

Good News

December
2022

Lord of Life
Lutheran
Church
(ELCA)

Worship
Sunday -
9:30 am
Wednesday -
6:30 pm

Ministers
The Lord of Life
Faith Family

Pastors
Steven J. Rye
Erika Nilsen

Office Hours
Mon.-Fri.
8:30am - 5pm

Contact Info
(218) 828-9374
office@lolbaxter.
org

Advent Greetings to you!

As I was looking through many of the wonderful Advent seasonal resources provided by the larger church, I was struck by the theme of one in particular, it was entitled, "Make Ready for Holy Disruption!" In the introduction, it said this,

"Advent carries two simultaneous visions of our expectations: we await yet again the birth of the babe in the manger, and we also await Christ's coming again to fulfill all things. We often prepare for Advent by "getting ready": planning, organizing, and ordering supplies for various gatherings and worship services. Yet preparing for the coming of Christ is not a matter of having everything under control. Christ's arrival disrupts—disrupts injustice, sin, and brokenness in a society in which we are deeply embedded. A prayer for Christ to come to us is a prayer for a holy disruption of our lives that we cannot control and that we might struggle to accept."

I love the tension of this! We want everything "just right" for the holidays – and at the same time celebrate the inbreaking of love and light into our hearts and into the world – the love and light of God made known in Jesus that upends everything, disrupts systems of oppression, and turns the world right side up once again. Are we ready to be disrupted? Are we ready to have our perspective changed? Are we ready to have our reality upended?



On the next pages, drawing again on the wisdom of this wonderful resource, I'm including the 4 steps to use to help recognize our resistance to God's inbreaking and prepare for God's holy disruption. \

The 4 simple steps are: breathing, releasing, receiving, and rejoicing. Throughout the 4 weeks of Advent, you can work on forming a spiritual discipline that reminds you to return to your sense of longing for and expectation of God's coming into our world and opens yourself to the holy disruption of God's inbreaking promise.

May our systems of injustice, our patterns of oppression, our hearts of intolerance be disrupted this Advent season and may the one whose birth we celebrate and whose arrival we await, be born in us again.

In Hope, Peace, Joy and Love,

Pastor Erika Nilsen

Youth Update

In this month's update I want to take a look back at the past month and share with all of you a few highlights. We will look ahead to this month as we find ourselves within the Advent and Christmas season! Thanks for taking the time to read this article and blessings to you this Advents & Christmas season!

Recapping November: A Time of Collaborative Ministry Events & Summer Happenings

This past month it was an exciting time as we collaborated with area ELCA churches for a confirmation night with parents hosted at Lord of Life. The sanctuary was filled as we gathered together with Catherine Anderson from the NEMN Synod. Families reflected on their faith journeys and important faith stepping stones along the way. We were blessed with a worship band made up of high schoolers from the area ELCA churches. This event was the first of four collaborative confirmation nights bringing together, First Lutheran in Brainerd, Bethlehem Lutheran, Trinity Lutheran and Lord of Life!

- On November 19th and 20th, 6th-12th grade youth at Lord of Life gathered with hundreds of other students from across the NEMN Synod at Craguns Resort for the All Youth Gathering event. This event is back after being postponed the last few years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The theme this year was, TOGETHER[E]. "TOGETHER[E] to get here... TOGETHER[E] to get there". What makes this event so unique is it is led by the LYO team of NEMN Synod, made up of high school and college age youth and adults. Thank you to the synod for putting on such a great event for our youth. Families, if you missed this event I hope you consider sending your child to it in the future!

- Our summer high school trip has been booked! This year, we will be going to Idaho Servant Adventures with six other area ELCA congregations! This past month we hosted our annual Christmas Thrift, Gift and Goodies fundraiser to raise funds for the trip. Thank you to all of those who stopped by and supported our youth. If you know someone in 9th-12th grade interested in this summer trip, please visit our website at www.lolbaxter.org or contact the church directly.

Wednesday Night Programming & December Youth Groups

From Club 56 to Confirmation and Teen's Upstream, Wednesday nights continue to be a busy night of programming at Lord of Life! Our confirmation program continues their study of the Old Testament this month. Club 56 session two is underway with focusing on Jesus and the New Testament. Lastly Teen's Upstream continues to meet weekly and our next middle school youth group is scheduled for December 18th with focuses on the Advent / Christmas season!

