series. Faith plays a big part in Woods' writing, especially when this small town needs some guidance. With only one church in town being a Lutheran congregation led by a black female pastor, the chances that our ELCA denomination plays heavily in the structure of the town would be a safe assumption. Here are some questions to reflect upon as you read this first book:

- 1) How does faith play a central role in the decisions the characters make?
- 2) What is the sense of "home" that all the characters are longing for?
- 3) How do Maddie, Dana Sue, and Helen convey a holy trinity of friendship?
- 4) What elements of new life do you see in the book?
- 5) How does self-care and self-love play out throughout the many decisions being made?

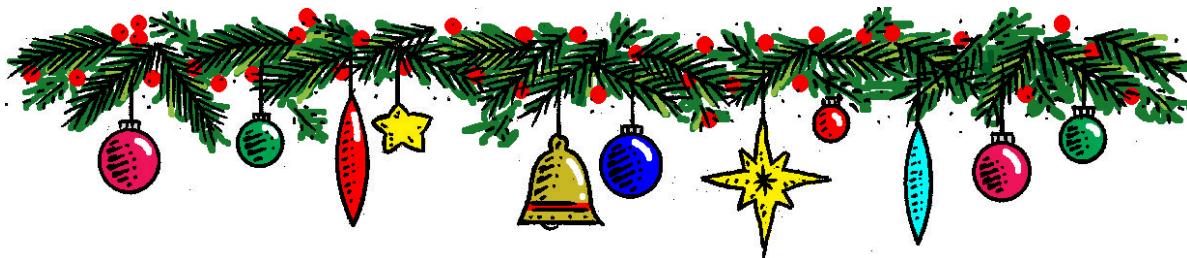


We also want to prepare you for our February book. With the release of *Wicked: For Good* across theaters, we'll enter into the Lenten season looking at the characters that make up this storyline and asking which one(s) resemble the Christ figure we know so well. In addition to reading the book, we'll spend some time "going to the movies" to engage this conversation on a deeper level. Stay tuned for more information to come!



#### Future Books:

- December: *A Dog in the Manger and Other Christmas Stories* by Jim Simons
- January: *Sweet Magnolias: Stealing Home* (book 1) by Sherryl Woods
- February: *Wicked: the Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* by Gregory Maguire



#### FAMILY BOOK PICK

Throughout the Bible, it's not just humans who sing to God. The animals, plants, and even the mountains and rivers sing to God! Even the stars twinkle for and to God! So, a story about animals on the night of Jesus' birth is just another wonderful tale of how everything in God's universe gave joy at the new baby coming into the world. Here their voices in *The Animals Speak: a Christmas Eve Legend* by Marion Dane Bauer and illustrated by Brittany Baugus. This is our December pick!

January can be a tough month. The sun shines for only a few hours a day; many days are cloudy, covering up that precious sun. The Christmas lights are taken down, and it feels as if all the great holidays are far from us. But hope exists. In *Little Mole Finds Hope* by Glenys Nellist and illustrated by Sally Garland, we discover signs of life and excitement even in the middle of winter. This book will prepare us for what Lent means for us. This is our January pick!



## Table Talk is Back!

As we gather around the table for our meals and family meetings, let's continue exploring *the Small Catechism* by Martin Luther, a short book Martin Luther wrote to encourage families 500 years ago to have conversations about faith. For the next two months, explore the first and second parts of our Apostles' Creed and the meaning. Then identify examples of each section (for example, where do you see God creating? Where do you see new life happening?).

### **The First Article: On Creation**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

*What is this? OR What does this mean?*

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties.

In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property, along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

### **The Second Article: On Redemption**

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

*What is this? OR What does this mean?*

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.



# Youth GROUP

## Youth Group Events for This Month



**FRI-SUN  
05-07**

### MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT



Johnsonburg Camp and Retreat Center

**SAT  
13**

### MOVIE NIGHT



Emanuel Lutheran Church  
6pm

**SUN  
21**

### SECRET SANTA



Pleasantville Presbyterian Church  
6pm

Weekly meetings every Sunday  
6:00pm-7:30pm

For more information contact:

[tawe@pvillepresby.org](mailto:tawe@pvillepresby.org)

# Worship, MUSIC & ARTS



Use this to help navigate you through the journey of Advent!

