



# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Bellefontaine, Ohio 43311

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## First Hand December 2023

### OUR WELCOME STATEMENT

**At First Lutheran, all means all, and the gifts of God are free. We welcome, love, affirm, and include everyone in our faith community regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity.**

**Here in this place, you will find a warm, loving Christian family which strives to faithfully proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to all of God's children. We renounce racism, discrimination, and persecution in any form, in faithfulness to the gospel, and to the best of our ability, we promise to provide ministries and pastoral care to all who seek God in this place.**

**GOD WELCOMES ALL, AND SO DO WE.**



Pastor Larry Novak- [lnovak@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:lnovak@flcbellefontaine.org)

Office Mngr. , Rachel Gillespie- [rgillespie@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:rgillespie@flcbellefontaine.org)

Director of Music, Judy Vassar- [jvassar@flcbellefontaine.org](mailto:jvassar@flcbellefontaine.org)

Bell Choir Director, Stephanie Oaks- [sloaks1737@gmail.com](mailto:sloaks1737@gmail.com)



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*Mission Statement*

*Sharing God's grace through prayer, witness and service.*



## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

A friend of mine, Father Tom Gartin, a priest in the Episcopal Church, spoke quite eloquently about what is happening in the Middle East today. I met Tom in the summer of 2013, when we both did our summer internship of hospital chaplaincy in Atlanta, Georgia. He gave me permission to share this post.

*Christmas is coming.*

*And there is a movie coming out about the Holy family giving birth to baby Jesus in Bethlehem. I'm sure I'll see it at some point, and I'm sure it will be as sweet as it is inspirational.*

*I visited an orphanage in Bethlehem a few years ago, and I remember how emotionally moving it was to see all those children who through no fault of their own were born into a life where they will have enormous challenges. It was stirring to think of each child being born to the same streets and stones as the Christ child so long ago. Assuredly they are no less beloved of God.*

*So it hurts my heart to think of the children killed in this conflict. It's painful to see killing of innocents at such a scale that it is beyond what any rational person, no matter how shrewd, could call justifiable loss.*

*The killing must stop.*

*In a world gone mad, in a world gone red with rage, may peace prevail. In such a world, in the very town of Bethlehem was a holy child born. And the children there today are no less holy, no less beloved. In a world covered in the darkness of dying and despair, may a light shine.*

*Christmas is coming. But first, Advent. The season of waiting, of remembering those who wait for a light to shine, of sitting in the cold darkness and waiting with hope for the dawn to come before it's too late.*

Thank you, Father Tom, for letting me share your beautiful, heartfelt words. As we await the arrival of the Prince of Peace, let us continue to pray for peace in the world, especially in the Holy Land. We take comfort in the knowledge that through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God's kingdom has broken into our world. And the powers that enslave us: Sin, Death, and the Devil, will be defeated. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

May you all have a holy, blessed, and joyous Christmas.

In the abiding hope of the empty tomb,

Pastor Larry



**An Act Of Gratitude**

(Psalm 116: 12-14, 16-19; NRSV)

12What shall I return to the LORD  
for all his bounty to me?

13I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the LORD,  
14I will pay my vows to the LORD  
in the presence of all his people.

16O LORD, I am your servant;  
I am your servant, the child of your serving-maid.  
You have loosed my bonds.

17I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice  
and call on the name of the LORD.

18I will pay my vows to the LORD  
in the presence of all his people,  
19in the courts of the house of the LORD,  
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

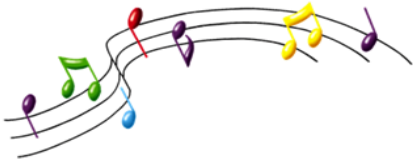
Praise the LORD!

In Psalm 116, the composer expresses gratitude for deliverance, and vows to offer his life and resources to God. In like manner, let us express our gratitude for God's grace through how we give our resources and ourselves to Christ.

For end of year financial records, I need your offering to be into the church office by December 31, 2023. All Sunday offerings on December 31 will be credited to 2023 financial statements.

Thanks

Judy Vassar, financial secretary



## Report of Director of Music

I am looking forward to the season of music. We have several varieties of music during the month.

