

December Newsletter

Check out what we've been up to this month



Faith Lutheran Church of Blakeslee, PA

www.faithlutheranblakeslee.org



Our Gratitude

by Phil Newlander

THANK YOU!!! To all those that contributed to the funding of the new lawn mower and to the new furnace. Your selfless dedication to the betterment of Faith is greatly appreciated.



The Pastor's Page



This week we begin a new church year with the season of Advent. This is a time when the Church invites us to slow down, savor the anticipation of Christmas and prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord. Yet too often we have found the busyness of preparing for Christmas soon overwhelms our best intentions for prayer and pondering.

But whether we like it or not, this year will be different. As the pandemic surges around the country, this year's Advent is beginning to look a lot like this year's Lent. To avoid contracting or spreading COVID-19, we are by necessity paring down our usual seasonal activities. Get-togethers are being canceled or moved online, and we are left with sincere feelings of loss. It is painful to have to skip or alter the traditions, celebrations and togetherness that help us celebrate what matters most...we are mourning right along with you.

While we are planning to continue indoor worship services through December, we are aware that those plans are subject to change based on conditions around us. That's why we are continuing to develop our technical capabilities and offer more options for worship. We are in the final stages of being able to have Sunday morning services go 'live' on Zoom (and hopefully Facebook). These will also be recorded and available at other times you want to watch, including on YouTube. You can also come to the parking lot and pick-up worship booklets and communion cups and listen to the service on radio station 93.1 FM. We've come a long way since March!

Despite its challenges, this Advent can be a time of great opportunity if we let it. Since the Church is calling us to slow down, and the pandemic is forcing us to slow down, maybe this is the year we allow Advent to truly take root in our hearts. Perhaps our social losses can lead to spiritual gains. In this newsletter you will find information on our upcoming on-line Advent Study, our virtual Christmas 'pageant', and a special Christmas celebration offered by the National Lutheran Choir.

This Advent also offers a chance to ponder more deeply the real meaning of the season: that we are preparing our hearts not just in memory of the Lord's birth but in anticipation of his coming again. With a global pandemic endangering the health of millions, political divisions straining our relationships, and climate changes threatening habitats, many of us are feeling anxious, frightened, overwhelmed. We are in need of healing...physically from a virus that has claimed too many lives, emotionally from strained relationships, spiritually from the fatigue of doubt and fear. But remember that Jesus was born into a world facing disorder, oppression, and fright as well. People then, as now, longed for a Messiah who would save them...bring them wholeness and healing.

So never forget that Advent is above all a season of hope, joy, peace and love. Jesus is the Word made flesh, and we look forward to his coming to bring healing and restoration of all of God's creation. He made his dwelling among us in order to save us, and we rejoice in the hope of one day meeting him face to face. This year, when so much is unknown, let us cling to that hope ever more fervently.

Even during our current time of darkness, we find reasons for hope. Stories abound of the courage of our health care workers and the creative perseverance of our churches. Truly remarkable scientific advances seem to be bringing a COVID-19 vaccine in record time. The people of God are generous and are helping one another in concrete and meaningful ways. And, of course, Jesus Christ dwells among us. What better source of hope could we want?

So while this Advent is going to look and feel different, if we make a point to center our hearts on the coming of Christ, and remain filled with his hope, this season will be not only reclaimed but enriched. We may find ourselves celebrating the most Advent-like Advent ever.

Yours in hopeful expectation... ***Pastor Debby***



Technology Committee

by Paul Frantz, Vice President and Finance Chair

Congregational Council has recently approved the creation of a new committee. The technology committee has not been formally formed however a few of us have been filling roles that will eventually fall under the purview of this new committee.

In response to the pandemic Pastor has asked to have the ability to "broadcast", commonly known as streaming, the Sunday service live over the internet. This will allow our congregation to receive the service live anywhere they can login to the internet. We expect to have this capability ready early in December. Details will follow by e-mail.

