

FIRST Impressions

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A Publication of First Lutheran Church • Birmingham, AL

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First Lutheran Church

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Birmingham, AL 35205
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www.firstlutheranbham.org

[View our Church Calendar](#)



Pastor's Pen God's Gift

"Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign; The virgin will be with a child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel." - Isaiah 7:14

Prophecy over 700 years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah spoke to King Ahaz of Judah about the deliverance that God would provide that besieged kingdom. This prophecy has provided the world with one of the clearest declarations of the Christmas miracle. God would come in the flesh to dwell among us. He would enter our world through the womb of a virgin. What a wonderful sign God gives to us to behold and believe.

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Local Events

Saturday Mornings: The Market at Pepper Place;
www.pepperplacemarket.com

Through 1/16: Glow Wild: An Animal Lantern Celebration,
Birmingham Zoo; www.birminghamzoo.com

12/1-18: Holiday Spectacular 2022, Red Mountain Theatre;
www.redmountaintheatre.org

12/9-22: Holiday Film Series, Alabama Theatre; www.alabamatheatre.com

12/15: Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols, Cathedral Church of the Advent;
www.adventbirmingham.org/holidays-and-seasons

12/16-23: George Balanchine's The Nutcracker®, BJCC; www.alabamaballet.org

12/17: Handel's *Messiah*, Alys Stephens Center; www.alabamasymphony.org

12/31: Alabama Symphony Orchestra presents New Year's Eve: A Viennese Celebration,
Alys Stephens Center; www.alabamasymphony.org



(cont'd from p. 1)

It may be difficult to identify with King Ahaz of Judah. As reflected in 2 Kings 16:24, he was a young, arrogant king of "detestable" ways. In spite of this, the prophet Isaiah went to Ahaz to offer him spiritual strength in a time of national crisis. Because of his godless ways, Ahaz did not merit a sign or a faithful prophet. Yet despite these evil ways and his phony spirituality, a covenant-keeping God gave Ahaz a clear sign of what he would do, not only for Ahaz but for our sin-darkened world through the Immanuel prophecy. What can we learn from God's actions?

We learn about the character of God. He is a God of tremendous mercy and tenderness. In the midst of the dilemmas that were entirely of Ahaz's doing, God came to deliver the king and his kingdom. We should never underestimate the depth of God's love for any of us. None of us is worthy, and still God comes. He comes into our lives with signs that are clear and understandable to us. He is not a God who would stay hidden and unnamed from a people he loves. As we worship him, he extends to us a cup, the bread, and a cross. At Christmas we are presented with a star, a manger, a virgin, shepherds, and kings. As Jesus takes on our flesh God presents us with tangible proof that he is indeed among us, to be known by us, in a personal relationship.

At Christmas, through signs and the messages, God continues to seek after us. Will we be onlookers who stroll past these familiar words and signs with casual interest? Or will we stop, open our eyes, ears and mouths, and dare to believe that a loving heavenly Father is here to cut through our fears, and to draw us to himself? Ahaz. You. Me. God still desires that we believe and be saved. Christmas is a gift for such as us.

Dear God, you know of no hopeless ones in this world. Help us to stop and realize that you are truly there for us. Enable us to believe. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

In His Peace,
Pastor Schultz

Looking Ahead to Advent: Dates to Remember

Nov. 27	First Sunday of Advent
Dec. 7, 14, 21	Midweek Advent Meal & Evening Prayer Service Meal - 5:15 p.m.; Service - 6:00 p.m.
Dec. 10	Tree Trimming and Sanctuary Decorating - time TBD
Dec. 24	Christmas Eve Carols, Communion, & Candlelight Worship - 6:00 p.m.

From the President Opportunities

What an opportunity to learn! I remember thinking those words when I was young and I had not succeeded in doing something well that I was participating in. I still think those words when I have a house project that doesn't turn out as I had anticipated it would. What an opportunity to study what just happened and plan changes in what I will do the next time.

