



# Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

1187 C.R. 128 & U.S. Rt. 20

Fremont, Ohio 43420

Pastor Tim Miller

93.1FM

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**First Sunday of Advent**

**December 3, 2023**

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Setting 3 with Holy Communion

\*Congregation please stand as you are able.

## **Introduction**

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

## **Prelude:**

*Awake! The Voice is Calling*

**Karl Karow**

## **Welcome & Announcements:** Joys and Concerns

Signing of the Pew Register by all present.

## **\*Opening Hymn:** *Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding!* ELW 246

## **GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

## **\*Greeting**

**P:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C:** And also with you.

**P:** As we celebrate the season of Advent, may we rejoice in the great gift that is ours in Jesus Christ. To help us celebrate, we light the candles of the Advent wreath. The candles signify that Jesus is the Light of the World. The evergreens remind us that He is life and brings life to us.

**C:** He is Emmanuel. God with us.

**P:** Often called the Hope candle, the first candle represents the hope born out of all that God has done and will do for humanity. In some traditions, hope is commemorated by looking ahead to the day when Christ will come again. For others, hope is best embraced by looking back—by reflecting on all the promises God has kept and all of the ways God has protected and preserved the world. For this reason, the first candle is also known as the Prophet’s candle, as it invites us to celebrate the words of hope and provision prophesied by those like Isaiah.

**P:** The candle of hope is our assurance that God will finish all He has started. Hope is our confidence that He will do all He has promised. All the promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is our hope today and forever.

**C:** He is Emmanuel. God with us.

**P:** May the candle of hope always be a part of our lives through the hope of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

**C:** Amen

**Lighting of Advent Candle**

**Congregation sings verse 1 only**

**Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah**



1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.  
 2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.  
 3 Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.  
 4 Light four can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.  
 He shall feed the flock like a shep - herd, gent - ly lead them home - ward.  
 Lift your heads and lift high the gate - way for the King of glo - ry.  
 He is com - ing, tell the glad tid - ings. Let your lights be shin - ing!

## **\*Confession and Forgiveness**

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who opens the heavens  
and draws near to us with salvation.

**C: Amen.**

P: God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance.  
Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P: Everlasting God,

**C: you love justice and you hate wrongdoing.**

**We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness  
that make us reluctant to work against oppression.**

**We are complicit in systems of exploitation.**

**We choose comfort over courage.**

**We are careless with creation's bounty.**

**Look upon us with mercy.**

**Turn our hearts again to you.**

**Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways  
for the sake of our waiting world.**

**Amen.**

P: Hear these words of assurance:

God clothes you with garments of salvation  
and covers you with robes of righteousness.

In the tender compassion of † Jesus Christ,  
your sins are forgiven.

God's covenant is eternal,  
and God's blessing rests upon us all.

**C: Amen.**

## **\*Prayer of the Day**

P: Let us pray.

**C: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

### **First Reading:**

**Isaiah 64:1-9**

*This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.*

R: A reading from Isaiah, the 64<sup>th</sup> chapter.

<sup>1</sup>O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,  
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

<sup>2</sup>as when fire kindles brushwood  
and the fire causes water to boil—

to make your name known to your adversaries,  
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

<sup>3</sup>When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,  
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

<sup>4</sup>From ages past no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who works for those who wait for him.

<sup>5</sup>You meet those who gladly do right,  
those who remember you in your ways.

But you were angry, and we sinned;  
because you hid yourself we transgressed.

<sup>6</sup>We have all become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.

We all fade like a leaf,  
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

<sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on your name,  
or attempts to take hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us,  
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

<sup>8</sup>Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.

<sup>9</sup>Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,  
and do not remember iniquity forever.  
Now consider, we are all your people.

The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Responsive Reading:**

**Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19**

<sup>1</sup>Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;  
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

<sup>2</sup>**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,  
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

<sup>3</sup>Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

<sup>4</sup>**O LORD God of hosts,  
how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

<sup>5</sup>You have fed them with the bread of tears;  
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

<sup>6</sup>**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,  
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

<sup>7</sup>Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

<sup>17</sup>**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,  
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

<sup>18</sup>And so will we never turn away from you;  
give us life, that we may call upon your name.