Important Calendars of Events

- **December 7th:** First Mentor night for 9th grade confirmation
- **December 14th:** Confirmation Christmas party @ Bethlehem (With area ELCA churches)
- **December 18th:** Middle School Youth Group
- **December 28th:** No Wednesday night programming (Christmas Break)

Council Minutes

Lord of Life Church Council Regular Meeting Minutes Thursday, October 27, 2022 at 6 pm

Present: Pr. Erika Nilsen, Kevin Olson, Donna Salli, Josh Freelove, Steve Schaitberger, Jolene Parks, Brian Orlovski, Donna Salli, Karla Skwira, and Pr. Steve Rye

Absent: Greg Bennett, Kurt Porter

Guest: Anne Laechel

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Schaitberger.

Devotions by Pr. Rye based on the hymn "God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind".

Tim Slinger, Youth Director, shared information about Idaho Servant Adventure as possible youth activity in summer 2023. LOL youth would participate with youth from six other Brainerd Lakes area Lutheran churches. Discussion followed of 3-year rotation (national, international, ELCA youth gathering) of youth trips, based on national ELCA Youth Gathering held every three years (will be in New Orleans in 2024).

Consent Agenda:

- Adoption of October 2022 Agenda (CC.2022.10.01);
- Approval of September 2022 Regular Council Meeting minutes (CC.2022.10.02); and
- Approval of September 2022 Financial Report (CC.2022.10.03)

Discussion of recent roof shingle replacement project. Thanks to Orlovski, Laechel, Schaitberger, Pr. Rye, property team and others for their work in organizing project. Suggested to have staff member work with property team to better facilitate large projects in future. **MOTION** to ratify executive team's decision on roof replacement. Motion by Orlovski, second by Parks, all ayes (CC.2022.10.04).

Discussion of capital improvement fund-raising campaign, specifically parking lot repaving project.

MOTION to establish dedicated fund for parking lot project and transfer current parking lot maintenance funds into new dedicated fund. Motion by Schaitberger, second by Orlovski, all ayes (CC.2022.10.05).

Council winter retreat tentatively scheduled for early 2023 (possibly late January) off-site for more in-depth discussion of LOL projects/mission.

MOTION to receive 2022 Confirmation of Baptism members:

Josh Anderson, Riley Anderson, Nora Behr, Alivia Brown, Zoe Cervantez, Aizlynn Ford, Hayden Freed, Derek Hoglin, Kiley Jendro, Chad King, Abby Larso, Madi Miller, Straton Pribula, Julia Schmeck, Amelia Sjostrom, Kade Stengrim, Raquel Tulenchik, and Dylan Wikoff

Motion by Pr. Nilsen, second by Parks, all ayes (CC.2022.10.6).

Directional Council Updates

Salli (Outward): MOTION to grant approval for Quilters to do fundraiser at a couple services in early December 2022 to raise funds for specialty fabrics used in senior quilts. Motion by Salli second by Pr. Rye, all ayes (CC.2022.10.07). **MOTION** to grant Micah Group approval for clothing giveaway October 2023. Motion by Salli, second by Freelove, all ayes (CC.2022.10.08). Native American Sunday to be

Advent Exercise

Week One: Breathing

The Hebrew word ruach means spirit, breath, and wind. The interconnectedness of these images is clear throughout scripture. In Genesis the Spirit/wind of God blows over the waters at creation, and God breathes into the created human to give life/spirit. Who we are created to be is centered in our breathing, which connects us to the one who created us.

Research is clear that deep, slow breathing contributes significantly to a sense of calm and a reduction of stress. The effectiveness of this seems to be even more pronounced when we practice breathing with a brief pause after both inhaling and exhaling. This space can provide a sense of deep connection with God as everything else is momentarily paused.

Practice this type of breathing: Sit with both feet on the ground, back and neck straight, shoulders back, eyes closed. Slowly breathe into the diaphragm (so that the chest remains still but the abdomen expands) for 3 counts, hold for 2 counts, exhale for 3 counts, hold for 2 counts. Repeat for a total of 5 breaths.

