


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

THE LIGHT

Pastor's Notes



December 1, 2025

**Lebanon
Evangelical
Lutheran
Church**

*A congregation of the North/West Lower
Michigan Synod of the ELCA
Julie Schneider-Thomas, Bishop
Yehiel Curry, 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
M-Th 9AM-1:00PM

Office Manager
Margaret Everling

Church Council

Cheri Crouch Dave Dusenberry
Laura Hollister Wiestse Schaafsma
Sarah Schmalz Amy Swope
Al Wheeler
Treasurer: Terry Beekman
Financial Secretary: Curt Crouch

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

www.lebanonlutheranchurch.com

My prayer for this Christmas season is that the spirit of the Prince of Peace be wide.

Chances are pretty good that my Christmas celebrations will go pretty much as planned. Yes, emergencies and the unexpected do happen, but I can anticipate worship (7 pm by the way), dinner with the now adult kids home, some presents, some music, some games. But I pray this year for those who need a spirit of peace to come where it is not likely to be planned for or expected.

The surprise Santa visiting the hospital floors and nursing homes, the neighbor who brings food to a family where the mom or dad is forced to be away, the ones who have no parents or no house and no planned holiday, for children who have a parent in prison,

Dear Lord, cast the Spirit of Christmas wide.

For those whose communities, churches, mosques, hospitals have been reduced to piles of stone and wood in Gaza or Ukraine, or a dozen other places torn by war or gangs, or in the US where whole cities have been given over to poverty. Dear Lord make it wide to reach those suddenly deported to a place they’ve never been, with no time for plans.

For that song on the radio that hits just right for someone living alone.
Dear Lord, make it wide.

Here is the rarely-sung third verse to O Holy Night, written in 1831:

“Truly he taught us to love one another, his law is love and his gospel is peace.

Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother,

and in his name all oppression shall cease. *Continued on page 2*

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Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we, let all within us praise his holy name.”

And you know the rest, about falling on your knees.

“O Holy Night” was written by Placide Cappeau, an atheist in France whose local priest asked him to write a poem for Christmas. After researching the gospels he wrote the words. An opera singer liked them so much she asked a Jewish friend to write a melody to the atheist’s words. Three weeks later she sang his words and her friend’s melody at Christmas midnight mass.

Dear Lord, make the spirit wide enough for the atheist and the Jew, who remind Christians what they should be about, and for people of faith to really hear all the hopes and longings in every street, town and shelter, every faith, including none at all, or none anymore.

In 1906, Reginald Fessenden, a co-worker with Thomas Edison, shocked the radio operators aboard ships at sea, the ones listening intently for Morse code, by developing a way to transmit the human voice. They had no idea where the voice was coming from as he read the Christmas gospel of Luke, then picked up his violin and played “O Holy Night”, the first song ever broadcast over the airwaves of the world.

Dear Lord, make the spirit of the Prince of Peace wide enough to reach ships at sea, to reach those adrift in life in so many other ways, and for those who need to be shocked into hearing a very old story in a heart-felt new way. Make our prayers wide.

Pastor Doug Ogden

On Sunday January 11, 2026 we will once again assemble Thrivent-sponsored Cause Kits after worship.

There are two kinds of kits. One is the Water Filter Build, supporting people who lack access to clean water by building filters that provide clean water to 12 people for 10 years. The other is the Solar Light Build, supporting children who live in energy poverty by building solar lights, each providing 7,300 extra study hours over 3 years.

Before the end of the year, we ask that Thrivent members check their online accounts and order whichever Cause Kit they prefer. Cause Kits are free and return postage is paid by Thrivent when the kits are built and returned. Each Thrivent member can order one kit with three filters or three lights in it per year, so we will have plenty of builds for members and non-members alike. **All are invited to help build!**

Thrivent members: To order a free kit, sign into your online Thrivent account and click on the “Generosity” tab at the top. Click on “Thrivent Cause Kit,” then choose either a water filter or solar light kit and confirm your order. Kits arrive in about 7-10 days. Then bring your kit to church on January 11 (or drop off if you prefer) and let’s see how many water filters and study lights we can build together.