In order to achieve the ability to stream the service, our internet connect at the church was upgraded. We also purchased a camera and upgraded the network to allow for better video processing. We are now connected to the internet through Blue Ridge Communications with a major speed increase from our former Frontier Communication setup.

These changes also have necessitate updating the e-mail that is used by the office and pastor. Several new e-mail addresses have also been added for communication with council and committees. If you see a need for another e-mail address for a specific use please contact the office and we will add them after council approval.

The following E-mails are currently active:

faithoffice@faithlutheranblakeslee.org
moquendo@faithlutheranblakeslee.org
technology@faithlutheranblakeslee.org
treasurer@faithlutheranblakeslee.org
finance@faithlutheranblakeslee.org

As we work to stand this committee up, we are asking anybody that is interested in joining us, to drop us an e-mail at **technology@faithlutheranblakeslee.org**.



Thoughts from your Council President

Home for the holidays. A saying that used to bring joy in anticipation of family gatherings and celebrations. Not this year. We seem to be stuck in an endless rut of stay home orders and fear of an invisible virus. We all try to remain positive, but find it harder and harder every day.

Finally, we have good news of several vaccines on the horizon. Hope could not come soon enough. Is this the corner we all have been waiting to turn? Let's not forget that many of our favorite small businesses will struggle to stay afloat for a very long time.

Unemployment is not going to fair much better. A special prayer for them this year goes without saying.

Our church family will recover over time. The new normal will become just that, normal.

Give thanks for the blessings that God has given you. Rejoice at the news of our savior's birth. Share these gifts with those who are less fortunate or homebound. The alternative is to do what our resident bear population does around this time. Fill your belly, find a comfortable spot and hang a " See you in the spring" sign.

Yours in Christ, *Michael Gillis*



Indoor and Drive-In

Every Sunday @ 9:30 am

Indoor service is open following social distancing and using masks according to CDC protocols. If you wish to stay in your vehicles, tune into 93.1 FM radio.



COMMUNION WILL BE SERVED – HYMNS ARE READ PRAYERFULLY!

"Recordings of each week's service will be posted on Sunday on our Facebook Page, Website and our YouTube channel."

Facebook: [Faith Lutheran Church of Blakeslee PA](#)

Website: www.faithlutheranblakeslee.org

YouTube: **NEW!** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIS4mbff7D-BIf04KHGSNAw>





Let Your Thankfulness Show

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances!--1

Thessalonians 5:16-18

Sages, mystics and prophets through the ages have taught us that cultivating an attitude of thankfulness will not only help us grow as disciples, but thankfulness will also deepen our connection neighbors and give us happier, more fulfilling lives.

And how do you cultivate thankfulness? First and always, through prayer. Consider how many of the Psalms offer thanks, or how often the Apostle Paul gives thanks for the people and blessings of his ministry. Pray always – and always with thanksgiving. Keep a “blessings list” and pray through it daily.

Giving thanks to God can nourish thankfulness in your own heart, and you can also help encourage thankfulness in your community by developing a habit of thanking others – verbally, by text or email, or with cards and notes.

Look for every opportunity to thank someone for any reason, big or small. It could be a stranger who holds a door open for you, a clerk who rings up your sale, or a neighbor who does you a favor. Keep track of the number of times you can say “thank you.” You may be surprised.

In the process of saying “thank you” you will not only develop a habit that will deepen your soul, you will also change your relationship with neighbors, your community and our world. And that will be a real cause for thanksgiving.

–Rob Blezard

Copyright © 2020, Rev. Robert Blezard. Pastor Blezard serves as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, MD, and works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org. He blogs at www.thestewardshipguy.com

Faith's ALL CHURCH Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 13th, 7:00 PM

Please join us in your home for our very first online All Church Christmas Pageant.