Pray: O God—sweeping Wind, life-giving Breath, cleansing and guiding Spirit—you are the source of all I am and all I can become. Your power roars and skips among the galaxies and flows delicately within our every cell, sustaining all life. You breathe mercy over me and teach me with truth and wisdom. Be with me and all your people in this season and guide us so that we find comfort and confidence in your coming promise. In the name of the Holy One who was, is, and is to come. Amen.

Week Two: Releasing

Many people struggle with the concept of letting go, especially in cultures where accrual is seen as a sign of success and a guarantee of peace. The recent rise in blogs, books, and lifestyle coaches to help people reduce clutter caused by too many possessions is an indication of the stress created by our inability to let go. Worshipers may want to focus on whether they need to release material goods or a tendency to find comfort in acquiring possessions. Alternately, it may be the clutter of too many accrued holiday traditions that worshipers need to let go of.

Letting go of emotional “baggage” is equally challenging. The mental energy taken by chronic or even habitual negative thoughts can sap a tremendous amount of our reserves, making it difficult for us to receive the new things that arrive with God’s Promised One. Mindfulness of the need to release things that block our receptivity to God can become a healing spiritual practice. (You may wish to note that for some emotional pain, this process is best accomplished with professional support, and what people might need to begin with is releasing fear of or resistance to that support.)

Practice deep breathing (as described in Week One). Hold your fists closed in front of you, palms down. As you exhale, slowly open your hands. As you inhale again, return to the closed fist, repeating the opening on the exhale. Release unhelpful expectations or attachments, anxiety, and resentments, asking God to take that which you need to release. Repeat as often as desired.

Pray: O God of freedom, there are so many other things that I cling to and that demand my focus. I fear the disruption of change and hold fast to the very things that cause me grief. Yet your promise assures me that I find all I need in you. Be with me and all your people in this season and guide me so that I may set aside all that distracts me from you. In the name of the Holy One who was, is, and is to come. Amen

Calendar

Thursday, December 1

Quilters, 9 am
Men's Fellowship, 9:30 am
Parkinson Support Group, 12 pm
Martha Circle, 1 pm

Friday, December 2

Men's Breakfast, 7 am

Sunday, December 4

Worship, 9:30 am
Manger Tales Christmas Program Rehearsal, 10:45 am
Worship, 11 am
Lord of Life at Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen, 11 am
Micah Group Book Discussion, 11 am
Cantata Rehearsal, 7 pm

Tuesday, December 6

Property Team Meeting, 6:30 pm

Wednesday, December 7

Women's Bible Study, 10:30 am
Fellowship Supper, 5:30 pm
Worship w/ Confirmation, 6:30 pm
Club 56, 7:15 pm
Master Class Bible Study, 7:30 pm
Teen's Upstream, 8 pm

Thursday, December 8

Quilters, 9 am
Men's Fellowship, 9:30 am
Church Council, 6 pm
New Member Conversation, 7 pm

Friday, December 9

Men's Breakfast, 7 am

Sunday, December 11

Worship w/ Christmas Cantata, 9:30 am
Brunch, 10:45 am
Manger Tales Christmas Program Rehearsal, 10:45 am

Tuesday, December 13

Sarah Circle @ Brenda Johnson's Home, 10 am
Christmas Caroling, 5:45 pm

Wednesday, December 14

Women's Bible Study, 10:30 am
Service of Grief and Hope, 6:30 pm
Club 56, 7:15 pm
Master Class Bible Study, 7:30 pm
Teen's Upstream, 8 pm

Thursday, December 15

Quilters, 9 am
Men's Fellowship, 9:30 am

Friday, December 16

Men's Breakfast, 7 am

Sunday, December 18

Worship w/ Children's Program, 9:30 am
Middle School Youth Group, 5:30 pm

Wednesday, December 21

Women's Bible Study, 10:30 am
Worship w/ Confirmation, 6:30 pm
Master Class Bible Study, 7:30 pm
Teen's Upstream, 8 pm

Thursday, December 22

Quilters, 9 am
Men's Fellowship, 9:30 am

Friday, December 23

Men's Breakfast, 7 am

Saturday, December 24

Choir Practice, 2 pm
Christmas Eve Service, 3 pm
Christmas Eve Service, 5 pm
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, 9 pm

Sunday, December 25

Worship, 9:30 am

Monday, December 26

Church Office Closed

Wednesday, December 28

Women's Bible Study, 10:30 am
Master Class Bible Study, 7:30 pm

Thursday, December 29

Quilters, 9 am
Men's Fellowship, 9:30 am

Friday, December 30

Men's Breakfast, 7 am

Council Minutes Cont.

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held November 20, 2022. Fifty people currently in SAIL exercise class. Blood drive to be held January 22, 2023. Bonnie Henningson reported need for Habitat for Humanity volunteers.

Skwira (Upward): Third-graders receiving Bibles.

Parks (Inward): Return of group surveys has been low. Kennedy Niska, Music Coordinator, recruiting accompanists. Brenda Johnson recruiting people to bring Sunday 'treats'. Discussion of merging Take Them a Meal and Caring Friends accounts and having pastors discuss and determine needs for better accountability. MOTION to authorize Pastor Rye and Pastor Nilsen to sign off on distributions of the funds in the Caring Friends account and repurpose "Take Them a Meal" to "Caring Friends". Motion by Parks, second by Schaitberger, all ayes (CC.2022.10.09). Micah Group and Library Group would like to move some books into Commons area. Council gives approval for move.

Freelove (Youth): Synod youth gathering will be at Cragun's Resort, November 19 + 20, 2022. Possible Idaho trip in 2023. Confirmation Sunday, November 6, 2022.

Orlowski (Grounds): Thanks to Rick zumBrunnen who recently resigned as Property Team Leader after many years of service. Anne Laechel has been coordinating with the Property Team on projects recently. Landscape team has been doing a lot of work.

Schaitberger (President): Barrett property disposition still in progress. Stewardship Stews have been productive, surveys will be reviewed. (Council extended thanks to Schaitberger for facilitating Stewardship Stews).

Pr. Rye: Job reviews of lay staff completed. Experimental 11:00 a.m. worship services to be held November 27 and December 4.

Laechel: Financials good, recent work by roofing contractors has been paid for. Final depreciation payment is pending Church Mutual insurance review. (Council extended thanks to Laechel for her work in managing LOL finances).

Next Regular Council Meeting set for Thursday, December 8, 2022 at 6 p.m.

Meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer led by Pr. Rye, 8:10 p.m.

Kevin Olson, Council Secretary

Lord of Life Recent Memories



Confirmation Class of 2022

Baptisms

Lord of Life is proud to welcome Lochlan Leigh Janey into our faith family through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Lochlan was baptized on Sunday, October 23rd. His parents, Leigha and Adam Janey, and sponsors, Elizabeth and Bruce Coonfield, brought Lochlan to receive the Sacrament.

Congratulations to the Janey Family, and once again welcome Lochlan into the Christian Faith.



3rd Grade Bibles



All Lutheran Confirmation Night

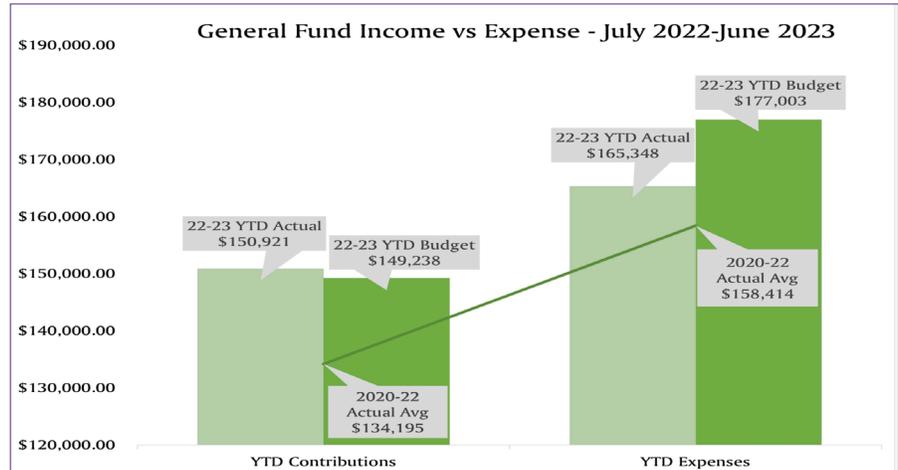
Financial Report

Year End Tax-Deductible Contribution Deadlines:

In Person: 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 30, 2022.

Via USPS: Postmarked to PO Box 685, Brainerd, MN 56401 no later than December 31, 2022

Online: Must have an "approved" status by December 31, 2022.



Stock: If you wish to gift Stock to Lord of Life, please contact Anne Laechel for more information. Transfer of ownership must be completed by Friday, December 30, 2022 to be considered at 2022 gift. As the process can take 1-2 weeks, requests should be initiated by Friday, December 16th

Any gift received or post-marked on or after January 1, 2023 will be credited to 2023.

Capital Campaign			
YTD Credits	\$20,704.70	YTD Credits Last Year	\$24,478.83
YTD Debits	\$23,216.00	YTD Debits Last Year	\$23,216.00
Balance Due	\$645,770.32	Current Rate	4.875%
Loan Maturity	August 2035	5 yr Adj Sec Loan (2022-2027)	

Music Ministry

Worship Musicians:

We are looking to add more musicians to our pool of volunteers who lead hymns, play instruments, and accompany worship. Contact Kennedy if you are interested in serving in our music ministry.

Lord of Life Choir:

All who enjoy singing are welcome to join the Lord of Life Choir. The choir will perform next on Christmas Eve at the 3 pm service, with a rehearsal at 2 pm.

Cantata Performance:

This year's cantata, "Joy to the World: A Celebration of Carols," will be performed during worship time on Sunday, December 11. Brunch will be served afterward.

Worship Volunteers



Scripture Reading

December 4: Wendy Adamson
December 11: Paul Springstead
December 18: Carol Rodseth
December 25: VACANT



Fellowship Treats

December 4: Colleen Bush
December 11: Christmas Cantata Brunch
December 18: Brenda Johnson
December 25: Merry Christmas!



Ushers

December 4: VACANT
December 11: Val Jones and Verdell Bose
December 18: John Wolf
December 25: VACANT



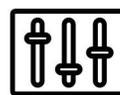
Musicians

December 4: Jennifer Person and Rachel Delaney
December 11: Christmas Cantata Group
December 18: Teresa Kingsley
December 25: VACANT



Communion Serving

December 4: Worship Environment Team
December 11: No Communion
December 18: No Communion
December 25: VACANT



Sound Booth

December 4: VACANT
December 11: VACANT
December 18: Jim Kingsley
December 25: VACANT



Communion Setup

December 4: Worship Environment Team
December 11: No Communion
December 18: No Communion
December 25: VACANT



Kids Time

December 4: VACANT
December 11: In Worship Packets
December 18: Children's Program
December 25: In Worship Packets

Week Three: Receiving

We often miss the presence of God because we look for the wrong things. Whether hoping for easy miracles or wearing ourselves out working for transformation in a broken world, we may miss the signs that God is coming and has, indeed, already come. We might think our encounter with God must come as a profound emotional experience, and we spend our energy seeking such an experience more than we seek God's own self.

To prepare ourselves to receive the Savior—and the disruption the Savior's coming brings—we lay down our own agendas and expectations and learn to open ourselves to what God brings rather than focusing on what we want or expect. God's coming into the world never fulfills human expectation; it fulfills God's expectation.

Practice deep breathing (as described in Week One). As you inhale, hold your closed fists in front of you, palms down. As you exhale, open your hands and turn your palms upward. As you inhale again, return to the closed fists facing downward, then open and turn the palms up on the exhale. Repeat as often as desired.

Pray: Generous God, you provide all that I need. I thank you that you do not give me what I want, but what you, in your wisdom, desire for me. Open me to the miracles surrounding me every moment, and teach me to expect your coming throughout each day. Pour out upon me your overflowing mercy, justice, and peace. Teach me to trust your abundance so thoroughly that I share all that I have received from you, for the healing of the world and the proclamation of your name. In the name of the Holy One who was, is, and is to come. Amen

Week Four: Rejoicing

C. S. Lewis called joy “the serious business of heaven.” The call to rejoice isn't simply an invitation to enjoyment, but a spiritual practice of shaping our perspective and our witness. By centering ourselves in thanksgiving for what God has done and reflecting on the promise of hope even during struggle, we make ourselves ready to welcome Jesus.

