



Sunday, December 1 – Advent 1

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:45 a.m. Sunday School & Frolic WILL meet

10:45 a.m. Adult Ed. – *Christmas Traditions Around the World*

7:00 p.m. – *Messiah Sing-In* with Northeast Chorale

Sunday, December 8 – Advent 2

9:30 a.m. Worship – Sunday School Christmas Pageant

10:45 a.m. Congregational Potluck

Sunday, December 15 – Advent 3

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:45 a.m. Sunday School & Frolic; Cookie Potluck

3:00 p.m. Christmas Caroling with Mt. Carmel

Sunday, December 22 – Advent 4

9:30 a.m. Worship

4:00 p.m. Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

(See more details about our Advent schedule on the flier on page 9 of this mailing.)

Christmas Eve at GA Church



3:45 pm - Christmas Prelude by our Gustavus Bells

4:00 pm - Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 29 – Christmas 1

9:30 a.m. Worship – Christmas Lessons & Carols with Reflections from Martin Luther

Welcome, New Members, to Gustavus Adolphus

We want to extend a warm welcome to our new members who were received into membership on Sunday, November 24:

- *Cindy & Bob Bach*
- *Elizabeth Blount*
- *Julie & Peter Bodurtha – and Gwen, Pepper, and Clark*
- *Karen Thorson Grivna*

We are so happy and blessed by your presence among us, and we look forward to getting to know you better in the weeks and months ahead. Welcome!



New Members Are Joining

Help Set-Up the Stage for the Christmas Pageant

It's that time of year again...time to roll the stage equipment over from the garage and set it up in the front of the sanctuary for the Sunday school Christmas pageant.

We're looking for help after worship on Sunday, December 1 – during the Sunday school hour. It will be especially helpful if we have some people who have done this before. If you can help on the 1st, please meet in the front of the sanctuary after worship. Thanks!



Beloved in Christ,

Advent and Christmas invite us to reflect on one of the most profound mysteries of our faith: *Emmanuel, "God with us."* In the person of Jesus Christ, God entered the world not as a distant or indifferent deity but as one of us—sharing in our joys, sorrows, and struggles. For Martin Luther, this truth was at the heart of his understanding of God's grace and love.

Luther marveled at the humility of the incarnation. In a Christmas Eve sermon he wrote, "How could God have demonstrated [God's] goodness more powerfully than by stepping down so deep into flesh and blood, that [God] does not despise that which is kept secret by nature, but honors nature by the highest degree exactly where it was." (LW 52:12) For Luther, the manger was not just a quaint setting; it was a radical proclamation of how God chose to be revealed—not in power or glory, but in vulnerability, poverty, and humility.

This message resonates deeply in our uncertain times. Like the shepherds trembling at the angel's announcement or Mary pondering the angel's words, we too can feel overwhelmed by the unknown. We live in a world that often seems full of fear and division, where uncertainty about the future can weigh heavy on our hearts. Yet, the promise of Emmanuel assures us that God has not abandoned us. In Christ, God enters into the fullness of human experience, journeying with us in every trial, every fear, and every uncertainty.

Luther's theology emphasizes that the incarnation reveals God's heart for humanity. God did not come to dwell among the powerful or the perfect but chose to be born into our brokenness.

The beloved hymn "*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*" (ELW 257) echoes this promise. As we sing its verses, we are reminded of the deep longing for God's presence and the joy of God's arrival. Each verse names a different way Christ comes to us—bringing wisdom, freedom, light, and peace. Consider these words from the hymn:

*"O come, O Branch of Jesse, free / Your own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell your people save, / And give them victory o'er the grave."*

Here, we see a God who meets us in our depths—not distant or aloof but present in our pain, offering liberation and hope. This is the radical love of Emmanuel, the God who became human to dwell with us and redeem us.

In this season, we are invited to reflect on what it means to encounter Emmanuel in our lives. Where do we see Christ present in our struggles, in our communities, and in the marginalized? How might we, like Mary, ponder and treasure this truth in our hearts, allowing it to transform the way we live and love?

Luther often pointed to the surprising places where God chooses to work. In his commentary on the Magnificat, he wrote: "God ...looks into the depths and helps only the poor, despised, afflicted, miserable, forsaken, and those who are nothing, there a hearty love for Him is born." (LW 21:314) The incarnation reveals this truth most clearly. God is born not in a palace but in a common room. Christ's glory is revealed not through conquest but through the cross. And God's love is extended to all—not because of our worthiness but because of God's infinite mercy.



As we move through Advent into Christmas, let us take comfort in the promise of Emmanuel. The God who joined us to share our humanity continues to walk with us in every moment of our lives. And as we celebrate Christ's birth, may we find renewed hope in the knowledge that God is indeed with us—always.

– pr. Ian

Community Meals

We are so very **thankful** for the opportunity we have to meet with community members through our monthly Community Meals. We invite members and friends to come and enjoy good food and music.

In December, we are serving roast beef, mashed potatoes, and side dishes!

Meals will be served from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

You can **mark your new calendars** so that you don't miss out on these opportunities.

You can also find sign-up sheets in the narthex if you would like to bring food to share!

Reach out to Lynn Lurvey, Nick Tangen, or Kathy Schutte with your questions and ideas.



Upcoming Community Meal Dates...

Saturday, December 7

Saturday, January 4

Saturday, February 1

Saturday, March 1

Saturday, April 5

Saturday, May 3

Saturday, June 7

...and following....

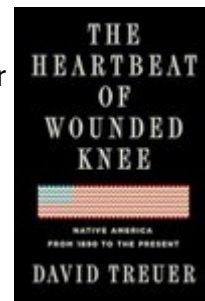
Rainbow Church Meets December 14



Rainbow Church – that's the new name of our group for folks who identify as LGBTQIA+ that has been meeting at GA for the past several months. We'll be meeting on Saturday, December 14, at 5:30 p.m. for fellowship and discussion. There may even be some food! Come and join us. There's no agenda...just a safe space to hang out and enjoy some fellowship. Questions? Reach out to Pastor Ian or Deacon Phil.

GA Book Club Meets in January

Join us on Monday, January 13, at 6:30 p.m. to discuss *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* by David Treuer. In this non-fiction book, the author counters assumptions from Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Treuer argues that American Indian history did not end with the massacre at Wounded Knee and that Native people have resiliently responded to land seizures, boarding schools, and further pressures from the U.S. government. Our discussion will take place at GA in the Fireside Room. All are welcome!



From Deacon Phil

Handel's "Messiah" Sing-In at GA – Sunday, December 1

I'm excited about the *Messiah* Sing-In on Advent 1/December 1 at 7:00 p.m. You'll be able to hear solos and choruses from the Christmas portion of this beloved oratorio by Handel. PLUS – we'll have *Messiah* scores available for those in the audience who want to participate by singing along with the choruses. The soloists will be members of the Northeast Chorale, including GA's own Laura Koletar. Help spread the word and plan to attend.

**THIS
DEACON
LOVES YOU**

Christmas Caroling with Mt. Carmel

The Better Together Committee invites you to join for some Christmas Caroling on Advent 3/December 15 at 3:00 p.m. Meet at Mt. Carmel, go caroling, and return to Mt. Carmel for refreshments and fellowship.

Lessons & Carols on December 22

You're invited to attend a GA tradition on Advent 4/Sunday, December 22, at 4:00 p.m. – A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. This service of music and readings will be presented by the Northeast Chorale and the GA Choir. Hear prophetic readings about the coming of the Messiah, hear anthems presented by the combined choir, and sing some beloved Christmas carols at the culmination of the service. See (and share) the flyer included in this mailing. It will also be included in the Saturday emails.

Handbell Prelude on Christmas Eve

Our Gustavus Bells handbell choir members are hard at work preparing their traditional handbell prelude for the Christmas Eve service. Plan to come early (at 3:45), sit quietly, and enjoy the magic of handbell music as you prepare to worship on Christmas Eve.

Deacon Phil

Sunday School News

There are several opportunities to help the Sunday School department during the month of December.

- On Sunday, December 1, help is needed putting up the staging for the Christmas Pageant.
- On Saturday, December 7, help is needed preparing lunch for pageant rehearsal. Volunteers are needed from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.
- On Sunday, December 8, please bring a dish to share for the annual pot luck lunch following the Christmas Pageant.