Covid was an opportunity to learn for First Lutheran Church. Prior to Covid we did not have a broadcast ministry. Covid required us to be creative and develop a way for our members to stay faithful in worship while leaders of the church tried to learn how to handle the infection and meet the needs of the congregation. The initial broadcast was done on Facebook and was the collective creativity of Pastor Lampella, June Weir, and Larry Donaldson. Initially the audience was the members of First Lutheran Church and was designed around bringing the Sunday service to the members' homes. God has taken this ministry beyond the walls of First Lutheran Church. The ministry now involves the Facebook and YouTube platforms. From data that we get from these platforms, the church services and devotionals are being viewed in at least 10 countries with India, the Philippines and Indonesia having the highest viewership. Between October 9 and November 5, there were 1,282 Facebook views. Women made up 77.7% of the viewers and over 60% of all viewers were younger than 35. Our YouTube data is not as detailed as Facebook, but over the past month there were 117 views on YouTube with a total watch time of 30.8 hours. Currently we have 80 people who are subscribers to our YouTube channel. When we reach 100 subscribers, YouTube will release additional information about views of our material to us. I encourage you to subscribe to our YouTube channel and encourage your family and friends to subscribe also.

It is important for us to remember that God works in mysterious ways and uses us in ways that we did not anticipate. We are not isolated and do not just impact ourselves in things that we do. When we show care and concern for others in acts that are "fruits of the Spirit" in our community we demonstrate the love of Christ that has been shared with us. You never know what God will do next.

Your participation in our ministries, virtual or actual, are opportunities to learn and grow with us. Remember no experience is required, only a servant heart and a willing spirit. If you need help identifying your gifts, please contact Lorenza Robinson and ask him for a SHAPE survey (SHAPE is an acronym for spiritual gifts, heart, aptitude, personality, and experience). When you complete the survey and discuss it with Lorenza, we will find ways for you to share your gifts as a blessing to others and to the glory of God.

You never know what God will do next and how He will use your talents.

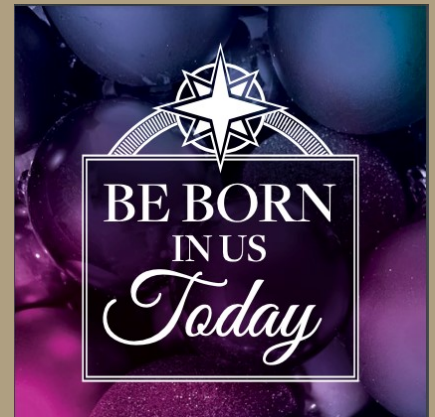
Glen Thompson
Congregational President

Advent & Christmas 2022 “Be Born in Us Today”

Wednesdays - December 7, 14, 21

Meal - 5:15 p.m. / Evening Prayer Service - 6:00 p.m.

In this Advent series, we are reminded that Christ is born in us spiritually today and every day. He enters into us daily to strengthen and support us, save us and renew us. We are changed by his presence within us as we become more and more like him in the living of our lives.



Week 1 (Dec. 7) • Be Born in Us Today: Bringing Blessing (Genesis 12:2): God promises Abraham that an offspring from his line would bring blessing to all. When Jesus was born, that promise came true with an abundance.

Week 2 (Dec. 14) • Be Born in Us Today: Bringing Renewal (Isaiah 40:31): The prophet Isaiah declared that a Holy One from God would be born into this world to bring renewal to all the faint and weary. Christ's birth restores our strength that we might serve him.

Week 3 (Dec. 21) • Be Born in Us Today: Bringing Guidance (Psalm 31:3): The children of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years, often doubting God's plan for them. With the arrival of Jesus on the scene, we have a clear path to the promised land of heaven through him who is the Way.

Christmas Eve Worship - December 24, 6:00 p.m.

Be Born In Us Today: Bringing Light

Welcome the Lord at our carol, candlelight, and communion Christmas Eve worship . Jesus is born for us all on this silent night in the little town of Bethlehem. His first cry announces to the world that the darkness of sin is done away with by the shining light of his amazing love.

