

# *The Messenger*

*December 2022*



**The Newsletter of Christ Lutheran Church  
Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey  
An ELCA Congregation  
The Church: Proudly Proclaiming Christ since A.D. 33**

## PASTOR'S NOTE

A few weeks ago I made a mistake in one of my sermons that I didn't catch until several days later. I was in the sanctuary packing reusable grocery bags full of all the produce you donated to our annual harvest altar. While putting apples in one bag, potatoes in another, and carrots in a third, I couldn't help but feel incredibly thankful for all of you. When I took a step back to simply take the whole moment in, something out of the corner of my eye captured my complete attention. In the sermon I had preached just a few days ago, I noted how our sanctuary space doesn't contain many images of Jesus himself. Jesus is why we are who we are and yet our images of Jesus are in other parts of our building. We let our gathering together to share in God's Word, song, prayers and holy communion do the work of making Jesus real to us. I said, in my sermon, that there's one image of Jesus in our space located by the door connecting the sanctuary to the church office. On the left side of it is an image of Mary with Jesus sitting on her lap. To me, that was the only picture of Jesus visual in our space, and my sermon claimed that it was. Yet, as I discovered just a few days later, there's another image of Jesus right next to this one. In the eight+ years I've spent going in and out of that door, I've seen that image a million times. But when I actively tried to see Jesus in our space, I found one picture but missed the other. To the right of the door is a picture of Jesus on the Cross, serving as a kind of bookend to Jesus' life that began with the picture to the left. I missed seeing Jesus even when I sought him out, and I apologize for messing up this detail in my sermon.

I wonder, though, if it serves as a helpful reminder how we sometimes miss seeing what's already there. The Advent and Christmas seasons are often a time when we're busy seeking many things. We're seeking the right Christmas gift to give, the right decorations to hang up, or maybe just five minutes to ourselves during a month that's filled with way too much stuff. We seek the healing of broken relationships and any kind of peace knowing that not everyone we long for will be with us this year around the Christmas table. We might, in a rush of exuberance, even seek out Jesus by reading a devotional or engaging in deep intentional prayer. We don't always find what we're looking for, and that often makes this season to be more painful than anything we find in a Hallmark Christmas movie. Yet, one beautiful truth about Advent and Christmas is that this season doesn't depend on what we can see. Rather, it's about what God has done and is still doing through the ongoing story of Jesus Christ. We might not see him or experience him or even find him while we search for him. But he, like the picture I missed, is still here. God's presence in our lives and world doesn't depend on what we notice through our own work and skills. Jesus is always with us because that's simply who he is. I pray that even during those moments when you are unable to find what you seek that you will trust the promise God gives to you every day. You are loved; you are valued; and you matter. And God's promise to you is true and right in front of you even when you can't see it.

Blessed to be the church with you, Pastor Marc

## GROWING IN GENEROSITY



### **Good Wishes for Your Faith Community—The Love Tree:**

One of our amazing traditions at CLC is the Love Tree! The Care Committee invites everyone in the congregation to send a Christmas blessing to the entire congregation. There is a tree in the narthex (church lobby) where you can share your wishes for the entire congregation. These will be collected, collated and re-printed in our Christmas Eve

bulletins. You can also call the church office, 201-321-4224, to share your Christmas message. A big thank you to Care Committee for supporting this ongoing tradition.

**Christmas Gifts for Children and Families in Need:** We will be working again with Westwood Social Services and the Tri-Boro Food Pantry of Park Ridge to provide holiday gifts to local families. Westwood Social Services is requesting we provide 40 gift cards, preferring them in \$25 denominations. We are inviting you to purchase bank-based gift cards (i.e., Visa or MasterCard) or gift cards to local stores so recipients can shop right in their own backyard. Please return them to church by Sunday, December 12. A sign-up will be posted online and shared via email.