#### Recurring

- Wednesdays, Dec. 3 - 17: Bible Study @ 1 pm (Zoom)

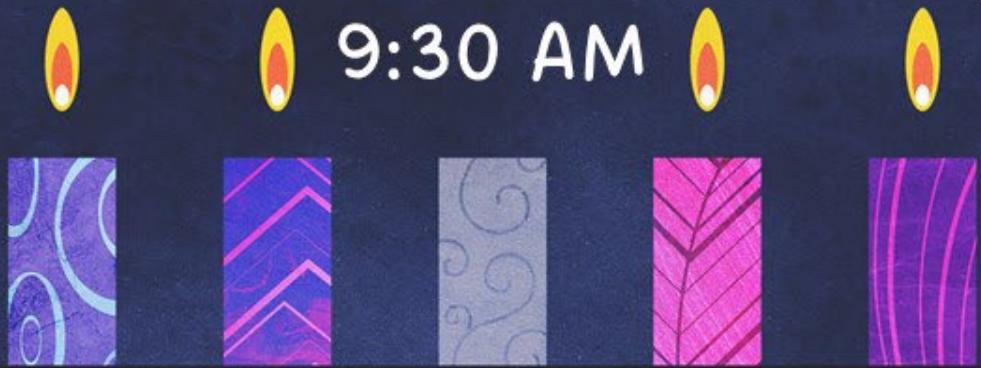
#### One-Time Events:

- Nov. 30: Advent Celebration Event @ 10:30 am
- Dec. 6: Christmas Party at the Schoener's House @ 3 pm
- Dec. 7: Holiday Benefit Bell Concert @ 4 pm
- Dec. 21: Worship @ 8 & 9:30 am; Christmas Pageant @ 9:30 am; Church Christmas Party @ 10:30 am
- TBD (Saturday): Christmas Caroling at Farmer's Market
- Dec. 24: Family Christmas Worship @ 5 pm; Candlelight Christmas Worship @ 11 pm
- Dec. 25: Christmas Day Worship @ 9:30 am
- Dec. 28: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas Worship @ 9:30 am only

\* Office Hours vary between Dec. 25 and Jan. 2. We appreciate your patience as the staff takes some time to celebrate with families and rest.

Dec. 21: Advent 4/Christmas Pageant

9:30 AM



Dec. 24: Family Christmas Eve Service

5 PM



Dec. 24: Traditional  
Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Service  
11 PM



Dec. 25: Christmas Day  
9:30 AM



*The Congregation Surprised Pastor Kevin & Kevin McGettrick for  
The Joyous Event(s) That Will Soon Be Here -*

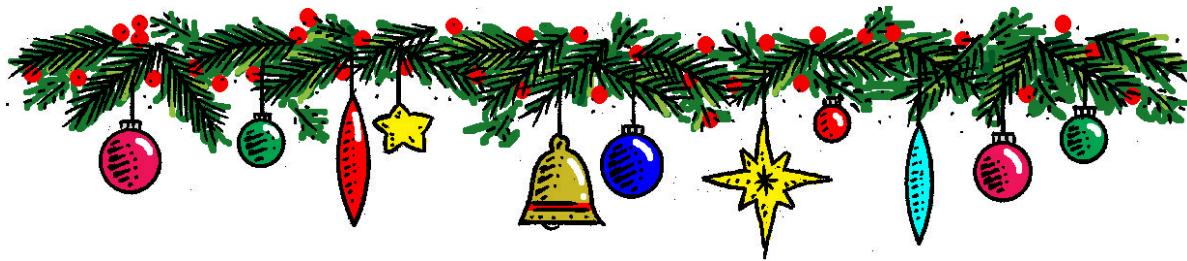


Thanks to our Leadership Team for Christ the King/God's Season. Pictured: Rev. Kathleen Koran, Deacons Barbara Meberg, Karen Nurmi, and Nancy Schoener



