

## ESTHER LUTHERAN NEWSLETTER

December 2023

*"Knowing Christ – Making Christ Known  
Through Faith, Hope and Love."*

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### KNOWING CHRIST

Recently this portion of Esther's mission was mentioned during worship and I began to wonder about the first word, "knowing." Then, the questions came to mind: in what ways are we to know Christ? What would Martin Luther say? Does our modern-day understanding come close to a more ancient understanding of the word, "know?"

If the New Testament didn't exist during the incarnated life of Jesus here on earth, then folks back in the day (or ancient times) would've used their understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures to make sense of knowing God.

And in the Hebrew Bible, the word "know" (or "yada" in Hebrew) has a wide range of meanings: know, learn to know, perceive, discern, distinguish, know by experience, recognize, confess. Each one of the definitions really depends on the context - doesn't it? In other words, how the word is used in a sentence and how that sentence fits in the paragraph and as we zoom out how the person is trying to convey their experience of God through story.

So, for the Israelites, one might tell the story of their oppression under Pharaoh and how God sent not only Moses but a series of plagues to get Pharaoh's attention. The last plague involves putting lamb's blood above the door of each Israelite home as the angel of death passed over (hence Passover) those houses with lamb's blood (they were spared from death). All others including Pharaoh witnessed their first-born children (and livestock) die after the angel of death passed over.

The grief of Pharaoh was so great, that he let God's people go free. Then, he had regrets over that decision and chased after his former slaves to re-enslave them.

At a point that looks like the Israelites are certain to be caught, Moses calls on God and God makes a way through the Red Sea for the Israelites to escape to the other side of the river. In full pursuit, Pharaoh's army chases the escaped slaves. But before they could be captured, the waves of water once held back by God are let go and they quickly consume the army - leaving a wake of destruction behind.

So, how does knowing this story inform the mission of Esther which begins with "Knowing Christ."

What if the Israelites' foundational story of essentially, we were once slaves, until God heard our cries and ultimately freed us from oppression is similar to the foundational story that followers of Christ tell. A story that in broad strokes might go like this, we are all slaves to sin and Christ cried out to God, "forgive them - they don't know what they're doing," and God in Christ forgave us - now nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus, not even death (and the many ways death is manifested - lies, gossip, and judging others).

What if "Knowing Christ" is deeper and wider like the Hebrew definition of "know?"

Is it possible to perceive Christ where two or three are gathered in Christ's name? Could we learn to experience Christ around the Lord's Supper? May we learn to recognize our need for forgiveness when judging others and hear Christ call to God for forgiveness amidst our fumbling / stumbling attempts to point the finger at others while missing the three pointing back at the accuser?

So, how does God's story connect with your story and with Esther's story? Perhaps listening for and discerning that connection is a place to care for others willing to share their story. And for those a bit more guarded, perhaps it's worth trusting that they'll share their story if they're able to, and when they are willing to, and with whom they feel called to share. And if that conversation eventually occurs, Christ promises to be right there - smack dab in the middle of it.

Pr. Scott

There will be two services on  
Sunday, December 24:

10 am Christmas Eve Morning  
Worship with Communion

7 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight  
Worship with Communion

We look forward to  
worshiping with  
you and your family!



**Kathryn McDaniel is looking for someone to take the next 3 years of her council term. If you are interested, please contact Kathryn or one of the other council members.**

## IN OUR PRAYERS

Colleen Burquest  
Kristy Fyhrie  
Ernie & Georgia Hart  
Mike Heiser  
Anniley Lambrecht  
Sarah Pomeranz  
Cindy Skoglund  
Luella Thom  
Ralph Townsend  
Marsha Clow – sister of Linda Arvidson  
Ty Hawes – friend of the McDaniels  
Cindy Rachuy - sister of Dawn Kreidler  
Barb Tvedt – mother of Joan Burquest  
Jen Wintheiser – friend of Esther members  
Family and Friends of Jaci Schlosser, Joan Arvidson,  
Kathy Koep and Doug Muyres