<sup>19</sup>**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

**Second Reading:****1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

*As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.*

R: A reading from 1 Corinthians, the first chapter.

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup>for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—  
<sup>6</sup>just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—<sup>7</sup>so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup>He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup>God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**\*Gospel Acclamation**

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the



words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.*

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 13th chapter.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

P: [Jesus said:] <sup>24</sup>“In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup>and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

<sup>26</sup>Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

<sup>28</sup>“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>32</sup>“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup>It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

<sup>35</sup>Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, <sup>36</sup>or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. <sup>37</sup>And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **Children’s Sermon**

### **Sermon**

**\*Sermon Hymn: *Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending* ELW 435**

## Apostles' Creed

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

**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.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## \*Prayers of Intercession

R: With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

*A brief silence.*

R: Call your church into holy fellowship as we await the restoration of all things. Reenergize your faithful people to live with hope and compassion, especially those who serve as missionaries near and far. Center us on your promise to come among us and make all things new. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: All creation signals your presence, O God: the vastness of the cosmos, the turn of the seasons, and living things that both rest and flourish. Rekindle our commitment to care for the earth. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Let the nations tremble at your holy presence, that justice and liberation prevail in all corners of the earth. Restore peace to nations in conflict, teach righteousness to corrupt leaders and systems, and bring stability to areas facing uncertain futures. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**



R: Enrich the spirits of all who feel hopeless, fearful, or despairing. Stay close to those who await healing or relief, *especially those we name at this time (Pause for people to be named)*. Deliver all in any need.  
Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Be with those who keep awake at night: nurses working overnight shifts, caregivers of newborns and aging adults, stargazers, those who are anxious, or those who are traveling. Reveal to all that the dark can be a place of calm and comfort filled with your presence. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: You have sent out your angels and gathered your faithful people from every time and place, calling them into one fellowship of saints. Bless the witness of those who dwell in your eternal presence. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

**C: Amen.**

### MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

### \*Sharing of the Peace

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

(10:30) Sr. Choir:

*Long-Expected Lord*

**M. Jordan**

### Offering

### \*Offering Prayer

P: God our provider,  
by your merciful hand  
abundance springs up from the earth.  
Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty.  
Let them be a sign of your steadfast love  
and faithfulness for all people,  
through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

## **\*The Great Thanksgiving**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

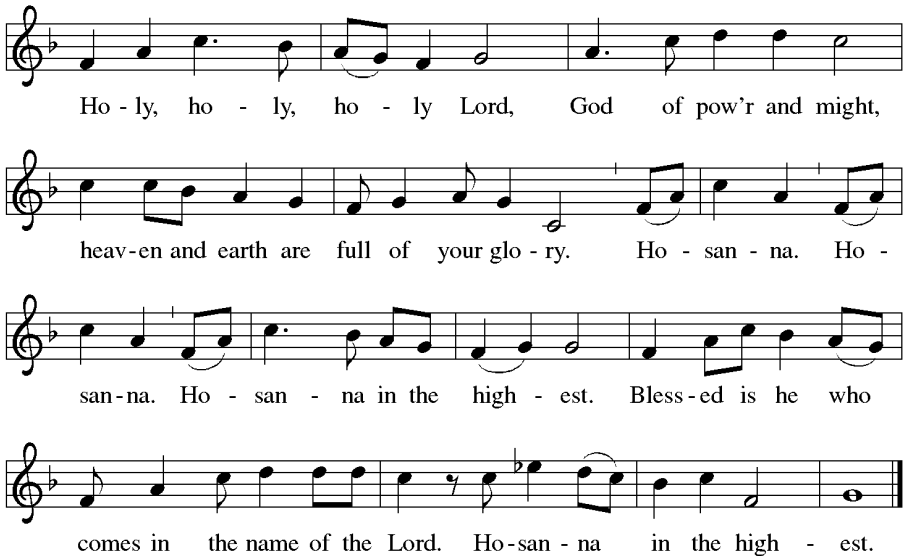
**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer,  
through whom you will also make all things new  
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.  
And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -  
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

## **\*Thanksgiving at the Table**

P: Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:  
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.  
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.  
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.  
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.  
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.  
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,  
the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

P: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C: Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.**

P: With this bread and cup  
we remember your Word dwelling among us,  
full of grace and truth.  
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.  
We look with hope for his coming.

