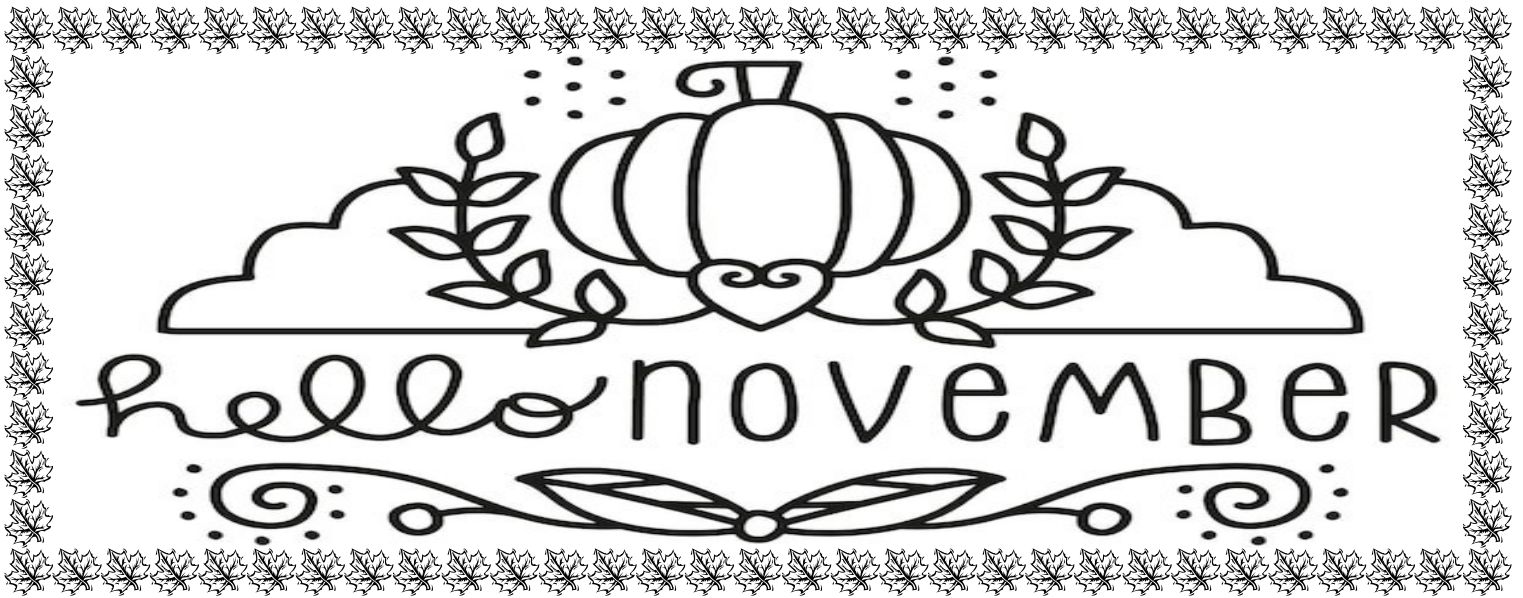


NOVEMBER 2025



The Rev. June E. Wann
Pastor

Robert Billig
President, Church Council

Zach Keenan
Vice President, Church Council

Secretary
Judy Ehret

Margy Muthard
Treasurer

Jordan Bucks
Organist

Joanne Gantz-Jalowiecki
Financial Secretary

Jennifer Kishbaugh
Director Of Music

Claudette Nia
Office Administrator

FAITH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
3355 MACARTHUR ROAD
WHITEHALL, PA 18052

DATES TO REMEMBER

November 1 is All Saints' Day.

November 1 is also Sadie Hawkins Day.

November 2 at 2 A.M. is the end of Daylight Saving Time. Set your clocks back one hour on Saturday night at bedtime!

November 4 is also Election Day

November 6 is set up for craft fair

November 8 is craft fair

November 11 is Veterans Day (U.S.) and Remembrance Day (Canada).

November 19 is Discovery of Puerto Rico Day.