Advent and Christmas Events at Lebanon Lutheran Church

Advent Vespers

- Potluck at 6:00 PM
- Evening prayer service at 7:15 PM
- Wednesdays in Advent: December 3, 11, and 18

Christmas Baskets for the Homebound

- Needed: fruit, cookies, sweet breads, jams
- Pack baskets on Thursday December 11 at 10:00 AM

Christmas Cookie Fellowship Hour

- Sunday December 14, after worship
- Bring a plate of your favorite Christmas cookies or treats to share, along with a copy of your recipe.
- 2 Christmas quilts will be raffled off and regular quilts will be displayed for sale in the Old Fellowship Hall.

Christmas Eve Worship – Candles, Carols and Communion

- 7:00 PM December 24th



The Bishop's Newsletter

Dear Siblings in N/W Lower Michigan,

Last week I was invited to attend the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes. Their diocese covers almost the same geographical area as our synod. It reminded me very much of a synod assembly. In fact, I ran into four pastors who have connections to our synod right away. Pastor Max Miller and Pastor Nicole Smith - both of these pastors are ELCA pastors who serve Episcopal congregations, along with an ELCA congregation. It was also a joy to see two Episcopal priests, who have served in our synod - Rev. Mike Wernick and Rev. David Blank.

There were other things that were similar - display tables highlighting ministries, voting machines that did not always work correctly, and the joy of singing together.

The keynote speaker for the event, who also was the preacher at their main worship service, was The Most Rev. Sean Rowe who is the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Bishop Rowe commended those gathered for doing something bold. Last year this group was actually TWO groups - The Western Diocese and the Eastern Diocese of Michigan. They chose to join to make a new diocese, The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes.

Bishop Rowe, along with giving his praise, gave them these words of blessing - the first iteration of a new idea is often imperfect and that's okay. We don't have to have everything right before we move ahead. The Holy Spirit does not call us to be perfect. The Holy Spirit calls us to faithfulness. The Holy Spirit calls us to trust and to follow.

In this season of the church year, as we remember our roots in the Reformation, we are reminded from scripture: For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law - (Romans 3:28). Jesus makes our relationship with God good and sound on our behalf. When we try and fail, God loves us still.

We are freed to be bold. We are freed to try new things. We are freed to believe that God will bless and prosper what we offer in faith and trust. Several years ago, at a synod assembly, we picked up a magnet from one of the display tables. It bears a quote from Martin Luther; How soon "not now" becomes "never!"

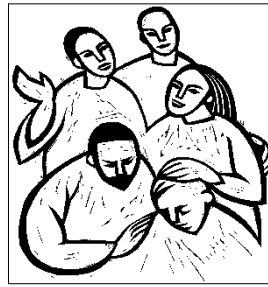
Have you been mulling over a new idea? Have you felt nudged to work on a relationship? Has someone encouraged you to take on something new? Have you felt called to speak out about something? What are you waiting for?

We are freed to try. We are freed to fail. We are freed to get up and try again. We are freed to forgive. We are freed to love. God be with you as you listen for the Holy Spirit's leading. God be with you as you step out in faith!

In Christ,

+Bishop Julie

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 to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

This month in your prayers, please remember:

Prayers for those who are homebound:

Jane Blyth, 28801 Jefferson Ave., Apt. 332; Saint Clair Shores, MI 48081

Chris Claus, American House - 17383 174th Avenue, Spring Lake, MI 49456

Shirley Glass, with health concerns, 3121 Lake Michigan Dr. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Marlene Holmstrom, at home. 2643 Benston Road, Whitehall, 49461

Ken & Sandy Kolb, with health issues - 6755 W. Old Channel Trail; Montague 49437

Elaine Liska, Sunrise Senior Living—Sunrise of Troy; 6870 Crooks Road, Troy, MI 48098-1704. Elaine Liska—Room 130.

Phyllis Monte, at Legacy of Caring - Whitehall—1302 Warner Street, Whitehall 49461

Ruth Nurmi, with health concerns —308 E. Dayton Street, Fremont, 49412

Lois Szczerbinski, at Robinswood Assisted Living, 2650 Ruddiman, N. Muskegon 49445

Special Prayer Concerns:

Brianne Beekman, (Terry & Mary Beekman's granddaughter) diagnosed with multiple brain tumors

Lucas Carlson, (Terry and Mary Beekman's grandson) for new treatment.