**C: Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: Holy God, we long for your Spirit.  
Come among us. Bless this meal.  
May your Word take flesh in us.  
Awaken your people.  
Fill us with your light.  
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

**C: Come, Holy Spirit.**

P: All praise and glory are yours,  
Holy One of Israel,  
Word of God incarnate,  
Power of the Most High,  
one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

**\*Lord's Prayer**

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

**Invitation to Communion**

P: In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together.  
Come, take your place at the table.



## **Distribution of Communion**

*Communion will be continuous. The ushers will invite you to come forward by the center aisle. You will be handed the bread with the words, "The Body of Christ given for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!". Step to the Communion Assistant and take the cup. They will speak the words, "The Blood of Christ shed for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!" Empty cups may be placed in the basket as you return to your seat by the side aisle.*

*If you prefer gluten- free bread, please let the Pastor know. If you prefer grape juice, please let the Communion Assistant know. If you prefer not to receive or have children who have not yet received, please let Pastor Tim know and he will offer a blessing.*

## **Communion Hymns:**

**ELW 815 *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light***

**ELW 254 *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus***

## **\*Post Communion Blessing**

**P:** May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C: Amen.**

## **\*Prayer After Communion**

**P:** Generous God,  
in bread and cup you have revealed your glory  
for all people to see together.  
Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim  
your good news of liberation and release,  
brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

## **SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

## **\*Blessing**

**P:** The God of peace bless you,  
the love of Christ sustain you in hope,  
and the anointing of the Spirit ✝ remain upon you  
now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

**\*Dismissal**

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: Thanks be to God!

**\*Postlude:**

*Veni Emmanuel*

**Robin Rokey**

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**ON THIS FIRST DAY OF ADVENT**, Lord, I am eager for your coming — at Christmas, at the end of time and in the present moment. Amen.

**ALTAR FLOWERS** today are in loving memory of our parents, Don and Mayre Anne Fahle - Herb and Norma Arnold, along with our loved ones who have gone before us. Den and Deb Fahle.

**2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES** are available in the narthex. If you have not picked yours up yet, please do so.

**CHURCH TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES AND THE F.L.C.W. PROGRAM BOOKLETS** for 2024 are available in the narthex for you as well.

**A CHRISTMAS CONCERT BY TERRA STATE CONCERT CHOIR** will be hosted by Faith Lutheran Church **this Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.** We are asking for your help with providing cookies and brownies to be served after the event. There is a sign-up sheet on the Women's bulletin board in the coat room area. A free-will offering will be taken up to support the choir. Thank you very much and we hope to see you there for a festive evening of song and fellowship!

**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTMAS DINNER** – Esther Circle invites you to sign up for our Christmas Dinner at The Wall Street Pub & Grill on the Tiffin University Campus on **Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, at 6:15 p.m.** We will be ordering off the menu and those choices range from \$8 to \$17.00. They serve Appetizers, Flat Breads, Salads, Burgers, Entrees and Melts. There is a sign-up sheet on the Women’s Bulletin Board. **Deadline to sign up is TODAY, Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>.** It is **open to everyone.** We hope to see you there!

**PRAYER SISTERS FOR 2024** – You have the opportunity to be matched up with a prayer sister for 2024. Prayer sisters keep in touch with each other throughout the year. This can mean meeting for lunch or dinner, sending greeting cards, praying for each other regularly and anything else fun that you can think of to do together. **It really is quite rewarding!** If you would like to have a prayer sister please let Barb Kocsis, Carol Trick or Ginger Walker know. Thank you.



## **Christmas Worship Schedule**

**CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM** – Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, at the 8 a.m. service.

**CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING WORSHIP** will be at 9 a.m. only with Holy Communion.

**CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES:** There will be a 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Candlelight Service with Holy Communion. Offerings from these services and Thanksgiving offerings will be split 3 ways between Alicia’s Closet, The Missing Link and Pontifex. Please invite your family, friends and guests as we celebrate our Savior’s birth.