Sign your email on the sign up sheet located in the back of the church or email Maritza at moquendo@faithlutheranblakeslee.org if you prefer the Zoom information emailed to you separately.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96401249742?pwd=eVJFMVIPa2RwZ2FCY0F1NTZRbnR0QT09>

Meeting ID: **964 0124 9742**

Passcode: **679790**

One tap mobile

Dial by your location

1-929-205-6099 US (New York)

Planning to date:

- Carol Sing-alongs with Molly, Dan, Melanie, and Phil
- The Christmas Story read by our Children
- Special Music by Dick Merrell
- Each person attending **Showing** and **Sharing** their favorite Christmas
- Memory, Ornament, Decoration, Poem...
- Christmas Prayer read by Lois

Special thanks to Janice Neagle and Judie Tim for organizing and Pastor Debby for her guidance!

Respectfully Submitted,
Judie Tim

Congratulations!

To Jordan on his 11th birthday. We wish you more football seasons to come.

And for all those who are celebrating their birthday and anniversary in December.
Cheers to you.

2021 is around the corner. Please email your bulletin and flower sponsorship date and dedication to moquendo@faithlutheranblakeslee.org





VIRTUAL APPLE FEST

Crafts and other items

Although we couldn't hold our annual Apple Fest, the committee has assembled baskets, crafts and other items that are on display on a table in the back of the Fellowship Hall or on our Facebook page. Most prices are marked, or a reasonable donation will be accepted. More items being added each week. If you are interested, please contact the office at 570-646-0309 to arrange payment and pickup. Or you can stop by during office hours to take a closer look.

Giving Tree

Christmas Donation

As always, the TOMEK Food Pantry will provide Christmas assistance to its clients this year. However, due to current conditions, they will be providing \$25 gift cards in lieu of gifts. Therefore, the Ecumenical Council is requesting that those who wish to help meet these needs submit donations to help cover these costs. They are hoping that Faith can collect enough to cover 30 gift cards, or \$750. This should be included in your giving to Faith and identified as a "Giving Tree" donation. Faith will then direct these funds to the Food Pantry.



Poinsettias

December 16th

Order by the 16th of December for \$6 a piece. Forms are placed in the back table of the church to go with your payment. You may also pay online by clicking on the purple heart on the churches website home page.





The National Lutheran Choir Christmas Festival

Friday, December 11 – 9pm (EST)

View it free of charge at <https://nlca.com/>.

Don't miss the National Lutheran choir's signature Christmas Festival program of music, scripture, poetry and faith.

Filmed in the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis, and drawing on five years of live-streamed programs plus multi-media videography, the program celebrates a global nativity; Christ incarnate; being born in each of us, in every time and place. Nothing – not even our pandemic year – can separate us from God's love and the music that conveys the peace and joy of Christ's birth!

Red Cross Blood Drive

Wednesday, January 13, 2020
1:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Faith Lutheran Church
550 Route 940, Blakeslee PA 18610

Please continue to use masks and social distancing.



To **pre-register** your appointment, please visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767). There are donation eligibility requirements by donation type. Please click on the link below for Eligibility Requirements.

550 PA-940, Blakeslee, PA
18610, USA
570-646-0309

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Faith Lutheran Church

PO Box 228
550 Rt. 940 Blakeslee, PA 18610

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DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

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FAITH LUTERAN CHURCH
PO Box 228
Blakeslee, PA 18610
The Rev. Debra A. North, Pastor
570-646-0309 Office
570-643-6853 Fax
570-481-4474 Pastor's Home
faithoffice@faithlutheranblakeslee.org

Church Office Hours
8:00AM—1:00PM
Worship Times Holy Communion
9:30 AM
Dec.—Mar. 8:30AM
Sunday School 9:15AM Sept—May

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2020 CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mike Gillis	Council President
Paul Frantz	Vice President and Finance Chair
John Lyman	Council Secretary
Ben Mroz III	Treasurer
Phil Newlander	Financial Secretary
Rev. Debra A. North	Pastor
Tom Hutton	Witness and Service
Peggy Rapp	Witness and Service
Nancy Croughn	Witness and Service
Bob Crownover	Witness and Service
Barbara Monroe	Worship Committee
Jacque Halko	Worship Committee

Maritza Oquendo—Parish Secretary

Molly Finkbiner—Music Director

John Casabianca—Sexton