**The Tri-Boro Food Pantry Gifts:** They have put together a list from families with specific wants this Christmas season. A sign-up will be available soon, and we will let you know when it goes online and is available at the church. If you have any questions, please contact me ([kate.stutzel@gmail.com](mailto:kate.stutzel@gmail.com)) or see me at church. As always, thank you for your generosity as we make this a nice Christmas for those in need. – Kate Stutzel

**Christmas At Sea Project:** For our annual Seafarers Christmas At Sea project, we assembled 25 satchels, each filled with a hoodie, T-shirt, socks, along with homemade scarves and hats by the Knit 1 Crochet Too team, chocolate bars and a Christmas card from the church. These satchels will bring Christmas Eve joy to a crew sailing the seven seas. Thank you to everyone who worked on this project and for the funds from CLC's Special Gifts for making this a successful event.





## 2023 STEWARDSHIP DRIVE - DECEMBER UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who has made a pledge to their faith community for 2023! Through Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 25 financial pledges and time/talents sheets had been recorded. We are excited for 3 pledges from folks who did not pledge last year. It's not uncommon for a number of pledges to arrive in December. We encourage you to prayerfully consider turning in your pledge. Your gift supports the staff and building of CLC, but also our shared calling to spread the Gospel in Woodcliff Lake. As we heard in the reading from the Bible that shaped this year's drive (1 Kings 17:7-16), it is not always easy to be generous during times of anxiety, worry and scarcity. Elijah saw that first hand when he was sent by God to a widow and family living in the village of Zarephath. She was about to prepare the remaining bit of what she had for one last meal, yet Elijah proclaimed to her the words God so often speaks to us: "Don't be afraid." We can use what we have right now and trust there will be some tomorrow. So much of what we do at the church is rooted in that kind of trust. Every Sunday, the Altar Guild fills a generous amount of individual communion cups because they believe what we do matters to every one of our neighbors. We are never quite sure who will be able to gather in person, who will be gathering at home, or who will be watching the recording later in the week. Yet we print extra bulletins, stream worship online, and keep singing, praying, and worshipping even when only 2 or 3 of us gather in person. We trust the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and world so we, as a community, live into that trust by making a commitment to being engaged with this part of the body of Christ. Financial pledges can be returned to the church office, dropped into the offering plate, or shared online at [www.clc4u.com/2023pledge](http://www.clc4u.com/2023pledge). Time/Talent sheets can be physically returned to the church. If you need an extra copy or didn't receive one, let us know as soon as possible.

### Financial Pledges for 2023 (as of November 22)

<u>Range</u>	<u>Number of Pledges</u>	<u>Amount</u>
\$1-\$500	6	\$1,198
\$501-\$1000	2	\$1,600
\$1001-\$2000	5	\$7,224
\$2001-\$3000	3	\$7,600
\$3001-\$4000	2	\$7,380
\$4001-\$5000	2	\$9,480
\$5000+	5	\$80,440

## YOUR CHURCH COMMITTEE UPDATES

**The Care Committee's** mission is to care for Christ Lutheran Church and the surrounding community. We'll meet again Tuesday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. During the meeting we will assemble Christmas baskets for our members who spend most of their days in their homes.

**A Financial Update:** At the end of October your year-to-date gifts to your faith community were 0.5% higher than last year at this time. Total income was \$185,212, and expenses were \$214,404. Expenses in October were \$1604 less than plan while investment income was up \$500. Last year, your financial gifts to CLC were extremely strong but this year's number are more in-line with pre-COVID expectations. Our financial loss through October was \$29,192 which is \$9,300 better than our budget. We are not using any of our restricted/temporary restricted funds to cover our operating expenses. We are grateful for your gifts which enable us to do God's work in this place together.

**Knit One Crochet Too:** Do you wannabe knitting or crocheting? Join us at CLC the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month, 10:00 am. Supplies and instructions are available. Work on something for one of the church projects or make something for yourself. Come, have fun! See you December 20 at 10:00am.

**Ricci Foundation Update:** Earlier this year, the Trustees of the Ricci Foundation (which was established by Anna and Dominick Ricci when Dominick died) began to question and change the previous practice of giving money CLC and four other beneficiaries as described in Dominick's will. At the October 2022 Church Council meeting, a lawyer was hired to engage with the Trustees. Our hope is that we will be able to come to an understanding that fully reflects the intentions we see in Dominick Ricci's will. Please feel free to speak to any Council member or Pastor Marc if you have any questions.