**NEW YEAR’S EVE WORSHIP** will be at 9 a.m. only with the celebration of Holy Communion.

**REMINDER...** *When Sandusky County is under a Level 3 Snow Advisory the church will be closed. This includes Sunday services as well as all weekday events, meetings and activities for that day. If we are under a level 1 or 2 snow emergency, the church will be open and if it's on a day of worship, we will have worship.*

**CHRISTCARE NEWS** - Beginning Saturday, January 6 we will begin a new study using the book *One Thousand Gifts* by best-selling author Ann Voskamp. In this present day, crazy world in which we find ourselves we'll see how this author will help us find joy in the midst of deadlines, debts, drama and our daily responsibilities. We will learn how to intentionally embrace a lifestyle of radical gratitude while we catch God in the moment. Come join us as we begin a new year, a year of joy and gratitude. See Noelle Leutenegger or call (419-307-1063). We can't wait to get started. **Sign up by December 10<sup>th</sup>** so materials can be ordered.

**VALLEY VIEW HEALTH CAMPUS** - During the past 2 ½ years a dedicated group of our Faith Family has been bringing Jesus to the folks living at Valley View and what a blessing this ministry has become. We sometimes wonder who experiences more blessings, those we spend time with or we ourselves. We see God in action in so many ways as we attend to the spiritual needs of his precious people here at this facility. Since we began this ministry we have grown, sometimes thinking as one of our regulars said, "We need a bigger space". One woman thanked more than once saying, "We are well taken care of physically here, but you bring us the spiritual care we so need and we so appreciate that". I don't recall her missing any of our weekly gatherings. Another person, with us for her very first visit recently was crying during most of our worship/Holy Communion time. Concerned, after the service we approached her with hugs, asking what was wrong. Through tears she shared, "Oh, these are happy tears. I don't know the last time I felt so loved and cared for". By then she wasn't the only one with tears streaming down their cheeks. So again, the question – Who is more blessed on those Monday mornings? If this has touched your heart and feel God calling you to this ministry see Noelle Leutenegger or call (419-307-1063) Join us in this blessing. There are also other volunteer opportunities at Valley View – leading a special interest group, making one-on- visits with residents, reading to them, participating on trips. See Noelle for more information or call directly to Valley View and ask for the Life Enrichment Office. Blessings will be given as well as received. And please, always, include this ministry in your prayers. Blessings to all!



## ASSISTING TODAY

**Pastor:** Rev. Tim Miller    **Organist:** Parm Boyer

**Sr. Choir Director:** Darla Brown

**8:00 a.m.**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:**                    Mason Harder    Julia Norris

**Lector:**                     Lillian Harder    Barb Kocsis

**Acolyte:**                  Lillian Harder    Julia Norris

**Communion:**    B. Fox/C. Paeth    Ann Mayle & Barb Kocsis

**Counters:** Niki Wasserman\* & Nicole Weiker

**Fellowship Time Host:** Adult II Sunday School Class

**Altar Guild:** Annie, Allison and Lauren Gazdecki

## ASSISTING NEXT WEEK

**Pastor:** Rev. Tim Miller    **Organist:** Parm Boyer    **Pianist:** Becky Fox

**Sr. Choir Director:** Darla Brown    **Flautist:** Marilyn Ring

**Assisting:** Judi Neill

**8:00 a.m.**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:**    Roy & Shelli Burgoon    Bill & Noelle Leutenegger

**Lector:**                     Judi Neill    Noelle Leutenegger

**Acolyte:**                  Easton Root    Julia Norris

**Communion:**    J. Neill/K. Smith    N. Leutenegger & L. Krynock

**Counters:** Alexis Brickner\* & Judi Neill

**Fellowship Time Host:**

**Altar Guild:** Annie, Allison and Lauren Gazdecki



## PRAYING DAILY

**For healing and hope:** Jim Bolen, Pat Copley, Mary Ann Diekman, Della Humbarger, Cinda Jones, Denny Krumnow, Nancy Mylander, Bob Schneider, Dorothy Swedersky, Janet Tressler, Carnetta Weber. Ginny Gnepper, Joanne Koch, Richard Libbee, Jon Kitchen.