Thanks in advance for your help during the month of December.

Looking ahead to 2025...

In 2024, the Sunday School Bible Village was resurrected to kick off our 110th Anniversary year-long celebration. For 2025, the Bible Village will include a celebration of Epiphany. All members of the congregation are invited to attend the Bible Village following worship on Sunday, January 5, 2025. Activities will include: sampling middle eastern food, a visit to the temple lead by Pastor Ian and Deacon Phil, the burning of the Christmas tree lead by Nick Tangen, a petting zoo, a leather work demonstration by Gary Arvidson and much, much more. If you would like to help offset the cost of the event, please donate to the church with the notation of Bible Village on your check or envelope. Any and all financial donations would be greatly appreciated.



From the Church Council

As the council reflects on 2024 and prepares for 2025, we want to share highlights of our ongoing discussions. Please mark your calendar for January 26 for the annual congregational meeting where we will discuss these themes further and make thoughtful decisions together.

Our congregation is generous.

Giving is up 20% and for the first time in many years, we expect to meet our giving budget. In September, Council shared a worrisome deficit and insufficient cash flow to cover the monthly operating expenses. Our congregation responded and by November, our income *exceeded* our expenses. We are on track to match revenue from last year, even without the help of a federal grant and additional tenants.

We have other sources of revenue.

The Council and church leaders have spent 2024 focused on maximizing rental income. We have updated leases with our current tenants, and spent significant energy clearing and cleaning the church for new tenants. We have engaged a realtor.

Furthermore, our Finance committee has finalized an endowment policy that allows us to access interest as part of our general budget.

Most of our expenses are fixed. They comprise the majority of our annual expenses.

We are blessed to have a full-time pastor *and* deacon. We value them and our other part-time staff. With modest 3% raises in 2025, salaries and other benefits comprise 63% of our budget.

We also maintain a significant amount of property. This shows up in our budget as maintenance, improvements, snow plowing, insurance, and utilities. These expenses rise each year. We are dedicating about 20% of the 2025 budget to our property.

We are committed to maintaining an operating reserve.

Council voted to open an operating reserve account from an unrestricted Thrivent account, and we have earmarked an additional \$2500 in the 2025 budget. Totalling about \$10,000, this account will help us manage our cash flow without borrowing from accounts intended for other purposes.

We project a deficit in 2025. We have few remaining options to balance the budget.

Despite the generosity of our congregation and the best efforts of our church leaders, there remains a deficit of about \$5000 to close. Going line by line in the non-fixed areas of our budget, we believe we can find another \$2000 by insisting on strict penny pinching in our life together. For example, we will ask Thrivent members to seek grants rather than dedicate resources for church events. We will seek cheaper coffee options and limit our worship supplies. We will be leaning into email communication over mail.

An update on the parking lot.

In June, we met as a congregation and voted to move forward with phase 1 of the parking lot. We allocated nearly \$20,000 from the *Life Together Capital Appeal* to determine the viability of stormwater management strategies, get specifics on the city requirements for landscaping and screening, and commission a design document so we can have construction costs estimated.

While \$20,000 may seem significant, this is actually about 50% less than the average cost - we are fortunate to have members with connections! However, this discount also means we are at the bottom of the list and unfortunately, we have been unable to move this work forward. While we remain hopeful

that something will come through in the remaining weeks of 2024, the council intends to take action at the annual meeting if that does not happen. This will mean allocating additional resources from the remaining \$55,000 available in the capital appeal account for parking lot improvements.

Council remains committed to honoring votes related to the parking lot while also understanding that each step in the process is another decision point for the congregation. Council will continue to share the costs related to upgrading and maintaining this property.

Meanwhile, we know that parking is a barrier for some in our congregation. To ease that stress, council is exploring signage for 27th Avenue that will kindly request that those who are able consider parking on a street farther away.

GA is blessed.

The council appreciates the generosity and response throughout the year from members as we move forward in our *life together*. We look forward to continuing this conversation at the annual meeting on January 26.

Prayer List

As the body of Christ and a family of believers, let us pray for each other.

