

**Lebanon
Evangelical
Lutheran
Church**

*A Congregation of the North/West Lower
Michigan Synod, of the ELCA
Craig Satterlee, Bishop
Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop*

**1101 S. Mears Avenue
Whitehall, MI 49461
(231) 893-5745**

Rev. Douglas M. Ogden

**Sunday Morning Worship
10:15 am in person
YouTube Worship on the Web**

Office Hours
Please contact the church office for
current hours

**Newsletter Editor &
Bulletin Announcements**
Margaret Everling

Church Council

Meg Eaton Cheri Crouch
Laura Hollister Brian Jaekel
Sarah Schmalz Wietse Schaafsma
Al Wheeler

**“We are baptized members of God’s
Church, forgiven and set free by grace
through faith.**

www.lebanonlutheranchurch.com

**Facebook: Lebanon Lutheran Church
(ELCA)**

Instagram—Twitter : #llesignsofgrace

TO BRING GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE TO EACH OTHER
AND TO THE WORLD

THE LIGHT



Pastor's Notes

December 2023

Christmas occupies a special place in every congregation's heart.

In the face of the holiday's hecticness our evening time together is intended to give you a Holy Spirit of calm, to convey a sense of God's hopes for a world of peace, and for you personally.

It is not peaceful in Bethlehem - or Gaza, nor in some homes around us. And so our ministries continue. Thank you to the DeMumbrums for searching out a tree, the Wheelers for the altar and wreath, Sheila for the bread, Mike, Monica, Diane, Erica, and Emma for the music, and all who help generate the right spirit. And Mike who broadcasts it all.

Pastor Ogden

Wednesday potluck (6:00 pm) and Evening Prayer
(7:15pm)

On December 6, 13, and 20

On December 13, we decorate window wreaths

December 20, we decorate the tree

Sunday, December 24, we worship at 10:15 am with Carol on the organ.

Sunday, December 24, we worship at 6:30 pm with guitars, piano, choir and bells.

Sunday, December 31, at 10:15am we welcome back Western Michigan University student Aeden McCauley!

December 2023
Fund of the Month
Worship & Music



Websites of Interest

www.lebanonlutheranchurch.com

www.mittensynod.org

www.elca.org

www.whitelakescouting.com

www.whitelakechorale.com

www.hopescarves.org

LivingLutheran.org.

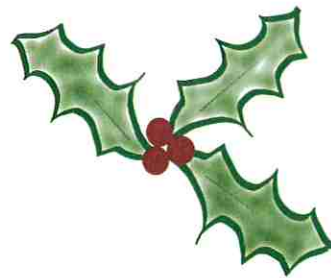
www.samaritas.org

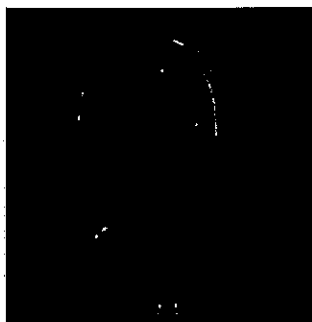
Suicide Hotline 1-800-273TALK.org
www.co.muskegon.mi.us/cmh/suicide_prevention

Every Woman's Place 231-722-3333 or
www.everywomansplace.org

The Trevor Project 1-866-488-7386

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) young people.





**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

**P.O. Box 517
Dewitt, MI 48820**

**517-321-5066
mittensynod.org**

In this Issue:

On Death

Safety and Security for Houses of
Worship

Adult Theological Education

Salt, Light, and Leaven

Upcoming Events

Congregations in Transition

On Death

For some time, I have felt Death's shadow cast over our path as our church, society, world, and many of us individually walk through an unending valley (Psalm 23:4). More recently, I resonate with First Peter's observation: "Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour" (5:8). First Peter identifies our adversary as "the devil," whose existence we can debate. I identify our adversary as Death in all its forms, whose prowling, devouring reality we cannot deny.

Make no mistake, I am not publicly pleading for personal pastoral care. I am naming an existential reality that has reared its ugly head. Like a roaring lion, our adversary Death prowls around looking for someone to devour. Not that many years ago, I regularly conversed with people who challenged the gospel because they considered death natural, even necessary, for humanity and the planet to evolve. COVID-19 changed that perspective as Death became personal, powerful, pervasive, and, for a time, completely out of our control.

