

# The Contact

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH — NORFOLK

1301 Colley Ave., Norfolk, VA 23517

Parish Office: 757 625 1953

[www.flcnorfolk.com](http://www.flcnorfolk.com)

VOL. XXXV

DECEMBER 2021

NO. 12

## Christmas Eve

There's no place like home for Christmas, and we're so excited to welcome you back home this year! Gather loved ones of all ages for a joyful service, singing together in a space of beauty and community, telling the ancient story of God's continued love as made known in the infant Christ. Adorned with poinsettias and two beautiful Chrismon trees, the church will glow in candlelight, while readings from Holy Scripture and favorite hymns carry us to the manger in Bethlehem. Two services are offered this year:

### 5:00 p.m. for families with young children

*Children are invited to come dressed as angels, shepherds, or animals of their choice for a dramatic retelling of the Christmas story. A limited supply of costumes will be available.*

### 8:00 p.m. Communion by Candlelight

*Prelude music will begin one half hour before this service.*



## Advent Midweek Series: *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

Traditionally, the readings and rituals of Advent impress upon us the darkness of our world and point to the coming Light that will shatter that darkness and radiate all of creation with the splendor of God's glory. As we grow closer to that Light, we become more aware of the darkness in our own hearts. We are called by the Spirit to repentance. We are called to examine ourselves and to "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."



One of the customs of this season is the lighting of candles in an Advent wreath. The four candles represent the time of waiting that we must endure as we anticipate Christ's coming. The flames of candles are symbolic of the light that is shining in the darkness, and our call to be light in the world. As the weeks of Advent progress, more candles are lit, symbolizing the recession of darkness as the Light of God and our hope for Christ's coming grows stronger.

For some, a careful look at these images reveals a rather straightforward dark = bad, light = good dichotomy. What has come to light recently is how these traditional, sacred metaphors have been misused against people of color. When we consider darkness, isn't it usually associated with danger, evil, fear, ignorance, wickedness, and sin? And what of those who dwell in darkness — addictions, oppressive captivity, chronic

*continued on next page*

# Advent Midweek Series: *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

*continued from previous page*

depression, paralyzing grief, domestic abuse, or merciless poverty — and the shadow of death? Does the light of Christ not perpetually shine upon them? Can we offer more than light to their situation? We know we can and we must go beyond binaries, as so few things in life are truly “black and white.”

Advent is a time of finding beauty in darkness and of discovering Christ there as well. Whether it's a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts with the dark! Like the night, Christ comes to offer rest, peace, and healing.

Inspiration for our mid-week contemplative worship this Advent was drawn from a book by Barbara Brown Taylor,

titled *Learning to Walk in the Dark*. Each week we will reflect on a different aspect of darkness and seek the blessings of God found within. Please join us at 7:00 p.m. in the nave.

Thursday, December 2 “The Fear of Darkness”

Thursday, December 9 “The Eyes of the Blind”

Thursday, December 16 “The Dark Emotions”

Thursday, December 23 “The Treasures of Darkness”

*Purchasing the book is not a requirement for participation, but is recommended to those who wish to explore these concepts on a more intimate level*

## Our Journey to the Light

*“If you decide to read the rest of this book, you will learn plenty about what darkness means to me. For now, it is enough to say that ‘darkness’ is shorthand for anything that scares me — that I want no part of — either because I am sure that I do not have the resources to survive it or because I do not want to find out. The absence of God is in there, along with the fear of dementia and the loss of those nearest and dearest to me. So is the melting of polar ice caps, the suffering of children, and the nagging question of what it will feel like to die. If I had my way, I would eliminate everything from chronic back pain to the fear of the devil from my life and the lives of those I love — if I could just find the right night-lights to leave on.*

*“At least I think I would. The problem is this: when, despite all my best efforts, the lights have gone off in my life (literally or figuratively, take your pick), plunging me into the kind of darkness that turns my knees to water, nonetheless I have not died. The monsters have not dragged me out of bed and taken me back to their lair. The witches have not turned me into a bat. Instead, I have learned things in the dark that I could never have learned in the light, things that have saved my life over and over again, so that there is really only one logical conclusion. I need darkness as much as I need light.”*

(Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*)

The days are getting shorter, and the darkness settles in earlier every day. As we near the holidays, the Christmas lights offset some of the darkness; still, one can't help but notice how the darkness swallows up and envelops everything. Walking in the dark, we grope around seeking safeholds; we move a bit more slowly so that we don't trip over some unseen object; we listen more closely and breathe in more deeply because

we can't see as well — perhaps our ears and noses will pick up something important; we hold on to those in front of us who perhaps know the way a bit better than we do. The point is, when surrounded by the dark — be it outside or deep within us — we can respond in fear or in expectation. We can imagine the worst, or we can decide to embrace the dark and learn from it.