November 27 is Thanksgiving Day

The day after Thanksgiving, November 28 this year, is known as Black Friday.

November 30 is the First Sunday of Advent, marking the beginning of the Advent season.



From the Pastor

“Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good.” In a few weeks Thanksgiving will be upon us, and along with it, a lot of work. Thanksgiving means picking up family from airports, car rides, large meals, family gatherings (maybe many family gatherings) food shopping, and soon enough, planning for Christmas. Your list could probably go on and on.

Sometimes the “busy-ness” of our holidays and lives is unavoidable. But we do not have to harbor in our hearts an unrelenting “busy-ness.” During this time of year, especially as we prepare for Advent, we should remember the story of Mary and Martha. You may remember, Martha was running around preoccupied with all her busy preparations while Mary was sitting at Jesus’ feet and listening to Him. Jesus told Martha that it was Mary who had chosen what is best (Luke 10:38-42).

It is inevitable that we will have busy moments in our lives. That is normal. However, as Christians, we do not have to allow the busy moments to take our focus off Christ. As we begin our celebrations of Thanksgiving, let’s remember the One to whom we are giving thanks, Christ Jesus our Lord. As we take the leap into Advent and Christmas, let’s not forget the reason for these celebrations; our Lord is coming to do great things for us!

Like Martha, it can be so easy for us to get wrapped up in OUR plans, and all the work WE have to do, that we can completely forget that this time of year our thoughts should especially be turned to our Lord Jesus who has worked so hard for us. The quote at the beginning of this article comes from a personal prayer that I quietly each and every Sunday that we celebrate Holy Communion. I say this because our Lord has just given us a foretaste of the feast to come in heaven through the Lord’s Supper. As we begin our preparations for Thanksgiving and Christmas, may we always remember the preparations our God made for us in the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The Lord be with you!

In peace,

Pastor June



SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT FORUM AT 9:00 AM

WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:00 AM

**Communion—The first Tuesday of each month,
Join us for a light lunch at noon
followed by communion at 1:00.**

We hope to encourage our members who are uncomfortable driving at night, to use this time for fellowship that is and has been enjoyed at our Wednesday night Hotdogs and Hymns.

All are welcome!

Bring a friend.

**Altar Communion—The first Sunday of each month
celebrate Communion around the Altar. Please join us!**



To my brothers and sisters in Christ:

A very special thank you to all of you for the love and kindness shown to me and my family on the death of Rhyner. For the visits, food, calls, and offers of help, I am truly blessed. To the kitchen crew, the bakers, the cleanup gang you all did a beautiful job, thank you very much.

To Pastor June for a lovely service, your visits, calls, food, and prayers. I am truly blessed.

God bless you all.

Adriana and Family

THE WHITEHALL FOOD PANTRY

Is requesting canned sweet potatoes as our contribution from Faith

FOOD BOX REQUESTS FOR THANKSGIVING

AND CHRISTMAS FOOD BOXES

IF YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO IS IN NEED OF A FOOD BOX, PLEASE CALL

THE CHURCH OFFICE

Canned vegetables, boxed stuffing mixes, instant mashed potatoes
cranberry sauce, pasta and pasta sauces, Cake mixes, icing,
And turkeys

Craft Fair preparations calling

Get involved in helping with this important fund raiser—lots of opportunities

Join the fundraising committee, the Craft Fair committee,
the Fellowship committee

Soothe the soul with food, fun, service to others, and fellowship with our Faith family

We are now accepting nominations for the 2026 Council.

**If you are interested in a spot on the council,
please reach out to Pastor June or the church office.**

The annual Christmas tea is December 7, 2025 beginning at 2 PM. Tickets are \$12. Parkland Chorale will be performing. We, the committee, are still calculating how many tickets will be available. You can contact the hostess of whose table you usually sat to confirm your coming so hostess can submit her count These are the hostesses we have verified so far: Rose, Judy, Gloria, Vickie Lynne, Michelle and Claudette, Pat M, Fran, Rosemarie and Gail, Barb Y, Margy

FAITH FAMILY FYI'S

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY: LET US REMEMBER

Charles Silvius

Richard Daniel

Nelson Schaeffer

Nancy Salter

Barbara Meckes

Sandra Meckes

William Fenstermaker

Sally Buchmiller

Rhynier Minnich

Robert Bair, Sr.

