

# News From The Pews

Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church—ELCA  
Pastor Phillip Vickers

143 Chota Center, Loudon, TN 37774  
[www.shepherdofthelaketn.org](http://www.shepherdofthelaketn.org)  
(865) 816-4756

January 2025

*A Christian community sharing God's love with the world.*

**Sunday Worship**  
9:00 a.m.

*In Person*  
and  
*Online*

On the website:

Bulletins  
Announcements  
Sermons  
Newsletters  
Livestream

Church Council

**Christine Elbert**  
President

**Tom Tisch**  
Vice President

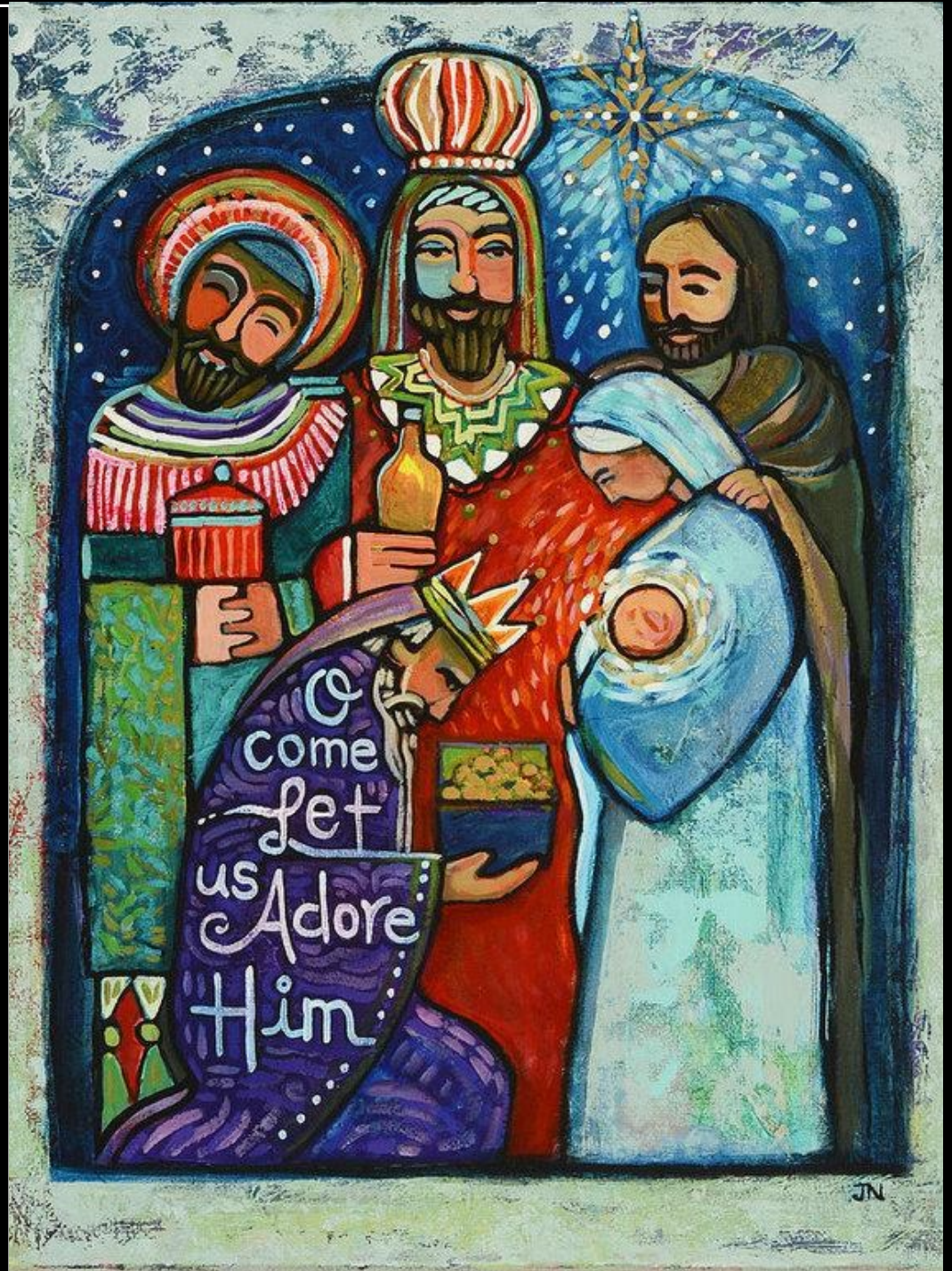
**Julie Claus**  
Secretary

**Cherie Oswald**  
Treasurer

**Bob Bly**  
**Claire Moxim**  
Members-at-Large

**Office**  
**Manager**

**Sandy Hagan**  
[Shepherdofthelake13@gmail.com](mailto:Shepherdofthelake13@gmail.com)



## Pastor Phil's Page

Should old acquaintance be forgot  
And never brought to mind?  
Should old acquaintance be forgot  
In the days of auld lang syne?



