

# Following Faith

Winter Newsletter 2024/25



Friends of Faith,

Our liturgical year is new now, as of Dec. 1st, with our first season of Advent here with us. It means “Coming” or “Arrival” and it’s this period of preparation for God arriving at Christmas.

I don’t know about you, but every time the Advent season arrives to us in our liturgical calendar, it is always for me a contrast. It’s a contrast to the seasonal focus on shopping and holiday parties. It’s a contrast to the Christmas music already playing everywhere in public. Advent means — it is still coming: *so get ready, prepare, focus, wake up!*

It’s a contrast.

Honestly, I like the contrast. I like the opportunity for us to meet on Wednesday nights and have soup in the darkness and light candles and sing and pray together. I like that we do that simple act of worship and focus in Advent, living the contrast.

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And I like it because the Christian church is always called to this contrast, whether it's Advent or not. We are always called to work for, prepare, celebrate, and uplift the arrival of God to a world in need. We point to God's Work! We point to God's promise! We point to God's gift in God's son, Jesus. And we do it at Advent, at Christmas, and all the time.

For Lutherans, it's a three-way arrival. First, it is the old, old story of how a weary world is given a chance to rejoice ... especially the outcasts (like shepherds) receiving the chorus of Angels. Jesus, born in Bethlehem, vulnerable and out of the way, arrives to our world to love us and to walk with us and give his all for us. We anticipate, at Advent, that the story arrives to us again so we can be open and celebrate the gift!

Second, it is the promise of God's kingdom come to earth. Advent is our call to "Wake Up" our lives to the coming of Christ again. At the cosmic "end of all things" is the picture of all nations knowing the wonder of Christ and all life living in Peace under his reign. At Advent we pray for this coming, this kind of gift, this very needed Peace and Life for the world to come.

Third, Advent reminds us that God already arrives to us in Word and Sacrament. These are the means of God's grace in the life of the church. We hear the Word preached: Christ crucified and raised. And we receive forgiveness and nourishment for the journey in baptism and communion. We gather and worship and share these heavenly gifts as we celebrate Advent — God coming to us as heaven touches earth in these practices Christ told us to uphold.

Church, God is arriving again. In all these ways, embrace the contrast. And so you can hope, pray, lament and rejoice. All of it fits at this time, because the weary world will soon rejoice.

We can be weary, and we can rejoice, together. Blessed Advent church,

†Pastor Shaun O'Reilly

**2024 FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL**

**President:** Sonja Dresbach

**Vice President:** Eric Weldon

**Secretary:** Benjamin Pesis

**Treasurer:** Erica Wilfrid

**Members at Large:** Jean Carter, Matthew Rhiley, Amy Zimmerman, & Pr. Shaun O'Reilly

**2024 TEAMS & LEADERS**

**Communications:** Amy Zimmerman

**Fellowship:** Eileen Way

**Finance:** Erica Wilfrid

**Property:** Eric Weldon

**Outreach/Social Action:** Judi Hein

**Stewardship:** Eric Weldon

**Worship and Music:** Sharon Scagliotti

**Personnel:** Linda Zimmerman

# NOTABLE GATHERINGS IN DECEMBER & JANUARY

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## Advent Soup Suppers and Vespers - Dec. 4th, 11th, 18th

**5:30pm Soup, 6pm Worship**

Join us for community, prayer, candle lighting, and song.

## Faith Lutheran Christmas Concert - Dec. 15th, 3pm

We celebrate the season with our community presenting gifts of music, songs and readings. We will take a free will offering. Bring a friend or neighbor to experience the rich gifts among us!

## Christmas Eve Worship - Tuesday, Dec. 24th 4pm

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

## 1st Sunday of Christmas, Lessons and Carols

Sunday, Dec. 29th Worship - 9:30am

## Save the Date - Faith and Life Retreat

**January 11th, 10am - 3pm. Lunch provided.**

**Believing the Bible: Inhabiting Its Stories, Trusting God's Promises**

**Fred Niedner**

**Faith and Life Retreat, Faith Lutheran Church, Reno, NV**

***\*Register on our website: [www.faithlutheranreno.org](http://www.faithlutheranreno.org)***



*Fred Niedner is Senior Research Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University, where he taught biblical studies and Hebrew language from 1973 to 2014. While an active faculty member he also served in several administrative roles and preached regularly in Valpo's Chapel of the Resurrection. He has published many scholarly articles, mostly on biblical topics, and for 25 years he wrote a bi-weekly op-ed column for northwest Indiana editions of the Chicago Tribune. Fred currently teaches in a variety of ecclesial settings but does not give grades, and he writes frequently for publications which serve the ministry of preaching.— for more details see page 4.*