Greg Rismiller

Judy Spellbaum

Janice Herzog

David Haffner

Donald Baum

Michael Bodnyk

THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

ALTAR GUILD

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

CRAFT FAIR COMMITTEE

SOCIAL MINISTRY

QUILTERS/PIECE MAKERS

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

FUND RAISING COMMITTEE

PRAYER GROUP

MUSIC AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE

BAKERS AND KITCHEN CREW

ALL OUR REGULARS WHO ALWAYS SHOW UP TO HELP

CHURCH COUNCIL

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

WORSHIP TEAMS FOR OCTOBER

NOV 2

NOV 9

NOV 16

NOV 23

NOV 30

ALTAR GUILD	Linda Johnston And Pat Masonheimer	Cathy Haller And Gloria Senchak	Judy And Shel Ehret	Diane Batza And Charlene Frack	Barb Yurasits And Pat Masonheimer
ASSISTING MINISTER	Howard Schaffer	Bob Brandt	Kindall Wann	Kyle Brandt	Bob Billig
LECTOR	Kindall Wann	Jennifer Reiner		Jennifer Reiner	Kindall Wann
GREETER	Charlene Frack	Barb Kotsch	Dan Herzog	April Spaits	Charlene Frack
FLOWER SPONSOR			Rosemarie And Mel Haffner	Paulette Hawkey	Sandy And Michael John Bodnyk
BULLETIN SPONSOR			Rosemarie And Mel Haffner	Paulette Hawkey	Sandy And Michael John Bodnyk

NOVEMBER 2025 CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2 <u>ALL SAINTS DAY</u> Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Altar Communion AA 7:00 PM	3 <u>1:00 PM Piece makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	4 <u>10:00 AM Prayer Group</u> <u>Light lunch and Communion</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts	5 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	6 6:00 PM Cub Scouts <u>6:15 pm Bell Choir</u> <u>6:30 Craft fair setup</u> <u>7:30 pm senior choir</u>	7	8 <u>Craft Fair 9-3</u>
9 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM 5:00 PM AA Anniversary celebration	10 <u>1:00 PM Piece makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	11 Veteran's Day <u>10:00 AM Prayer Group</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts <u>Exec Council</u>	12 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	13 6:00 PM Cub Scouts <u>6:15 pm Bell Choir</u> <u>7:30 pm senior choir</u>	14	15 funeral
16 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM AA 7:00 PM	17 <u>1:00 PM Piece makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	18 <u>10:00 AM Prayer Group</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts 7:00 pm Church council	19 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	20 6:00 PM Cub Scouts <u>6:15 pm Bell Choir</u> <u>7:30 pm senior choir</u>	21	22
23 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM 7:00 PM AA (PH)	24 <u>1:00 PM Piece makers</u> 6:00 PM Brownies 7:00 PM Pioneer Band (BH)	25 <u>10:00 AM Prayer Group</u> 6:45 PM Boy Scouts	<u>26</u> <u>Poinsettia orders due</u> 6:00 PM Eagle Scouts	27 Office Closed Thanksgiving	28	29
30 Sunday School 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM First Sunday in Advent 7:00 PM AA (PH)			7			