In this traditional Scottish ballad, the author asks a series of rhetorical questions. Should our old acquaintances, with whom we have shared so many things, be forgotten? The answer of course is no. Those with whom we have run through the fields and paddled in the burn, as the old song says, should never be far from our memory. We often sing this song on New Year's Eve to affirm that as time passes, *Pastor Phil Vickers* we are still connected to and formed by the days gone by and all the people with whom we have shared those golden days.

There are those who believe that Church is one of those things that belong to the past and not to tomorrow, and if you look only at the numbers, they seem to be right. Since 1950 the population of the United States has doubled, but the United Methodist Church has lost half its membership. In about the same time frame the Presbyterian Church has seen a 70% reduction in membership, and our own Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has seen a 41% decrease in membership. There are a lot of factors that go into those numbers. The 50's and 60's are now acknowledged as a boom time in the American Church. The Church was never as big before those years and so in a sense it skews our perception to compare current numbers to those "all time high" figures. Also, actually being a member of a particular congregation is something that is not as emphasized as in days past. Folks will attend but not feel led to be a member on the books as their grandparents might have. People are also increasingly mobile because of their jobs and often no longer stay connected to the same congregation they grew up in, nor do they seem to maintain the same denominational ties.

The family I was born into was not a church going one by the time I came along. My grandparents had been baptized and were church attenders. They had their three children baptized in the Methodist Church down the road from our plot of land in the Mississippi Delta. But when that congregation closed, instead of finding another Church they simply stopped going. By the time I came along the only remnant of Church left were a few bibles scattered around (including one given in memorial of my great grandmother to my grandfather by the steelworkers' guild of which he was a member), and the tradition of having a big homecooked meal on Sunday. I accepted the big Sunday dinner as just something we did, never realizing till later that this was a nod to something our family used to be connected to but was no longer.

As Church goes we find ourselves in the odd position of being counter cultural. We get together in a room without screens and sing off of real paper, and we continue to take communion, worship, and fellowship face to face. We hang on to the traditions we learned from our forefathers and foremothers in the faith, and I think that in this case, it is a heroic and noble thing to do. There are some things from old days gone by that are worth hanging on to, preserving, and celebrating. Call me old fashioned, but I'm happy to go into the year of our Lord 2025 not having forgotten some of these good old ways that help us keep Christ at the center of our days.

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***Join us at Shepherd of the Lake for a service honoring Epiphany on Monday, January 6, at 5pm. We will hear the story of the wise men coming to honor the infant Christ and then gather for food and fellowship in Friendship Hall. This is an open potluck so bring whatever you wish to bring. King cake will be provided!***



# Mountain Views

## People are Messy.

Our lives are often a hodgepodge of messy ideas, chores, thoughts and deeds. We live in a world of chaos. Social media, politics, conflicts and fear all serve to divide and isolate us. We are encouraged to be strong individuals, standing up for what we believe and our "rights" in today's society. We are tired.

There is a place to find hope, to find joy, to find peace and a true community of others who want to share "the joy of the Lord is our strength". A place where we are built up and supported, not knocked down and frightened.

Whether you are a life-long church goer, have drifted away, been disappointed in "religion" or have never set foot in a church, now might just be the time to find that which we seek, sometimes without knowing what that is - just the feeling of an empty space in our lives.

Life is hard and messy but we can still find joy in community. Community reaches out to show us that we don't need to focus on "me". Us is what builds up and reaches out to support others who feel left behind and brings compassion to those who are desperately in need. Church gives us the opportunity to share joy, compassion, support and true friendships with each other not only in our community but in mission that supports our fellow humans in places where we can't go. We are not alone.

From the hymn, Blessed be the Tie that Binds by John Fawcett ...

- 1 Blest be the tie that binds  
our hearts in Christian love;  
the fellowship of kindred minds  
is like to that above.
- 3 We share our mutual woes,  
our mutual burdens bear,  
and often for each other flows  
the sympathizing tear.
- 6 From sorrow, toil, and pain,  
and sin, we shall be free;  
and perfect love and friendship reign  
through all eternity.

