



Olive Tree Newsletter

December 2023

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isiah 9:6, NRSV)



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Minister's Musings



Thomas Fedorka, LLM

Back in November the NE Synod had its annual Convocation. This is a time when rostered religious leaders gather to worship, visit, relax and recharge. I understand the commitment GLC make to send me to Convocation and I truly appreciate it.

Monday night we had a discussion with Bishop Tracie Bartholomew from the NJ Synod of the ELCA. She has been, and continues to be, a strong leader in the ELCA in the areas of social justice, racial and gender equality, and God's Grace. Bishop Bartholomew talked a lot about what a Bishop does. This was helpful as we prepare to elect a new Bishop in June 2024. A Bishop is a pastor to the pastors (and LLMs). A Bishop sets policy, prays, and speaks on behalf of the synod. A Bishop does not speak for the synod or any individual church community. A Bishop has a lot of responsibility and very little authority.

Tuesday was a focus on our individual Emotional Quotient or our Emotional Intelligence (EQ-i). Prior to attending Convocation, each attendee filled out a questionnaire used to evaluate our individual EQ-i. The results were shared with us the weekend before convocation and I can tell you, mine were pretty humbling. I was beginning to worry if I was in the wrong profession until I spoke to many colleagues who were also humbled by their individual results. It might not make you feel better, but it made me feel that I was in good company. We learned strategies to improve, and I promise that I will work to be better. I cannot promise results, only a commitment to serve you better.

Tuesday afternoon was fellowship time filled with various activities including hiking, napping, running, a brewery visit, theater practice, or just some meditative alone time. The evening highlight was a Yankee swap gift exchange.

Wednesday morning, we were back in plenary sessions for various updates on the AntiRacism Board, Bishop's farewell remarks and various committee announcements. There is much going on around our NE Synod and the ELCA Churchwide.

Part of Bishop Hazelwood's comments included topics the new Bishop will need to address. One near and dear to my heart is the continuation of the Licensed Lay Ministry program. While the numbers of LLMs continue to grow (from 12 when I started to ~25 now) this program remains controversial. Some (ordained and lay members) feel that only an ordained Pastor should lead worship, others feel that lay leaders are the future of the church. Either way all the LLMs in the NE Synod serve at the invitation of the Bishop, so it is only right for Bishop Hazelwood to leave the future of the program in the hands of the new incoming Bishop.

Each day ended with worship, prayer, and meditation. I think this is the most powerful part of the program. I truly feel revived and ready to serve when I return. Thank you again for your generosity for allowing me to attend Convocation.

This Far By Faith

Submitted by Thomas Fedorka

Gethsemane Lutheran Church – for everyone, a place in the Garden. We have a rich history of prayer, Christian education, and community involvement. We have grown, developed, and changed throughout the years. One thing that has not changed is our commitment to God, our Savior Jesus Christ, and continuing His work here on Earth.

It reminds me of the hymn We've Come This Far by Faith, ELW 633

We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord:
trusting in His Holy word, he's never failed us yet.
Oh, can't turn around, we've come this
far by faith. We've come this far by faith.

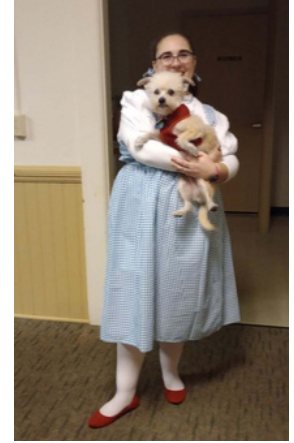
We sang this hymn at convocation last November and it brought tears to my eyes. Those of you that know me are probably not surprised as you know how easily I cry, but this somehow was different. The words, the tune, the melody, and the setting were all so very powerful. It made me think of my own faith journey and the many times I've quit, strayed, or just turned around. I seem to always come back to the Lord.

It made me think of Gethsemane; the congregation as a whole as well as all the individual members. We've come this far by faith. God will carry us through. We don't know our future, but we do know our God. Our God, Savior and King, will not abandon us. Our Sovereign God is with us forever and for always.

We've come this far by faith; we can't turn around now.



Trunk-or-Treat Pictures



Thank you to everyone who came out to offer candy to the local children for our indoor trunk-or-treat event. Even though the weather didn't cooperate for us to be outside with our actual trunks, the kids (and one dog) had some fun and plenty of sugar!



Friendsgiving

Submitted by Sarah Kjendal

Our first Friendsgiving was a success! Lovely decorations by Diane...fabulous fellowship with our Gethsemane family...delicious desserts with a table laden with pies—apple, blueberry, lemon meringue, pumpkin and some chocolate variations and more!!...Dinner included turkey, meatballs, chili, two soups, and fruit, jello and broccoli salads, Mary's hot cocoa bar, and more!