- ♥ *Paul & Sharon Banitt – Carlotta Rosebrock requests prayers for her parents, as her father has ongoing health issues, and her mother is his caregiver in their home.*
- ♥ *Terry Carlstrom – Prayers for Terry who is experiencing some significant health concerns.*
- ♥ *Rodney Christopherson.*
- ♥ *Pam Evangelist – Pam would like prayers for her as she is living with Parkinsons.*
- ♥ *Chris Fredrickson – Prayers for this friend of Cassandra and Eric Weidmann who was seriously injured in a car accident recently.*
- ♥ *Sharon Hatella – Prayers for Sharon who is suffering from back issues and pain.*
- ♥ *David Hendrickson – Prayers for David who has recently experienced a health setback.*
- ♥ *Ben Hentges – Prayers for Nic Hentges’ brother who is currently battling some health issues.*
- ♥ *Judy Johnson – Prayers for Judy as death draws near.*
- ♥ *Nancy Rathbun – Experiencing some ongoing health concerns.*
- ♥ *Lesa Rowen, Melissa Hentges’ mother, who has an ongoing health situation.*
- ♥ *Bill Turnquist – Prayers for Bill who has ongoing health issues.*
- ♥ *Doug – Ongoing health issues.*
- ♥ *Bonnie – Jennifer Creadick would like prayers for her daughter who is on a recovery journey.*
- ♥ *Barry – Prayers for Barry as he has had recent brain surgery.*
- ♥ *LeeAnn – Prayers for continuing health concerns.*

To have someone’s name included on the prayer list, contact our volunteer prayer coordinator, Jean Jenson, at mplsjean@yahoo.com or Pastor Ian, or Deacon Phil.

We extend Christian sympathy to Dan Leba and Paul Leba and the rest of the family and friends of Sharon Leba who passed away on November 3. Sharon’s funeral was held at GA Church on Friday, November 8. Blessed be her memory.



Treasurer's Report for December

	October 2024 YTD Actual	October 2024 YTD Budget		October 2023 YTD Actual		October 2024 vs 2023 YTD Actual
Income	\$263,507.30	\$291,270.70		\$282,734.06		-\$19,226.76
Expense	\$279,118.11	\$291,270.70		\$294,848.25		-\$15,730.14
Inc - Exp	-\$15,610.81	\$0.00		-\$12,114.19		-\$3,496.62

Blessings Abound!

May the love of Jesus fill your homes and hearts this Christmas.

We are so very thankful for the mission of our church and for the fellowship we share.

Joy to the world. The Lord has come.

Lynn Lurvey
Treasurer

Year end gifts!

Will you consider a year-end gift to GA? Our members have been so generous throughout 2024 which has allowed us to fulfill our mission of building community where God is at the center. We still need a strong December to finish our year financially sound. To be recorded as a 2024 contribution, you can contribute online through December 31. The church office will have limited staffing between Christmas and New Year's, so cash or checks should be delivered to the office by Monday, December 23, or put in the offering plate on Christmas Eve or December 29. Stock donations should be transferred by December 15 - note, however, that some financial institutions have earlier deadlines to guarantee the transaction before the end of the year. Thank you for all the ways you support GA!



You may use this QR code to give online.



Here's a Reminder!

This is just another friendly reminder that Pastor Ian or others on the church staff will NEVER send emails or texts asking for money, gift cards, or for you to do favors for them. **These messages are scams! Ignore them!!** Several church members have been receiving them recently. In fact, Deacon Phil received an email allegedly from Pastor Ian just this morning a few hours before typing this article! Be cautious about your online activity with messages like these.

Sunday School Thanksgiving Observance

A tradition in our Sunday school department is their Thanksgiving “feast.” Here are some pictures from this year’s observance – held Sunday, November 24. The students are very busy these days learning songs for the Christmas Pageant coming up on December 8. After practicing their songs on Sunday the 24th, they took the rest of their time to make some “apple turkeys” and enjoy some good food. Here are some pictures from the occasion. (You can also find them on our Facebook page.) These children are such treasures to our congregation.





Advent at GA

December 1 (Week 1):

Adult Education Opportunity with Connor Arneson.

Topic: *Christmas Traditions from Around the World.*

Bring pictures or stories from your travels or traditions.