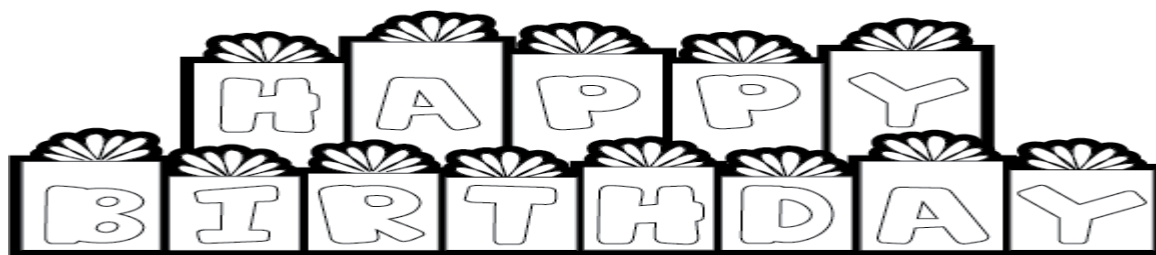


HAPPY anniversary

BILLIG, JR, ROBERT and KARLA 11/08

BUCHVALT, PAULA 11/14

MILLER, II, RICHARD & TARA 11/25



Copyright Homemade-Preschool.com

BRETZ, DOROTHY (82) 11/02

CAVE, CONNOR (20) 11/05

YURASITS, BARBARA (74) 11/07

MC FARLAND, IRVIN (76) 11/11

SMYKOWSKI, KAITLYN (26) 11/11

KURRASCH, LINDA (85) 11/17

WEHR, MELISSA (57) 11/18

YANOSHIK, DAVID (62) 11/19

HOWER, JULIET (25) 11/22

WHITTAKER, HAROLD (62) 11/23

HAFFNER, ROSEMARIE (83) 11/25

SCHMIDT, CHRISTOPHER (59) 11/29

From the kitchen of Pat Walschburger

Dutch Apple Crisp

4 Tart Apples (I prefer MacIntosh)
1-1/2 Cups Flour
1/4 tsp. Salt
1 tsp. Sugar
1/2 Cup Canola Oil
2 Tbsp. Milk (2%)

Streusel Mixture

Mix 3/4 Cup Sugar, 2 Tbsp. Flour,
& 1/4 tsp. Salt in a bowl. Cut in 2
Tbsp. Butter or Margarine with
pastry blender or fork until
crumbly.

Peel and core apples, cut in eighths.

Sift flour, salt, and sugar into 8 x 8 x 2" cake pan. Combine oil and milk in a measuring cup. Whip with a fork. Pour all at once over flour mixture. Mix with fork until dampened. Pat the mixture to cover the bottom of the pan and push dough up along the sides of the pan to a depth of about 1". Arrange apples over pastry. Sprinkle streusel mixture over top, sprinkle with Cinnamon, and bake in a hot oven – 425 degrees 40-45 minutes until pastry is browned.

Enjoy!

This is the original recipe given to me by Mary Litwhiler who was a member of Faith, a very sweet lady that helped in various ways at church. Her husband, Ed, was on council and was very active in the life of the church, and their son, Lance, became an Eagle Scout at Faith many years ago.

5/17/24

CREAMY mushroom soup

6 qt. pot

1/3 c. olive oil

1 stick butter

1 L. onion

6 cloves chopped garlic

1/4 c. leaves from handful of tyme

1/4 c. chopped parsley

2 qts. half and half

2 14oz. cartons portebella mushrooms

2 whole carrots chopped + diced

3 bfg. bullion cubes

1/4 c. flour

Salt + pepper to taste

Place oil and butter into pot on med heat then large chopped onion and 6 garlic cloves chopped -- caramelize the onions -- remove from the heat -- add chopped mushrooms -- mix return to medium heat -- for 2 min. continue to mix remove from heat and level the mushrooms and sprinkle lightly with half of flour -- mix again -- level again and spread + stir remaining flour -- mix very well -- ADD half + half -- medium high heat to a boil for 5 minutes -- lower heat add tyme -- parsley + bullion Salt + pepper to taste -- mix well.

4-6 servings w/ left overs.



Empowering Creative Ministries
c/o the Lutheran Center • 2354 Grove Road, Allentown, PA 18109
7002 Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002
www.lutherancongregationalservices.org • 267-464-7740

Philippians 1: 4-6

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Pastor June Wann
Faith Lutheran Church
3355 MacArthur Road
Whitehall, PA 18052-2903

Dear Pastor Wann,

We give thanks for Faith Lutheran Church and your continued support of Lutheran Congregational Services in doing good work. Your faith in action is a testimony to the gospel we share, and your partnership brings the love of Christ to those most in need.

With your support, hundreds who are homebound are receiving holy communion from 24 newly trained Eucharist volunteers. These servants are also providing companionship and affirming the dignity of those who often feel forgotten.

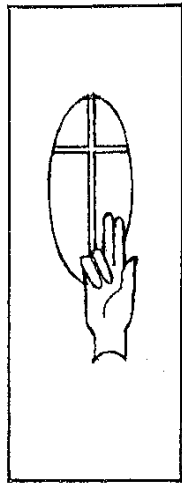
You provide comfort and guidance through our bereavement ministries for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Their faith, though sometimes shaken by the depths of their loss, is gently held and renewed through the presence of caring companions.

Thanks to Faith Lutheran, 170 families rebuilt their lives after flooding between 2022 and today. From Berks and Northampton Counties, all the way south through Delaware County, PA, our disaster response teams are still at work. AmeriCorps volunteers, local pastors, and church members continue to show up—proving that Christ's love is ever-present.

The success of our work with these families enabled Lutheran Congregational Services

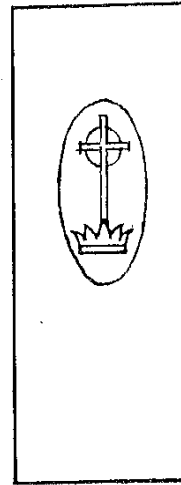


Nave Window Symbolism



THE HAND OF GOD
Symbol of the Father, as Blessor.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST
*Symbol of the Son's
Suffering and Death.*

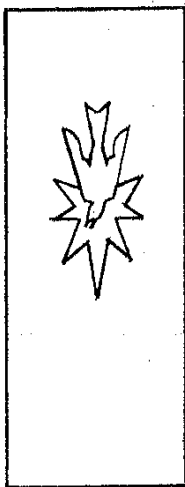


THE CROSS AND
THE CROWN

These symbolize the reward of the faithful in the life after death for those who believe in the Crucified Saviour.

"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the Crown of Life."

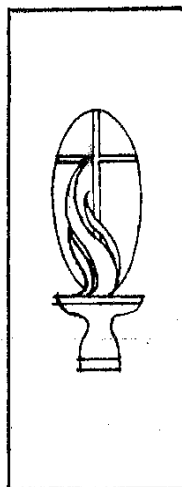
REV. 2:10



THE DESCENDING DOVE
Symbol of the Holy Spirit.

"Jesus . . . was baptized of John. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him."

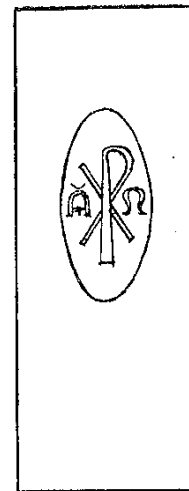
MARK 1:9, 10



CHRIST THE LIGHT
OF THE WORLD

Also, the unquenchable Word of God.

Also, the eternal flame of faith that forever burns in the hearts of believers of all ages initiated by the fire of the Spirit on Pentecost.



THE CHI RHO WITH THE
ALPHA AND OMEGA

The symbol for Christ is within an unbroken enclosure (symbol for eternity) and so signifies the eternal existence of our Lord.