***December 9<sup>th</sup> Caroling 2 PM to some of our members of concern. Meet at FLC. (pg. 6)***



***December 13<sup>th</sup> @ 6 PM will be a Bell Choir Seminar then at 7 PM will be our Wednesday Contemporary Worship Advent Service.***

***December 17<sup>th</sup> will be the Intergenerational Christmas Program 2 10:00 AM***



***December 21, 2023, 7:00 pm, a joint Advent "Blue Christmas" Service at the First United Methodist Church.***

**Sunday, December 24, 2023 three services will be offered.**

**10:00 AM** 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent Service with communion

**7:00 PM** Service of Lessons and Carols candlelight and communion

**10:30 PM** Traditional Christmas Eve Service candlelight and communion





## The Meaning of Advent

From the Latin word for “coming”, Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation for the coming of Christ both in the past in His incarnation as the baby Jesus, but also in the future with His promised second coming as Christ Triumphant. Furthermore, Advent is a time to focus on His present coming to us in the Word and Sacraments. In the Lutheran church there have been many traditions observed during Advent that help Christians to both prepare for and anticipate His coming at this time. Martin Luther encouraged families to observe Advent as a time for them to teach their children about the coming of Christ.

Advent marks the beginning of the church calendar. It traditionally starts on the Sunday closest to St. Andrew’s Day (November 27<sup>th</sup>) and continues for four Sundays until Christmas. During this time the liturgical paraments and vestments in many churches will change to violet to recognize Advent as a time of preparation and repentance as well as a symbol of the royalty of the coming King. The color blue can also be used as a symbol of anticipation and hope.



**CHRISTMAS BREAKFAST ON DECEMBER 17<sup>th</sup>**

*at 9:00 am in Rice Hall*

*Following the breakfast will be the Communion Worship Service which will include a Christmas Program.*

*Come and enjoy a wonderful breakfast and a celebration of Christmas.*

*(Sign up sheets in lower narthex for food donations)*



**THE MITTEN TREE WILL BE PUT UP ON DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>.**

**DONATIONS OF NEW HATS, SCARFS, GLOVES (MITTENS), SOCKS FOR CHILDREN ARE ALL ACCEPTED.**

**THE TREE WILL BE TAKEN DOWN ON 12/17 AND ALL OF THE DONATIONS WILL BE TAKEN TO LUTHERAN COMMUNITY SERVICES SO THEY CAN BE ADDED TO THE CHRISTMAS BASKETS.**



## **SUNSHINE BAGS**

**The sunshine bags will be placed on tables in the sanctuary starting December 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

**One table is for our “members of concern” and the second table will be for the residents of Luther Community.**

**ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> A GROUP FROM FIRST LUTHERAN WILL BE GOING TO SEVERAL HOUSES OF “MEMBERS OF CONCERN” FROM OUR CONGREGATION. WE WILL BE LEAVING THE CHURCH @ 2:00 PM. COME AND JOIN THE FUN.**



**TUESDAYS IN THE PARK & FAITH CIRCLE**

*“Tuesday’s In The Courtyard” will meet only one Tuesday at noon on Tuesday December 5th. Bring your lunch and enjoy good fellowship!*

*Everyone is welcome to join us! Bring a Friend!*

\*\*\*\*\*

**FELLOWSHIP /CHRISTIAN ACTION & MINISTRY TEAM**  
will meet on Monday, December 4th at 6:00 pm.

**We welcome any and all to join us.**



\*\*\*\*\*

**Faith Circle Holiday Lunch!**

*On December 19th, Faith Circle will enjoy lunch in “the vault” at Coldwater café in Tipp City . We had lunch here last year and so enjoyed it...and the desserts were “to die for”, so we are making a return trip.*

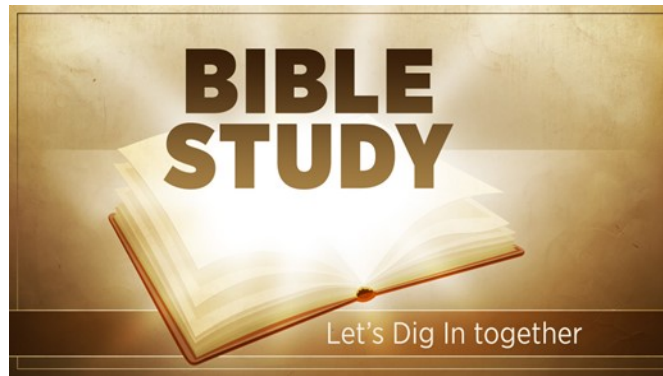
*There are also a few little shops to walk around to afterward.*

*We will carpool from the church leaving at 10:45 am.*

*Please let Susan know if you plan to join us.*

*Drivers are also needed.*

*Come, Enjoy some Christmas Cheer!*



## A NEW BIBLE CLASS-CIVIC LIFE AND FAITH

*Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. And render unto God that which is God's.* Luke 20:25.

Should congregations take a stand for or against political issues? Should churches be in the business of political advocacy? How do we discuss political issues in ways that build up, and not tear down, the Body of Christ?

The ELCA is developing a social statement on Civic Life and Faith, the relationship of church and state and related matters, as called for by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Social statements are the ELCA's primary documents to address significant social issues. They are intended to aid reflection and shape conscience and to set forth the ELCA's teaching and policy on the major social issues and questions of contemporary life.

