



The Tower

A PUBLICATION OF **FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Leechburg, PA



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Our mission:

"We are a people called together into the life-transforming ministry of the Gospel, empowered to share our lives for the blessing of the world."

From the Pastor's Desk

Extended Advent

Grace and peace to you!

This year, Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. Whenever this occurs, the church year calendar stipulates that the fourth Sunday in Advent is celebrated in the morning, and Christmas Eve is celebrated in the evening.

Advent is my favorite season of the liturgical year, and I was disappointed when I realized that this year's Advent season would last only 21 days. This gave me an idea: what if we started Advent one week earlier this year? Given these anxious times we are living in, a season of hopeful waiting and expectation is worth celebrating for as long as possible.

In October, our worship committee met and decided that we would shift the liturgical calendar ahead one week, celebrate Christ the King Sunday on November 19 and the first Sunday of Advent on November 26. In addition, we decided to forego a morning service on December 24. The biggest change is that our Christmas Eve service will be at 1:30 in the afternoon, with our annual Christmas music festival beginning at 1:00 pm.

I admit that I felt sad about decision *not* to worship on Christmas Eve evening. This may be the first Christmas Eve during my lifetime that I will not be in church in the nighttime. And yet, our Christmas Eve attendance has been on a sharp decline over the last several years.

On the other hand, in 2021 and 2022 I led afternoon Christmas Eve services at Bethesda in Lower Burrell, and their attendance was quite strong. Families with small children were happy that they would not have to keep their children out late in the evening, while persons who are unable to drive at night were excited that they could finally worship on Christmas Eve. If it snows on Christmas Eve, road conditions are generally better during the daytime than at night. With all these factors in mind, we felt this year would be a great year to try something new and different.

But most of the elements of Christmas Eve that we all love and treasure will stay the same. Our musicians are working hard to enrich our worship with uplifting and beautiful songs. We will sing Silent Night in candlelight. Most importantly, we will be together.

Remember, we are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, who is always bringing doing new things and opening doors to new opportunities for us to grow in faith and make a difference in the world.

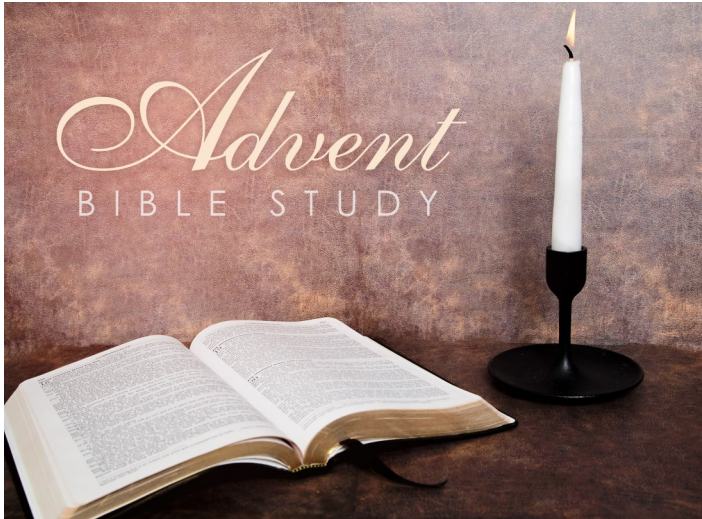
In Christ's love,

+ *Pastor Jim*

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.SERVINGGODGRACEFULLY.NET



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Wednesdays at 6:30, beginning December 6

You can also participate on Zoom by visiting zoom.us
or calling (301) 715-8592 and entering meeting ID#
950-761-3304 .

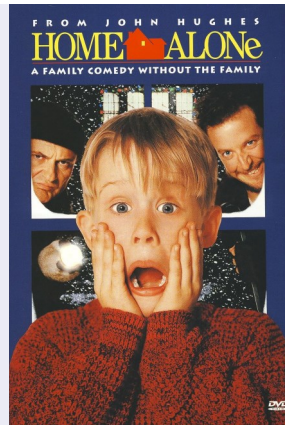


FRIDAY, DEC. 8—6:30pm

December's movie is
Home Alone

There will be a light dinner and
movie theater popcorn! Bring
your friends! Everyone is
welcome.

Presented under CVLI
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**MUSIC
FESTIVAL
1:00 PM**

**CANDLELIGHT
WORSHIP
1:30 PM**



We're Going Caroling!

Fri. December 15 at 6:00pm

The Leechburg Area High School Chorus and the
Leechburg Ministerium invite you to Christmas
Caroling around Leechburg! We will walk through
the downtown business district, visit the high-rises,
and end with hot chocolate and cookies in our
church basement. Please meet at our church.



Council Notes

Ministry Sharing Update

Sandy Smythe and Pastor Jim met with Assistant to the Bishop Peter Asplin (SWPA Synod), Pastor Susan Washburn (Cross Roads Presbyterian Church), and Dr. Donald Wilson (Kiskiminetas Presbytery) to outline the process of entering into an agreement to share Pastor Arter's call.

At our November 19 congregational meeting, a committee was authorized to form the sharing arrangement. Committee members include Sandy Smythe, Alicia Szarek, Kevin Daugherty, Ruth Sloan,

and Doreen Smeal.

Bell Tower Restoration Update

A site survey was conducted on November 8. We are awaiting bids to update the electrical system from local electricians. The electronic control system will be installed upon completion of the electrical work.

Finances

The congregation passed the 2024 Budget in the amount of \$181,362.

New Council Members

Amanda Dunmire-Graham, John Smail, and Nathan Boarts were elected to three-year terms. We thank Becky Panzak, Lois Bowser, and Janis Hill for their service.





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DECEMBER Servants

	Assisting Ministers	Acolytes	Altar Guild	Coutners	Food Pantry
3	Alicia Szarek	Josey Smorey	Janis Hill & Diane Kuhn	Janis Hill & Doreen Smeal	Kathy Munko
10	Nathan Boarts	Jacob Boarts	Doreen Smeal & Lynette Israel	Alicia Szarek & Sandy Smythe	Lois Bowser
17	John Smail	Jacob Boarts	Cheryl Nelson & Carolyn Shaffer	David Moran & Margaret McKallip	Sandy Smythe
24	Margaret McKallip	Graciella Kiro	Debbie Smail & Carolyn Shaffer	Becky Panzak & Janis Hill	Janis Hill
31	Nathan Boarts	Jacob Boarts	Sandi Kulick & Lois Bowser	Doreen Smeal & Lois Bowser	Debbie Smail



GRIEF SHARE



GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

GriefShare meets on Monday meetings from 6-8 pm through December 11. To register or find out more, visit servinggodgracefully.net/griefshare or contact Sandy Smythe: mainesmythe@live.com.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

December 17—9:30am

Our annual Christmas banquet will follow! Social ministry will be providing chicken tenders and potatoes. Please bring a side dish or dessert as you are able. Invite family and friends! The more, the merrier!



Bethesda's 2023 Residential Christmas List

- Paintbrushes
- Paint
 - Acrylic
 - Washable
- Board Games
- Hair Straightener or Curling Irons
- Books
 - Young Adults or Teenagers
- Feminine Smelling Body Washes
- Shampoo & Conditioner
- Winter Boots - Assorted Girls Sizes
- Pajamas
- Art Supplies
 - Colored Pencils
 - Crayons
 - Art Canvases
 - Loose Leaf Paper
 - Markers
 - Paint
 - Paper
 - Colored Paper
 - Tablets
 - Planners - Pocket planner
 - Journals
 - NO Scissors, Pencil Sharpeners
 - NO Spiral Bound Tablets
- Bras, Socks, Underwear - Women
 - Various Sizes
 - Sports Bras
 - NO Underwires
- Playing Cards
- Adult Coloring Books
- Fidgets
- Makeup
 - Lip Gloss
- Puzzles
- Sport Balls
 - Volleyball, Basketball, etc.
- Non Metal Book Marks
- Sketch Books
 - NO Spiral Bound
- Stationary Sets
- African American Hair Care Products
 - Weave
 - Oil - Coconut or Tea Tree
 - Shining Jam
 - Eco Gel
 - Braiding rubber bands
 - Hair Ties - No Metal Bands/Pieces
 - Scrunchies
- Stuffed Animals
- Feminine-smelling Lotions or Sprays
 - NO Aftershave Sprays
- Face Wash
- Sweatpants & Hoodies - Assorted Sizes
- Tennis Shoes
- Slippers
 - NO hard bottom ones
- T-Shirts (Teenage Appropriate)
- Outdoor Games/Equipment
 - Sleds
 - Snow Ball Makers
 - Snow Toys
- Snow Pants
- Word Searches
- Sudoku
- Crosswords
- Loofah Sponges
- Stick Deodorant
- Hair Brushes - No Metal
- Combs



Gift Cards are always welcome and extremely helpful as we can receive youth at anytime during the Christmas Season. Having gift cards on hand allows us to be able to purchase any additional presents if the need arises.

IMPORTANT! Please beware to not purchase anything that could be used to harm oneself or another person!



You are invited to make the season brighter for the children of Bethesda Lutheran Services! You may choose from a teen's wish list, or purchase your choice of gifts from the list above. Please bring all gifts to the church UNWRAPPED by **December 10.**

SERMON SERIES

Dec. 3—2nd Sunday in Advent

Isaiah of the Exile

Isaiah 40:1-11

Mark 1:1-4

John Smail preaching

Dec. 10—3rd Sunday in Advent

Rebuilding the Temple

Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4, 10-13

Luke 2:25-32

Dec. 14—4th Sunday in Advent

Zechariah's Song

Luke 1:5-13, 14-25, 57-80

Psalms 113

Dec. 24—Christmas Eve

Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-20

Psalms 146:5-10

Dec. 31—1st Sunday of Christmas

Beginning of the Good News

Mark 1:1-20

Psalms 91:9-12



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Give
ONLINE
EASY. FAST. SECURE.

Your gifts make a difference!

Please continue to give generously. To support our church with your offerings, visit our website at <http://www.servinggodgracefully.net> and click GIVE ONLINE. All major credit cards and e-checks are



CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Clothing Closet Volunteer Luncheon

Monday, December 4 — 12PM



The Clothing Closet

Saturday, December 16, 9:00—1:00

The Clothing Closet volunteers meet every Monday morning at 9am—12pm to sort clothing and keep things running smoothly. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Kathy Munko at (724) 845-8974 or by email at kathymunko@hotmail.com.

FOOD PANTRY



THE LITTLE FREE PANTRY NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!

Support the ministry through monetary gifts marked "Little Free Pantry" or by donating the following non-perishable items: Pasta side dishes, Spaghetti, Pasta sauce (no glass, please), Instant potatoes, Pop Tarts, Macaroni and cheese boxes, Cereals (in single-serving size), Fruit cups, Pudding cups, Peanut butter, Snack crackers in individual packs, Tuna in cans or pouches, and Shelf-stable milk. Thank you for making a difference!



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get^CONNECTED



Like us on Facebook and stay connected with all that's happening in our church:

[facebook.com/servinggodgracefully](https://www.facebook.com/servinggodgracefully)

Join our Facebook Group **First Lutheran and Friends** to share prayer requests, communicate about events, and more!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/472072791043479>

Do you have something you would like to publish in the next newsletter? Contact the church office: **felc@salsgiver.com** or **724-845-7518**

The Tower deadline for the January newsletter is

Dec. 24



We are now on **You**Tube

Worship with us Live at 9:30 or catch up any time!

Subscribe to our channel to grow our livestream and spread the good word about our church!

youtube.com/@servinggodgracefully

Pastor James Arter's Office Hours

TUESDAY 9:00 AM—10:00 AM
WEDNESDAY 9:00 AM—12:00 PM
THURSDAY 9:00 AM—12:00 PM

Contact information:

Email: pr.jim@comcast.net

Office: 724-845-7518

Home: 724-212-7240

930 Wildlife Lodge Rd. Apt. 302

Lower Burrell, PA 15068

Parish Administrator: Deborah Smail

Office hours: Wednesdays 8--1

Church Treasurer: Ruth Sloan

rae_rae1963@yahoo.com

Council President: Sandy Smythe

mainesmythe@live.com



Want to read Pastor Jim's sermons?

Check out his BLOG online at jamesarter3.blogspot.com



Ink Cartridges

Bring your empty cartridges to the church and help us reduce the cost of office supplies!



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 ■ 9:30AM Worship ■ 10:45AM Contemporary Choir Rehearsal ■ 10:45AM Messy Church	27 Pastor on Vacation ■ 9:00AM Clothes Sorting ■ 6:00PM GriefShare	28	29	30	1	2
3 Pastor on Vacation ■ 8:30AM Chancel Choir Rehearsal ■ 9:30AM Worship ■ 10:45AM Council Meeting ■ 1:00PM Confirmation Class	4 ■ 9:00AM Clothes Sorting ■ 12:00PM Volunteer Luncheon ■ 6:00PM GriefShare	5 ■ 6:30PM Bible study	6	7	8 Hanukkah (1st day) ■ 6:30PM Movie Night	9
10 ■ 9:30AM Worship ■ 10:45AM Contemporary Choir Rehearsal	11 ■ 9:00AM Clothes Sorting ■ 6:00PM GriefShare	12 ■ 6:30PM Bible Study	13	14	15 ■ 6:00PM Christmas Caroling	16 ■ 9:00AM Clothing Closet Open
17 ■ 8:30AM Chancel Choir Rehearsal ■ 9:30AM Worship ■ 11:00AM Christmas Banquet ■ 1:00PM Confirmation Class	18 ■ 9:00AM Clothes Sorting	19 ■ 8:00AM Food Bank Packing ■ 12:00PM Food Bank Luncheon	20 ■ 9:30AM Food Bank Distribution ■ 6:00PM Food Bank Distribution ■ 6:30PM Bible study	21	22	23
24 Christmas Eve ■ 1:00PM Music Festival ■ 1:30PM Christmas Eve Worship	25 Christmas Day	26 Kwanzaa	27	28	29	30
31 New Year's Eve ■ 9:30AM Worship	1 New Year's Day	2 ■ 6:30PM Bible study	3	4	5	6



*Join Our
Family
of Faith*



Our church family is growing, and we invite you to be a part of it! Please speak to Pastor Jim if you wish to be received into membership.





TREASURER'S FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 2023

October 2023 Treasurer's Report:

Balance September 30, 2023	24,135.33
Receipts	11,063.71
Disbursements	(13,197.49)
Balance October 31, 2023	22,001.55

BREAKDOWN OF BALANCE:

	Balance 9/30/23	Receipts October	Disbursements October	Balance 10/31/23
Current	(72,223.25)	7,322.08	12,586.60	(77,487.77)
Building Fund	25.00	0.00	0.00	25.00
Kipp Trust Distribution & Interest	57,967.19	2,005.55	0.00	59,972.74
Benevolence	3,422.14	0.00	0.00	3,422.14
Reimbursables/Dedicated Account	2,293.52	185.00	25.00	2,453.52
Popcorn Fundraiser	79.00	283.04	362.04	0.00
Bell Tower Fund	19,113.24	537.04	0.00	19,650.28
Clothing Closet	3,713.23	731.00	548.25	3,895.98
Bush Trust	9,745.26	0.00	75.00	9,670.26
Tax Liability Accounts	0.00	0.00	(399.40)	399.40
<u>TOTALS</u>	24,135.33	11,063.71	13,197.49	22,001.55

October 2023 Abiding Gifts & Memorials Report: **CD-Matures 9/18/24-MIF:**

Balance 09/30/23	8,365.40	Balance 09/30/23	35,883.06
Receipts-Kitchen Fund	25.00	Receipts-interest	121.46
Interest	2.74		
Balance 10/31/23	8,393.14	Balance 10/31/23	36,004.52

January - October 2023 FLC Mission Fund Report:

Balance 01/01/23	12,034.47		
Receipts	5,175.00		
Disbursements	(1,118.23)		
Balance 10/31/23	16,091.24	Ruth Sloan	
		Treasurer	



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358 Main St.

Leechburg, PA 15656

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Jesus loves...

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILY SERVICE

Music Festival — 1:00pm

Candlelight worship — 1:30pm

Worship **SERVICE**

Sundays—9:30

Livestream on YouTube

youtube.com/@servinggodgracefully

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www.servinggodgracefully.net

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