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## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Erica Nelson	12/01
Rodney Peterson	12/04
Casey Aldrich	12/05
Joseph Orsello	12/07
Jim Arvidson	12/10
Arewen Dobratz	12/12
Jacey Hoecker	12/13
Stephanie McPhail	12/13
Bill Wagner	12/16
Lizz Tvrdik	12/16
Brock Peterson	12/17
Connor Sather	12/22
Carol Kriedler	12/22
Brian Arvidson	12/24
Amanda Sansness	12/24
Charles Pogose	12/26
Byron Klimek	12/28
Moraina Wagner	12/28
Margaret Wehking	12/28
Rick Guenther	12/30
Summer Dobratz	12/31

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Esther T-Shirts are  
available at Jak's in Parkers  
Prairie! To place your order  
go to [www.jakspp.net](http://www.jakspp.net)  
**These would make great  
Christmas gifts!**

## SERVING IN DECEMBER

**Pastor:** Scott Hoecker  
**Organists:** Marcia Guenther, Brad Lambrecht  
**Altar Care:** Deb Koep  
**Communion Assistant:** Jacey Hoecker, Megan Townsend  
**Lay readers:** Jacey Hoecker, Megan Townsend  
**Ushers:** Rodney Peterson, Rick Guenther, Trent Hagen  
**Acolyte:** NEED VOLUNTEERS  
**Birthday Card Sender:** Linda Arvidson  
**Tech Team:** Mandy Arvidson, Mike Lage, Jewel Townsend  
**Birthday Fellowship Families:**  
Brian & Vicky Arvidson, Rodney Peterson, Delmar & Margaret Wehking

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**Confirmation  
2023-24**

The Pancake Fundraiser that was held in November made \$295, which the confirmation students designated towards those attending the ELCA National Youth Gathering in 2024.

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**Youth Fundraiser**  
The Esther Youth are selling 2024 inspirational calendars. A sign-up sheet is on the narthex table.

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**The Sunday School Christmas Program** will be held on Sunday December 10th during worship. Join us as our youngest members share the story of Jesus' birth!



# CHURCH COUNCIL NOTES



Thank you to Esther Harmony for sharing their voices during worship these past few months. You are an inspiration to us all!

- The Esther Annual Meeting will be held on January 28, 2024 (back up date of February 4) following worship.
- Thank you to everyone who helped to decorate the church and tree for the Advent and Christmas season.
- Thank you to Anna Guenther and Megan Townsend for leading our Advent children's sermons on the meaning of the Advent Candles.
- Thank you to our Sunday School children and teachers for sharing the story of Jesus with us at the Sunday School Christmas Program! Each of you are a joy and blessing to this congregation!
- Thank you to all who will be participating in the Christmas Band. We look forward to your musical talents!
- Thank you to everyone who has been attending the Pancake Brunches put on by the confirmation class and their parents. Your support and generosity is greatly appreciated!
- Thank you to Marcia Guenther for continuously coordinating our worship music and for helping others share their musical talents, as well as sharing her own.
- Thank you to Megan Townsend for leading worship two of the weeks that Pastor Scott will be away.
- If you are interested in helping with worship on January 14 and/or 21, while Pastor Scott is away, please contact Mike Lage or Jewel Townsend.



## Financial Update as of November 30, 2023

Budgeted Contributions	113,305.50
Actual Contributions	97,415.66
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-15,889.90</b>

Checkbook balance as of 11/30/23 2,803.84

Savings balance on 01/01/23 = \$14,718.96

Savings balance on 11/30/23 = \$10,348.31

*Please prayerfully consider a gift to Esther to help get closer to our Budgeted Contribution goal for 2023.*



## ESTHER WELCA REPORT

WELCA was held Sunday, November 12 @ 8:30 AM. There were only 3 of us in attendance. Jewel did devotions for us.

The WELCA hosted the Thank Offering for the month of November. The donated food was blessed November 26th and was delivered to the Parkers Food Shelf on Tuesday, November 28th. THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO DONATED TO THE FOOD SHELF. There is a great need in our community; so please continue to lift them up financially and with prayer.

The WELCA also was coordinating the ordering of poinsettias for the holidays. We decided who we wanted to lift-up with a pixie poinsettia. Checks were made out to the WELCA and when Anderson Florist sends the billing, the WELCA will issue a check. They will be delivered by December 17.

We discussed the possibility of hosting a MELCA ...Men of the ELCA ... night out similar to the outing the women did on October 25th. We will discuss in the future.