An ELCA task force provides primary leadership for the statement's development over a five-year period, using an established process of study and widespread participation in theological and moral deliberation.

The task force is now offering a six-session study curriculum for use throughout our church. It provides a guide into the issues and invites participant feedback for the task force.

The six sessions delve into these questions:

How is God's invitation to discipleship lived out in a democracy?

How do Christians address controversial civic issues?

What are Lutheran views on civic life?

What are the objectives of Democracy in the United States?

What's faith-based living got to do with civic life?



Pastor and Carolyn will be on vacation from  
December 25 to January 2nd.





## December Ministry Team Meeting

Dates:

12/04 7:00 pm Church Council

12/04 7: 00 pm Fellowship & Christian  
Service & Mission

12/15 7:00 pm Outreach



Fellowship & Christian Service &  
Mission Ministry Teams

Worship Ministry Team

Property Ministry Team

Finance Ministry Team

FLIRT

Outreach

*Copies of reports from the monthly meetings of each ministry team is available for you to view in the Partners In Ministry Book located in the lower narthex.*

## 2023 Church Council

President- Chris Hildreth Blair

Vice-President- John Bodin

Secretary- Carolyn Novak

Financial Secretary –Judy Vassar

Members- Ray Kramer, Judy Lunz, Brittany Porter, Liz Rose, Kris Shannon, Brenda Shively Ray Swisher

## Sunday Attendance for October

	On Site	Online
October 1	75	46
October 8	80	42
October 15	60	37
October 22	82	56
October 29	65	63
Average	72	49

**THE DEADLINE FOR THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER  
ARTICLES IS DECEMBER 22nd.**



*The church office will close at 4:00 pm on Thursday, December 21st and will remain closed during the holiday week from December 25th thru January 1st.*



***During the past month we have remembered many in prayer. We remember in prayer all who are in need of God's presence and care ... especially:***

***Health Issues***

***Jim Donnelly***

***Michael smith***

***Loren Kipker***

***Pastor Karen Torrez***

***Jordan Banks***

***Chris Hildreth Blair***

***Gloria Kipker***

***Sally Stephan***

***Ray Swisher***

***Misty Kipker***

***Entered the Church Triumphant***

***Virginia M. Fergus***

***Dick Collum***

***Jack Bull***

***John Barra***



- 12/01 Barb Detrick
- 12/02 Rick Ramsey
- 12/04 Mary Beth Stoltz
- 12/08 Heath Allen
- 12/09 Jan Van Hoose
- 12/13 Cheryl Chamberlain
- 12/15 Hilary Horn
- 12/15 Connor Rose
- 12/18 Derek Bingaman
- 12/18 Daniel Weikart
- 12/18 Robby Weikart
- 12/22 Pat Sebring
- 12/25 Chris Hildreth-Blair
- 12/25 Alex Pulfer
- 12/26 Diane Anderson
- 12/27 Cheryl Kramer
- 12/29 Kris Swisher



CONGRATULATIONS TO BRETT BELSER WHO WILL BE GRADUATING FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF FINDLAY IN DECEMBER . HE WILL THEN BE PURSUING HIS CPA.



12/20/2003 John & Colleen Bodin

**THANK YOU**

**Dear Church Family,**

**I'm deeply grateful for the beautiful flowers that you provided this past month. Your thoughtfulness is much appreciated. Thanks for your kindness and for being a source of love and support.**

**Jim Donnelly**

**Thank you to everyone for the condolences and prayers on the passing of my mother-in-law, Virginia M. Fergus. Thank you to WELCA for preparing and donating items for the meal after the service.**

**To Pastor Larry for seeing her at OSU and giving the prayer before the meal.**

**Jinny Fergus**

**I received my Walmart gift card and I would like to thank the congregation for their generous gift and I look forward to seeing everyone over the holidays.**

**Jacob McKenrick**

**I want to say thank you to everyone at First Lutheran Church for the gift card and kind words of encouragement. It is very well appreciated and will definitely help during my time in college**

**Luke McKenrick**

**Worship Assistant**

12/3 Beth Harman  
 12/10 Dick Griffith  
 12/17 Brenda Shively  
 12/24 Dave Vassar (10:00 am)  
 12/24 Winnie Bodin (7 pm)  
 12/24 Cindy Weikart (10:30 pm)  
 12/31 Lucas McKenrick

**Communion Assistant**

12/3 Barb Triplett  
 12/10 Kris Swisher  
 12/17 Carl Gillespie  
 12/24 Sue Neer (10:00 am)  
 12/24 Colleen Bodin (7 pm)  
 12/24 Chris Hildreth Blair(10:30 pm)  
 12/31 Rachel Gillespie

