

That's The Spirit!

Rev. Greg Hartman,
Pastor

New Spirit Lutheran Church
Our faith is in Jesus.
Our hope is in grace.
Our strength is in love.

December 2023

Beloved Saints of New Spirit,

Happy Advent! For some of us Christmas music is bringing with it the excited anticipation of Christmas Day, and for others this time of year will be a difficult one. There are many reasons why this time of year can be difficult. If that is where you are this holiday season, know that you are not alone, and it is ok if this holiday season doesn't have the same magic as previous ones.

In fact, the promise that comes with the birth of Jesus is especially meaningful for us during those times that we just don't feel it. Believe it or not, there are times when the energy or sparkle in my eye fades, and I have my inner Grinch come out. There are times when I look out at the world and wonder "does it even matter". What difference does the birth of God With Us make? This mind set can be especially true when I listen to the news, or see sales ads for more stuff, or when I see people being less than kind in a store and then getting into a car with "keep Christ in Christmas" or some other kind of Christian phrase. I want to throw my hands up and say, "why does it even matter" or "does it even matter anymore".

We don't need to look far to see that the world is hurting. People are hungry. People are struggling. Yet, for many this month is also a month marked by excessive spending. Spending that any other month would not even be considered, but somehow when celebrating the birth of Jesus it becomes ok. It really does bring out the Grinch in me.

And yet. And yet, Jesus is born. And yet, God is born in the flesh. Hope is born. And yet, the very love of God is born. And yet, the divine logos that spoke creation into existence are born. And yet, the incarnation of a God that loves us, even in our grinchy-ness, is still born.

That's the magic of Christmas and the importance of the birth that we prepare for during the season of Advent. We prepare for a birth that did, is, and will change the world. So maybe this year when we see those twinkling lights we will remember the Light of the World's birth and be part of being a light that extends the light of Jesus.

Pastor Hartman

Merry Christmas!



CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Come celebrate Christmas at New Spirit, and please invite your friends, too. We will worship on Christmas Eve at 10:00am and 7:00pm. The services will be similar. The Children's program will be included in the early service. Then, on Sunday, Dec. 31, come for a service of Lessons and Carols at our usual worship time, 10:00am.



ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING!!! Important Date: Be sure to save it to your calendar! We will hold our 2023 annual congregation meeting on Sunday, January 21, 2024, at 11:15 immediately following our worship service. Voting will be held for the 2024 operating budget, open council and committee positions, and provide an opportunity for everyone to hear updates on what's going on at New Spirit and plans for the new year. You don't want to miss this! The success and vitality of our congregation requires all of us coming together for God's work!



STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who returned their statements of intent. Thank you for your generosity, for your commitment to the ministry of New Spirit, and for sharing our vision!

As of November 30, we have received 54 statements of intent for a total of \$164,608. The good news is that this is 4 more statements of intent than last year, and \$19,568 more in giving commitment. The not so good news is that we are \$15,432 below our goal of \$35,000 in increased giving.

So, if you haven't had the opportunity to turn in your Statement of Intent, **IT'S NOT TOO LATE!** Please bring it to church, mail it or drop it off at the office. And if, after prayerful consideration, you realize you have the ability to give more, then we invite you to complete a new Statement. We appreciate everything you give!



The Stewardship Committee

SUNDAY SCHOOL ANNUAL COMMUNITY PROJECT

This year the Sunday School Dept. is sponsoring a book drive for Make Way For Books. Make Way For Books is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting early literacy and giving young children the chance to fall in love with books and reading. Therefore, they rely on groups to collect books for this cause. They donate books to children aged 0 to 18 years. We are asking for new or gently used books. They ask for story books and literature books. Please note they do not want coloring, dot to dot, or activity books. At the end of the book drive all books will be sent to Make Way For Books. You can donate books or if you prefer you can donate money for books. We will have a tree with small ornaments. When you make any type of donation please take an ornament, we hope to empty the tree. The Sunday School Fund Raiser will be from Nov. 26, 2023, to Jan. 7, 2024, books or checks. Please make all checks payable to the church with the notation on the memo line that it is for the Sunday School Fund Raiser. Thank you for your help - this is a wonderful way to promote reading in children and help kids in need.



December 2023 Prayer

Holy God, we await the coming of your son. We look forward to celebrating the birth of the divine word made flesh. Help prepare our hearts during this time. We pray that you are especially with those who have a hard time this time of year. Send your Holy Spirit to be with us and this congregation to guide us to be a light of your love in a world that is hurting. Amen



MARDI GRAS IS COMING!



We are planning to hold a Mardi Gras celebration on Sunday, February 11, 2024, from 4:00 – 7:00. We look forward to reviving this fun and spiritual celebration at New Spirit. We will need graphic designers and artists, decorators, social media experts, food preparers and servers and clean up help. But initially, we need creative planners to meet and develop a plan and time-table. If you are interested in helping plan this celebration, please contact Cathy Cermak at cathycermak@gmail.com or 520-780-0378.

2024 Pastor's Book Study

It is hard to believe that we have reached the end of the 2023 Pastor's Book Study reading list. We spent this year reading works done by contemporary Lutheran voices. In 2024 we will be spending our time reading about poverty and related issues. Jennifer Brown created the Ally Continuum, the four "stages" of being an ally are Apathetic, Aware, Active, and Advocate. The first three stages rely heavily on education. As a church that serves those that are homeless and food insecure, we must continue to learn about the struggles of those that we serve as well as about the systems at play. If you are unable to join us for the monthly discussion groups, you are still encouraged to read the books.

January – Poverty, by America by Matthew Desmond

February - \$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America by H. Luke Shaefer and Kathryn Edin

March – The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together by Heather McGhee

April – The Other America by Michael Harrington

May – Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America by Linda Tirado

June – August – Reading on your own, see Pastor Hartman for recommendations.

September – Poorly Understood by Mark Robert Rank, Lawrence M. Eppard, et al.

October – Evicted by Matthew Desmond

November – Dignity: Seeking Respect in Back Row America by Chris Arnade, Donte Bonner, et al.



As of October 2023 the total cost for all the books listed above is \$120. If you are interested in participating but the cost of purchasing the books above causes a hardship please let Pastor Hartman know.

Fellowship
Dinner



Fellowship Dinner

The MONTHLY Tuesday night dinners will resume in January. Sharon Dobbs and Edna Walton have volunteered to coordinate the event. It will be held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month thru May and resume in September. Watch for information to be posted regarding themes and sign up.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY GROUP MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 2023

Women's Ministry Group (WELCA Bible Study Group) met at 1:30 on November 8, 2023, at the church.

Our Bible Study was session three of Holy Places – Pilgrimage. Over the past two months, we have explored what it means for people of faith to “live and move and have our being” in embodied relationships to physical places. In September, we pondered the holiness of home. In October, we examined sanctuary as a place of holy presence and sacred refuge. In November, we concluded our study considering pilgrimage: the journeys we take to a holy place or for a holy purpose, and the promise that God meets us along the way.

We assembled Christmas cards to send to those that are homebound.

We will pass out envelopes for the Women of the ELCA yearly thank offering to the congregation on Sunday, November 12, 2023, and collect the offering on Sunday, November 19, 2023. Thank offerings show gratitude for God's blessings and give us an important and tangible way to express that gratitude. It is a tradition grounded in our celebration of community, of meeting together to joyfully give thanks for what God has given us. Thank offerings have always been, and still are, our opportunity to say thank you to God in both significant and ordinary moments.

At our meeting in January, we will decide on the ministries for which we will use some of our project money.

The Kino Conference will be on March 2, 2024, at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Tucson, AZ. Our New Spirit WELCA group will be presenting the devotions at this conference.



We will be celebrating the Christmas season at our next gathering on December 13, 2023, at 12:30 at the church. We will be having a potluck salad luncheon and will be sharing our favorite and/or most memorable Christmas season memories.

Linda Lamb – Secretary

December Birthday & Anniversary Celebrations

12/12 Joyce Dow

12/15 Amber Uidenich

12/19 Carol Morales
Gary Grochowski

12/20 Marilyn Carter



12/22 Paul Koster

12/26 Linda Lamb

12/27 Laurie Bernard

12/30 Eva Kwapich
Sarah Elmquist
Ethan Rettig

ELCA Advocacy

ACTION ALERT



As child poverty grows, lawmakers must prioritize tax relief for low-income families. Take action today.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers in Washington, D.C. are pushing for an expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC), with hopes that it will be included in a wider tax package by the end of this year. An expanded version of the Child Tax Credit helped cut child poverty nearly in half over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, but those gains have largely been lost since the expansion expired at the end of 2021.

Emerging statistics and stories of ministry unveil alarming experiences. New data from the Department of Agriculture suggests that 3.5 million families fell into food insecurity from 2021 to 2022 – raising the total to more than 44 million people nationwide. Congregations, Lutheran hunger leaders and food pantries from many synods tell of volunteer exhaustion, increased demand for services and an urgency to address rising child hunger in our communities. With inflation, food prices and childcare costs continuing to climb, tax relief for low- and middle-income families would go a long way in supporting those of us who are hungry and our ministries serving those of us in the greatest need.

As negotiations are underway, many lawmakers remain on the fence over core issues, such as: making the credit available to as many low-income families as possible, expanding eligibility to families where a grandparent might be the primary caregiver, and ensuring benefits are received by all qualifying children regardless of their parents' immigration status. Lawmakers in Congress need to hear that an expanded Child Tax Credit is an urgently needed priority – and that child poverty is a profound concern for people of faith.

Today, tell your legislators that families should be able to afford the costs of raising a child in the modern economy, and that your lawmaker should champion an expansion of the Child Tax Credit before the end of this year.

For further details on various bipartisan proposals for CTC expansion, read: <https://www.niskanencenter.org/bipartisan-reform-options-for-the-child-tax-credit/> .

Thank you for your advocacy.

Shout-Outs

SHOUT OUT - To Jenny Kwapich and Lynn Rupp as additions to the Praise Team

SHOUT OUT - To our Stewardship team for a most significant delivery of financial need and the need for everyone to make a commitment.

SHOUT OUT - To John Lukecart for continuing some of the custodian jobs on a volunteer basis and the cross that he made that was used in the All Saints' Sunday service.

SHOUT OUT - To Craig Geiger for early set-up (really early) for weekly Blessings in a Backpack bag packing.

SHOUT OUT - To Cathy Cermak for obtaining Manna Grants for Blessings in a Backpack.

SHOUT OUT - To Rick Firth for helping remove cut tree branches on property and removing the old lumber from the side of Fellowship Hall.

SHOUT OUT - To Ken Dobbs and John Lukecart for putting up the luminaries, setting out the Christmas decorations.



BLESSINGS IN A BACKPACK

Who will feed the kids this weekend?



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

We are blessed to provide snack packs for 325 students each weekend for Steele, Henry, Ford, and Erickson Elementary schools.

For regular contributions, please make your tax deductible check to Blessings in a Backpack. You can drop it in the offering plate, drop it off at the church office, or drop it directly in the mail to BIB Lockbox, PO Box 950291, Louisville, KY 40295. **Remember to put Steele Elementary on the memo line.** You can also donate online through the New Spirit Lutheran Church website. Just click on the donate button.

Our team members are hard at work to keep up with the added students each week. Learn more about what we do and how you can help. **We need volunteers to help with fund raising, planning, purchasing, packing, delivery, and gardening. If you like to shop, join our team!**

During the school year, packing is done on Tuesdays from 8:00 to 9:30 AM. Deliveries are done in the mornings after packing (if you want to help deliver, you can pick the day you are available).

Contact Laurie Bernard at lbernard2008@hotmail.com with questions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THIS MINISTRY



HOMELESS BLESSINGS

JOIN US THE 2ND SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH
OCTOBER THRU APRIL 1PM TO 3PM

SOME PETS ARE HOMELESS TOO
WE NOW COLLECT DOG/CAT FOOD, OLD TOWELS, AND BEDDING FOR OUR CLIENTS' PETS AND
FOR DONATION TO THE PIMA ANIMAL CARE CENTER

FOOD INSECURITY AFFECTS ALL AGES

Our next event is December 9th. We will be distributing Christmas food bags. In addition to our monthly Saturday events, we hand out bags to clients on the street that include food, socks, and hygiene products.

New Spirit is reaching at least 100 people every month with our events and hand out bags. Thanks to the City of Tucson's new mobile unit, we can provide showers! We are looking for a few stylists who can give haircuts to our clients. Do you know anyone willing to volunteer for a few hours just once a month?

IF YOU ARE A THRIVENT FINANCIAL MEMBER, PLEASE CONSIDER SPONSORING AN ACTION TEAM FOR HOMELESS BLESSINGS. WE WILL RECEIVE \$250 TO HELP TOWARD THIS MINISTRY.

If you'd like to help our ministry with a cash donation, please make your tax deductible check to New Spirit Lutheran Church with the notation for Homeless Blessings in the memo. You can drop it in the offering plate, drop it off at the church office, or mail it to NSLC, 8701 E. Old Spanish Trail, Tucson, AZ 85710. You can also donate online through the New Spirit Lutheran Church website. Just click on the donate button.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THIS MISSION

Want to help? Contact NSLC Office or Laurie Bernard at lbernard2008@hotmail.com

New Spirit Lutheran Church

8701 E. Old Spanish Trail
Tucson, AZ 85710

Please submit words of thanks and praise to Nancy at nancy@newspiritlutherantucson.org by the 15th of each month to be placed in the newsletter. Thank you!

<p>Sundays:</p> <p>10:00 am Worship</p> <p>You can currently watch each week's message on YouTube.</p>	<p><i>How to contact us:</i></p> <p>New Spirit Lutheran Church 8701 E. Old Spanish Trail Tucson, AZ 85710</p> <p>Phone: (520) 296-2461</p> <p>E-Mail: NewSpiritLutheranTucson@yahoo.com</p> <p>Website: newspiritlutherantucson.org</p>
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