Meet downstairs in the Faith room after worship

Northeast Chorale Concert: *Messiah Sing-In*

7:00, GA Sanctuary

December 8 (Week 2):

Christmas pageant during worship.

Congregational potluck following pageant.

December 15 (Week 3):

Cookie potluck.

Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship.

Share and sample cookies. Bring your recipe!

Caroling with Mt. Carmel.

3:00 at Mt. Carmel. Refreshments following at Mt. Carmel

December 22 (Week 4):

Lessons & Carols at 4:00.



*A Festival of Nine
Lessons and Carols
Sunday, December 22
4 p.m.*

Presented by the Northeast Chorale and the
choir of Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church

Directed by Phil Holzman

Freewill offering received
(\$10 suggested donation)

At Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church
1509 27th Avenue NE, Minneapolis (27th & Johnson)

Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, Minneapolis...December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Advent 1 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Adult Ed. 10:45am - Sunday School/Frolic 7pm - "Messiah" Sing-In	2 1pm - Grief Group 6pm - Property Comm.	3 5:45pm - Contemporary Group 6:30pm - NE Chorale	4 10am - Coffee Hour 6pm - GA Choristers 6:30pm - Gustavus Bells 7:30pm - GA Choir	5 9:30am - Quilters	6	7 9:30am - Pageant Rehearsal 5:30pm - Community Meal
8 Advent 2 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Confirmation Class 10:45am - Cong. Potluck	9 1pm - Grief Group 6:30pm - Social Ministry Comm.	10 5:45pm - Contemporary Group 6:30pm - NE Chorale	11 10am - Coffee Hour 6pm - GA Choristers 6:30pm - Gustavus Bells 7:30pm - GA Choir	12 5pm - Cong. Life Comm. 6pm - Finance Comm.	13	14 8am - Men's Breakfast 5:30pm - Rainbow Church
15 Advent 3 9:30am - Worship 10:45am - Cookie Potluck 10:45am - Sunday School/Frolic 3pm - Christmas Carolling	16 1pm - Grief Group	17 6:30pm - NE Chorale & GA Choir	18 10am - Coffee Hour 11am - Meals on Wheels Delivery 6pm - GA Choristers 6:30pm - Gustavus Bells	19 6pm - Church Council	20	21
22 Advent 4 9:30am - Worship 4pm - Lessons & Carols	23 1pm - Grief Group	24 Christmas Eve 3:45pm - Bell Prelude 4pm - Worship	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28
29 Christmas 1 9:30am - Worship	30 1pm - Grief Group	31	1	2	3	4

A publication of

Gustavus Adolphus

LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Minneapolis, MN 55418

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Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church

A Reconciling in Christ Congregation

Church Phone: 612-789-7256

Bldg. Hours: Mon., Wed., Thurs. – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Evenings as noted in weekly bulletin and online calendar.

Website: www.gachurchmpls.org

Sunday Worship at 9:30 a.m.

Church Staff ...

Pastor Ian Coen-Frei, Minister of Word & Sacrament (Ext. 10)

pastorian@gachurchmpls.org

For Pastoral Care: 612-888-3701

Deacon Phil Holzman, Minister of Word & Service (Ext. 11)

(Worship & Music, Parish Administration)

philh@gachurchmpls.org

Cell Phone: 320-304-1774 (for calls/texts)

Zachary Copa, Finance Manager

Joel Lurvey, Contemporary Choir Director

joel.lurvey@gmail.com

Analisa Hillman, Church Custodian



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Ways You Can Support GA Church (besides bringing your offerings on Sunday morning to worship):

1) Mail your offering to GA:

1509 27th Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418



2) Our church offers online
giving and text-to-give.

They're easy to use and

secure! You can give a gift of support online

at www.gachurchmpls.org/donate or give via
text message by texting the amount you would
like to give to (612) 887-1797.

3) Email Deacon Phil if you are interested in
learning how to contribute stock donations.

4) Point your smartphone at the QR code above!

Gustavus Adolphus Church Council:

Jenny Arneson, President

Matthew Streed, Vice-President

Kristin Tangen, Secretary

Lynn Lurvey, Treasurer



At-Large Members:

Bryant Kumlin

Lori Nordling

Kathy Schuette