## WORSHIP AND MORE!

**All Hands "Deck the Halls"**, join us for a light lunch after the 10:30 am worship service on December 4<sup>th</sup> for a light lunch and then keep the "hanging of the greens" tradition alive by helping to decorate the sanctuary. All ages are welcome, and if we have many helping hands, it only takes a couple of hours.

**We Need You!** If you are available to be an usher or a service coordinator during our winter schedule, let Doris Crouse in the church office know.

**Prophets and Promises: Devotions for Advent and Christmas** In ancient times prophets announced God's promises of a deliverer to the Hebrew people. These promises are at the heart of this new devotional available for you this season! Marvel at the power of God's promises and the mystery of God with us in a newborn child. Each daily devotional features a scripture, accompanied by a photo, a quote to ponder, a reflection and a prayer.

**Two Sunday Worships:** 9:00 am contemporary worship music led by David Scance. 10:30 am worship is led by Argine Safari on the organ and supported by Chancel Choir. You can access worship from home, work or anywhere: YouTube ([www.youtube.com/@clc4u](http://www.youtube.com/@clc4u)), on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/clc4u/live](http://www.facebook.com/clc4u/live)), and our website ([www.clc4u.com](http://www.clc4u.com)).

Listen in via Conference Call, dialing 646-558-8656. For 9:00 am worship, enter meeting id: 843 2757 3572 and then #. For 10:30 am worship, enter meeting id: 827 672 730 and then #. For both worships, hit # to ignore participant id and enter password 195901.

If you will be participating in Christmas Eve worship via Conference Call at either 5:00 pm or 9:00 pm, please use the call information we typically use for 10:30 am worship on Sunday.

You may also request a copy of the bulletin and sermon mailed to your home! Four households worship this way every week. Call the church office, and we will be happy to put you on our regular weekly mailing list.

**All Creation Sings (ACS)—a new set of worship resources** in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) family, designed to expand upon and complement what we are already doing in worship on Sunday morning. When the ELW (the prayers, hymns and liturgy we print in our bulletins) was published in 2006, a commitment was made to continually add and expand to the available material. The ACS draws on several supplemental resources that have been developed for the ELCA since 2006 and collects some of the most useful new liturgy and assembly song resources from across the ELCA. The title, *All Creation Sings*, evokes the scriptural themes found in the Psalms and Revelation 5 while, at the same time, knowing that the song of creation also includes the sound of lament (Romans 8:22-23). This resource continues to expand our experience of the God who lives with us through all things. The Worship Committee and staff at CLC will slowly integrate new hymns, prayers and liturgy into our worship in the months and years to come. We will make sure to highlight when these new elements appear in worship.



## **CHRISTMAS AT CHRIST LUTHERAN**

### ***Christmas Eve—Saturday, December 24***

*Each worship service will include  
special music and the lighting of candles.*

*5:00 pm - Christmas Carols sung in a Contemporary Style*

*9:00 pm - Organ-led Carols with Special Guests*

*(Please note the new time!)*

### ***Christmas Day - Sunday, December 25***

*One Worship at 10:00 am will include the singing of carols.*

*Come in your Christmas PJs for a casual celebration.*

### ***New Year's Day – Sunday, January 1***

*One Worship at 10:00 am (Hymn Sing)*



## KIDS AND ADULTS: EDUCATION AND MORE!

**Sunday School Meets December 11<sup>th</sup> and December 18<sup>th</sup>:** We are looking forward to a great December as we lead into the Advent Wreaths we made in November. We will meet twice this month after the 9:00 am worship and begin in the sanctuary before moving to either a group activity or the age-appropriate classes. On December 4<sup>th</sup> we will meet in our classes while on December 18<sup>th</sup>, meet as one group.



### **A Special Pick-Up Christmas Event on December 18<sup>th</sup>:**

Our kid-friendly pageant this year will be a bit different as we spend time with Good King Wenceslas. We invite all families to attend worship at 9:00 am on that day for an interactive service. Kids of all ages will be able to participate!