As we move towards the longest night of the year, we are also awaiting the celebration of the birth of the one who is called the Light of the World. During Advent, we hold in tension the darkness and the light. We learn from both, discovering the healing that the darkness can bring even as we yearn for the light. This Advent, as we journey to the Light, we will sit with the darkness and we will learn together to walk in the darkness, naming our fears, treasuring the cloud of unknowing, and uncovering the truths that can be found only in darkness and loss.

*“Meanwhile, here is some good news you can use: even when light fades and darkness falls — as it does every single day, in every single life — God does not turn the world over to some other deity. Even when you cannot see where you are going and no one answers when you call, this is not sufficient proof that you are alone. There is a divine presence that transcends all your ideas about it, along with all your language for calling it to your aid, which is not above using darkness as the wrecking ball that brings your false gods down — but whether you decide to trust the witness of those who have gone before you, or you decide to do whatever it takes to become a witness yourself, here is the testimony of faith: darkness is not dark to God; the night is as bright as day.”*

(Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*)

# December 2021

**Office Hours:** 9 AM—4 PM Monday–Thursday, 9 AM –1 PM Friday  
**Men's Bible Study:** 7 AM, Wednesdays, IHOP, 114 E. 21st, Norfolk, VA 23517  
**Women's Bible Study:** 2 PM Tuesdays online, please contact Pastor Mims for more information.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>General Deadlines:</b> 12 PM Tuesdays—Life Together Weekly Edition 3 PM Tuesdays—Altar Flowers <b>4 PM—December 11th—The Contact (early deadline for holidays)</b> Email <a href="mailto:kminnick@flcnorfolk.com">kminnick@flcnorfolk.com</a> with your articles & information.						
5 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship 11:30 AM NYG Prep Session 6:30 PM FLC Book Discussion Group	6 7 PM Congregation Council	7 12 PM Adult Ministry 1 PM Lydia Circle & Over 80's Holiday Program 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	1 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	2 9:30 AM Christian Service 7 PM Night Prayer	3 <div>Pastor Mims' Day Off</div>	4 10 AM LGTBQ Study Group
12 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship 11 AM Social Justice	13	14 10 AM Quilt Group 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry 6:30 PM Martha Circle Party	8 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	9 7 PM Night Prayer	10 <div>Contact Deadline</div>	11 <div>Contact Deadline</div>
19 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	20	21 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	15 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	16 5:30 PM Laundry Love 7 PM Night Prayer	17	18
26 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	27	28 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	22 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	23 7 PM Night Prayer	24 <div>Christmas Eve Services 5 PM Families &amp; Children 8 PM Communion by candlelight</div> <div>Christmas Holidays Church Office Closed</div>	25 <div>Christmas Day</div>
<div>Christmas Holidays Church Office Closed</div>						
31 9:00 AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship	30 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	29 2 PM Women's Bible Study 5:30 PM Dinner Ministry	29 7 AM Men's Bible Study 12 PM Lunch Ministry	30	31	

**Community Groups (Strickler Hall):** Mixed Groups—Sun. 7:00–9:30 PM; Happy Hour AA Home Group—Mon. 4:30—6:30 PM; Happy Hour AA—Mon. 5–7 PM; SAA—Mon. 7–8:30 PM; Thur. 7:30—9:30 PM; Just For Today—Tue. 10–11:30 AM; Continuing Quest—Fri. 12–1 PM; Candlelight—Fri. 8–9 PM; SNL AA—Sat. 7–9:30 PM

# Advent Blessings

This Advent, try some different table blessings that remind us of the hope we have in Jesus' presence and to prepare for his coming among us. Here are two options:

Come, Lord Jesus to us this day.  
Come into our hearts to stay.  
Come in the morning and at night,  
Come and fill our world with light.

Bless this food that we eat  
Bless all people that we meet  
Bless this house and our family  
Bless us with grace and peace. Amen.

Father, we thank you for all you have given us. The gift of life, of family and friends and food that strengthens and nourishes us. We especially thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus, who is our joy and hope. Be with us this season to help us prepare the way for His coming. Bless us O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty, through Christ Our Lord. Amen



## ADVENT

Adult Devotionals are available  
in the Welcome Center.  
Children will receive theirs in  
Sunday School.



