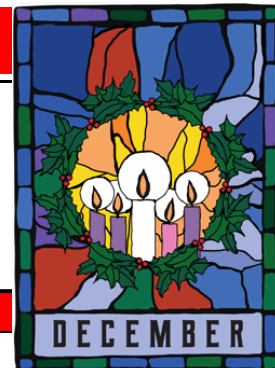


# UNITY LUTHERAN NEWS

1500 Western Ave. Albany, New York 12203



Dear Friends of Unity Lutheran Church,

Advent Greetings! December and all that comes with the month have finally arrived. If you have not yet already, it is time to begin preparing for Christmas. You know exactly what needs to be done in the weeks to come. Shopping, wrapping, baking, making travel or hosting plans. Don't forget to add our Christmas Eve service (5:30pm) and Christmas Day service (10:00am) to your list. Apart from attending a worship service, have you ever stopped to consider how a Christian is to prepare for Christmas? It should come as no surprise that God's Word speaks clearly on this.

My whole life I have heard in church that the Lenten season, the one leading up to Easter, is the season of repentance and self-reflection. It is, but repentance and self-reflection are not limited to Lent. When we read the four Gospels of the New Testament we read of Jesus' birth. That which we celebrate during Christmas. There is actually a lot of fear and uncertainty leading up to and surrounding His birth. The shepherds in the field are terrified at the sight of the angels in the sky. Joseph was instructed to not fear to take Mary as his wife. The angel told Mary not to be afraid when he announced the news of her pregnancy. Out of fear and uncertainty the wise men took a different route home and Joseph hid his wife and child in Egypt after he was born. It should not be surprising that an encounter with an angel, or God himself, would invoke some level of uncertainty. The truth is, when there is nothing to hide our sinfulness behind, we have no choice but to beg for mercy.

Maybe this is why Jesus began his ministry with a one-word cry. The same word that John the Baptist shouted to prepare the people for the coming of the Savior: Repent! You see, when the creator, sustainer, and judge of all things shows up in front of you, there is nowhere to hide. He sees us. He knows us, and the beautiful thing is that He loves us. It was not his anger at the ways we fail that drove the Father to send the Son. Rather, it was love for us, the lost ones, which brought Jesus that first Christmas morning. It's what keeps Him in our hearts each day.

So we take this season of preparation to repent and self-reflect. To lay ourselves entirely before God and beg for mercy. The most wonderful news is awaiting us when we do: we are forgiven! Praise God for his mercy on behalf of Jesus, our Savior, the light of the world. May He shine His light into all the dark places of our life and make us to stand before the Father forgiven and free.

Your brother in Christ,  
Pastor Jim Dörner



### DECORATING THE CHURCH

Join us on December 7th after worship to help decorate the church for Christmas. We need volunteers for several trees and other decorations. Note: No Bible Study that day—let's work together to prepare our church for the season.

Each Advent season we prepare our hearts anew to receive the Christ Child. This Advent we will offer an opportunity to join together mid-week (Wednesdays) for soup and time of study and prayer. We will begin serving supper at 6:00pm and wrap up our evening by 7:30pm. (December 3,10,17). Please sign up on the bulletin board in the narthex to contribute something to the meal.



We will be ordering poinsettias to beautify the altar for Christmas. Ordering will begin on November 30th. Forms will be available in the Narthex. The price is \$10 per plant and are available in red, white, or pink. The deadline for orders is December 14th.



Thank you to the Women's group for planning and spearheading the Holly Fair. It was a successful day enjoyed by all. The group will meet on Thursday, December 4th at 5:30 to assemble and wrap packages for the Albany Maritime Ministry. Come join us—bring some wrapping paper scissors and tape, and a shoe box or two if you have one. Everyone is welcome to help out!



## Candles That Tell a Story

Lighting its candles each Sunday is a treasured tradition during the four weeks of Advent.

Depending on denomination, churches use different color combinations for the candles. Some place four blue candles around the wreath with a white one in the center, while others use all white. Many light purple candles on the first two Sundays, pink on the third, purple again on the fourth, and then a large white candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Each part of the wreath carries symbolic meaning:

- **The wreath:** Its circular shape represents the everlasting love of God, having no beginning or end. The green symbolizes eternal life.
- **The four candles:** Mark the four weeks of Advent. One tradition says that each candle also represents 1,000 years, totaling 4,000 years from Adam and Eve to Christ's birth.
- **Purple candles:** in ancient times, was expensive and was considered the color of royalty and kings. On Christmas,

Christ is proclaimed King of Kings. Purple also symbolizes humility and penitence. The first purple candle represents Hope; the second, Peace; and the final purple candle, Love.