*We hope you didn't miss the amazing performance by Eric Stephenson on cello at our Noontime @ Emanuel Concert Series! Next concert: January 21.*

Help us fill up our pages with pictures from the month! Send pictures to  
[emanuelelc197@gmail.com!](mailto:emanuelelc197@gmail.com)



## **Updates on Pastor Kevin's Family Leave Plan**

Pastor Kevin will be navigating the realities of both work and family needs throughout December. He is expected to be on vacation time after the 9:30 am worship service on December 7 and will be back as soon as possible. He'll be around, working for the church until December 25, when he will finish out his vacation time for the remainder of the year. He will be officially on Family Leave beginning January 1 through February 17 (approximately 5 ½ weeks). During the end of this time, the second child is expected to be born. He is expected to return to work from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday. He will take another 6 weeks off from April 6<sup>th</sup> to May 16<sup>th</sup> for the second part of the Family Leave Plan. Of course, “the best laid plans of mice and men often go astray...”

During this time, 9:30 am worship services will be covered mainly by Rev. Kathleen Koran. We will also have our own Rev. Nicole Schwalbe (new member in November and Assistant to the Bishop of our synod) cover one of the Sundays in January. There may be two Sundays that there will be no pastoral coverage; those Sundays will be led by our deacons. Our 8 am worship service will be covered by our deacons; there will be no communion available for this service while Pastor Kevin is on leave.

When it comes to administrative operations, Deacon Nancy Schoener will be covering for Pastor Kevin. If you should need pastoral care during this time, please reach out to her. Should the request need a pastor, Deacon Nancy ([deaconnancyschoener@gmail.com](mailto:deaconnancyschoener@gmail.com)) will be in consultation with Rev. Kathleen. Deacon Nancy is happy to make visitations on request.

Dee Furgang, our church's office administrator, will continue to cover all aspects of coordination and communication between our church body. Please continue to reach out to her as you normally would.

Both our council president, Darlene Esposito, and our vice president, Helayne McDonnell, are providing assistance and support to the staff and ministries during this time. Please show them deep appreciation for their stepping up in this role which is more than volunteer leaders are ever asked to do.

Just note that during the leave, Pastor Kevin is not expected to check email or answer the phone. Continue to direct all needs to the church staff, deacons, or Council leaders during this time.

## Op Ed

I woke up this morning in a particularly foul mood – like leave me alone or accept the consequences mood. I felt like everything was out of my control. I had to take my car to be serviced today. But I don't want to take the drive. It's cold and it looks like it's going to rain. It'll take up most of my Saturday – gone!

In the car my mood sinks lower as I think about all the things bugging me. Traffic is backed up along the NYS Thruway for what seems like miles, people are driving ruder than usual, if that's at all possible – people are so rude – they think the road exists only for them, especially those who drive right up to your back bumper because by doing that, they believe that I'll acquiesce to their wishes and go faster, or change lanes so they can whiz by me. But what seems like instinct, I go slower, just to make them angrier. The emails I send out at work don't get read, it seems like everyone has a complaint, office politics is running amok, I can't seem to make my family understand that there is an actual off switch attached to the light fixtures in the house and why am I the one who always has to think about what to make for dinner...!

It starts to rain, not a good sign but soon the traffic begins to lighten up. The thruway starts to turn and curve with the mountains, and the car moves like it's dancing with the road, and my mood seems to be lifting. Then, out of nowhere, a ray of sun hits some of the

fall leaves still on the trees and I notice how beautiful they look, and I begin to feel less tense.

As I arrived at the service department, my mood has lifted & I came to remember what was very important to me – that there are forces, spirits and miracles happening all around - all the time. It's the force that reminds me that I do not like to grumble and complain, and I don't enjoy being around people to do. It's the spirit that pulls me to try to be the best and nicest person I can be. And it's the miracle of having a job that I truly enjoy, to know that office politics and complaints are for the most part temporary and minor and must not be important enough to drag me down. I am filled with gratitude in knowing that I have the money to pay for the electric bills – because there was a time when I didn't and that I am blessed with a family that appreciates what I can give.