I capitalize "Death" to emphasize just how personal, powerful, and pervasive Death is. Lewiston is the latest in the long list of communities where Death reigned, a list that includes Oxford and East Lansing, because our society seems to love our guns more than our children. We seem to think the ability to align ourselves with Death by protecting our right to pull the trigger will somehow protect and preserve us from Death. Now Death wars in Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Gaza. Closer to home, I can only say that cancer has become my hated, dreaded enemy for the lives it claimed. Death may be natural. Parents burying their children and congregations burying their pastor is not.

And Death is not content confining itself to devouring individuals. For some time now, like a hungry lion, Death has prowled around, looking to devour tangible expressions of Christ's Church. In the same way we refer to our loved ones dying as "passing," so we speak of congregations celebrating their "holy closure" and "completing their ministry." Even when closing is the right decision, it brings the sting of Death. On All Saints Day, I remembered and prayed for the 17 congregations that died during my time as bishop. I prayed fully aware that there are more deaths of congregations to come.

When we can point to congregations celebrating their 150th anniversary, we can forget or deny that, like all living things, congregations have lifespans. We mistakenly conclude that churches are meant to endure forever. The death of congregations can be somewhat more acceptable when they have a long and revered history. But when their lives are short, when we know and remember those who invested so much of themselves to establish and maintain a congregation, or when we are those people ourselves, or when we have fought so hard to prolong a congregation's life, we can be tempted to look for a reason, a person, a decision, or a circumstance that we can name as the cause of Death, someone or something that we can hold accountable for not defeating Death. Then, we think, at least we can make sure that no congregation will ever die again.

Like a roaring lion, our adversary Death prowls around looking for someone to devour. Confronted by our own death, the death of a loved one, or the death of a congregation, we can blame, we can punish, and perhaps we can keep Death at bay, at least for a time. We cannot prevent Death. We cannot overcome Death. We cannot resurrect from Death...

[I invite you to pause and take this in, as I did, before reading on.]

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

Thankfully, Jesus can. Thankfully, Jesus does. Jesus resurrects. Jesus overcomes. Yet, Jesus does not prevent Death or keep Death forever at bay. Jesus tells a certain parable that I have come to love: "But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house" (Mark 3:27). One interpretation of this parable holds that Jesus is referring to our adversary, whether we name "the strong man" the devil or Death.

Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) asserts that, to "bind" the devil and Death, Jesus, though innocent, allowed himself to be executed on the cross, thereby entering "the strong man's house" or Satan's dominion of death. Jesus overcame Satan through innocent suffering and plundered his property, namely, freeing humanity held captive by Satan in sin and death.

Augustine's understanding grows out of Christians' reflection, since the second century, on the New Testament's testimony about the cross, as a curse on the one hand and a ransom on the other (Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:18-19). In some passages, Jesus saved us by succumbing to evil in death but then victoriously overcoming it. In other texts, Jesus allowed Satan to seize him as the "ransom" in exchange for which Satan frees the descendants of Adam and Eve [Luke 11:21-22; Mark 10:45]. The good news is that, while Death is inevitable, thanks to Jesus, Death is not invincible.

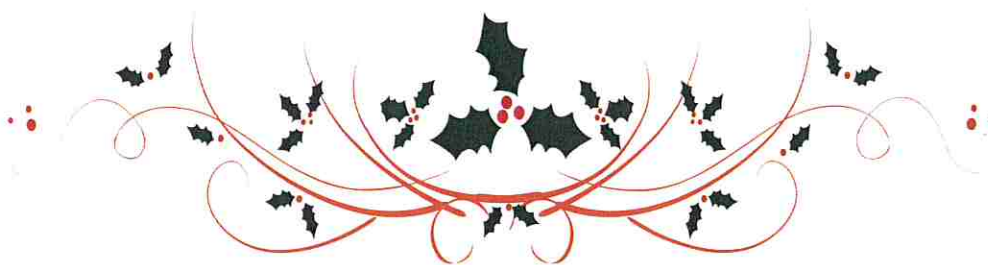
So, whether we are devoured by Death, held hostage by Death, or killing ourselves with our feeble attempts to outrun Death or keep Death at bay, Jesus delivers us from Death. More precisely, Jesus delivers us through death to new life. And this is as true for our beloved churches as it is for our beloved ones and for us ourselves.

Notice I switched to a lowercase "d" to name death as a sign that death loses its power, its victory, its sting. We can live in confidence and hope, especially when the shadow of death is cast over our path as our church, society, world, and we ourselves walk through an unending valley.

Pastor Sarah Samuelson recently said to me, "Sometimes it stinks. And all we have is Jesus. Thankfully, we do. We have Jesus." Preach it, Pastor Sarah! It's what we need to hear! Amen.

Walking alongside you,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop



Prayer Concerns

It is an important part of our ministry to be praying constantly for one another. *We add names to the prayer list with consent in order to maintain privacy and confidentiality.* This month in your prayers, please remember:



Prayers for those who are homebound:

Our Minister

Helen Bartlett, at daughter Carol Roods' home now.
Mary Bernhardt, at Robinswood Assisted Living #115 (Kay Snell)
Marlene Holmstrom, at home
Ken Kolb, with health issues
Sandy Kolb, hip replacement surgery
Elaine Liska, at White Lake Assisted Living - Whitehall
Phyllis Monte, at Legacy of Caring - Whitehall
Ruth Nurmi, with health concerns
Nancy Peterson, McCauley Place, E. Sherman, Muskegon #407 A
Barb Smith, at Legacy of Caring - Whitehall
Marty Windbacher, at home under Hospice Care

Special Prayer Concerns:

Cindy Albert, with gallbladder issues.
Brianne Beekman, (Terry & Mary Beekman's granddaughter) diagnosed with multiple brain tumors.
Anita Benes, ("oboe sister" of Michele Wheeler), battling leukemia
Lucas Carlson, (Terry and Mary Beekmans grandson) for new treatment.
Margaret Fountain, (Mary Koenen's sister) diagnosed with multiple myeloma
Elin Frietsch, diagnosed with Lymphoma undergoing treatment
Karl Glass, with health concerns
John Lewallen, (Mary Lewallen's brother-in-law) liver cancer
Mary Lewallen, with home & pet issues
Jill (Chuck Miller's daughter) Knee replacement on 10/11/23
Dwight Mead (Paula Moreau's brother-in-law), non-hodgkin lymphoma mantel type (stage four).
Pastor Sarah Samuelson, recently diagnosed with colorectal cancer
Wendy Shalifoe, undergoing chemo treatment
Verne "Barney" Sutherland, with serious heart issues



Worship Notes

Sunday, December 3 - Advent 1

Color: Blue

Worship - 10:15am

**Musician:
Monica Ogden**

Readings

**Isaiah 64:1-9
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:24-37**

**Today we pray for:
Bob & Sharon Ackerman**

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Sunday, December 10 - Advent 2
Worship - 10:15am**

Color: Blue

**Musician:
Monica Ogden**

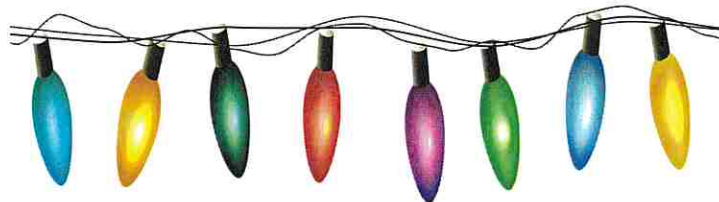
Readings

**Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2,8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8**

**Today we pray for:
Mike & Becky Chenoweth
Violet and Roscoe**

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**



Sunday, December 17 - Advent 3
Worship - 10:15am

Color: Blue

Readings

Musician:
Monica Ogden

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 19-28

Today we pray for:
Adrienne Mackowiak

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Sunday, December 24 - Nativity of Our Lord
Worship - 10:15 am

Color: White

Readings

Musician:
Monica Ogden

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

Today we pray for:
Darlene Willbrandt

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

Sunday, December 31 - Christmas 1
Worship - 10:15 am

Color: White

Readings

Musician:
Monica Ogden

Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

Today we pray for:
Harry & Yolanta Swiatek

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

December



12/1	Fransica Holmblade	12/23	Todd Groessl
12/1	David Hosticka	12/23	Drew DeWeerd
12/2	Amy DeBolt	12/24	Timothy Kesteloot
12/3	Michaelanne Hendrixon	12/25	Lisa Robertson
12/4	Jerry Lewallen	12/25	Alan Stevens
12/7	Jacob Brackmann	12/25	Sharon Gribas
12/10	Gary Holmstrom	12/27	Ray Lathrop
12/11	Jon DeMumbrum	12/27	Sue Plewka
12/11	Gretchen Lane	12/27	Dean Roesler
12/14	Holli Nichols	12/27	Wietse Schaafsma
12/15	Scott Keller	12/28	Holly Hughes
12/15	Melanie Schaafsma	12/28	Monica Szczerbinski
12/19	David Hendrixon	12/29	Mardi Otto
12/19	Courtney Mares	12/29	Molly Thompson
12/20	Ruth Ann Nurmi	12/29	Katherine Thompson
12/20	Hannah Romain	12/31	Elly Hendrixon
12/21	Hilda Branstrom		
12/21	Celia Vihtelic		
12/21	Joni Will		
12/22	Bradley Carlson		
12/22	Sharon Ziske		



