



Mount Olive EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2023

920.739.9194 • 930 E. Florida Ave., Appleton, WI 54911 • www.mountoliveappleton.com

Are you Ready?

This time of year, when someone asks you, “Are you ready?” they probably mean, “Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet?” For so many people, that's what it means to be prepared for Christmas. It means making sure you have your gifts purchased, your decorations up, and your Christmas cookies baked. Such activities are certainly appropriate for the holiday season. We've probably all engaged in them to one degree or another. But they really are not the essence of true Christmas preparations.

Being prepared for this time of year involves not so much what's going on in our houses. Far more important is what's going on in our hearts. This season is a time to reflect not only on the gifts that we're giving to others (or the gifts that we're hoping to receive), but rather the much greater gift that God has given to us in a baby born in a stable. It's God's gift of his holy Son to live and die in our place that makes this season worth celebrating.

And yet, while we all can look at a calendar and know how many days remain until Christmas, we cannot do the same regarding an even more important event—the day we meet Jesus, face to face. That's why Jesus once told his listeners, *“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Matthew 24:44)”* The question is, are you ready for that event, the moment when God decides whether you will spend eternity with him or without him?

Truthfully, only God can make you ready for Judgment Day. And there is only one way he does it. And that's by planting in your heart a faith that trusts that Jesus is your only hope for living with God forever. God did that for you through the washing of holy baptism. That's when he created saving faith in your heart. The faith that God created, he also continues to nourish—through his Holy Word. Isn't that what the Bible teaches? *Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. (Romans 10:17)*

This Advent season, be sure to set aside some extra time to gather around God's Word and sacraments with your fellow Christians. It's how God will get you ready for what he has in store for you now, and in the future. Even if you never get all your Christmas decorations put up, you'll still be ready. You'll be ready, not only for the celebration of Jesus' first coming, but more importantly, you'll be ready for the reality of Jesus' second coming. Come, Lord Jesus!

Being prepared by God with you,
Pastor Robb Raasch



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Membership Changes

Deaths

- * Karen Bork passed on November 6, 2023

Adult Confirmation

- * Kevin & Emily Grasse (5 children)

Transfer Out

- * Connor & Jennifer Graham to Victory of the Lamb Lutheran Church, Franklin, WI

Release

- * Jacqueline Gonzalez
- * Jeff & Jalin (Crandall) Krepline
- * Evan Sweeney
- * Thomas Ziebell to Trinity Lutheran, Menasha, WI

Remove

- * Dana Piehl



Memorials & Gifts

Forward in Faith 2

- \$50 Family & Friends in memory of Mark Johnson
- \$25 Sandra Arnold in memory of Mark Johnson
- \$25 Tom & Elaine Bartel in memory of Mark Johnson
- \$25 Louise Ebert in memory of Mark Johnson
- \$10 Kay Zuberbier in memory of Mark Johnson
- \$30 Wayne & Joan Strelow in memory of Mark Johnson
- \$30 Wayne & Joan Strelow in memory of Charles Dreger
- \$50 David & Patricia Schwartz in memory of James Engel, brother of Joan Mueller
- \$25 Family & Friends in memory of Steve Collins
- \$25 Jerome & Susan Laabs in memory of James Engel

Forward in Faith 2

- \$25 Richard & Marion Hinz in memory of Charles Dreger

- \$30 Family & Friends in memory of Leta Krueger

General Fund

- \$132 John & Melody Truby in honor of their 32nd wedding anniversary

Ministerial Student Fund

- \$30 Al & Debbie Vetting in memory of Charles Dreger

Mount Olive School

- \$250 Family & Friends in memory of Charles Dreger
- \$10 Kay Zuberbier in memory of Charles Dreger
- \$25 Roger & Bonnie VandenLagenberg in memory of Charles Dreger



Church Council Report from November 20, 2023 Meeting

Pastors' Report

Pastor Zank: Spent part of last week in New Ulm to meet with the leaders of Martin Luther College and share the support from the Conference of Presidents. Traveling in January to the Conference of Presidents meeting.

Pastor Raasch: Spent a couple days at synod to provide updates on ministry in Asia. The pastors are visiting the Mount Olive shut-ins to fill in for Jerry Evansen while he is out. Pastor is working on filling the 2024 Mount Olive board vacancies.

Pastor Priewe: Advent Wednesdays start the week after Thanksgiving. The Mount Olive Pastors took educational classes at FVL in October. Pastor met with prospective new members from Fall Festival.

Pastor Gawel: Presented at the Fox Valley youth night. Preparing for Christmas services, devotions, and related events.

Financial Report

Reviewed October 2023 financial report:

- October offerings were \$1,928 higher than budgeted.
- Tuition was \$12,718 lower than budgeted.
- Other income was \$6,449 lower than budgeted.
- Total income was \$17,239 lower than budgeted.
- Total expenses, before FVL/Synod distributions, were \$1,537 higher than budgeted.
- The net loss for October, including FVL/Synod distributions of \$29,600 was \$83,373. This compares to a budgeted net loss of \$64,597. The result is \$18,776 unfavorable to budget for the month.
- Note: Balance sheet amounts now include accrual balances.

Reviewed YTD (18 weeks ending October 2023) financial report:

- Offerings are \$12,772 higher than budgeted.
- Total income is \$23,022 higher than budgeted.
- Total expenses are \$3,165 lower than budgeted.
- YTD net loss is \$27,568, which compares to the budgeted YTD loss of \$53,755. The result is \$26,187 favorable to budget.

Forward in Faith 2 cost tracking update—Operations Manager Paul Koll reported that:

- total receipts for November 2020 through October 2023 (the full 3 years of the FIF2 campaign) were \$2,177,663. \$2,015,144 came from pledges and related offerings and \$162,529 came from other sources.
- member pledged receipts for the month were \$15,503. This brings the total to \$1,517,117 which is 91.8% of the total 3-year pledge amounts.
- funds received over the past three years allowed Mount Olive to pay off the entire cost of FIF2 construction (about \$1.3M) plus pay down debt by an additional \$637K. Total school expansion costs between FIF1 and FIF2 was \$6.5M; by God's grace, Mount Olive has paid off more than \$5 million in construction costs over the past 6 years.
- at the end of October 2023 total Forward in Faith debt is \$1,460,381.

With Peter Joch at his term limit, Daryl Ohland has volunteered to become the chairman for the Board of Finance starting in January 2024.

New Business

2024-2025 LES Tuition Rates

The Board of Education recommends a 6.62% increase to Mount Olive school tuition for the first child member. A motion was made and carried to approve the increase in school tuition for the first child member.

Announcements

*Next EC meeting - Monday, Dec. 4, 9am

*Next Church Council meeting - Monday, Dec. 18, 7pm



Greetings from Thailand

Merry Christmas from the Zondag family in Thailand. We thank God for your partnership in Thailand's gospel ministry and we pray that your Christmas season is focused on Christ.

This year we are blessed to celebrate the wedding of one of our church leaders, a Thai church spiritual growth weekend, Christmas caroling, and our regular Christmas services. We pray that the busyness of the season does not distract you or us from the celebration of our "God with us". God bless you all.

Missionary Mark and Sarah, Esther (left) and Anastasia (right)

We would also like to thank all those who participated in the Mission Bake Sale for Thailand. The many bakers who provided tasty treats, the volunteers at the sale, and the purchasers who enjoyed the treats – all helped to support the Zondag family and our mission in Thailand. We were able to send a special gift of \$1,581.00!

Mount Olive Mission Partner Committee



Our second annual LWMS/SISTERS Make and Give Night" on November 14th was a great success! God certainly blessed the evening. We tied 30 blankets for the Outagamie County Foster Care Closet and collected an entire table full of gloves, mittens, toiletry items, coloring books and crayons. Thank you to all who made food, bought material, tied blankets, helped clean up and donated items for the Foster Care Closet. We had over 60 women and girls attend. The food was delicious and the Christian fellowship absolutely fantastic.

The LWMS Christmas Mission Tree this year will help the Malawi, Africa Sanitation Crisis. Cyclone Freddy devastated Malawi with severe flooding in March. Many homes collapsed and latrines flooded, worsening an already widespread cholera outbreak. Contributions to the Christmas Mission Tree will aid in helping volunteers restore the sanitation system, build new latrines, and give emergency clean water kits to many African Lutheran households.

Just take an envelope from the tree in the Atrium and your donation can be placed in the offering plate during any service. Make checks payable to Mount Olive Lutheran Church. The tree will be up November 28th through January 2nd. Thank you to Mrs. Sehloff, Mrs. Jaeger and the second-grade class for providing the ornaments.

Mark your calendars...

- LWMS Meeting/Decorate Atrium Tree – November 28, 2023, 6:00 PM Atrium/Fireside Room
- LWMS Meeting – January 9, 2024, 6:00 PM, Fireside Room
- Paperland Circuit Spring Rally – April 20, 2024 – St. Paul's, Winneconne
- 61th Annual LWMS Convention – June 27-30, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Thank you, Mount Olive for the continued support and prayers for LWMS and WELS missions.



Hands and Feet of Jesus Ministry Update

Hands and Feet of Jesus provides assistance and support to members of Mount Olive undergoing various life challenges and crises. Since this ministry launched, we have provided support to over a dozen individuals and families. Some of the ways we have helped include setting up meal trains following surgeries, card showers for encouragement, friendship visits, medication and grocery pick up, lawn care, and assistance with moving. If you are aware of someone that could use some help please call the church office at 920-739-9194 and they can put you in touch with our care team.



"May the favor of the Lord our God establish the work of our hands for us, yes, establish the work of our hands" Psalm 90:17. Thank you to all of you that served our Mount Olive family through the Hands and Feet of Jesus ministry. If you have not already indicated your willingness to help Hands and Feet of Jesus, please consider prayerfully how you can help. Then reach out to us at handsandfeet@mountoliveappleton.com.



Does Your Employer Match Charitable Gifts?

Companies like Amcor, Bemis, K-C, Menasha Corp, Neenah Paper, Secura, Thrivent and WI Energy provide gift matching programs for their employees. Most of these companies use a 1:1 ratio for matching (for every dollar the employee gives to the church or school, the company gives another dollar).

Most companies require your donation to be made out to Mount Olive School. (Please note: your gifts directed to Mount Olive School will also benefit the overall ministry of Mount Olive, by reducing the amount needed for the school from the church budget.) Online donations to be matched should be directed to "Forward in Faith 2 (for Co. Matching)" or "Mt. Olive School (for Co. Match)."

Contact your human resources department to see if your company matches gifts for its employees or go to www.doublethedonation.com. If you need additional help, please contact the church finance office at finance.office@mountoliveappleton.com or 739-9194. The little bit of extra effort it takes to utilize a company's matching gift program provides additional dollars to support the gospel ministry that Mount Olive is carrying out.

Hope Center Donations Needed

So far in 2023, The Hope Center has served over 1500 local families to provide practical help and the good news of Jesus. We have recently reached a record of 164 families per month, including an increasing number of local refugee families and families rebuilding their lives after homelessness. Please consider sharing a monetary gift to help us with the most-needed supplies. Your \$20 monthly recurring gift provides for one family and a one-time gift of \$300 provides basic needs for a family moving from homelessness. Find an electronic giving link and a list of our most-needed items at www.hope-center.org/how-to-help. Questions? Call 920-739-0039 or email information@hope-center.org. We are grateful for your ongoing partnership to share hope and help with those in need.



The Hope Center, 1316 W. Lawrence St, Appleton, WI 54914, is a compassion ministry of WELS United located on the campus of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in downtown Appleton, WI. The center is a non-profit, volunteer run organization financially supported by members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and in partnership with the Fox Cities Diaper Bank.





Purchase gift cards for all your holiday shopping needs while raising money for Mount Olive Lutheran Church and School! Many gift cards are available immediately, and special orders are placed each Monday. To view a complete list of available retailers use the RaiseRight app. To ensure delivery by Christmas, **the deadline for special gift card orders is Monday, December 11.**

SCRIP gift cards are available from 9:00-9:25 AM and 10:00-10:25 AM on Sundays in the church atrium and on Mondays and Fridays from before and after school in the school office.

Questions? Call 920-739-9194 or email scrip@mountoliveappleton.com.



December 1	Roger Wilke, 85
December 2	Linda Schlavensky, 83
December 6	Karen Johnson, 80
December 10	Rev. David Bode, 85
December 11	Pat Bellin, 85
December 17	Mary Heckert, 76
December 23	Robert Bauer, 86
December 25	Yolanda Tesch, 80
December 29	William Bastar, 83

Church Library News

Adult Fiction: *The Judge Who Stole Christmas*, by Randy Singer. This is a story of religious freedom bumping heads with the law. A federal judge rules the annual live Nativity scene, held in the fictitious town of Possum, Virginia, unconstitutional. But when Thomas Hammond, who plays Joseph, refuses to abide by the court order, it takes a Christmas miracle to rectify the situation. This book is humorous and full of unexpected twists and surprises. Plus, it's an interesting read for anyone wanting to know where our courts stand on the issue of celebrating the religious aspects of Christmas on public land.



Christmas Dreams: Four Inspirational Love Stories from Christmas Present. 1) *Evergreen*, by Rebecca Germany. 2) *Search for the Star*, by Mary Hawkins. 3) *The Christmas Wreath*, by Veda Boyd Jones. 4) *Christmas Baby*, by Melanie Panagiotopoulos.

Internet Link to the Church Library: Go to www.mountoliveappleton.com, click the "Member's Page" heading found at the top of the homepage. Then within the "Quick Links" section on the right, select "Church Library Access." You will be taken to the church library's website where you can perform a custom search or simply click on "New Materials" to see what's been recently added to the library.

Return all materials to the "Book Return" slot at the check out counter.

Come Check Us Out!!





2024 Flower Donation Calendar

The calendar is on display in the west school hallway. Members may sign-up to donate a floral arrangement for the chancel area. This is a nice way to help beautify our church as well as commemorate special events or express gratitude for blessings received.



Poinsettia Orders

Please consider purchasing a poinsettia to help decorate our chancel during Christmas. We will be taking orders for twenty-five poinsettias. The cost is \$28 each. To order a poinsettia, please call the church office at 739-9194 or email church.office@mountoliveappleton.com.



Apple Valley Food Pantry

The pantry's next collection date is December 9.

The following list of items are needed: healthy adult cereals, canned pastas, chili beans, chunky soups, cookies, crackers, body and hand lotions, cleaning supplies, bath tissue, facial tissue and paper towels.

Thank you for your support of the pantry. Your donations of monetary and non-perishable food items are greatly appreciated.

2603 W College Ave, Appleton WI 54914

Email: applevalleyfoodpantry@gmail.com

Website: welsunited.org/programs/apple-valley-food-pantry.php

Coffee Café The Coffee Café sign up is available online. New and past volunteers are welcome to join us. Training is available! Please sign up using the "Cafe Sign Up" link on the [Mount Olive website](http://MountOliveWebsite.com).



Contact Jennifer Klemp at jklemp31@gmail.com for more information and

	Early 8-10 AM	Late 10 AM-Noon
Dec. 3	Medema family	Mark & Merri Schroeder
Dec. 10	Mark & Merri Schroeder	Brad & Laura Waurio
Dec. 17	OPEN	OPEN
Dec. 24	CLOSED	CLOSED
Dec. 31	OPEN	OPEN

Heading South

Please contact the church office with any new information, so we can update our files and keep in contact with you.



SPECIAL WORSHIP SERVICES

Midweek Advent Services Nov. 29, Dec. 6, Dec. 13

10 AM & 6 PM, Advent Supper 4:30-5:30 PM

Christmas Eve Services 8 AM, 10:30 AM, 4 PM, 6 PM

Christmas Day Services 9 AM with Communion

Saturday, December 30 5:30 PM

New Year's Eve Service 8 & 10:30 AM

New Year's Day Services 6 PM

Dec. 30-Jan. 1 will feature one New Year's Sermon and Communion at all services.



UPCOMING EVENTS

[Click here](#) to go to our website calendar for more details and the most up-to-date information.

December 3	Advent by Candlelight, 4 PM
December 6 & 13	Midweek Advent Service at 10 AM & 6 PM
December 6 & 13	Soup Supper from 4:30-5:30 PM
December 10	Apple Valley Food Pantry Pick-up
December 16	3K-5K Christmas Service, 3 PM
December 20	Gr 1-8 Christmas Service at FVL, 6 PM
Dec. 21—Jan. 2	No School, Christmas Break
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship Services at 8 AM, 10:30 AM, 4 PM, 6 PM
December 25	Christmas Day Worship Service at 9 AM
December 25	Christmas Day, Church Office closed
December 27	College Student/Recent Grad Night, 6-9 PM in the Commons
Dec. 30—Jan. 1	Regular worship schedule with one New Year's theme sermon and communion at all services.
January 1	New Year's Day, Church Office closed
January 3	School Resumes
January 3	Bible Classes Resume
January 13	Apple Valley Food Pantry Pick-up