Claire Moxim  
Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church  
143 Chota Center, Loudon, TN

### Birthdays

- 3 Pauline Gorsline  
8 Ron Filbert  
8 Sara Meilleur  
10 Marjorie Porr  
10 Jim Wuolukka  
11 Carl Kirts  
12 Susan Tisch  
25 Tom Tisch  
26 Sandy Arrowood

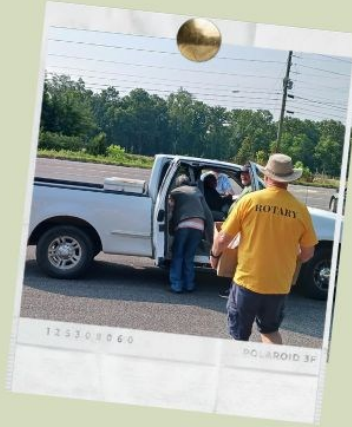
### January



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH



HAM & TURKEY  
GIVEAWAY



USDA  
GIVEAWAY



We are so grateful to report that we served 600 families with USDA food boxes and distributed a total of 603 turkeys and hams Friday morning.

The line of recipients went from The Good Shepherd Center on Rt 411 around onto Rt 68 at the Justice Center.

We thank our donors and hard-working volunteers. This could not happen without their hard work and under the hand of the Lord.

DEC 20TH 9-11AM

5150 Hwy 411 S Madisonville



**GOOD SHEPHERD CENTER**  
MONROE COUNTY





## Kiddie Kingdom

Sandy & Lloyd Arrowood (Santa), Eileen & Steve Dorner (reader), Susan Tisch and Penny Hatt ventured to Kiddie Kingdom with their cars loaded with gifts and goodies on December 17. Steve read, *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*. His voice had the children memorized as they sat like little angels. When Santa arrived the atmosphere changed. The children were so excited! Santa gave each child a gift bag. Then pictures were taken with Santa were taken. Susan made cookies and they were served with juice boxes– it was a festive morning.

On behalf of Kiddie Kingdom the Reading Ladies thank those who support this outreach program. Its success is due to your continuing support. We hope you all had a blessed Christmas. Happy New Year!

*The Reading Ladies - Sandy Arrowood, Susan Tisch and Penny Hatt*



**Kiddie Kingdom Daycare** is located in Philadelphia, TN and is a family owned and operated childcare center serving the community since 1931. They offer a range of services including daycare, preschool, infant care, and afterschool programs. Their mission is to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive. We have three wonderful ladies (Sandy Arrowood, Penny Hatt, and Susan Tisch) that stay involved in providing gifts and goodies.

The center is located at **23202 W Lee Hwy, Philadelphia, TN**. They have a strong commitment to safety and development, ensuring that children receive age-appropriate activities and guided learning.





# Church News & Events

## Christmas Day Dinner

On the Sunday before Christmas the people at the ACT Group Home joined our "choir" of voices and enjoyed meeting Santa. Then on December 25 all 4 clients, 3 staff and the sister of one of the clients, joined us for Christmas dinner in Friendship Hall for a delightful Christmas Day dinner with 36 people in attendance.

We had a good time laughing, visiting and eating good food. Linda Schussler provided after dinner music to add to the merriment with several joining in singing Christmas Carols.

It was our joy to also host these delightful folks during the Thanksgiving celebration. We just may have started a tradition with these holiday dinners. A great big thank you to all who helped with the setup, food preparation, and cleanup.





## Women's Annual Christmas Luncheon

Thirty women of So+L and their guests enjoyed a wonderful Christmas Luncheon on Thursday, December 19, in Friendship Hall. Many helped to make this event special: the table favors were made by the Card Making Group, Penny Hatt shared a meaningful devotion, and Linda Schuessler led us in a Christmas prayer.

Thank you to all who bought a meal item to share! A special thank you to Sue Schemberger who played the piano as we sang Christmas songs. Sue also lead the group in Christmas-themed Bingo!

Women's Fellowship Team is planning events for the new year. We invite all the women of our congregation and friends to join us in 2025 for fun and fellowship!