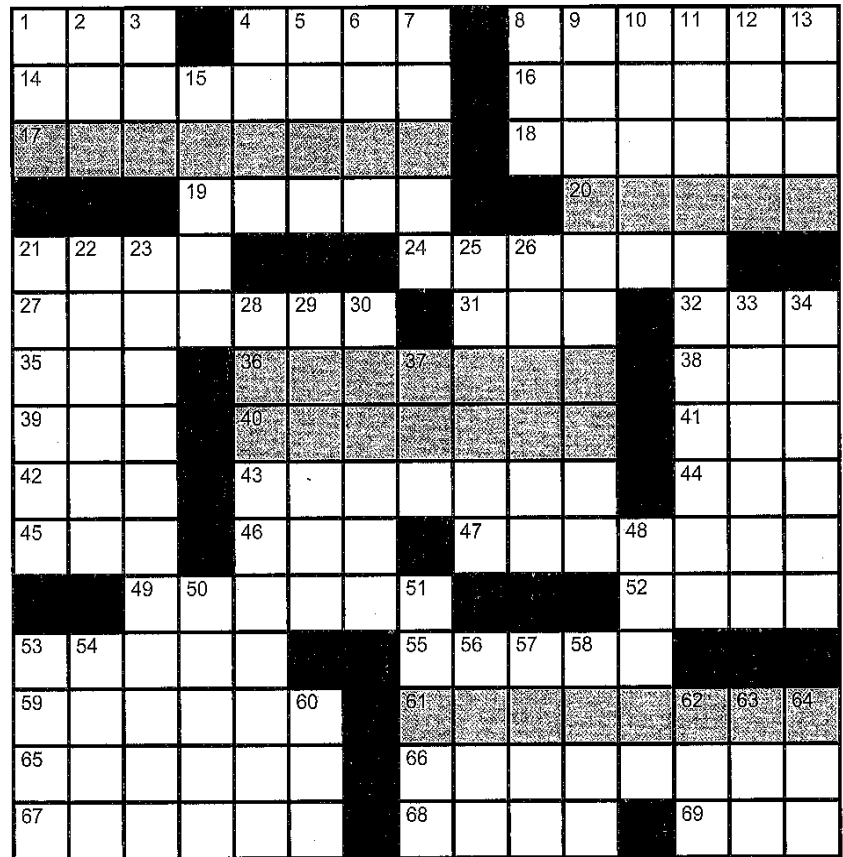
GHOSTLY MESSAGE

EASY
Solution on page 23

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, God had a spooky way to tell King Belshazzar some bad news. The gray squares contain both the message and the name of the story.

ACROSS

1. Whirling Looney Tunes character, for short
4. Olympic martial art since 1964
8. Magician's "Voilà!"
14. Area from which to hear an aria
16. Intensify, as an argument
17. First part of the ghostly message, the repeated Aramaic word for "numbered" — interpreted by Daniel to mean that Belshazzar's days as king were numbered
18. Gasoline component
19. Somewhat sour
20. Second part of the ghostly message, the Aramaic word for "weighed" — interpreted by Daniel to mean that Belshazzar had been weighed on God's scales and found wanting
21. _____-Seltzer
24. Component of natural gas
27. Upscale London retailer, since 1849 (anagram of RASH ROD)
31. Kylo _____, "Star Wars" villain
32. Mil. command centers
35. Verdi aria: "_____ tu"
36. With 40-Across, a visual representation of the common name of the Bible story of the ghostly message: "_____ on _____"
38. Not safe, in baseball
39. William Barr and Merrick Garland: Abbr.
40. See 36-Across
41. Bill, after being signed by the president
42. Single squat or lat pull
43. Land where "Puff the Magic Dragon" lives (variant spelling)
44. 551, to Caesar
45. Attempt
46. Get an _____ (ace)
47. Processes
49. Popular candy bar from Hershey
52. Prefix for -while
53. Home for herons and egrets
55. Host Tyler of "Whose Line Is It Anyway?"
59. Fill one's gas tank
61. Third and last part of the ghostly message, the word for "divided" (KJV-style) — interpreted by Daniel to mean that Belshazzar's kingdom would be divided...which it was that very night
65. Munitions supplier



66. Reason to give up on a phone call
67. Nap, in Nogales
68. Non-repetitive disapproving sounds
69. Org. that approved two Covid-19 vaccines for emergency use in December 2020

DOWN

1. Jerry's adversary, in old cartoons
2. King Kong or Donkey Kong
3. _____ Buddhism
4. Doctors' professional magazine: Abbr.
5. Taxi alternative
6. "Cut it out!"
7. Sunflower-like flower
8. Vietnamese noodle soup
9. Football fields and basketball courts, geometrically
10. All gone, as dinner
11. Key participant or owner, as of a business
12. Adjust, as guitar strings
13. German auto brand since 1899 (anagram of LOPE)
15. