



GOOD NEWS January 2023

Pastor's Message

Dear Friends,

*"Tonight's December thirty-first,
Something is about to burst.
The clock is crouching, dark and small,
Like a time bomb in the hall.
Hark, it's midnight, children dear.
Duck! Here comes another year!"*

Ogden Nash, from 'Good Riddance. But Now What?' 1949

Yes, there seems plenty to duck from as we enter a new year. You know — health experts warning of a “triple threat” of illnesses for children and adults alike. Overcrowding in hospitals as a result. What about this recession talk? Will a new Congress be able to work constructively? Storms keep sweeping and churning across the land. Who can define normal anymore? Name your own reasons to duck. But here it comes ... another year!

And then there is life here in this beloved congregation of Jesus people...so much change and transition, a time for honest conversation and prayerful discernment, a time for earnest, purposeful and expectant pulling together as community.

Soon the Transition Team begins its work to deepen our understanding of how God is calling this congregation into a new day in an uncertain time. We await the appointment of a new Minister of Music while we at the same time rejoice and give thanks for the ministry of Gwynne Hopko, a ministry marked by excellence and faithfulness to the church. And we await too the naming of a new administrator in the church office — a new voice on the phone and at the door to greet us, a new preparer of bulletins and announcements and newsletters and communications to keep us informed and to help weave our lives together.

But really now, is this a time to duck? Isn't it better a time to stand wide eyed with open hearts and minds and arms, welcoming this as a time of opportunity for the strengthening and building up of our life together in this community in Christ? This is a time for prayer, for patience and perseverance, a time for encouraging and nurturing one another, a time for faithful acting, a time to trust in the Spirit's certain guiding, a time to hope in the God who leads us with sturdy hand onto paths of life-giving grace that we can't always see all on our own.

As the Israelites long ago stood on the brink of the promised land after a journey far too long and exhausting, God spoke these words to Joshua, not just once but three times (adding a “very” preceding “courageous” the second time through):

*“...be strong and (very) courageous,
do not be frightened or dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*

Confident in that promise even to us today, we move into 2023 daring to stand and walk without ducking, eager and expectant for God's purposes and graces to unfold before and among us.

With gratitude for the privilege of joining you on your journey into a new year,

Les Swenson
Stated Supply Pastor

From the President

I start with a quote from my 2020 annual report: "What will 2021 bring? Only God knows". Well, we lived thru 2021 and saw progress as we re-opened and headed toward what most of us call normal. 2022 showed promise as we continued to see more people at worship, the choirs resumed their rehearsals and offered meaningful music to our worship, ushers and worship assistants resumed their roles.

But, then in early June, in conversation with Gwynne Hopko, our Minister of Music, it became apparent to me that her time with us would soon end. It took some time but an official letter of resignation followed. My personal feelings as well as my concern for the congregation made this a difficult situation to handle. I thank the search committee for their efforts in finding a suitable replacement (not an easy task). I also want to thank Gwynne for extending her "retirement date" until we find that replacement. On the other hand, we thank Gwynne for her fourteen years plus of service and wish her well on her retirement.

Then in September, we received word that Pastor Stephanie had received and accepted a call to Community Lutheran Church in Enfield, NH. While her tenure at St. Andrew was longer than most pastorates these days (eight and a half years) I was surprised, but immediately turned to the synod for assistance. Pastor Steve Wilco, Associate to Bishop Hazelwood, has met with the congregation and outlined the process for the search for a new pastor. A transition team has been formed - they will help us identify our strengths and weaknesses and then will help us determine the attributes we need in our new pastor. Once the transition team has completed their work (and the entire congregation will be involved) a call committee will be formed. The entire process will take up to a year and a half but we have been blessed with the services of Pastor Les Swenson in the meantime.

To complete the list, Lynne Adame, our "office person" has also submitted her resignation. Lynne sites personal reasons and no dissatisfaction with the position for her departure. While her time with us was short, we thank her for the things we learned from her experience in the office world. It goes without saying that we thank Ellie Miller for her "covering" until a replacement is found.

On a more positive note some funds from the Kathleen Roth bequest have been disbursed. Three thousand dollars was used to fund our "Special" VBS this past summer and Six Thousand Six Hundred dollars was sent to various causes suggested by members of the congregation. These disbursements were made in keeping with the guidelines accepted at the last congregational voter's meeting.