12/27/68 Art & Sue Plewka
 12/29/73 John & Chris Parman



Baptism Anniversaries



12/1	Kara Jaekel	12/20	Paul Brogren	12/26	Hilda Branstrom
12/3	Tom Foster	12/20	Bob Ackerman	12/26	Katie Stacy VandeBunte
12/3	Mary Bernhardt	12/21	Emma Stanhope	12/26	Becky Stacy Chynoweth
12/4	Jodi Emms	12/23	Curt Crouch	12/27	Jeff Holmstrom
12/4	Jennie Shalifoe	12/23	Jon DeMumbrum	12/27	Julie Tyler
12/11	Dustin King	12/24	Hannah Berry	12/27	Dustin Roesler
12/12	Patti Ferguson	12/24	Brian Hosticka	12/28	George Stanhope
12/14	Sandra Morris	12/24	Sophia Walters	12/29	Diane Eastman
12/15	Kathy Scarbrough	12/25	David Civis	12/29	Jed Emms
12/15	Stephen Ogden	12/25	Jeffrey Civis		
12/15	Terry Kesteloot	12/25	David Hosticka		
12/15	Tim Kesteloot	12/25	Mary Ellen Larson		
12/17	Tylor Raymond Ramsey	12/25	Linda Schenten		
12/18	Karen Hosticka	12/25	Elaine Stevens		
12/19	Logan Montgomery	12/26	Bill Hosticka		

Celebrate your baptism anniversary with a candle a meal or this prayer:

“Stir up within me the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and joy, on this day when I give thanks for my baptism in to Christ.”

DONATE RIGHT FROM YOUR SMARTPHONE

Giving through our Vanco Mobile app is an easy and convenient way to donate to our church. It only takes a moment to set up and account:

1. Download the free Vanco Mobile app from the App store or Google Play.
2. Find our Church by searching for our Church name:
Lebanon Lutheran Church
3. Donate: to the General Fund

Thank you for your generosity

This is the new version of the GivePlus app, and must be downloaded again from your App Store.



HOW TO DIRECT THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS®

Online

1. Visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice.
2. In the "GET STARTED" section on the right, click **Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars®**.
3. Log in by entering your user ID and password. (If you haven't yet registered on Thrivent.com, click "Register for account access.")
4. Choose the organization to which you want to direct Choice Dollars:
 - a. To direct to a previous organization:
 - Click "Direct Now" next to the organization's name, or
 - Click on the "View activity history" link, scroll down and click on the name of the desired organization.
 - b. To direct to a new organization, enter keyword(s) like organization name, ZIP code, cause, etc. Click "Search."
5. Choose "Direct All" or enter a specific number and click "Direct Now." Follow the prompts on the confirmation page to direct Choice Dollars.

By phone

1. Call 800-847-4836 and when prompted, say "Thrivent Choice."
2. Press 1 to direct Choice Dollars or 2 to hear Thrivent Choice Dollars® program Terms and Conditions. (If prompted, say or enter your phone number and date of birth.)
3. A representative will work with you to direct Choice Dollars.

**You have the power to recommend where
Thrivent gives back!**

WANT TO MAKE AN EVEN BIGGER IMPACT?

Make a personal donation.



The Thrivent Choice® charitable grant program engages Thrivent members and Thrivent Member Networks in providing grants that support charitable activities, furthering Thrivent's mission and its purposes under state law. All grant decisions, including grant recipients and amounts, are made at the sole discretion of Thrivent. Directing Choice Dollars® is subject to the program's Terms and Conditions available at Thrivent.com/thriventchoice.

26087 R12-18

Understanding Required Minimum Distributions and Qualified Charitable Distributions

In late December 2022, the President signed legislation that included the Secure 2.0 Act which extended the **Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)** age from age 72 to 73 beginning in 2023 and to 75 beginning in 2033. If you have a qualified retirement plan (i.e., IRAs, 401(k)s and 403(b)s), you're required to take a minimum amount of money out of your plan each year. (Roth IRAs do not require RMDs.) These RMDs are taxable and must continue for your lifetime or until the account is depleted.