*Women's Fellowship Team*



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## ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, January 26, 2025

10:15am

- ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS
- PROPOSED 2025 BUDGET
- OTHER BUSINESS



## RECURRING EVENTS

So+L has many recurring activities throughout the month. They are on our website should you wish to check them out and just maybe participate. See below what's happening! Go to the website and select:

### GET INVOLVED — COMING EVENTS.

Wkly.	Al-Anon Meeting	Mon	10:00am
Wkly.	Women's AA Meeting	Mon	11:30am
Bi-Wk.	Dream Study Circle	Tues	2:00pm
Wkly.	Bible Study	Wed	10:00am
Wkly.	Small Group	Thurs	3:00pm
Mthly	Card Making Ministry	2nd Thurs	10:00am
Mthly	Creative Hands	2nd Thurs	10:00am
Mthly	Women's Fellowship	3rd Thurs	11:30am
Mthly	Men's Fellowship B'fast	3rd Sat	8:30am

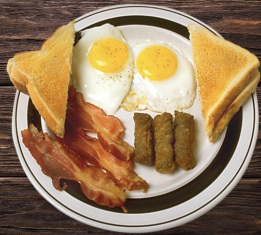


### SAVE THESE DATES

January 6	5:00pm	Epiphany Service followed by "Old Fashion Potluck"
January 26	10:15am	Congregational Meeting
March 4	5:00pm	Shrove Tuesday Dinner
March 5	5:00pm	Ash Wednesday Service

## Men's Breakfast

Join us for  
food, faith, and  
fellowship



**Saturday, January 18 at 8:30am**  
**Friendship Hall**

Join the men for coffee and breakfast items of your choice as they fellowship together.

Go to SignUpGenius and make your reservation and select the food you plan to bring. It will be a great time to socialize.

**Men's Fellowship: Men's Fellowship Breakfast**  
**([signupgenius.com](http://signupgenius.com))**

For questions, email Howard Kastner ([howardkastner285@gmail.com](mailto:howardkastner285@gmail.com)) or call Sandy in the church office 865-816-4756



**Women's Fellowship**  
**Come and join us!**

Go to SignUpGenius and be a participant.  
[Women's Fellowship: Women's Fellowship \(signupgenius.com\)](http://signupgenius.com)

**January 16, 11:30am Game Day**  
**Bring a brown bag lunch**

**Women's Fellowship Committee**



## Card Making Ministry Thursday, January 9



Our Card Making ministry serves a very special purpose at So+L. It provides fellowship, learning and creativity for those who participate, and it shows caring and love to those who receive the cards...a win-win for all involved. We create Birthday, Get Well, and Sympathy cards as needed for all church members. We also make various holiday cards such as Valentine, Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, for those members/attendees who are shut-in, as well as those who don't get out much or have no family nearby, which helps keep their spirits lifted throughout the year. There are lots of occasions to celebrate during our lifetimes, and we help by sending cards to remind all and celebrate all at these special times!

We meet monthly on the 2nd Thursday from 10am – Noon. If you have a question, feel welcome to call me.

Carol Opsal, at 936-520-2271, or  
e-mail [csopsal@gmail.com](mailto:csopsal@gmail.com).

## Women's Fellowship Christmas Card Recycle



Remember all the fun we had participating in the mug project for Vonore Elementary School! Well, we're going to do it again!! Women's Fellowship has started collecting Christmas cards (**fronts only**) for a project that is planned for later in 2025. A card collection box has been placed in Friendship Hall by the door closest to the computer.

The project includes gluing the Christmas card fronts to plain bags that become gift bags. These will be used when Vonore school children Christmas shop in 2025 for their family in a store set up for them. The items in the shop are donated by the community. Thank you for saving your Christmas cards for this worthy project!

Also, please start going through your mug collection (they don't have to be Christmas mugs). Hang on to them until later in the year.

**Women's Fellowship Team**

## New Beginnings

*"Every year I think of January as new beginnings in my life. Recently I discovered this icon on my computer called Co-Pilot. When I typed in these two words, this was the response:*

*New beginnings are a wonderful opportunity to set fresh goals and create positive changes in our lives. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke said, "And now we welcome the new year, full of things that have never been." It's a perfect time to reflect on the past and look forward to the future with hope and determination.*

*Do you have any specific goals or aspirations for this year? Whether it's picking up a new hobby, setting personal milestones, or simply embracing a more mindful approach to life.*

*New beginnings can be incredibly exciting and invigorating. They offer a chance to reinvent ourselves, explore new horizons, and embrace changes that can lead to personal growth and fulfillment.*

*Whether you're starting a new job, moving to a new place, embarking on a new relationship, or simply adopting a new mindset, these moments can be transformative. Remember to be kind to yourself as you navigate these changes and celebrate each small victory along the way".*

So, what is Sandy Hagan going to do in 2025 with New Beginnings?