# SPECIAL EVENT

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A faith and life retreat on

## **Believing the Bible: Inhabiting Its Stories, Trusting God's Promises**

January 11th, 10am-3pm

*Faith Lutheran Church, Reno, NV with Dr. Fred Niedner*

***\*Register on our website: [www.faithlutheranreno.org](http://www.faithlutheranreno.org)***

Some “Bible believers” insist that authentic biblical faith includes affirming that the universe is but 6,000 years old, that you could have recorded the serpent talking to Eve in the Garden of Eden had iPhones existed then, and that a guy named Jonah once survived a three-day sojourn (during which he wrote poetry) inside the belly of a great fish. Whether such things “really happened” matters little for how we live. What really matters is whether we recognize the times when we are living in those same stories and the serpent is tempting us, or we are wandering in the wilderness subsisting on manna, or we have landed in a graveyard where broken souls live in the tombs and howl at the moon, or we’re hanging nailed between heaven and earth, only to turn and see *him*, “the King of the Jews,” on the next cross over.

### **Session Outlines**

#### ***10am Session 1 – Believing vs Trusting, Inhabiting, & Engaging***

What does it mean to “believe the Bible?” Questions about the Bible’s origins, authorship, reputed inerrancy, historicity, and textual integrity often dominate discussions about the church’s and individuals’ relationship to the Scriptures and their contents. Ultimately, it matters less what we claim about the Bible than what the Bible says about humankind as a whole and each of us in particular as it diagnoses our circumstances, behaviors, and assorted maladies and offers a promising prognosis regarding what could become of us.

#### ***11am Session 2– Accepting the Invitation to Inhabit the Scriptures***

The Bible, beginning with the story of creation, offers readers/hearers a place and an identity in a universe of the biblical narrative’s own construction where we can see, examine, revise, and exchange the stories we tell about ourselves and others. We shall listen in on (and see ourselves in) the couple in the garden, Cain and Abel, Jonah, and two lost sons of a waiting father.

***Lunch 12-12:45pm, discussion, gathering of questions/responses***

#### ***12:45pm Session 3 – Swapping Stories with Jesus***

The New Testament gospels invite us to believe that Jesus’ story is our story, and our story is Jesus’ story. The passion narratives of Mark and Luke, for example, meaningfully script our lives no matter where or in what circumstances we find ourselves.

#### ***1:45pm Session 4 – Hearing, Trusting, Wrestling with God***

Even when we believe in God and accept God’s “word,” we can find ourselves at odds with God. Then we must have it out with God. Several stories show us how: Genesis 18:22-32 (Abraham dickers with God); Genesis 32:22-32 (Jacob wrestles with the night stranger); Exodus 32 (Moses confronts God, God repents); Mark 7:24-30/Matthew 15:21-28 (Jesus gets nailed and hung up between God’s law and a mother’s tenacious love).

FAITH IN ACTION

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\*\*\*\***2024 ANNUAL**\*\*\*\*

**CONGREGATION  
MEETING**

**Sunday, January 26th, 2025**

*(immediately following Worship Service)*

*\*Please check your mailbox cubbies for any updates!*

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FAITH FORMATION

**ADULT FORUM**

Join us on Sundays, after worship, when we continue looking at Louis Ling's own book project on images of "Blood and Sacrifice in the Scriptures!" We are reading and discussing the manuscript and Louis is looking for, and encouraging, constructive feedback.

*All are welcome.*

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**Sundays, 10:50am - 11:50am\***

**\*Kids' Place meets Dec 15th and then is off through Jan 5th.**

**Bring the kiddos back on Jan 12th!**

# OUTREACH



Our Advent Angel Tree project was very successful! We donated coats and shoes for 26 Elmcrest Elementary students in need. Thank you so much to all who participated and a big THANK YOU for the beautiful wrappings on the presents! It really looked like Christmas magic for the children!



## SHARED HARVEST

In December we need only **14 jars of Peanut Butter**, **30 cans of Fruit** and **Disposable Razors** in unlimited quantities. Thank you for your generous donations! Packing is Sunday, Dec 22nd, 1pm @ Faith Lutheran.