Christmas Day Worship - December 25, 10:15 a.m.

Be Born In Us Today: Bringing Salvation

On Christmas Day, join us for worship with communion to celebrate with joy the birth of our Lord, born to save us from sin, death and the devil forever. We are reborn as his brothers and sisters on Christmas and eagerly anticipate what our new life in him has in store for us.

Worship Ministry

What Great Joy and What Good News - Luke 2:10

What joy and good news was brought to the shepherds as the angels appeared to them. This was the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ's birth. As we look forward to Christmas, one of the most important days of the year, should we not celebrate this day of good news with the greatest of joy? Our Lord Jesus's birth recalls many prophetic promises of salvation. And that good news will be salvation for all people and will come to shine upon every nation through the preaching of the Gospel. His birth fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (9:6) and Jesus accomplished the purposes for which He was sent. He was sent to pardon the sin for all people which He won at the cross:

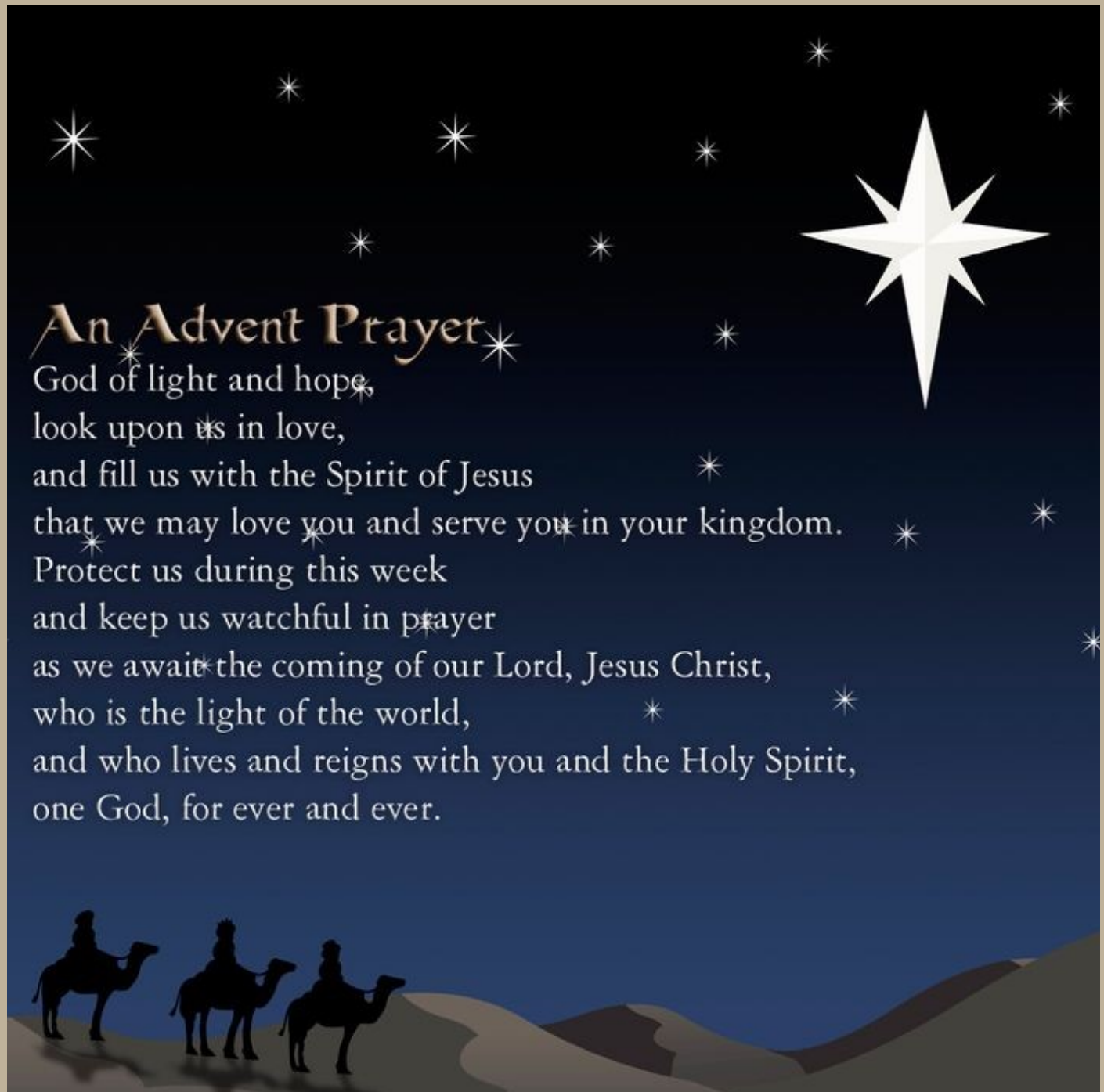
- He was born poor and humble, laid in cattle feed trough, wrapped in torn strips of cloth.
- He sought after lost sheep and laid down His life for them.
- He was born to be sacrificed by evil men.
- He is always faithful, even in our unfaithfulness.
- He redeemed us, not because of our righteousness, but because of God's righteousness.
- He gathered our sins and carried them to the cross and paid our ransom demand and made us His own.
- He was pierced for our transgression; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought peace, and with His wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)
- He has ascended and prepared a place for us, and He will come again.
- His birth is the Gospel for all humanity.