Now more than ever we need the support of each and every member of the congregation - yes that means we need your financial support - but more importantly we need your participation. Committees of one or two have a difficult time accomplishing their goals - teams get work done. Where can we count on your assistance? What will 2023 bring? Only God knows. Can we count on your help to make God's plan happen?

Blessings to all, *Bob*

From Deacon Natalie Bloomquist, St. Andrew's Transition Consultant

Greetings, St. Andrew Lutheran Church!

Thank you for this opportunity to introduce myself and the New England Synod's transition process. I am looking forward to meeting each of you as we work together during this time of transition.

I completed my Master of Arts in Religion degree at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now Union Seminary) and, as a Minister of Word and Service in the ELCA (deacon), I am called to equip God's people for ministry in the world. In my semi-early retirement, I am blessed to serve under Call to the Office of the Bishop of the New England Synod as Assistant to the Bishop for Churches in Discernment.

My sense of vocation is grounded in my desire to equip churches with the healthy listening and communication skills that enable faith communities to work together as the body of Christ in the world. Trained by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, I have served the New England Synod in mediation and conflict transformation ministry as a member of the synod's Listening Team, having served as Team Chair for three years, and continue to assist with mediations and difficult conversations in congregations.

I served 16 years as the Director of Christian Education at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Hartford, CT where I led faith formation ministries for all ages. My ministry of nurturing the faith given at baptism, building relationships, and helping people explore their God-given gifts led to opportunities to facilitate faith formation workshops around the New England Synod and to serve two terms as the Region 7 Advocate on the board of the Christian Education Network of the ELCA.

My early retirement plan was delayed when I accepted the Call to serve Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Waterbury as their sole rostered minister during their transition process. Adding to the valuable experience gained during this time, I completed Transition Ministry training by New England Synod staff and have been grateful for the varied opportunities to walk with congregations in transition as they discern their forward movement into God's future.

Originally from the Midwest, I have lived in Connecticut for forty years. My husband and I have two daughters and a son-in-law. With the arrival of our first grandchild and my husband's retirement, Gary and I moved to Essex, CT almost two years ago after 36 years in West Hartford, CT to be closer to our granddaughter. I am a voracious reader and podcast listener while walking and gardening and have a particular fondness for creating things out of fabric.

I very much enjoyed meeting your Transition Team recently on Zoom! Please reach out to your team members to let them know you'll be supporting their work as they engage each of you in the transition process: Karen Biernat, Emily Gdovin, Roy Ouellette, Kristin Pratt, and Owen VanBrocklin.

I will be meeting with the Transition Team on January 11 to plan a Transition Process that is open, interactive, productive – and fun! We will put together a timeline of transition process congregational events that will be shared with Council for their approval. As soon as those dates are confirmed, we'll share the Transition Process Timeline with you so you can mark your calendars. You don't want to miss anything!

The first date will be a time for me to meet with you after worship and share a more detailed overview of the transition process, which is a time devoted to discernment of who St. Andrew is. What we learn together will help you as a congregation discern your forward movement. This will also be an opportunity for you to ask questions. If you are like the many congregations in our synod going through this same process, you have lots of questions. I will engage all of them!

What is the most important component of the Transition Process? You! We need everyone – all ages, whether you're recently connected with St. Andrew or you've been here forever. We need everyone's voice and perspective to be a part of this process of discerning how God is calling St. Andrew into God's future.

"I know not the way God leads me, but well do I know my Guide." - Martin Luther

God's grace and peace as we begin a new year!

Deacon Natalie

From Gwynne Hopko, Minister of Music

Dear St. Andrew Church family,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made the reception celebrating my years of music ministry at St. Andrew so special.

In "true St. Andrew's style", there is so much to appreciate: from all the planning, food preparation, to the kind words of thanks and support.

The generous gifts from the choirs and congregation were truly a surprise! St. Andrew has been a special place for me because of the wonderful people you are.

To all of you - my church family,

Thank you, Gwynne

WORSHIP

*Return to the Lord your God, who is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

Get into the rhythm of life and renewal, worship with us on the regular! As God's people, we gather together in the presence of God and find rest, solace, a bit of grace for ourselves and others. It's called worship. We worship in person **Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the Sanctuary**. Sunday's service is streamed on Facebook and YouTube:
<https://www.facebook.com/Standrewct/>; https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLSSna5Ti_WSwRJ_ySbMA3Q. Following the live stream, the video of worship will be posted so that you can worship as you are available any time after that.

January 1, 2023

The First Sunday of Christmas; the Festival of the Name of Jesus

The festival continues with more song and rejoicing! A service of Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion.