- **Blue candles:** Blue is another color often used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use blue candles to symbolize the night sky and the anticipation of the announcement of Christ's birth. Blue also symbolizes the beginning of a new creation as in the waters of Genesis 1.

- **The pink candle:** Lit on the third Sunday, it represents Joy and marks the halfway point of Advent.

**The white candle:** The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle. Its light symbolizes Christ the Savior — "the light of the world."

The beauty and brightness from the glow of all five candles is a reminder that Christ's life was the light for all earth's people — "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5, NRSV).

The Advent wreath is more than just greenery and candles—it's a symbol of watchfulness and growing joy as Christmas draws near.



On Sunday, December 14th we will have a Congregational meeting (along with our Pot Luck Luncheon). The main topic is the budget for Unity for 2026. Please plan to attend and show your support as we begin to merge together.

### **Albany Maritime Ministry - Christmas at Sea:**

Take the time to share your blessings and the joy of Christmas with seafarers who will be out on the sea and far away from home and loved ones. Collect a few items, place in a shoe box and gift-wrap it for the sailors whose ships are docked at the Port of Albany during the Christmas season. Suggestions to include: knit cap, gloves, socks, writing paper, envelopes, comb or brush, book, ear buds, toiletries (razor, shaving cream, shampoo, shower gel, No candy or other edibles, please. There will be an Open House at the Center on December 4th after 1 pm for anyone wishing to drop off packages and see the center. Packages can also be left at the Church. Thank you for your support!



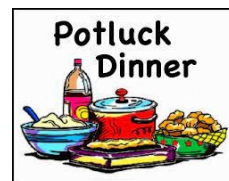
### **HOSPITALITY BAGS FOR THE CREW DURING THE YEAR**

During the year we hope to institute a "bag" program to deliver to the ships when they are in Port and the seafarers cannot get ashore. Items for the bags would include secular items (Magazines, ear buds –from the dollar store –I love NY anything! Puzzles, etc) religious items (bibles, rosaries, etc) and clothing items (toiletries, toothpaste, gloves, hats, t-shirts, sweatshirts) and DVDs. Items for the "Hospitality Bags" can be gathered throughout the year. We will load the bags—just send in some of the desired items.

*Christmas at Sea Boxes and other items can be brought in to Unity. See Diane Kingston if you have any questions*

### **Potluck Meals**

**Our Pot Luck Luncheon for December will be on December 14th. It will coincide with a congregational meeting on that day.**



The 2026 altar flower chart will be posted in the Narthex soon. Please sign up for your preferred Sunday and provide your bulletin dedication. Flower cost is \$36. Thank you.

**PORTALS OF PRAYER FOR JANUARY—MARCH WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE NARTHEX. BOTH LARGE COPIES AND POCKET EDITIONS ARE AVAILABLE. WHY NOT TAKE ONE TO A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOR WHO MIGHT NEED A LIFT EACH DAY.**





**CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE**  
**—DECEMBER 24th—**  
**5:30 PM—FAMILY CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP**  
**--DECEMBER 25 --**  
**10:00 AM CHRISTMAS DAY WORSHIP**

**AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM**

Hello Everyone!

I want to start by wishing everyone a very happy Thanksgiving. What a wonderful day for friends, family, food, and football! I was blessed to spend the holiday with my family, and I hope you all had the opportunity to spend the day with your loved ones. However, it is now time to gear up for most of the kids' favorite holiday— Christmas.

The kids are extremely excited we are finally in December and Christmas is just a few short weeks away. Conversations about Christmas lists, favorite holiday traditions, and the possibility of playing in snow have already filled the building. As teachers we will strive to educate and remind these great kids of the loving message of Jesus Christ, as well as about this being a season of GIVING and not just receiving.

I want to thank all of you for your continued support and generosity. If you are looking to donate any toys or items during this holiday season, I ask you to look for snow related items. The kids are all sorts of excited about snow and I am looking to get them more shovels, sleds, gloves, hats, etc. so they may safely enjoy playing outside this winter. Thank you very much and I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas season.

**John 3:16:** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Merry Christmas,

Jack Verhayden



### The Overflow Homeless Shelter News

The Homeless Shelter at First Lutheran Church opened in November, providing a place for some of the homeless men in Albany to come in from the cold, take a shower, have a filling meal and a warm place to sleep. Local churches help by providing the evening meal throughout the shelter season (Nov.-April). A meal calendar was prepared and Unity's Tuesday dates are: December 23, February 17 and April 14.



Can you help prepare a meal? Think family dinners, favorites include: casseroles, meatloaf & mashed potatoes, chicken & rice, macaroni & cheese. A meal usually includes: an entree, vegetable or salad and a dessert. Because of dietary considerations, the shelter asks that there be no meals with pork or fish. Meals should be completely cooked and in disposable pans. Dishes can even be prepared ahead of time and arrangements made for delivery.

A sign-up sheet will be posted on the board in the narthex. If you have any questions contact Sheryl Baum. Thank you so much!

We received a follow-up note from the homeless shelter contact that there are still several nights without meal providers

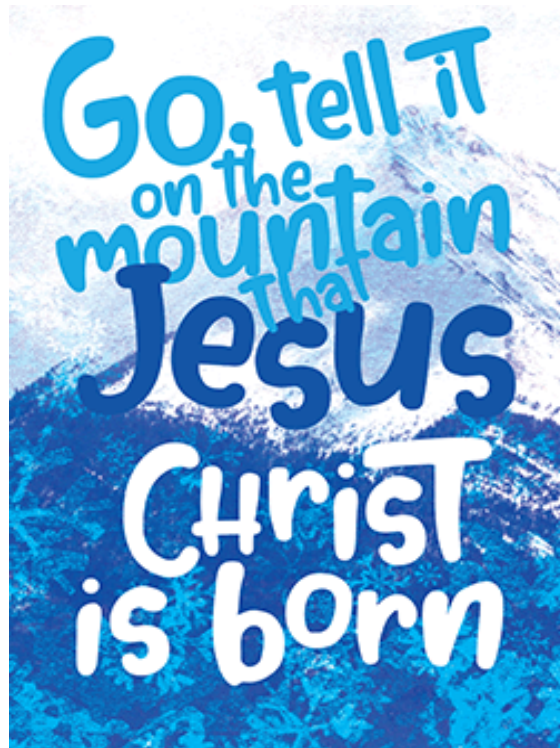
--- so if you would like to provide an extra meal or if you know any Scouts, highschoolers or youth groups that are looking for a service project --- please let me know! Thanks, Sheryl

### Christmas Prayer: The True Gift

Dear Lord,

You have brought us to Christmastime once more. Help us not to get lost in the glitter and the glow, but to see the true glory of the birth of Your only begotten Son. Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly to parties, presents and decorations, and turn our eyes instead to Christ — who bears Your very image and brings us Your message of love and hope.

In the glorious name of Christ, we pray. Amen.





## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 5. KENNEDY GRACE FOLEY  
CASSIDY OLIVIA FOLEY
- 7. ALAN DAVID ALEXANDER
- 11. CHELSEA DORNER
- 12. BRITT FOLEY
- 13. GEORGIANA RUSSO
- 18. PASTOR JIM DORNER
- 20. MAYRA VEGA  
ELI BAUM
- 28. NOOR JAVED  
JEAN KLEINKE
- 28 .DAVID ALEXANDER
- 30. RAIGEN LYNCH

## CANCELLATIONS AND CLOSINGS

No one wants to hear it, but it is November. That 4 letter word will be soon upon us.

If the weather is bad, check with TV and radio stations for cancellations and closures at St. Paul's. There will be notification on Capital News 9, channels 6,10,13, WXXA, and radio stations FLY92, WGY, WRVE, B-95.5.



## DECEMBER WORSHIP HELPERS ELDER -ALAN ALEXANDER

DATE	FLOWERS	SERVICE STEWARD	READER	ALTAR	COFFEE HOUR
12/7	The Alexanders for Alan's birthday	Andrew VanAcker	Dina Lee		Judy Zamurs
12/14	Pam Lupien in memory of her mother	James Welter	Lorraine Urbano	Alida Earl	POT LUCK
12/21	Lori Seim in memory of Dad	Mark Simmons		Ruth and Mark Simmons	
12/28	The Alexanders for Alex's Birthday	Bill Boomhower	José Vega		





1 Luke 1:1-4	2 John 1:1-5, 18	3 John 1:1-5, 18	4 Isaiah 9:6-7 & 11:1-5	5 Micah 5:2-4
6 Matthew 1:1-17	7 Luke 1:5-25	8 Luke 1:26-38	9 Luke 1:39-45	10 Luke 1:46-56
11 Luke 1:57-66	12 Luke 1:67-80	13 Luke 2:1-7	14 Matthew 1:18-25	15 Luke 2:8-21
16 Matthew 2:1-12	17 Luke 2:22-40	18 Matthew 2:13-15	19 Matthew 2:16-18	20 Matthew 2:19-23
21 John 1:6-8, 15	22 John 1:9-14	23 John 1:16-17	24 Isaiah 52:13- 53:12	25 Revelation 21:1-8