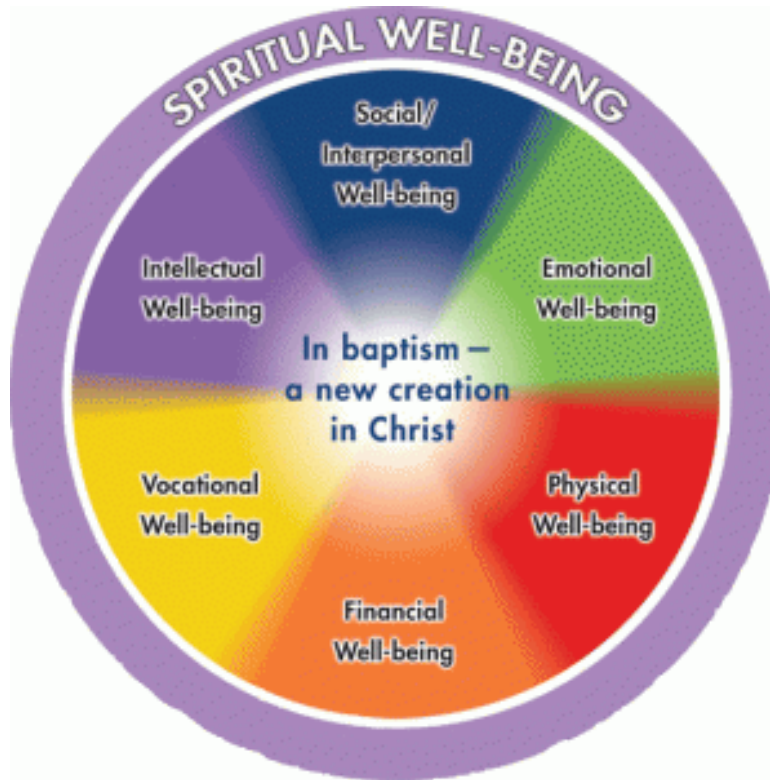
# Christian Stewardship

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” John 1:14*

**I**ncarnation refers to our Christian belief that God’s Son took on our human nature – that in the birth of Jesus, God took on human form and flesh. Jesus is the incarnate God, God living and walking among us, entering into the whole of the human experience. The incarnation demonstrates God’s commitment to this world. God does not despise the world or our humanity. Rather, God-who-takes-on-our-flesh values the stuff of earth and the complexities of our lives.

Ask yourself: What is it that I now make sure I do every day? Or every week? How might I modify my ‘will-do-no-matter-what’ list so it is in line with a holistic view of living as steward of the life God has given me?

The Wellness Wheel is not meant to drive us to guilt about what we are not doing. It is meant to be an invitation to slow down and take note of our lives – these human bodies,



One of the ways we live out our call as stewards, then, is to care for our lives, for our health and well-being, with a holistic perspective. That is, we understand that our bodies, minds, and spirits are connected and interdependent. A disturbance in one part of the body, mind, or spirit is a disturbance in all. Likewise, healing in one area will improve the whole. This emphasis of stewardship incorporates The Wellness Wheel, which identifies various dimensions that help us seek balance and healthy living:

The wheel reminds us that all these dimensions are part of our lives of faith; nothing in our lives is separate from our connection with God. Because time and energy are precious, it is challenging to devote ourselves to each dimension. But the wheel allows us to notice and celebrate the areas in which we are successful, and invites us to consider what might need some attention.

minds and spirits that are precious to God – and identify where we are thriving and where we may need to make some changes. The Wellness Wheel allows us to be more gentle with ourselves as we become more aware of how interconnected all of life is. The purpose is to recognize that our whole being – the whole of our lives – is wrapped up in our lives of faith, and how we steward our lives allows us to be more attuned to God’s presence and power in our lives, recognize God’s presence in this world and in other people, and anchor us in the giftedness of life.