- Continue my activity with Kairos Prison Ministry mentoring to incarcerated women twice a month.
- Advisory Council Training for Kairos via Zoom to other councils for various States.
- Starting a 12 week Bible Study, "Experiencing God".
- Enjoy working at So+L for some incredibly wonderful people.

### **Here is my commercial for prison ministry:**

It's truly inspiring to see the impact of such ministries on the lives of those who are incarcerated. Do you have a personal connection to prison ministry, or are you interested in learning more about how to get involved?

**Sandy Hagan**

## Prayer Ventures—January

1 New Year's Day Ask God to grant us strength, wisdom and patience to accomplish new goals this year. Give thanks for God's forgiveness and for the support of others, which help us to continue when we fail, grow frustrated or are redirected in our pursuits.

2 "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our newness in Christ is realized in our present life and in the future, when we enter the kingdom of God. Pray for the Spirit to strengthen our faith and to help us embrace our new selves — every day.

3 Pray for the Spirit to stir our patience, understanding and respect for others when we find ourselves in conflict with our neighbors or siblings in Christ.

4 Pray for our synod bishops attending the Bishop's Academy in Puerto Rico as they study and reflect on the challenge and promise of Lutheran mission and theology in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

5 Give thanks to God that Jesus Christ lived among us, that we might believe in God's grace and truth and be filled with joy and relief as children of God who are set free to live as Jesus did in service to our neighbors.

6 Epiphany "This star, as bright as day, that will never lead astray with its message so appealing, is the word of God, revealing Christ, the way, the truth, the life" (ELW 301). Praise God for the gift of Jesus Christ, who reveals to us the way, truth and life of God's love, forgiveness and promises.

7 Pray for a peaceful transfer of presidential power in the United States and that the Spirit will influence and guide our leaders to serve all people with compassion, wisdom and concern for justice and unity.

8 "In [Christ] we have redemption through [Christ's] blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us" (Ephesians 1:7-8). God's boundless love and forgiveness are lavish indeed. Give thanks and praise to God!

9 Remember in prayer college, university and seminary students taking part in winter J-term classes and service learning, that their experiences will deepen their faith, expand their knowledge and reveal how their gifts and passions can be used to do God's work in the world.

10 Thank God for the ELCA's special relationship with the United Methodist Church, a full communion partner since 2009. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, that we will respect our differences but embrace our unity in Christ so we can spread the gospel, serve our neighbor, and share leadership and resources for doing God's work in the world — together.

11 Give thanks for God's grace and the work of the Spirit, which equip us with the tools, wisdom and courage needed to face the challenges of everyday life and to bear Christ's love and hope into the world.

12 Pray that we will affirm our baptism by telling others about the triune God, by loving and serving our neighbors, by encouraging the faith of our siblings in Christ and by seeking opportunities for spiritual growth.

13 Pray for those who respond to God's call by working hand in hand with our companion churches and other organizations around the world through ELCA Global Mission. Ask God to sustain and strengthen their faith, their commitment and their diverse gifts.

14 "Who hears the song our sorrows swallow and offers hope to calm our fears? When all our words seem frail and hollow, God heeds the prayers within our tears" (All Creation Sings 1050). Give thanks that God hears and responds to our grief and suffering, even when our words fall short of expressing the depth of our sorrow.

15 Pray for the outdoor ministries of our church that are busy recruiting and hiring young-adult staff to share their faith and serve campers of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in summer programs.



16 National Religious Freedom Day Give thanks that the U.S. Constitution supports the freedom to embrace religion, to worship and to share our faith according to our personal beliefs. Pray that we will respect the religious beliefs of our neighbors and support their right to practice their faith openly, without constraints or persecution.

17 “You who know our fears and sadness, grace us with your peace and gladness; Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts” (WOV 738). Lift up your worries, troubles, insecurities and grief to God, who understands us and grants comfort, strength and endurance in every circumstance of our life.

18 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Today begins a week of prayer with our siblings in Christ around the world. Give thanks that we are one in Christ and that, together, we cast a brilliant light in the world.

19 Praise God for the inexhaustible grace shown to us throughout our lives and baptismal journeys.

20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Remember and give thanks for the life, teaching and advocacy of Martin Luther King Jr. for the sake of justice, inclusion and the value of all people, especially those who suffer persecution, racism, disdain or oppression. Pray that we will be inspired by our neighbors and siblings in Christ who are fearless and persistent in their advocacy and compassion for others.

21 Thank God for the gifts given to us through the Spirit, and pray that others might recognize their own unique gifts and see where they are valued and needed.

22 Pray for ELCA directors for evangelical mission, who serve as resources to synods in mission development, congregational renewal and stewardship.

23 Pray for our church’s grassroots Life of Faith initiative, meant to help us to live out our baptismal vocation in daily life, serve our neighbors and work for justice in the diverse contexts of family, workplace, school, community and the world.

24 Pray that we will open all our senses to God’s glory, power and voice as revealed in nature — the awe-inspiring and dynamic handiwork of our Creator.

25 Conversion of Paul Give thanks that, for God, all things are possible, even when we do not envision the possibility of lives being changed, hearts softened or faith awakened.

26 Ask God to help us follow Christ’s example, being humble, kind, loving, merciful, attentive to our neighbors and quick to respond to their needs.

27 Remember in prayer youth, adults and families involved in service learning and mission trips throughout the year. Pray that they might share the gospel, serve their neighbors in need, participate in the work of global companions and ecumenical partners, and respond to the unique contexts and needs of communities.

28 Remember in prayer neighbors and siblings in Christ who suffer poverty, homelessness and hunger, that their hope will be sustained, their daily needs met and their human dignity respected.

29 “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart” (Psalm 19:7-8). Give thanks for the word of God, for it is trustworthy and restores us, imparts wisdom, and stirs joy and gratitude in our hearts.

30 Pray for an end to conflicts and violence in the world, including in our own communities. Ask the Spirit to inspire and equip us to be peacemakers and bearers of hope.

31 Give thanks for Women of the ELCA (WELCA) and its ministry with women to encourage bold and active faith in Jesus Christ, promote healing and wholeness, address injustices, discover spiritual gifts, and encourage and equip leaders.

# Stewardship Toolkit for December 2024

## Commit to a tithe in 2025

*“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.” -Malachi 3:10*



Not everybody can tithe, and not everybody necessarily should tithe – that is, to give 10 percent of their income to God. But there are many who could and probably should. It would benefit them and God’s work.

For centuries, tithing has been a biblical benchmark for faithful giving. Through the prophet Malachi, God goes so far as to challenge faithful people to “put me to the test” by tithing, to then receive overflowing blessings.

Though any suggestion is to be avoided that tithing is a way to get rich, as the “prosperity gospel” preachers assert, longtime tithers say they have experienced God’s blessings as contentment, joy-in-giving, and sufficiency. I myself have been a tither for more than 20 years. It continues to be a source of strength.

For most people, tithing represents an impossible sudden jump in giving. If that’s your situation, you could commit to a tithe in 2025, then work up to it over the years. How? Here are some steps:

Calculate the percentage of your income that you gave to the church in 2024. (Start with after-tax income. Down the road you can always jump to tithing gross income.)

For 2025, increase giving by 1 percent, 2 percent ... or whatever you’re comfortable with.

Then, every year increase by another 1 percent. Eventually, you’ll be at a tithe for your after-tax income. If it is a good experience, continue until you have tithed your gross income.

But the important step is the first one: Commit to tithing. You and your congregation will be blessed for it.

*--Robert Blezard*

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### **General Stewardship Resource Websites**

**Stewardship of Life Institute**– Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources in areas of congregational and personal stewardship. ([www.stewardshipoflife.org](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org))

**ELCA Stewardship Resources**– Our denomination’s deep well of materials. ([www.elca.org/stewardship](http://www.elca.org/stewardship))

**Center for Stewardship Leaders** – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. ([faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/](http://faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/))

**The ELCA Foundation** a ministry of our denomination. ([www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation](http://www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation))

**The Episcopal Ministry for Stewardship** – Lots of good material. (<https://www.tens.org/>)





## **2025 Study**

### **Bible Study Opportunities**

Lectionary study with Pastor Phil Vickers  
Wednesdays at 10am, in Friendship Hall

For any questions  
call the church office 865-816-4756.

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### **Small Group Ministry**

*The small group ministry will begin  
January 9, 2025, at 3pm in  
Friendship Hall*

**For questions contact: Shari and Tom Lillestolen,  
865-603-9467**

### *February Newsletter*

**NEWS FROM  
THE PEWS**



**JANUARY 27**