In December's meeting, we will need to decide who we are going to do our 2023 donations.

Our next meeting will be Sunday, December 10th @ 8:30 AM. Please mark your calendar and try to attend so we can wrap up 2023.

Luella Thom, WELCA President



You are welcome to drop off eyeglasses that you are no longer using, in the collection box in the narthex.



**Thank you to those who have shared the beautiful poinsettias to help decorate our sanctuary:**

**In memory of Allen Fyhrie**

**from Josh, Shauna, Aria, Allen Nordlund, Elaine & Kristy Fyhrie**

**In memory of Doris & Elvin Arvidson**

**from Jim & Linda Arvidson**

**In memory of Leo & Mary Murray**

**from Jim & Linda Arvidson**

**In memory of daughter Penny**

**from Lana & Larry Doll**

**In memory of Art & Lenora Madison**

**from Dick & Luella Thom**

**In memory of Desia & Martin Thom**

**from Dick & Luella Thom**

**In Memory of Doug Muyres**

**from Dick & Luella Thom**

**From Esther WELCA in honor of:**

**Georgia & Ernie Hart**

**Colleen Burquest**

**Eleanor Thompson**

**Kristy Fyhrie**

**Cindy Skoglund**

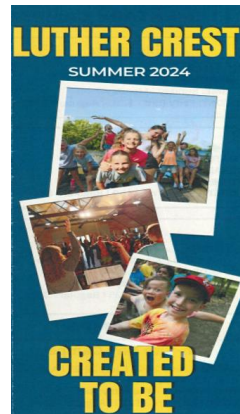
**Pastor & Jacey**

**Lois Rosenquist**

**Brad Lembrecht**

**Marcia Guenther**

**Jewel Townsend**



Brochures are available in the narthex. For more summer program information, visit [luthercrest.org](http://luthercrest.org) or call 320-846-2431

- Elementary Camps
- Middle School Camps
- Senior High Camps
- Day Camps
- All People Camps
- Women's Week
- **FREE** camp opportunities through Camp Magi, Blazers, Keepers and more!

**Luther Crest Early Bird Registration** runs through Feb. 14, 2024. Brochures are available in the narthex or visit [www.luthercrest.org](http://www.luthercrest.org)

The was created to help our young members attend bible camp to enrich their faith journey. To date the fund has over \$5,000. The Camp Fund Application can be found on our website [www.estherlutheran.com](http://www.estherlutheran.com) under the "Faith Formation" tab.



#### **NOW HIRING FOR SUMMER 2024**

Luther Crest Bible Camp 2024 Summer Staff applications being taken. Check out [www.luthercrest.org](http://www.luthercrest.org) for full job descriptions and application process.

We are looking for an individual to learn the church secretary position as a back up to Jewel. For more information regarding responsibilities and hours, please contact Jewel in the church office.

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>3 First Sunday of Advent</b> 8:30 am Sunday School 10 am Worship w/Communion Coffee Fellowship after worship 2 pm Worship at St. Williams	4	5	6 Confirmation 6 pm Meal served by Laney's family 6:30-7:30 Class 7:30 Council	7 Angel Tree gifts due to Esther	8	9
<b>10 Second Sunday of Advent</b> 8:30 am Sunday School 8:30 am WELCA 10 am Sunday School Christmas Program Coffee Fellowship after worship 2 pm Worship at St. Williams	11	12	13 NO Confirmation	14	15	16
<b>17 Third Sunday of Advent</b> 9 am Sunday School 9:30 am Birthday Fellowship 10 am Worship w/Communion Coffee Fellowship after worship 2 pm Worship at St. Williams	18	19	20 NO Confirmation	21	22	23
<b>24 Fourth Sunday of Advent&amp;Christmas Eve</b> NO Sunday School 10 am Worship w/Communion Coffee Fellowship after worship 2 pm Worship at St. Williams 7 pm Candlelight Worship w/Communion	25 <b>Christmas Day</b>	26	27 NO Confirmation	28	29	30
<b>31 First Sunday of Christmas</b> NO Sunday School 10 am Lessons and Carols Worship Coffee Fellowship after worship 2 pm Worship at St. Williams						