For "all the people" of God, the birth of Jesus is the greatest news in the world and a reason for great joy. The battle was won on the cross, the victory secured in the resurrection from the grave. There is no god who gives himself as a sacrifice to redeem His people. In Jesus' birth, God's glory is manifested on earth as peace between God and humanity. Fortunately, there is no greater source of joy and the incarnation of God's Son for the purpose of our salvation. There is no God like our God.

In His Peace,
Charles Craig
Worship Ministry Chair



Called to Serve and Celebrate Ministry



An Advent Prayer

God of light and hope,
look upon us in love,
and fill us with the Spirit of Jesus
that we may love you and serve you in your kingdom.
Protect us during this week
and keep us watchful in prayer
as we await the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
who is the light of the world,
and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Lorenza Robinson

Called to Serve & Celebrate Ministry

Christ Care Ministry

The Message of the Precious Treasure

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

— Luke 2:10-12 — (KJV)

On a clear crisp winter’s night, shepherds are warming themselves around a fire as the sheep in their care settle in with the evening’s silence. All is quiet and serene.

Then, the most magnificent thing happened. The evening darkness is brightened by a sudden appearance of a multitude of heavenly hosts and amplified with their singing of praises to God ... resounding with the familiarity of *Gloria in Excelsis*. The angels’ song had and still has for us a double focus: in the highest of heavens there is resounding glorious praise to God for his generous gift of a Savior and, on earth, there is peace for people on whom God’s favor rest.

As suddenly as the angels had come, so suddenly they left. The shepherds are again alone with their flocks. But they can hardly go on with their night’s watch as if nothing happened. They hurry to Bethlehem to see this thing which the Lord has told them about. Were they thinking about this message? One would certainly believe so. We do know the shepherds did not keep the news to themselves. They spread the word, the first to proclaim the newborn Messiah. Their message was not so much about a baby in a manger; rather they shared

the angel’s message, “A Savior” *has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.*” No wonder people who heard the shepherds’ talk were amazed! They may have even questioned the sanity of these “sheep herders.” Yet, the shepherds knew what they had seen.

Mary’s reaction to all these happenings, including the message of the angels shared by the shepherds, is much more subdued. We are told that she “*treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*” Her treasures were not any earthly relics. No, rather, her scrapbook of this marvelous event was carried in her heart and she was amazed at what a great thing God had done.

And for us, here and now, are two sides of Christmas: One is very public and the other, private. Yet both are necessary. Yes, we need to go public, celebrating the message with joy in word and song, witnessing to others. But Mary’s example is also for us to follow: ***What a marvelous thing God has done for me! This child is my Savior from sin, death, Satan and hell.***

Here indeed, is our precious treasure!

Peace,
Pastor Tom

Joy of the Lord



Join us on the **Second Sunday**
of the month at **5:00PM** for

Evening Prayer

✠ ENTER IN SILENCE ✠

✠ WORSHIP PRAYERFULLY ✠

✠ DEPART IN PEACE ✠



LWML News

Painting the Planet Purple with Servanthood

1942 -2022 -- 80 YEARS of GOD'S GRACE



True Christian Christmas

*Christmas isn't showy gifts
Or glittering decoration;
It's honoring our Savior, Jesus Christ
In humble adoration.*

*It's serving those less fortunate,
Meeting their needs before our own;
It's making sure at Christmas time
That no one is alone.*

*It's taking what we would have spent
On things that no one needs,
And using it to help someone
With service and good deeds.*

*Our Savior showed us how to live
With charity, faith, and service.
It makes the holidays a joy,
More peaceful, and less nervous.*

*So let's remember Christmas is
About our Savior's birth;
That's the way to happiness,
The way to peace on earth.*

by Joanna Fuchs

Father, we praise You for the joy of Christmas! In the loving way You brought Your own Son into the world, a vulnerable child born in a stable, You show us that You are able to care for us in any and all circumstances. Give us Faith, this Christmas. Father, You guide us in Your Word, but when we are mentally and physically poor we do not always see those truths. Forgive us. Father, we ask for Your provision. We ask for food to eat for the homeless and needy, a warm place to stay, and provision for bills that cannot be paid. You are a God who is able to do more than we ask or can imagine. Thank You. Help us to rejoice. Bless and heal our hearts of jealousy and bitterness. Give us a Spirit of True Joy. It is good to feel You Father, guiding our steps. It is good to experience the care of a Father who seeks to bless His children. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Merry Christmas and a Joyous New Year

LWML of First Lutheran Church

Gifts of Joy, Gifts of Love

Advent - a time of preparations for Christmas. Are we busy preparing by addressing Christmas cards, searching the perfect gifts for those we love, wrapping these gifts in shiny paper and beautiful ribbons? Are we searching for the perfect tree, decorating this tree and our homes for Christmas, and the cooking and baking? All these are ways that we show our love.



Let's pause a moment. Because the perfect gift, the gift of love, the gift that brings true joy - was given to us centuries ago. Christ's birth, God's gift of immeasurable love, wrapped in a babe to redeem us, to forgive our sins, and to bring us into unity with God the Father - truly the perfect gift. This is the gift we should focus on. It is the gift we should share and proclaim to our family and friends.

During Advent, let us share this gift in ways beyond trees with tinsel, gayly wrapped presents, cookies, and treats. Let us share the gift and meaning of true love with people who do not know, and who may have never felt the joy of God's gift. We begin with the children and the families at the YWCA.

This time we are asking for your donations to bring joy into their lives of children and families in our community. We have selected the YWCA Santa's Workshop for our special gifts--for the children and their families.

This year's Santa's Workshop will be held Saturday, December 10, 2022.

Each year, YWCA Central Alabama hosts Santa's Workshop to help families living in homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, or receiving YW services have a happy holiday season. This year's event will be "festival style" with children making crafts, taking pictures with Santa. The festival will be held on December 10th from 9 am to 1 pm. On the day of the event, children get to meet Santa, make gifts and crafts that they can give to parents, teachers, friends, and other loved ones. Meanwhile, parents will have a moment to step aside and select an age-appropriate book and a \$25 gift card for each child. This year the YWCA is anticipating 400 children will participate. Their goal is to provide the gift cards and a book to parents that will allow their child to enjoy a blessed Christmas season.

Here's how you can help:

- Purchase books or \$25 value gift cards from our [Santa's Workshop wish list](#) and drop them off at or

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ship directly to YWCA Central Alabama, **309 23rd Street North**, by **Friday, Dec. 2, 2022**.

- **Make an online donation to Santa's Workshop.** Select Santa's Workshop from the pull-down menu at the YWCA website, or mark your contributions to the YWCA in your offerings on Sunday.
- **Volunteer!** We have a variety of opportunities ranging from setting up and decorating the weeks and days before to day-of assistance. If you have a question about volunteering for this event, please email Valerie Johnson at **vjohnson@ywcabham.org**.

First Lutheran Church will collect books and donations for Santa's Workshop wish list. Please bring your books and donations to Church by December 1st. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact June Weir at junerweir@gmail.com or call the Church office at 205-933-0380. The blessings of giving are much greater when we reflect God's love of His perfect gift—Jesus.



Trim
the
Tree!

Saturday, December 10

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**Come when you can and
stay for as long
you're able!**



Hurricane Ian Relief

From the Southern District President:

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Southern District,

As you know, our fellow Brothers and Sisters in Florida were hit by the devastating hurricane, Ian. We in the Southern District are no strangers to the devastating impact of major hurricanes, and rely on the generosity of others to help fund our recovery efforts. Since we have been blessed this year by not being hit by a major hurricane, so far, **I would like us to rise up and generously support our sister District, the FL/GA District of the LCMS.**

100% of your financial gifts will go directly to the FL/GA District to help support their on-going efforts to aid in recovery after Hurricane Ian.

You may give through the Southern District, LCMS by following this link: [Donation \(eservicepayments.com\)](https://eservicepayments.com)

You will see several options for giving. Click on Disaster Relief, fill in Ian, then go to the bottom of the page and click Continue to proceed to the payment page. Giving this way is safe and secure.

If you would prefer to give via check, you can make your check out to Southern District, LCMS. Put Ian in the memo. 100% of all gifts will go directly to the FL/GA District to help with hurricane relief.

Thanks and Blessings!

Your Servant in Christ's Mission,
Rev. Eric Johnson
President, Southern District LCMS



Worship with us Sundays at 10:15 a.m.
in person or via Facebook or YouTube.



FIRST LUTHERAN STAFF

INTERIM PASTOR

Rev. Kurtis Schultz

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Rev. Kurtis Schultz

MINISTRY COORDINATORS:

CHRIST CARE

Rev. Tom Lackey

OUTREACH & INREACH

Vacant

SERVE & CELEBRATE

Lorenza Robinson

FACILITIES & PROPERTIES

Stan Weir

WORSHIP

Charles Craig

FIRST IMPRESSIONS EDITOR

Heather Lackey

Birthdays & Anniversaries



12/3: Carol Lackey

12/13: Kimberly Washington

12/17: Marcy Sharit

12/25: Wray Allen

12/26: Anja Mathru

12/29: Carol Melton

12/6: Anne & Wray Allen

12/14: Ernestine & Charles Craig

12/20: Carol & James Melton

Worship Team...December 2022

December 4

Pastor: Tom Lackey

Worship Asst: Charles Craig

Reader: Frances Robinson

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

December 18

Pastor: Tony Ramsey

Worship Asst: Glen Thompson

Reader: Eva Hill

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
Jay McGraw

Music: Becky Schultz

December 11

Pastor: Tom Noon

Worship Asst: Henry Mosley

Reader: Wendy Harris

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson

December 25

Pastor: Kurtis Schultz

Worship Asst: Robert Regulus

Reader: Judy Drews

Live Stream Asst: Shane Harris &
Jay McGraw

Music: Larry Donaldson



MAN UP! Meets the 4th Saturday of the month at 8:30 a.m. All men are welcome to join us for a time of fellowship, prayer, and devotion.

Contact Lorenza Robinson for information on post-pandemic **MAN UP!** meetings.