**Reader**

12/3 David Buchenroth  
 12/10 Kris Swisher  
 12/17 John Gensemer  
 12/24 Chris Tillman (10:00 am)  
 12/31 Jean Wright

**Acolyte**

12/3 Alexis Hogan  
 12/10 Lottie Bodin  
 12/17 Alexis Hogan  
 12/24 (10:00 am)  
 12/24 Lottie Bodin (7 pm)  
 12/24 Ray Kramer (10:30 pm)  
 12/31 Alexis Hogan

**Crucifer**

**Greeters**

12/3 Judy Lunz  
 12/10 Ted & Carolyn Hoy  
 12/17 Stacie Jones  
 12/24 Carl & Rachel Gillespie (10:00 am)  
 12/24 Jinny Fergus (7 pm)  
 12/24 Ray & Cheryl Kramer(10:30 pm)

**Usher for December**

12/3; 12/10; 12/17; 12/31 Kevin Miller  
 12/24 Kevin Miller (10:00 am)  
 Kevin Miller (7:00 pm)  
 Ray Kramer & Carl Gillespie (10:30 pm)

**Altar Guild**

Cindy Weikart

**Communion Bread**

Rachel Gillespie

## December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>26</b> Christ the King Sunday 9:00am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service	<b>27</b> 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:30pm Bible Study 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm Worship Ministry Team Meeting	<b>28</b> 9:00am Quilters 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm FLIRT	<b>29</b> 3:00pm NA (RH) 6:00pm Contemporary Worship Practice	<b>30</b> 3:00pm NA (RH) 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice	<b>1</b> First Friday Event Office Closed	<b>2</b> Office Closed 10:00am Extending the Branch
<b>3</b> First Sunday of Advent 9:00am Confirmation Class 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service	<b>4</b> 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:30pm Bible Study 6:00pm Fellowship Ministry Team and the Christian Service and Mission Ministry Team 6:00pm Holland Practice 6:30pm Dulcimers 7:00pm Council Meeting	<b>5</b> 9:00am Quilters 12:00pm Lunch in the Courtyard or Lounge 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm Bible Study	<b>6</b> 3:00pm NA (RH)	<b>7</b> 3:00pm NA (RH) 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice	<b>8</b> Office Closed	<b>9</b> Office Closed 10:00am Extending the Branch 11:30am Extending the Branch 2:00pm Christmas Caroling
<b>10</b> 9:00am Confirmation Classes 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service 11:00am Decorate Church for Christmas 4:00pm Extending the Branch	<b>11</b> 10:00am Staff Meeting 11:00am Chaplain MRH 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:30pm Bible Study 6:00pm Holland Practice	<b>12</b> 9:00am Quilters 11:00am Chaplain MRH 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm Bible Study	<b>13</b> 11:00am Chaplain MRH 3:00pm NA (RH) 6:00pm Bell Seminar 7:00pm Advent Contemporary Service	<b>14</b> 11:00am Chaplain MRH 3:00pm NA (RH) 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm Choir Practice 8:00pm Bell Practice	<b>15</b> Office Closed	<b>16</b> Office Closed 9:30am Christmas Play Practice 6:30pm Dulcimers
<b>17</b> 9:00am Christmas Breakfast 10:00am Communion Worship Service	<b>18</b> 10:00am Staff Meeting 12:00pm AA (RH) 1:30pm Bible Study 6:00pm Holland Practice	<b>19</b> 9:00am Quilters 10:45am Faith Circle - Coldwater Cafe 3:00pm Pastor's Meeting 6:00pm Holland Practice 7:00pm Bible Study	<b>20</b> 3:00pm NA (RH) 7:00pm Choir 8:00pm Bells	<b>21</b> 3:00pm NA (RH) 6:00pm Holland Practice 6:00pm Outreach Meeting 7:00pm Blue Christmas Service @ United Methodist	<b>22</b> Office Closed	<b>23</b> Office Closed
<b>24</b> 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service 7:00pm Lessons & Carols Communion Worship Service 10:30pm Christmas Candlelight Communion Service	<b>25</b> Merry Christmas Office Closed 12:00pm AA (RH)	<b>26</b> Office Closed	<b>27</b> Office Closed 3:00pm NA (RH)	<b>28</b> Office Closed 3:00pm NA (RH)	<b>29</b> Office Closed	<b>30</b> Office Closed
<b>31</b> 9:00am Fellowship Time 10:00am Communion Worship Service 2:30pm Green Hills Service	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

*Wishing you a blessed and*

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# MERRY CHRISTMAS

From the fullness of his grace we have all received  
one blessing after another. JOHN 1:16