*(adapted from William O. Avery’s article “A Well-Formed Stewardship Leader Holds a Holistic Perspective”)*

## December Birthdays

1 Dec Morgan Brown	11 Dec Christian Fenley	20 Dec Joseph Milner
2 Dec William Herman	11 Dec Levi Sutera	20 Dec Gail Stenberg
3 Dec Louisa Rowan	13 Dec Brendan Kelly	20 Dec Seth Utecht
5 Dec Jason Bishop	13 Dec Chris O'Neill	21 Dec Lucian Clare
5 Dec Eliza Stinson	13 Dec Bill Robinson	21 Dec Nicolle Stopa
6 Dec Ronald Ackley	14 Dec Brittany Acors	22 Dec Mary Margaret Curran
6 Dec Becky Roode	14 Dec Leanne Currie-McGhee	22 Dec Evans Poston
6 Dec Malcolm Van de Water, Ed.D	16 Dec Blake Wittmann	26 Dec Barbara Cordrey
7 Dec Keith Buckley	17 Dec Dana Humphreys	27 Dec Patty Graham
7 Dec Abby Weisenbeck	17 Dec Jenna Humphreys	28 Dec Bethany Johnson
9 Dec Sophia Bourcier	18 Dec Jonathan Mulder	28 Dec Diane Laine
9 Dec Shirley Skees	18 Dec Kirstin New	29 Dec Roger Seese
10 Dec Chris Coffing	19 Dec James Hood	31 Dec Gwendolyn Carr
10 Dec Stephen Herman	19 Dec Brian McElligott	31 Dec Edmund Joella
10 Dec Penny Yarasavich	19 Dec Mary Vaughan	31 Dec Nathaniel Schaus



LADIES OF FLC, JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL

# MARTHA CIRCLE CHRISTMAS PARTY

Tuesday, December 14 | 6:30 PM  
FLC Reception Room

We will celebrate the Christmas season together with an ornament & cookie exchange as well as a service project.

Watch for more details in Life Together or contact Cathy ([richwhitt@cox.net](mailto:richwhitt@cox.net)) or Clara ([cwstrehlow@gmail.com](mailto:cwstrehlow@gmail.com))

## Congregation Council Summary

At our November meeting held Monday November 01, 2021, via Zoom, the Congregation Council

- Devotion by Pastor Mims – 2nd Corinthians Chapter 9
- Discussed Annual Meeting and Sample Agenda
- Approved 2022 Council Nominees
- Discussed Constitution Update (distributed to council members)
- Covid Task Force provided an update on wearing masks – “it is not a suitable time to discontinue wearing masks”
- Approved the Ministry Investment Plan for 2022
- Approved motion to investigate & install new lighting and camera system for Porte Cochere
- Approved minutes from October 2021 Council Meeting
- Approved next Council Meeting for December 06, 2021, by Zoom
- Shared blessings, prayer concerns and prayer partners

The Congregation Council normally meets at 7 PM on the first Monday of each month. The meeting is open to the congregation.

# Connect with Others

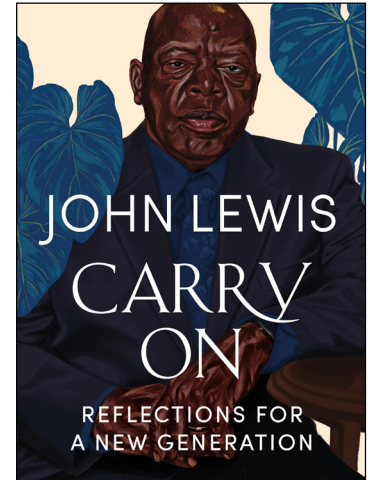
## FLC Book Discussion Group

The FLC Book Discussion Group will meet Sunday, December 5th at 6:30 PM to consider what the recently released *Carry On: Reflections for a New Generation* is saying to each of us.

Congressman John Lewis was a paragon of the Civil Rights Movement and political leadership for decades. Lewis had great confidence in our future, even as he died in the midst of one of our country's most challenging years. With this book, he passes the baton, empowering us to live up to the legacy he has left us with his perseverance, dedication, profound

insight, and unwavering ability to see the good in life. This conversation is a great way to prepare for the new year!

Contact Betty Jean Meyer for the Zoom link for the meeting.



## Thank You Notes

Lutheran World Relief

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your generous gift to Lutheran World Relief's Quilt and Kit Shipping Fund! Your donation ensures that LWR Quilts and Kits get into the hands of a person who needs it.

With your help, we have delivered Quilts and Kits to families in Mozambique whose communities were utterly ravaged by Cyclone Idai. For refugee families, your gift means so much. A School Kit can make the difference between getting an education or missing out. A Personal Care Kit helps families provide for basic hygiene needs, freeing up precious resources. Quilts help families through cold winter nights.

On behalf of LWR, our partners and those we serve together, please accept my heartfelt thanks once more for your gift and all that it will do.

Warm regards,  
Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard (ret.)  
President and CEO

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary  
Lenoir-Rhyne University

Dear Friends at First Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your support of the endowment at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. Our endowed funds are critical to the seminary's continued success. These funds help us to achieve our mission—helping teach, form and nurture women and men for public ministry. In this time of change and opportunity, our mission feels more important than ever, and we are blessed and grateful to be in partnership with you.

We are deeply grateful for your continued support of LTSS. Thank you for the joy you inspire, and thanks be to God for the Spirit's work through you to support a living witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace,  
Mary Hinkle Shore  
Rector & Dean

# Connect with Word and Body

## Prayer Concerns for December

Almighty God, your sovereign purpose brings salvation to birth. Give us faith to be steadfast amid the tumults of this world, trusting that your kingdom comes and your will is done through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

### Give joyful thanksgiving

...For people who extend compassion to those who have experienced harm in religious spaces.

...For wise elected officials who govern with insight and compassion

...For those who come to the aid of all survivors of natural disasters and the first responders who support them

### Help us

...To remain mindful of the well-being of all people so that your world may flourish

...Calm the fear and supply the needs of those affected by natural disasters

...Cultivate healthy congregations that embody your reconciling love

### Pray for

...Comfort and healing to the Pickrell family on the death of Jim Pickrell

...Comfort and healing to **Jennifer Boykin** on the death of her father Robert Roman

...Margaret, Heather, Kevin & their family

...Peace and comfort to the **Hogan** family

...Blessing and protection of children, the elderly, and the sick who cannot be vaccinated

...Justice for the victims of racial oppression & violence

...Those who are dying, that they are secure in knowing that God loves them & will welcome them into everlasting life.

...People fleeing dire humanitarian situations for a better life.

...The sick, that they are comforted and the despairing, that they receive hope.

...Those struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

...Those mourning the death of loved ones.

...For all who cry out to God in any need.

**Margaret Ackley, Gail Anthony, Alvene Buckley, Don Buckley, Lucian Clare, Barbara Cordrey, Lynda Falkiner, Margaret Fleet, Jennette Franklin, Roger Fuller, Joelle Griffith (mother of Paula Barwick), Valerie & Jim Harvey, Marion Ingersoll, Joann Klotz, Kelley Minschke, Lorna Moss, Bill Newlon, David Perron, Betty Phillips, Fay Rogner, Gail Simos, Shirley Skees, Nancy & Jack Smith, Ken Zaletski, Angela Blue & Patrick Garrison, Betty Lou, Charlotte & Lee Peglow, Cynthia Moll, Dave, Elizabeth McCorkindale (mother of Sharon Asam), Gert, Harriette & Dave Wheatley, Jimmy, Katrina, Kevin, Mark, Megan (niece of Melissa & Ken Zaletski), Rema, Rob, Ron Lewis, Sue & Jim Webb, Sharon Levinson**

### Those dealing with cancer

Alissa (friend of **Dorothy Shaffer**), Bob, James Collier, Iris Corbin, Dave Guelcher (father of Beth Zaletski), Harriette Wheatley (friend of the **Grogans**), Jenn, David Kelly, Chris Jones (nephew of **Karen Siegel**), Vickie Mack, Mark, **Melvin (Jack) Smith**, Phil, Ralph Munsey, **Randall R. Wiele**, Rob, Sandy, Andie Seagraves, Gerald Stover, **Dallas Williams**, Jess WineKing

### Military and their families:

All military personnel around the world.

**Fox family, Austin Davidson, Tom Douglas, Kyle Hefner, Dan Kelly, Bobby Masters, Nano, Masters, Nick Masters, Ted Peterson, Brian Becker, Amy Hardbower, Nicolette Huntley, Tim Kelly, Eli Jones, Ian Logan, Kelly Mackenzie, John Marfield, Nikki Parkman**

God our hope and strength, we entrust to you all for whom we pray. Remain with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

— Amen.

## Readings for December

### December 5th

Malachi 3:1-4

Luke 1:68-79

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

### December 12th

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Isaiah 12:2-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:7-18

### December 19th

Micah 5:2-5a

Psalms 80:1-7

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-55

### December 24th

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalms 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-20

### December 26th

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Psalms 148

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52



First Lutheran Church  
1301 Colley Avenue  
Norfolk, VA 23517

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Norfolk, Virginia  
Permit No. 200

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED