

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.*

November 2025

Beloved of New Spirit,

At the beginning of the year, I issued a challenge for us to have a positive impact on 500 new people. This was a thought that woke me up in the middle of the night January 14th around 2:00 am. I was not able to go back to sleep, no matter how hard I tried. Thoughts and ideas just kept coming to mind, and the number 500 kept coming forward. I came in the office that day and told Nancy that I "was not here". Meaning that I needed to be able to be focused and not be disturbed unless it was an emergency. I went into my office, grabbed my flip charts, my markers and went into room 105. I spent hours in 105 writing things down as they came to me. Everything was color coordinated. When one sheet was filled, I would post it on the way and move to a new blank sheet. I must have looked at least a little crazed by those that walked by the room. Some of the ideas were farfetched even for me, but they got written down anyway.

Now we have 2 months left in the year, so where do we stand on Mission 500? Some of these numbers you have seen in the NSLC By the Numbers. In 2024 our 2nd Saturday Blessings event, averaged 55 people served per month. As of October, the average thus far for this year has been 75 people served per month. Even if half of that increase is new people that is already 100 new people being positively impacted by New Spirit. We also had a toilet paper drive at the beginning of the year. Roughly figuring that each of the 6 schools has about 300 students and staff, then taking into consideration at least some of those kids we are already helping through our Blessings in a Backpack ministry, I figure we impacted 1,200 students and staff. Through our partnership with San Juan Bautista, we have distributed 1,025 pounds of food to a mission in Nogales. We have already distributed 23 Blessings in a Box, our emergency crisis food boxes. Of those 23 boxes, 11 have been for single people and 12 have been family boxes. Those family boxes provide food for 4-5 people, so just through Blessings in a Box we have impacted a total of approximately 70 people. Even as I write that total Nancy is in the process of giving out another food box. Just looking at the increases in our food insecurity and the toilet paper drive, it is safe to say that we have had a positive impact on at least 1,400 new people.



That doesn't include ministries like the quilting group, Pray without Ceasing, etc. The quilting group has created over 40 quilts that will go to 40 local youth facing some of life's most difficult times. As part of my planning for Mission 500, I also wrote down things like livestream equipment, new soundboard, adding a prayer ministry, increase our reach on social media using content created from sources such as worship, and increase our voice for justice. I will be honest with you, when I wrote some of those things down, I doubted if we would be able to do them. I wondered how we would do them. I questioned if we should do them, but I wrote them down.

Sometimes when I look at all the things I have written out, it seems counter intuitive. Here we are focusing on serving others, when it seems like we should be focusing inward to grow the church. I know people have thought it, and a few have come to me to voice this thought. "Pastor, why are we spending so much time, money, and effort serving others when we still have a deficit or need to bring in more people?" It appears we are focusing on others more than we are focusing on ourselves and our needs. My short response is "yes." My longer response is "Yes, we are living into the gospel and Jesus' call to love God and love others." If we are going to be honest with ourselves Jesus never teaches us to focus on ourselves. Even Jesus' teachings on sabbath and rest are framed in a way to encourage us to take them to be able to continue the work put before us. This is a counter-cultural way to live life and to "do church".

Continued on page 2

Here is the amazing part, we are continuing to grow. Looking at previous year's trends, and the fact that we have 8 Sundays left for the year, we should at least show a modest increase in Average Sunday Attendance. If that does end up being the case, we will have our 4th consecutive year of increase in Average Sunday Attendance. When studies have been done of younger generations, including Millennials (those who are 29-44), there were 2 things that were repeatedly mentioned when as "what are you looking for in a church". Those 2 things were:

- Purpose and impact: Younger generations are looking at a church's sense of mission and desire to make a positive difference in the world.
- Authenticity: Younger generations value integrity, transparency, and leadership that is more focused on character.

While other things like worship style, location, family programs, etc were also mentioned the two items listed above as well as "quality of preaching" are often at the top of the list of things younger generations are looking for in a church.

Mission 500 along with all our outwardly focused ministries certainly fit into "purpose and impact". I do believe we are a very authentic congregation. We don't hide who we are. I also believe because we are living into the gospel call of Jesus (purpose and impact) and we are who we are, we are seeing that many of the members that have joined this year are not Lutherans by birth or ones that are church hoppers. We have seen those with no church background, those that have been away from the church for extended periods of time, those who were agnostic, those that some would label as "nones" or "dones" and more join us. This is one of the places I find great hope! We are not a church that is relying on cradle Lutherans to find us and become members! Of course this brings with it other opportunities for growth, thoughts and ideas of what a church should be, less ingrained "Lutheranism", etc. It is the convergence of all these factors that is leading to the feeling that so many of you have named, that New Spirit is once again alive.

Now, of course there is the deficit that we must address. All of us need to take a prayerful look at how we are supporting the church, both financially and with our time and talents. I have been asked before, well what if I can't give 10%, can I give time? I have also heard; well, I can't give much financially but I do give time. First, let's be clear if we are going to strive for giving 10% that is really the beginning and should not be seen as an end goal. Technically speaking "offerings" are those things that are given in over and above 10%. If we look at someone that is giving 5% financially and wants to reach 10% by giving time what does that look like? We know that we are supposed to live our life in communion with God every moment of the day. We know that the 10% goes to support the church's ministry and/or service to others. If we figure that the average person has 12 hours a day when they can be "doing something", 5% of those 12 hours a day would be 36 minutes a day given to the church or 3.6 hours a week or 187.2 hours a year. If you are doing the math, I did include a day of sabbath, so those 36 minutes are multiplied by 6 days. What would NSLC look like if more people gave that much time a week? Or what if we gave 10% of our time in addition to whatever financial gift we give? What would NSLC look like if people gave 72 minutes every day or 7.2 hours every week to ministry? We should be intentionally in prayer regarding how we are being stewards of both our treasures and our time.

We also must continue to actively reach out to people. While our new increased presence in the digital world via our live stream, etc., is great and will help bring in new people, most people (80%+) still attend church for the first time because someone they know invites them. Reaching out to people directly was part of the Mission 500 focus as well. I believe that if we all brought at least 1 new person to church a month, we would see a full sanctuary. Just a little more math, our average Sunday attendance is sitting at 71 people as of November 2. If each of those 71 brought 1 new person every month that would equal over 850 people over 12 months. Even if "only" 10% of those 850 people became members and regular worshipers that would be 85 which would more than double our current average. Take a minute and imagine Sunday worship with 156 people! You can play a role in making that happen. Studies say that the average person has 12 to 16 social interactions per day. The last time NSLC saw an average attendance above 125 was 2014, and I do believe it is possible again!

Continued on page 3

In closing, as I look towards the end of the year and then 2026, I am excited by the possibilities in front of us. We have come a long way, NSLC! I believe we are on the path that God has called us to. I believe next year is going to be another big year of ministry and having a positive impact for us.

Let us hear the words Paul wrote in Hebrews 12 "12 ¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."



Pastor Hartman

November Prayer



Lord Jesus, You have called us to be bold witnesses of Your love and grace in this world. Help us to follow in the footsteps of Martin Luther and countless other faithful believers who have stood courageously for justice and truth. Give us strength to move beyond our comfort zones and speak out against the evils we see around us. May we never forget that Your grace is free for all people, and may this truth compel us to action. Help us to live with the conviction that here we stand, and we can do no other, because You have set us free. In Your powerful name we pray, Amen.

Advent

This year we will be using resources from Sanctified Art, the same company we used for previous seasons of Advent and Lent. These resources include words for worship services, home devotional, and faith enrichment activities. The first Sunday of Advent is November 30th.

ABOUT THIS WORSHIP SERIES:

"Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: "In the time of Herod..." This detail may seem minor to modern readers; however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability. A world not so unlike our own. And yet, throughout the stories of Christ's birth, we hear the whispers of angels delivering a surprising message: "Do not fear." When Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi are each called into God's redemptive story, they do not deny their fears—they move through them. They ask questions, hold fast to courage, trust in good news, and say, "Here I am, Lord." When we find ourselves in fearful times, can we acknowledge our fears while also insisting on hope?

This Advent series takes seriously the angels' message and trusts that Christ's birth truly is good news of great joy for all people. The resources look closely at the fear and terror looming in the background during the time of King Herod and invite us to consider the fears we hold now. Fear can divide and paralyze us and even be used as a tool for oppression. But what if we formed a different relationship with fear? Can we acknowledge fear without letting it rule us? Might we catalyze our fears into love and action? What if naming our fears helps us see more clearly how God is breaking in and where God is at work?



As you journey through this season, may your hope become gritty and resilient. May you remember: hope that trembles is still hope. This season, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear."

December 24th Christmas Eve services will be held at Noon and 6:00 pm.

Shopping This Holiday Season

There has been something that has been on my mind this whole year, and something I have been trying to practice before writing this article. When I started seminary, I took a course called Theological Ethics. As part of that class, we watched a documentary on a major athletic apparel company. This documentary explored this company's business practices including employee pay, environmental practices and more. After watching this documentary, and discussing it with Pastor Naomi, we decided that we would not long purchase items from that brand. This was my introduction to ethical consumption/consumerism.

When I was in college, I knew people that wouldn't shop at certain stores or brands. To be honest, I thought they had lost a few of their marbles. Little did I know that some 13 years later I would start my own journey of ethical consumerism or 20 years later be writing an article about this practice. The truth is we often say that "money talks" or that people "vote with their dollars", etc. We often say it and then move on because we think the few dollars we spend doesn't really make a difference in the bigger scheme of things.

At we enter Advent and the Christmas holiday season, I invite you to think about how you spend your money. I invite you to think about what businesses and brands you are supporting and if they align with your values or at the very least don't act in ways that are directly opposed to your values. Let me be clear, this isn't about just supporting businesses that donate to a certain political party or not. This is about identifying those values that matter to us and spending our money to support businesses and brands that are in line with those values. This is a process that I have started to think about regarding what businesses we support with our funds here at New Spirit.



This kind of shopping may come at a price. I'll give you a personal example. I loved Chick-fil-a's chicken minis for breakfast, and their peppermint chocolate shake available during the holidays. That shake tastes like Christmas in a cup for me. When I started to look at how they spend their philanthropy funds, it became apparent that they were directly working against values I held. It has been over 10 years since I have spent money at a Chick-fil-a, and boy do I miss that shake each holiday season.

As Christians we have certain values that we claim to hold like loving our neighbor and caring for the environment. How do those values align with how we shop? Do they impact how we shop during the holiday season? Does taking advantage of those Black Friday sales or Cyber Monday sales further or harm the values we claim to hold? To be clear, I don't think someone can always be a 100% ethical consumer, but we can make choices to be more ethical when making purchases. Below are some tips/thoughts that you may want to consider as you are making your list and checking it twice.

1. **Prioritize experiences over physical gifts:** Instead of contributing to material waste, give gifts like concert tickets, a cooking class, a spa day, or a guided nature hike that create lasting memories.
2. **Give "virtual" gifts or donations:** Make a charitable donation in the recipient's name to a cause they care about, such as an environmental organization or social justice charity. Many charities offer holiday-themed gift certificates for this purpose.
3. **Shop with a list and a budget:** Plan ahead to avoid impulse purchases and overconsumption. Sticking to a predefined list encourages thoughtful decision-making and ensures you're buying with purpose.
4. **Support small, local businesses and artisans:** This stimulates your local economy, fosters unique craftsmanship, and reduces the carbon emissions associated with shipping from distant warehouses.

Continued on page 5

5. **Choose handmade or DIY gifts:** Baked goods, a jar of homemade mulling spices, or a crafted item add a personal touch and allow you to control the materials and packaging, significantly reducing environmental impact.
6. **Go secondhand or vintage:** A unique vintage item, a high-quality used book, or a refurbished gadget makes a wonderful, unique gift that avoids the demand for new manufacturing and saves items from landfills.
7. **Look for sustainable materials and certifications:** When buying new, seek out gifts made from organic cotton, bamboo, reclaimed wood, or recycled materials. Look for certifications like Fairtrade or B Corporation status.
8. **Go for practical, everyday reusables:** Gifts like a high-quality reusable water bottle, a bamboo cutlery set, or organic cotton tote bags are useful, thoughtful, and promote a sustainable lifestyle year-round.
9. **Use creative, eco-friendly gift wrapping:** Ditch non-recyclable metallic paper or tissue paper. Instead, wrap gifts in reusable cloth bags, a scarf/blanket (as a bonus gift), old newspapers, or brown paper grocery bags that can be recycled or reused.

Be mindful of shipping: When ordering online, consolidate purchases into one large order from a single store to minimize packaging materials and choose the slowest shipping option to reduce delivery-related carbon emission



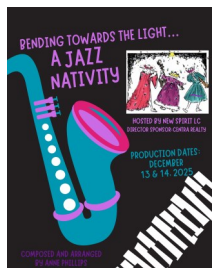
WOMEN'S MINISTRY

A reminder that the Women in Ministry group will meet on Wednesday, November 12, at 1:30 pm in the library .

We welcome continuing members and all the women at New Spirit to come and study with us.

Fellowship Dinner

Our next dinner will be on November 19th. We will do a potluck dinner again this month. Linda Grochowski and Sarah Drath have volunteered to organize the last dinners of the year. We will be posting a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Narthex for November dinner. If you are interested in helping to continue these dinners, please let Linda, Sarah or Nancy in the office know.



Join us for our **second annual production of *Bending Towards the Light: A Jazz Nativity***. This unique and uplifting concert will take place on December 13 at 7 pm and 14 at 5 PM. Tickets are now available! Visit www.jazznativity.org and click the Tucson link. Tickets are \$30.00 online and \$35.00 at the door.

PROGRESS REPORT: The expansion of the nursery bathroom now has walls and a door, most of the electrical work is complete. We are getting an updated bid for the plumbing work.

The electric work for the theater lights is complete and the theater lights have been ordered.



Feeding the Hungry, Following Jesus

Buckle your seat belts because things are about to get wilder at New Spirit! We know the food insecurity of our community and our very own congregation is going to get far worse due to the disruption and dismantling of the SNAP program and the number of Federal employees who are not collecting paychecks because of the stalemate going on in Congress. People who have barely been able to put food on their tables are about to suffer more, and those who have not known financial insecurity in the past are going to struggle.

We know that you may be pressed by our “asks” lately, but one of the most important things Jesus calls us to do is to feed the hungry. New Spirit has never shied away from a challenge. We have our existing food ministries, have already added a couple in the last few months, and are about to add one more. So we hope that you will bear with us and do what you can. If you can’t give fully for a particular program that tugs at your heart, perhaps you can partner with a friend. Here’s everything New Spirit is doing to help the food insecure and how you can help:



NEW! Food gift card match program: As Pastor announced on Sunday, a generous member of the congregation has committed \$1,000 to match other members’ contributions. Pastor’s goal is for this program to reach at least \$3,500, which we surpassed. The money will be used to purchase \$50 gift cards for groceries for individuals and families who have been impacted by the decimation of the SNAP program.

NEW! Holiday meals for Blessings in a Backpack families: We have committed to provide 25+ holiday bags for the five schools in our BIB program. Bags with a list of grocery items will be in the Narthex for you to pick up and fill. The church has a funding source for grocery store gift cards to include in the bags. We ask that you bring them back to the church by Sunday, November 23.

NEW! Community Meals: On Tuesdays until at least the time when SNAP/WIC is funded, New Spirit Lutheran Church will be providing a ho9t meal to go. Individuals are invited to enter our parking lot off of Old Spanish Trail (8701 E. Old Spanish Trail) between 4:00 and 5:30 pm to pick up a basic meal. Cathy Cermak will coordinate this program and can be contacted by phone, 520-780-0378, or email, cathycermak@gmail.com, if you’d like to help. There will be a monthly menu and sign-up sheet for folks who’d like to contribute food or help.

Blessings in a Box program: We have grant funds and items from the food bank to provide food for these boxes, which we give to individuals and families who come to our door in need. *We would also like to provide modest \$10-15 gift cards from Walmart or Frys so folks can buy dairy, meat or fresh produce. We look to the congregation to donate these gift cards.*

Homeless Blessings program: Is always in need of donations of money, nonperishable food, clothing, toiletries, etc.

Blessings in a Backpack program: Is also always in needs of monetary donations.

New Spirit, the Holy Spirit is moving and calling us to do more to feed the hungry and make connections with those who are hurting. Can you buy a gift card, fill a holiday bag or make a meal? You can bring gift cards and monetary donations to the church office, donate money online and designate its use, or contact Laurie Bernard or Cathy Cermak to help.

November & December Birthday & Anniversary Celebrations

11/06 Doug Butler

11/07 Barbara Rebok

11/09 Camellia Thatcher

11/10 Hope & Torrey Thatcher
(Anniversary)

11/11 Edna Walton
Cathy Cermak

11/12 Hope Thatcher

11/17 Pastor Hartman

11/18 Steve Harris

11/21 Rick & Lorrie Firth
(Anniversary)

11/23 Vicky Harris

11/26 Chip & Colleen Green
(Anniversary)

11/27 Heather Thatcher

11/28 Amy Rahe



12/01 Zinnia-Grace Thatcher

12/04 Kristy Leahy

12/05 Maurie Pearson

12/12 Joyce Dow

12/15 Amber Uidenich

12/19 Carol Morales
Gary Grochowski

12/20 Brian Francis

12/22 Paul Koster

12/26 Linda Lamb

12/27 Laurie Bernard

12/30 Eva Kwapich
Sarah Elmquist
Ethan Rettig
Shirley Thomas

Shout-Outs

SHOUT OUT - To Cathy Cermak for organizing the Meals to Go.

SHOUT OUT - To Marty Lueking, Ron Cermak and Ken Dobbs for getting the Live Streaming up and running.

SHOUT OUT - To Carol Johnston, Kitty Glanz, Lorrie Firth for work on the Calming Space.

SHOUT OUT - To the anonymous donors that have stepped up to provide funding.

SHOUT OUT - To Karen, Sandra and Shelley Colwell for organizing and support of Trunk or Treat.

SHOUT OUT - To Lynda Grochowski and Sarah Drath for taking over the organization of Wednesday night dinner.

SHOUT OUT - To Cathy Cermak for completing the various Grant applications that have been awarded for programs.





Who will feed the kids this weekend?



WE WILL!

Being well nourished vs. hunger can have a profound impact on a child's academic performance, school attendance, behavior and health. This is the vision of Blessings in a Backpack and New Spirit – happy, healthy children who can focus on school performance, attend regularly, and demonstrate academic success because of having full bellies. New Spirit provides snack packs to those who might not have enough to eat on the weekend.

The 364 children we currently serve are from five east side elementary schools: Steele at 700 S. Sarnoff Drive; Erickson at 6750 E. Stella Road; Henry at 650 N. Igo Way; Ford at 8001 E. Stella Road; and Soleng Tom at 10520 E. Camino Quince.

Want to volunteer to be a member of our team?
Contact Laurie Bernard at lbernard2008@hotmail.com with questions.

For regular contributions, please make your tax-deductible check to Blessings in a Backpack. You can contribute on New Spirit's website, drop in the offering plate, drop off at the church office, or drop directly in to the mail to BIB Lockbox, PO Box 950291, Louisville, KY 40295. **Remember to put Steele Elementary on the memo line.**

**HOMELESS BLESSINGS
NEXT EVENT NOVEMBER 8TH
1PM TO 3PM
THANKSGIVING DINNER WILL BE SERVED!**



On the 2nd Saturday of each month, we share hygiene products, tarps, backpacks, blankets, socks, underwear, shade hats, umbrellas, cool cloths, clothing, shoes, and haircuts, along with hot home-cooked meals for 50 to 70 unhoused/financially insecure brothers and sisters. We partner with local care providers to work towards housing, mental health support, and HIV/Hepatitis C testing.

Church members are provided with bags of essential items to share out of their cars with people on the street reaching another 100 unhoused neighbors per month.

We also volunteer with the City of Tucson Housing First MDOT Care Packet Assembly once a month for sharing at homeless camps.

As of August 1, 2025, we have emergency food boxes for families and singles. Please call the office at 296-2461 if you need help.

This vital ministry has grown to impact/serve/care for over 2,000 people annually.
Want to volunteer and make a difference in someone's life? Contact Laurie Bernard at lbernard2008@hotmail.com with questions.

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 contribute on our website, 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.

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!

Sundays:

10:00 am Worship Service

Wednesdays

9:00 am Pray Without Ceasing Service

You can currently watch each week's message on YouTube.

How to contact us:

New Spirit Lutheran Church
8701 E. Old Spanish Trail
Tucson, AZ 85710

Phone: (520) 296-2461

E-Mail: NewSpiritLutheranTucson@yahoo.com

Website: newspiritlutherantucson.org