## FAITH IN ACTION

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Building and Grounds team has added a "Health and Safety" team consisting of Matthew Rhiley, Eric Weldon, and Erica Wifrid. This team will identify safety hazards that need to be addressed and create plans to address emergencies that may arise. We will be installing and maintaining first aid equipment including an AED, maintaining our fire extinguishers, and doing our best to keep our property safety hazard free. Please let us know if you have any talents in this area and would like to contribute!



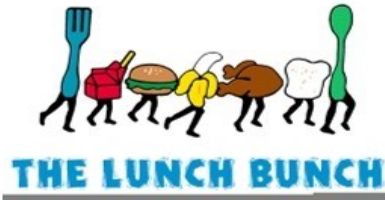
**There are plenty of extra cookbooks for purchase!**

*A great gift idea!*

See Amy Zimmerman, or email her at [amyzimmerman818@gmail.com](mailto:amyzimmerman818@gmail.com)



# COMMUNITY



## Faith Lutheran Church 2025 Schedule

January 1 **No Lunch Bunch**  
February 5  
March 5 Ash Wednesday **No Lunch Bunch**  
April 2 soup Supper **No Lunch Bunch**  
May 7  
June 4 BBQ  
July & August **No Lunch Bunch**  
September 3  
October 1  
November 5  
December 3

The Fellowship Team would like to thank everyone who contributed to the Cookie Palooza. There were lots of delicious cookies with enough to take some home and enjoy.

Eileen Way, Fellowship Chair

Thank you all who attended December Lunch Bunch. The food was fabulous! Our virtual tour to Tromso, and Trondheim, Norway was fun and educational. Mary Armstrong gave us more stories of Norway from her and Mark's trip to Oslo last summer. – Eileen

Be sure to join us at Noon on Feb 5th for our next LUNCH BUNCH!



## BIBLE STUDY

*The Bible Study Group will be off December 17, 24, and 31 for the Christmas and New Year's Holiday. We will resume January 7, 2025. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Eileen Way*

### Prayer Requests

Please send any prayer requests to the prayer team at:  
[prayers@faithlutheranreno.org](mailto:prayers@faithlutheranreno.org)

### Online Giving

For your convenience we offer an online option at our website:  
[faithlutheranreno.org](http://faithlutheranreno.org)  
Click on "Support Faith" at the top right of the page.

# January 2025 *happy new year*

**1st** - Wednesday, *New Year's Day*, **FLC CLOSED**

**2nd** - Thursday, 7pm Scouts

**3rd** - Friday

**4th** - Saturday

**5th** - Sunday, 9:30am WORSHIP

**6th** - Monday, 5:30pm ACA Mtng

**7th** - Tuesday, **1:30pm Bible Study**

**8th** - Wednesday, **12 Noon FINANCE MTNG**, 6:30pm 4-H WhipStirs

**9th** - Thursday, 7pm Scouts

**10th** - Friday

**11th** - Saturday, **10a - 3p, FAITH & LIFE RETREAT**

*\*Register on our website: [www.faithlutheranreno.org](http://www.faithlutheranreno.org)*

**12th** - Sunday, 9:30am WORSHIP, 10:50am Kids' Place, 11am Adult Forum

◆ **Baptism of Our Lord**

**13th** - Monday, 5:30pm ACA Mtng

**14th** - Tuesday, **1:30pm Bible Study**

**15th** - Wednesday

**16th** - Thursday, 7pm Scouts

**17th** - Friday

**18th** - Saturday

**19th** - Sunday, 9:30am WORSHIP, 10:50am Kids' Place, 11am Adult Forum

◆ **Epiphany**

**20th** - Monday, 5:30pm ACA Mtng, **6pm COUNCIL MTNG**

◆ **MLK Day, Inauguration Day**

**21st** - Tuesday, **11:45am NARFE**, **1:30pm Bible Study**

**22nd** - Wednesday

**23rd** - Thursday, **5:30pm FELLOWSHIP TEAM MTNG**, 7pm Scouts

**24th** - Friday

**25th** - Saturday

**26th** - Sunday, 9:30am WORSHIP, 10:50am Kids' Place, 11am Adult Forum

**27th** - Monday, 5:30pm ACA Mtng

**28th** - Tuesday, **1:30pm Bible Study**

**29th** - Wednesday

**30th** - Thursday

**31st** - Friday