It was a wonderful way to get to know each other better and to be gathered together in faith and thanksgiving.



Book Review

Submitted by Crystal Bluto

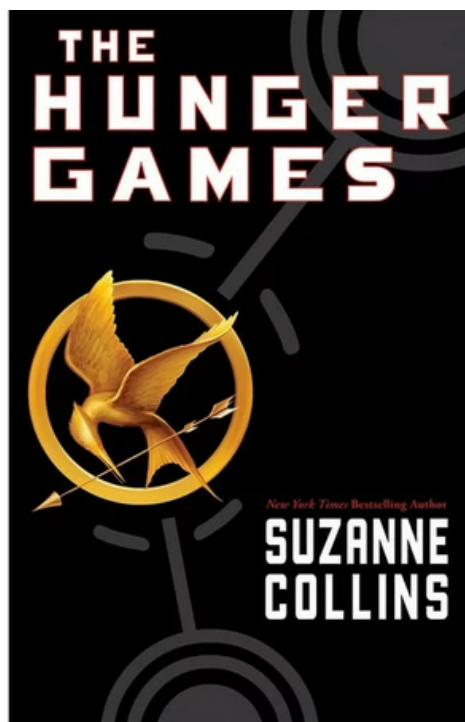
On its surface, the Panem Suzanne Collins introduced in the first novel of her trilogy, The Hunger Games, seems to be a world without religion. In the novel, no one is ever seen to pray, even covertly, or mention God, even in the form of an “OMG”. Instead, this appears to be an entirely secular dystopian future, set in present-day United States.

Under its surface, however, the story of The Hunger Games is one with themes of sacrifice, love, and giving up fear. These themes are familiar to Christians, and parts of the story bring to mind the perfection of God’s love for us.

In this world, the oppressor, the Capitol, rules over twelve districts. A rebellion had been attempted at one point and was violently halted. As punishment for their rebellion, every year two young people, a male and a female, from each district, are forced to compete in a bloody competition to the death. When young Primrose is conscripted for this task, her older sister Katniss volunteers to take her place. Knowing it will likely mean her death, nevertheless Katniss chooses the path of sacrifice to allow her sister a chance at life.

During the competition, Katniss and her male counterpart Peeta are advised to pretend to be in love, to ramp up the drama of the game and pull in sponsorships. Even though their romantic love is an act, at least on Katniss’s part, they begin to truly love each other as friends, so much that they defy their oppressor by refusing to harm each other.

Facing an event in which every other participant has given into fear and thus violence, Katniss and Peeta chose love, thus thwarting the evil intentions of their oppressors and opening the door for further defiance of the Capitol. In the end, love pulls through and allows both these young people to live. Fear begets violence, but perfect love begets true sacrifice and breaks the rod of the oppressor.



CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS 2023

Members of Gethsemane have the opportunity to donate poinsettias to decorate the Sanctuary and/or make a special offering for the relief of hunger throughout the world. Please return this form with your gift to the church no later than Wednesday, November 29.

(Since our order deadline is early this year, you may email your order information to office@glcmanchester.org and submit your check in the next Sunday offering.)



Number of Poinsettias @ \$15 each _____

An offering to the Hunger Appeal \$ _____

Include your envelope number here _____

A GIFT FROM:

IN MEMORY OF:

IN THANKSGIVING FOR:

Please make your check payable to Gethsemane Lutheran Church

and place in the Sunday collection basket

ReachOut Updates

Submitted by Crystal Bluto

- Our next community meal is Sunday, December 17 from 3-4 PM. As always, we can use more volunteers, as well as donations of items for our snack bags: fruit-and-grain bars, applesauce, cheese/peanut butter crackers, and bottles of water.
- As the weather gets colder, we are expecting more requests for warm hats, gloves/mittens, and scarfs from our unsheltered guests. If you have any of these items you would like to donate, whether new or gently used, please place them in the ReachOut room.
- Thank you all for your continued support of our ministries!



Caroling, December 3 and 10

Submitted by Theo Groh

Join us as we go door to door in the local neighborhood sharing carols and holiday cheer, and letting folks know about our community meals, advent and Christmas services. We will gather after worship (and after meeting with Pastor Maria on December 10) and then head out to spread some joy and let people know that we are here and would love to have them join us for worship or for a meal.



Announcements



Christmas eve service:






Our Christmas eve service will be at 6 pm on Sunday, December 24. Please invite your family and friends to join us!

Email Address Change and Security Reminder:

The church office email address has changed to office@glcmanchester.org. Please add this new address to your “safe sender” list to avoid having messages from the church end up in your Spam folder. And, as always, please be cautious of emails or text messages appearing to be from Thomas or the church. We will never be contacting you to solicit money or gift cards.