**Bible Study on Romans** will begin a read through Paul's letter to the Romans starting on December 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am. Pack a lunch (or make plans to go out after) and dig deeper into the book that transformed Martin Luther's experience of Jesus. Simply show up or let Pastor Marc ([pastormarc@clc4u.com](mailto:pastormarc@clc4u.com)) if you plan to be there.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**Project Medicine Drop:** The Woodcliff Lake Police Department has a drop box for medicine you no longer need. It's located in the lobby of the department and is available 24/7. The medications cannot be liquid, and no syringes can be placed in the drop box. For access to the drop box after business hours and on the weekend, please use the call box located to the left of the double doors and advise dispatch.

**SHIP - Navigating Medicare:** SHIP (The State Health Insurance Assistance Program) of Bergen County will be providing FREE help to New Jersey Medicare beneficiaries during this year's annual Open Enrollment that continues through December 7th! Counselors are available to assist by reviewing your options with Medicare, Medigap, Medicare Advantage, Medicare Part D, and Long-Term Care Insurance Services. If you live in Bergen County, please call (201) 336-7413 to get started.

**A Thank You From Lutheran Disaster Response:** Several of our committees use their gifts to support the work of other agencies around the world. We recently received a thank you letter from Lutheran Disaster Response, our denomination's agency who show up - and stay - for communities suffering natural and human-made disasters. They wrote:

*“As a church, we believe that God's grace is freely given to us. This brings us peace and hope. It makes a difference in our lives. Through your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response, you are sharing this amazing grace with others. You are helping people near and far feel the transformational power of God's love.*

*Your Spirit-filled generosity is helping families and communities reeling from disasters here in the United States and around the world. No matter the variety of disaster, no matter the variety of need, your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response enables people to rebuild their lives and livelihoods now and far into the future. Thank you for your gracious gifts. The glory of God is shining through you.”*

**Camp Koinonia's Capital Campaign** The \$1 million dollar base campaign to support the work of Camp Koinonia in Highland Lake, NY was met on November 7<sup>th</sup>! The campaign and commitments have already helped the camp remediated mold in all buildings, install split air/heat units and dehumidifiers in all buildings, paint walls and repair chimneys, install high speed Wi-Fi, put new roofs on the Conference Center, Caritas House, Two Family, and Lakeside buildings, renovate the Lakeside Kitchen, upgrade the electric and fire systems, launch a new website, pay for 1/4 of Nature Camp expenses, and replace the fence around the meditation garden. The work continues with additional projects to bring electricity to the rafters, renovating the office/staff house, installing a generator for the conference center, building a new floating bridge, upgrading the waterfront area, and adding phone lines to additional buildings. The campaign is now in its stretch goal of raising an additional \$500,000. You can learn more about the campaign and what is currently happening at the camp by visiting their website at [www.koinoniany.org](http://www.koinoniany.org).

**Camp Cross Roads is hiring for the 2023 season!** If you're a young adult and would like to know more about what it's like to work at camp visit: [www.crossroadsretreat.com/employment/](http://www.crossroadsretreat.com/employment/).

2022



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Messenger Mailing	2	3
4 <u>Streaming and Sanctuary Worship with Communion</u> 9:00 am and 10:30 am  Sanctuary Decorating after Worship	5	6	7 Bible Study Romans 11:00 am	8	9	10
11 <u>Streaming and Sanctuary Worship with Communion</u> 9:00 am and 10:30 am	12  Finance Committee Meeting 8:00 pm	13  Care Committee Meeting 10:00 am	14 Bible Study Romans 11:00 am	15  Council Meeting 7:30 pm	16	17
18 <u>Streaming and Sanctuary Worship with Communion</u> 9:00 am and 10:30 am	19	20 Knit1CrochetToo 10:00 am	21 DECEMBER SOLSTICE  Bible Study Romans 11:00 am	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE  Worship 5:00 pm And 9:00 pm
25 <u>Streaming and Sanctuary Worship with Communion</u>  One Worship Service 10:00 am	26	27	28	29	30	31 NEW YEARS EVE

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