On that particularly dreary day, when I was filled with anger, annoyance, tension and anxiety, I was also reminded of the small miracles that happen all the time - and I have no problem, none whatsoever, in recognizing that there is a higher power that's running things here, that power which I chose to call God, or Heavenly Father. I saw it on that Saturday when I saw the sun hit the fall leaves at just the right moment, when I realized that the traffic began flowing freely like the car was enjoying the drive, and when I remembered that things are,

in reality, going pretty good for me at my job and at home. However, these miracles don't come without work. You must have your eyes wide open to witness these happenings as his gifts, his miracles generated just for you, at just the right time when you need to see them.

I think we all need to acknowledge the small miracles that occur in our lives, every day, and to be grateful. Everything is going to be alright – God's got your back.

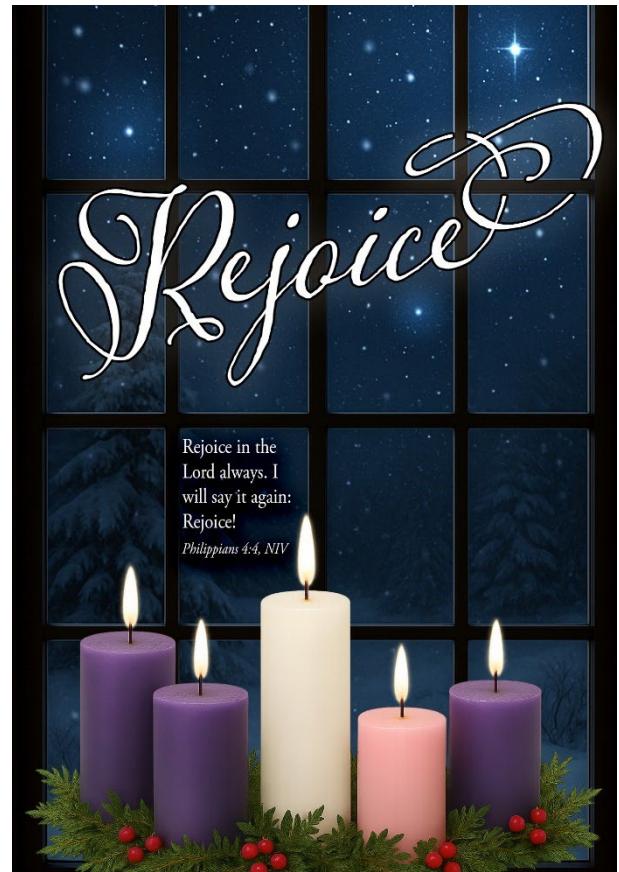
*Anonymous*



# Upcoming EVENTS

## Schedule for the month

- 12/2 – Women's Breakfast - 9:00am
- 12/2 - Staff Meeting - 11:30 am
- 12/5 – Church Christmas Party – 3:00 pm
- 12/7 – Book Club – 10:30 am
- 12/7 – Benefit Concert – 4:00 pm
- 12/7 – Confirmation Class – 5:30 pm
- 12/8 – Common Threads – 1:00 pm
- 12/8 – Stewardship Meeting – 5:00 pm
- 12/9 – Worship, Music + Arts – 7:30 pm
- 12/10 – Bible Study – 1:00 pm
- 12/10 – Christian, Faith + Life – 6:00 pm
- 12/14 – Bible Voyagers – 10:30 am
- 11/16 – Staff Meeting – 11:30 am
- 12/17 - Bible Study – 1:00 pm
- 12/18 – Council Meeting – 7:00 pm
- 12/21 – Christmas Pageant – 9:30 am
- 12/21 – Family Christmas – 10:30 am
- 12/23 – Deacon's Meeting – 7:00 pm
- 12/24 – Boys Breakfast – 9:00 am
- 12/25 – Family Christmas Service – 5:00 pm
- 12/25 – Nighttime Christmas Service – 11:00 pm
- 12/25 + 12/26 – Office Closed
- 12/28 – No Sunday School
- 1/1/26 – Office Closed



## Inspirational quote:

“When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.’” (Luke 2:15)