Cheri Crouch, recuperating from surgical procedure

Sheila Fretty, re-occurring cancer and health concerns

Margaret Fountain, (Mary Koenen's sister) diagnosed with multiple myeloma

Brian Holmblade, with heart issues

Mary Lewallen, recovering from spinal surgery

Dwight Mead (Paula Moreau's brother-in-law), non-Hodgkins's lymphoma mantel type (stage four)

Gil Norwick, with health concerns

Martha Ogden, with health concerns

Wendy Shalifoe, recuperating from surgery for re-occurring cancer

Bev Statz, with health concerns

Stella Strong, (5-year-old friend of Donna and Ernie Stacy) in remission after battling cancer for 3 years

Darlene Willbrandt, in treatment for re-occurring pancreatic cancer

For our partners in faith, our companion synods in Salud para la Vida in San Pedro Sula, Honduras for their mission and ministry in their place as we fulfill our mission in our place; for all the churches of the Lutheran World Federation, for people of the gospel throughout the world.

HAPPY *Birthday*

12/1 Fransica Holmblade	12/15 Abigail Bartlett	12/25 Alan Stevens
12/1 David Hosticka	12/15 Melanie Schaafsma	12/25 Sharon Gribas
12/2 Amy DeBolt	12/16 Ellis Gaiser	12/27 Ray Lathrop
12/2 Skeets Dusenberry	12/19 David Hendrixon	12/27 Sue Plewka
12/3 Michaelanne	12/19 Courtney Mares	12/27 Dean Roesler
Hendrixon	12/20 Ruth Ann Nurmi	12/27 Wietse Schaafsma
12/4 Jerry Lewallen	12/20 Hannah Romain	12/28 Holly Hughes
12/5 Suzanne Troy	12/21 Hilda Branstrom	12/28 Monica Szczerbinski
12/7 Jacob Brackmann	12/21 Celia Vihtelic	12/29 Mardi Otto
12/9 David Dusenberry	12/21 Joni Will	12/29 Molly Thompson
12/10 Gary Holmstrom	12/22 Bradley Carlson	12/29 Katherine Thompson
12/11 Jon DeMumbrum	12/22 Robin Peters	12/31 Elly Hendrixon
12/14 Holli Nichols	12/24 Timothy Kesteloot	
12/15 Scott Keller	12/25 Lisa Tallarico	

Baptism Anniversaries

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

Celebrate your baptism anniversary by lighting a candle with 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 into Christ.”



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

December Newsletter from Thrivent

As the year draws to a close and we celebrate the birth of our Savior, this is a perfect time to ensure your financial house is in order. December is ideal for reviewing important year-end financial details, such as maximizing retirement contributions or considering tax-advantaged charitable giving. These steps not only prepare you for the new year but also allow you to finish strong financially. Amid the bustle of the holidays, let us all pause to remember and celebrate the profound love and hope that Jesus brings, keeping Him at the very center of our Christmas season. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions about your year-end planning.

If you would like to speak with your local Thrivent Financial Advisor, please call Marci Bentz at 231-894-8886 or text at 231-760-8246. Thank you and have a Merry Christmas!!

A New Look for The Light

Since the pandemic, Lebanon friends and members have received an email newsletter called the Weekly. We are now revamping our monthly paper newsletter, the Light, to reflect the rising cost of postage and the wide use of the Weekly for regular communication. The new Light comes in an envelope and contains the same kind of news as the old Light. We will strive to use larger print and a simpler format. The new monthly Light will continue to be linked every week in the Weekly, so by receiving our emails you will get both.

If you have news for either publication, please send to Meg Eaton at meg1059@aol.com or leave in the office with Meg's name on it. Please contact the office at 231-893-5745 if you would like to make any changes to your subscriptions: i.e. if you would like to be on the email list for the Weekly, removed from The Light mailing list, or if you have an address change.

December Fund of the Month is Music

Donations to this fund will support stipends for our musician leaders, sheet music for our choir and handbell choir, and maintenance items like piano tunings and handbell repairs. Thank you for your support of all our joyful noises! You may write "Music" on your donation or just check the "Fund of the Month" section on your envelope.



Worship Notes

Sunday December 7 – Advent 2
10:15 AM

Today we pray for: Gilbert & Carol
Norwick

Readings
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

Sunday December 14 – Advent 3
10:15 AM

Today we pray for: Randy & Cathy
Nurmi

Readings
Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Sunday December 21 – Advent 4
10:15 AM

Today we pray for: Ruth Nurmi

Readings
Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

Christmas Eve Worship at 7:00 PM
Candles, Carols and Communion

Sunday December 28 – 1st Sunday of Christmas
10:15 AM

Today we pray for: John & Chris
Parman

Readings
Isaiah 63:7-9
Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18
Matthew 2:13-23