Joy may be expressed in laughter, exuberance, and resounding music. It can also be a deep and still experience so profound that only the dark silence of the cosmos can encompass it. In whatever ways it is expressed, joy is the character of our discipleship that draws others to Christ.

Practice deep breathing (as described in Week One). As you inhale, hold your closed fists in front of you, palms down. As you exhale, open your hands, turn your palms upward, and raise your hands in a gesture that reflects both offering and thanksgiving. Repeat as often as desired.

Opening Prayer

God of all that is good, source of all joy, we praise you for the gladness that comes to us in your promise. We celebrate the holy disruption that dismantles sin and brings new life and new beginnings. Holy God, in whom all creation delights, receive our thanks and our joy as an offering. Move within us and use us to reflect hope into the world, and to carry good tidings of great joy to every place we go. In the name of the Holy One who was, is, and is to come.

Groups at Lord of Life

- **Men's Fellowship and Breakfast** - At Lord of Life, we have two opportunities for men to come together for fellowship, food, and deep discussions. Men's Fellowship meets Thursdays at 9:30 am in the Commons, while Men's Breakfast meets Fridays at 7 am in the Fellowship Hall.

- **Sarah and Martha Circles** - There are also plenty of opportunities for women to come together for fellowship and growing in faith here. This month, Sarah Circle will meet for a Christmas Brunch on Tuesday, December 13, at 10 am at Brenda Johnson's home. Martha Circle will meet on Thursday, December 1, at 1 pm at Diamond Willow Assisted Living in Baxter.

- **Lord of Life Choir** - The Lord of Life Choir is back! Our choir performs one or two Sundays a month, with rehearsals held the hour before service. This is an excellent opportunity to share your musical talents. Contact Music Ministry Coordinator Kennedy Niska if interested.

- **Worship Environment Team** - This amazing team of volunteers use their talents to prepare our worship space and change its decorations throughout the year. Contact the Church Office at (218) 828-9374 if interested in joining this group.

- **Master Class Bible Study** - This Bible Study, led by Pastor Steve, takes a deep dive into the books of the Bible. The group meets Wednesday nights at 7:30 pm on Zoom. Email steve@lolbaxter.org.

- **Friends of Habitat for Humanity** - These members of the Lord of Life Faith Family make a huge difference in the lives of people in the community. They partner with our Lakes Area Habitat for Humanity to fundraise and construct homes for those in need.

- **Wednesday Women's Bible Study** - This Bible Study for women Wednesdays at 10:30 am. The group is currently taking a look at the Gospel of Luke. For more information, or to sign up, please contact Carol Rodseth at (218) 838-4396, or rodseth@charter.net.

- **Lord of Life Quilters** - From students graduating high school, to members of our Congregation, and to people around the world in need of kindness, the Lord of Life Quilters have touched many people's hearts with countless beautiful quilts they've made over the years. All are welcome to join in making quilts Thursdays at 9 am in the Fellowship Hall. Donations of material are always appreciated.

LoL Staff

Senior Pastor

Steven Rye
steve@lolbaxter.org

Associate Pastor

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Operations Manager

Anne Laechel
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Communications

Coordinator

Tyler Jensen
tyler.jensen@lolbaxter.org

Custodians

Paul and Karen
Erickson

Music Coordinator

Kennedy Niska
kennedy@lolbaxter.org

Announcements

- We will once again be offering three services on Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24th. They will be at 3 pm, 5 pm, and 9 pm. Because Christmas Day is on a Sunday this year, we will have a 9:30 am Christmas Morning worship service.

- We understand that sometimes the holidays are filled with mixed emotions. Come to this quiet and reflective worship service on Wednesday, December 14, where we give space and time to name our sadness, to sit in our longing, to pray for hope and to receive the grace and strength of Christ that we need. All are welcome!

- The order forms for Christmas Eve poinsettia donations are available! You can pick one up at the Welcome Center, or go to lrbaxter.org. Poinsettias cost \$10 each and can be taken home following the 9 pm service on Christmas Eve.

- We will be having a Children's Christmas Program entitled "Manger Tales" here at Lord of Life on Sunday, December 18, during our 9:30 am Worship Service. All are invited to attend and see the hard work these children have put into their performance

- Join us on Wednesday, December 7, at 5:30 pm for our monthly fellowship dinner. This month's meal is Swedish Meatballs.