**For the Family of:** Joshua Garlock, Robert Goehring, Norma Willey.

**For our Military:** Noah Egbert, Troy Halfhill, Daniel Linder, Katie Olmstead, Tony Rozzi, Christopher Templeton, & Joshua Tooman.

**For our Bishops:** Bishop Christian Ndossa, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, and NWOS Bishop Daniel Beaudoin and Staff

**For our partner congregation in Bumila, Tanzania**

**And its pastor:** Pastor Peter Magasi

**FAITH ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK OF – Dec. 3 to Dec. 10**

**Sunday**

Dec. 3-----8 & 10:30 a.m.   Worship/Holy Communion  
                                  9:15 a.m.    Sunday School & Fellowship Time

**Monday**

Dec. 4-----8 a.m.   Prayer & Conversation at Wendy's  
                                  10 a.m.   Valley View Worship & Holy Communion  
                                  7:30 p.m.   Dartball – Away vs. Grace

**Tuesday**

Dec. 5-----7 p.m.   Terra Choral Society Christmas Concert

**Wednesday**

Dec. 6-----6:30 p.m.   Bell Choir  
                                  7:30 p.m.   Praise Choir  
                                  7:30 p.m.   Sr. Choir

**Thursday**

Dec. 7-----9-3 p.m.   Fellowship & Sew Day  
                                  3 p.m.    Christ Care

**Sunday**

Dec. 10-----8 & 10:30 a.m.   Worship/Holy Communion  
                                  9:15 a.m.   Sunday School & Fellowship Time

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2023: ATTENDANCE: 135 – OFFERING \$4,637.15

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**COMMITTEE SECRETARIES** – Please remember to take the time to write your next meeting dates on the wall calendar in the office so they can be included on the monthly and weekly calendars. The new 2024 wall calendar is behind the current one now for your convenience.  
Thank you, Barb.

**A TASTE OF THE SEASON DINNER (5:30 P.M.) AND ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT (7:00 P.M.)** – will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church, 204 N. Wayne St., Fremont on **Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>**. The Concert will feature the music of the Fremont Ross Choir along with our seasonal musical talents! Concert is free and open to the public (a good-will offering is taken and donated). Dinner tickets are \$16.00. For dinner reservations or questions call Terri at 419-332-8167. Deadline for reservations is December 3<sup>rd</sup>. For dinner menu, please see the flier on the bulletin board in the coat room area.

# GOSPEL MESSAGE

**December 3, 2023**  
**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

## **Winds of Grace**

Have you ever experienced a powerful storm in which the sky grew increasingly dark and winds swirled the clouds or broke branches off trees? Our modern technology often allows us to prepare for storms like blizzards and hurricanes that develop slowly as they move toward us. Perhaps you've taken part in hastily boarding up windows, securing pets or farm animals, and gathering groceries and supplies in anticipation of being shut in or without power for a time.

The coming of the Son of Man will apparently not include advance warnings like those of meteorologists and weather apps, for Jesus says, "About that day or hour no one knows." It may be more like a tornado or thunderstorm, where we see that the conditions are right but can't be sure precisely when or where it will materialize. Our preparations for that type of storm are different, primarily focused on where and how we'll take shelter should lightning or a funnel cloud be spotted nearby. Many of us practiced tornado drills in school as kids; such practices, as well as storm watches and warnings, keep us aware of how to respond and alert about when to do so.

It is easy to hear Jesus' words and sound an alert for the end times. We might even spend time and energy worrying about the end and what it means for us. At the same time, the urgency of this proclamation is focused on the present, on what we can do here and now to be open to God's rule in our lives. This is a different kind of preparation, focused on loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

In the sacraments of baptism and communion we are invited into regular practices of anticipating the presence of God with us. In Advent we bring a particular focus to this expectation. We are invited to think about the ways the winds of grace gather us in, and then send us out for the sake of the world.