January 8, 2023

The Second Sunday of Christmas; The Baptism of our Lord

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children.

January 15, 2023

The Third Sunday of Christmas; The Second Sunday After Epiphany

Today's gospel opens with further reflection on Jesus' baptism. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the one anointed by the Spirit. Our part is to invite others to come and worship the Holy One and to receive the gifts of grace and peace made known among us.

January 22, 2023

The Fourth Sunday of Christmas; The Third Sunday After Epiphany

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light!

January 29, 2023

The Fifth Sunday After Christmas; the Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness.

ANNUAL MEETING 11:00 a.m., on JANUARY 22, 2023.

The annual meeting will take place, at 11 am, on **JANUARY 22, 2023**. Please plan to attend. A storm date, if needed, will be Sunday, January 29, 2023 at 11 am.

Annual Meeting packets will be available for pickup on Sunday, January 8, you may request a packet electronically, or ask that a hard copy be mailed to you. We will vote at this meeting on the budget for 2023, new council members, and synod assembly voting members.

Topic: Annual Meeting for St. Andrew Lutheran Church
Time: Jan 22, 2023 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Any questions, please contact the church office at 860.583.5809 or churchoffice@standrewct.org

FAITH FORMATION

Children's Bible Story Time Continues

Attention parents, guardians, and grandparents of youth age 18 months through grade 6! Our caring and dedicated team of volunteers are delighted to continue holding Children's Bible Story Time (CBST) during the 9:30am service in this new church year. Join us each Sunday in Advent and beyond as children and a rotation of two adult volunteers read from a children's bible, sing songs, and participate in activities that help children comprehend the Sunday's gospel and connect it to their lives today. Children are invited to leave with our CBST leaders before the first lesson and return during the hymn of the day. On the fourth Sunday of the month, Pastor Les gives a Children's Sermon in lieu of CBST.

Children's Bible Story Time at St. Andrew is geared to children in preschool through 6th grade. Our curriculum is built to accommodate a span of ages and development! If your child is 18 months to 2 years old (or simply shy!), they can still attend with a parent. Got a teenager in the household? We'd love to welcome them as a helper!

Please contact Britt Lynch (860-302-6538 / ray.britt.2015@gmail.com) or see her in church if you have any questions.

OUTREACH & MISSIONS

BRRR IT'S COLD OUTSIDE! THE CONFIRMATION CLASS "CART CHALLENGE" CONTINUES!

January is warm the tummy month! This month, let's warm things up by donating foods to eat on a cold day...soups, stews, hot chocolate, oatmeal....things to warm the heart and the tummy!

Charitable Donations! Thank you to everyone that completed our survey with suggestions for charities to receive over \$5000 in missions as part of a bequest received. Council reviewed the suggestions, there were 5 organizations presented. We are happy to say that all five are wonderful charities and each of the following have received checks for \$1100:

- Gloria Dei Food Drive
- Grace Baptist Food Drive
- Amy's Angels
- Autism Awareness
- International Myeloma Foundation

We are blessed to be a blessing to others.

Blessing of the Stuffed Animals. January 22nd. St. Andrew has a team of volunteers that have been making blankets for stuffed animals that are then wrapped up in ribbon with a tag from St. Andrew. These stuffies are donated to the Bristol Police Dept to give to children when needed. Please join us on January 22nd when we will have a Blessing of the Stuffed Animals. When you see Barbara Soden, Robin Landrette, Nancy Carpenter or Ursula Kaminsky, give them a big "thank you" for their hard work!

Food Outreach Update: Starting next month, Gloria Dei will be changing their food distribution to the *first Saturday of the month* rather than biweekly. Coordinator Tracy Carlson reports that with the high price of groceries, the need for food has increased and donations OF food have decreased. Her volunteers are weary, and need this change in schedule to re-energize. We will continue to support them in any way we can. Please continue to pray for this outreach.

OUR DAILY BREAD



STEWARDSHIP

Year-end offering statements and letters will be sent out shortly. Thank you for your financial support in 2022.

Electronic Offering: are you ready to start using automatic electronic giving? We can walk you through it, it is incredibly easy and you get an email every week (or month, your choice) confirming your offering. Go to standrewct.org and click the Donate button. You can make a one-time donation, set up weekly or monthly offerings, all in just minutes! See Bob H. or Arlene C. for info/assistance.

If you have not yet returned your 2023 Estimate of Giving form, there is still time to do so. Thank you for supporting St. Andrew for 2023 .

Service Stewardship: if you've ever thought about serving but were afraid to ask....now's the time to take that step! We have opportunities to serve in the areas of worship, outreach, parish life, from one-time to short-term duties. Many hands make light work. Training is always provided :0) See Bob H., Arlene C. or any Council member for more details.

Are you a Thrivent member? If so, you can apply for two grants per year, for things like fundraising, educational events, or help for someone in need. Applying takes just minutes and we can walk you through it. Bob H., Arlene C., and Vicki T. have utilized grants for VBS and outreach for many years and can help you complete the application!

P.S. If anyone applies for Thrivent Grants, the Tag Sale Team is asking you to answer YES to the section where it asks if you'd like a Thrivent banner. Thanks!

PARISH LIFE

Do You Have Any Leftover Christmas Cards? The members of Boy Scout Troop 15425 out of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church are in need of donations of extra Christmas cards to use for next year. The last two years, this troop of young women has sent out over 600 Christmas cards to local nursing homes and members of two local churches, including St. Andrew. Thank you for your help! There will be a basket in the Fellowship Hall to receive the cards.

Help Wanted for Sunday Coffee Hour! Coffee Hour Volunteers are needed for **January 8 and January 15**. Can you put a pot of coffee on and bring some donuts or cookies? We need you! **Please let the office, Arlene C or Robin L know if you can help, Thanks!**

Voting Members Needed In June 2023 The New England Synod ELCA will be holding its annual **Synod Assembly June 9 - 10, 2023**. Each congregation in the Synod may have 2 voting members attend. A third voting member may attend if from one of the following categories: Youth age 14-17, Young Adult age 18-30, or person of color or whose first language is other than English. Voting members to the Assembly are elected at the St. Andrew Annual Meeting in January. We encourage your participation. See what Lutherans in New England are up to!

Our constitution states that expenses for Synod Assembly are covered by the congregational budget. If you would like to be considered for election as a voting member, please inform the church office, Arlene Creswell, or Bob Herold.

2023 Spring Tag Sale!

Many people have asked if we would ever have another Tag Sale. **Yes! The proposed date is Saturday, March 18th** from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

What we need right now:

- People willing to spend an hour or so once a week, or every other week, to help tag items that are already coming in. A sign-up sheet is posted in the hall for volunteers.
- We would love to have someone volunteer to head the project!
- Hangers!
- Scissors (they need not be new – they just need to work)
- Bubble wrap
- Newspaper (for packing breakables)

Donations start now! There are signs in the Sunday School wing directing you to where to leave donated items.

We will NOT be accepting any large items this year; however, we are discussing putting up a board where people who have large items to sell could put up a notice with a picture of the item along with a description, price, and contact info.

In the meantime, please look around your house for things that you no longer have use for.

Best selling items include: jewelry, household items, small tables, collectables and lamps. We have found from prior sales that used clothing does not sell well.

Please note: we will *not* be accepting books. They are heavy and we are old!

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

4 Andrew Doty	24 Dennis Rindfleisch
7 Linus Clark	24 Laurie Rindfleisch
9 Erik Glidden	25 Donna Ouellette
11 Andrew Alling	26 Gertrude Wedler
14 Alex Vertefeuille	27 Sadie Goodfield
15 Aiden Trudel	27 Evelyn Lynch
20 Bobbie Scoville	30 Judi Ferro
21 Arthur Potz, Jr.	31 Ian Karp
24 Vonda DeVeau	

CARING FOR EACH OTHER AND FOR THOSE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Remember in your prayers...those known to us in need of healing: We offer prayers of thanksgiving and supplication for:

those known to us in need of healing: Bill, Dean, Jean, Shaun Corbett, Nick Ferro, Alex Massimino, Bill Murtha, Ted Neumann, Michelle O’Leary, Marge Pearson, Arthur Potz, Jim Prior, Callum Rescsanski, Paul Rescsanski, Charles Schissler, Steven Siecienski, Johanna Tessman, Carole Wedler, Trudi Wedler, and all those in nursing homes and the homebound: Marie Ouellette and Jean Wentland.

The Family of Russell Murphy made a donation to the Glory of God in his memory.

Purpose Statement

We are committed to seeking out people for membership in Christ's family, studying God's Word together that we may grow in his grace, strengthening our lives with regular worship and fellowship and sharing our time, talents, and treasure that Jesus will be known to all people through our words and deeds.