But what if you don't need these funds for daily living expenses in retirement? Fortunately, there are several ways you can repurpose your RMDs to make the most of the money you must withdraw. These options can enable you to spread generosity to people and causes that matter most to you and help you better meet your priorities and generosity goals.

Included in these options is **Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD)**. Individual Retirement Account (IRA) owners age 70 ½ or older are eligible to make qualified distributions directly to a charitable organization. The benefits of making a direct Qualified Charitable Distribution from an IRA include:

- The contribution results in a reduction of adjusted gross income (AGI) based on a number of tax calculations.
- The contribution allows taxpayers who use the standard deduction to reduce taxable income.
- The charitable amount counts toward the individual's RMD for the year, as calculated annually based on age and account balances.

The contribution must be made directly from the IRA trustee to the charitable organization (the funds cannot be received by the account owner).

Contact your Whitehall Thrivent financial advisors, Marci Bentz and Tony De Nicolo at 231-894-8886, text 231-760-8246, or email whitehalloffice@thrivent.com for assistance to guide you in strategies to consider.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM THE THRIVENT WHITEHALL OFFICE

May your Christmas be filled with hope, joy and peace.

Merry Christmas!

Tony DeNicolo and Marci Bentz, Your Thrivent Financial Advisors

AN ADDITIONAL NOTE: Wishing Tony the best in his upcoming retirement !!!



December 3 - practice at 9:00 am

December 6 (Wednesday) - practice at 4:00 pm

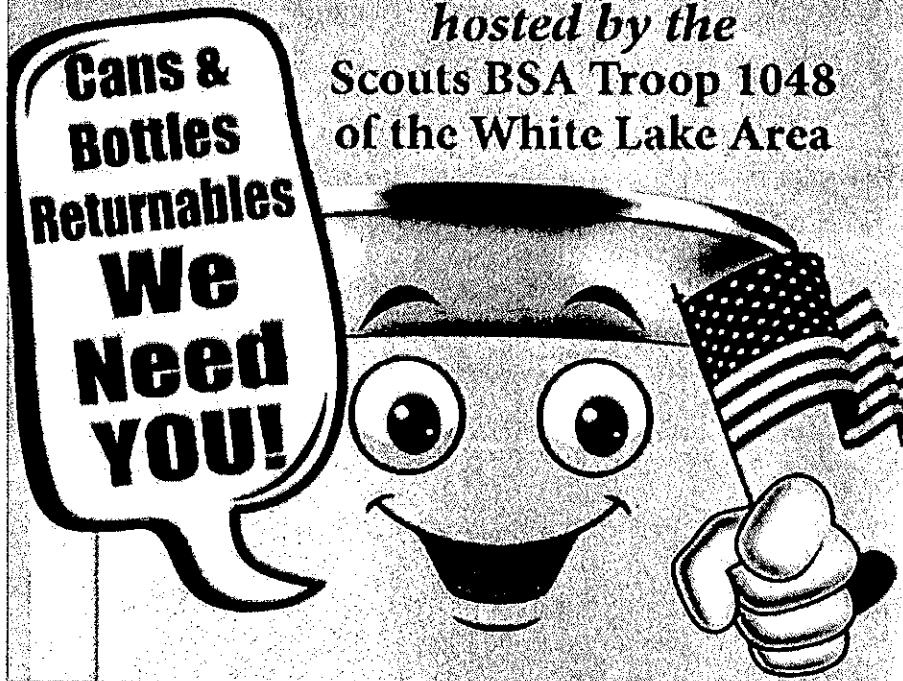
December 10 - practice at 9:00 am and then play
at worship at 10:15am



*The Church Office will be closed
on Monday, December 25, 2023*

BRING YOUR CANS & BOTTLES!

hosted by the
Scouts BSA Troop 1048
of the White Lake Area



SUN, DEC 10 AT 4:30 PM
Pack 4048: Bottle and
Can Drive



Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 24 - 10:15 am

Sunday, December 24 - 6:30 pm



Lebanon Lutheran Church

1101 South Mears Avenue
Whitehall, MI 49461

Living in God's Amazing Grace

The Light is published monthly by Lebanon Lutheran Church, 1101 S. Mears Avenue, Whitehall, MI 49461. Submissions are accepted through the 15th of each month. Submissions MUST include your name and a way to contact you in case of questions.

2 ways to submit your information:

- yellow folder in Margaret's office
(better)
- office@lebanonlutheranchurch.com
(best)