Council and Congregational Announcements:

- Pledges are Due December 3
- Pastor Maria will be returning on December 10 to discuss options with the congregation after church.
- The council meeting on Thursday, December 21 will be an open council meeting. All members are welcome. Please see Dane for the ZOOM link.
- Our annual congregational meeting will be on Sunday, January 28 after church. Please mark your calendars plan on attending.
- The council meeting minutes are printed each month and available at the top of the stairs, near the council. Please take a look, and don't be shy about asking your questions to council members.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>26</p> <p>Altar Guild - Judie</p> <p>9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE</p> <p>11:00am Christian Ed</p> <p>6:00pm AA</p>	<p>27</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p> <p>7:00pm AA MNWS</p>	<p>28</p> <p>7:00pm AA WB2B</p>	<p>29</p> <p>12:00pm BIBLE STUDY</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>1</p> <p>12:00pm AA</p> <p>WNBB 5:00pm AA</p> <p>HHE</p>	<p>2</p> <p>10:00am AA NO NAME</p>
<p>3</p>  <p>Altar Guild - Bonnie</p> <p>Pledges Due</p> <p>9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE</p> <p>11:00am Caroling</p> <p>11:00am Christian Ed</p> <p>6:00pm AA</p>	<p>4</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p> <p>7:00pm AA MNWS</p> <p>7:30pm COMMUNICATIONS</p>	<p>5</p> <p>7:00pm AA WB2B</p>	<p>6</p> <p>12:00pm BIBLE STUDY</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p> <p>6:00pm Prayer</p> <p><u>Service for Peace</u></p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <p>12:00pm AA</p> <p>WNBB 5:00pm AA</p> <p>HHE</p>	<p>9</p> <p>10:00am AA NO NAME</p>
<p>10</p>  <p>Altar Guild - Sue</p> <p>9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE</p> <p>11:00am Caroling</p> <p>11:00am Pastor Maria</p> <p>6:00pm AA</p>	<p>11</p> <p>12:00pm MARY MARTHA</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p> <p>6:30pm REACHOUT</p> <p>7:00pm AA MNWS</p>	<p>12</p> <p>7:00pm AA WB2B</p> <p>7:00pm FINANCE</p>	<p>13</p> <p>12:00pm BIBLE STUDY</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p> <p>12:00pm AA</p> <p>WNBB 5:00pm AA</p> <p>HHE</p>	<p>16</p> <p>10:00am AA NO NAME</p>
<p>17</p>  <p>Community Meal</p> <p>Altar Guild - Janine</p> <p>9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE</p> <p>11:00am Christian Ed</p> <p>3:00pm COMMUNITY MEAL</p> <p>6:00pm AA</p>	<p>18</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p> <p>7:00pm AA MNWS</p>	<p>19</p> <p>7:00pm AA WB2B</p>	<p>20</p> <p>12:00pm BIBLE STUDY</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7:00pm OPEN COUNCIL MEETING: FOR ALL MEMBERS</p>	<p>22</p> <p>12:00pm AA</p> <p>WNBB 5:00pm AA</p> <p>HHE</p>	<p>23</p> <p>10:00am AA NO NAME</p>
<p>24</p>  <p>Altar Guild - Judie</p> <p>9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE</p> <p>11:00am Christian Ed</p> <p>6:00pm AA</p> <p>6:00pm Christmas Eve Service</p>	<p>25</p>  <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p> <p>7:00pm AA MNWS</p>	<p>26</p> <p>7:00pm AA WB2B</p>	<p>27</p> <p>12:00pm BIBLE STUDY</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p> <p>12:00pm AA</p> <p>WNBB 5:00pm AA</p> <p>HHE</p>	<p>30</p> <p>10:00am AA NO NAME</p>
<p>31</p> <p>Altar Guild - Bonnie</p> <p>9:30am WORSHIP SERVICE</p> <p>11:00am Christian Ed</p> <p>6:00pm AA</p>	<p>1</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p> <p>7:00pm AA MNWS</p> <p>7:30pm COMMUNICATIONS</p>	<p>2</p> <p>7:00pm AA WB2B</p>	<p>3</p> <p>12:00pm BIBLE STUDY</p> <p>5:00pm AA HHE</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p> <p>12:00pm AA</p> <p>WNBB 5:00pm AA</p> <p>HHE</p>	<p>6</p> <p>10:00am AA NO NAME</p>



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Director of Music: Gary MacDonald





Gethsemane Lutheran
Church

**Free
Community
Meals**



Third Sunday of Every
Month
3-4 PM

**Next Meal Sunday,
December 17**

***60 Pennacook
Street***

(603) 623-3451

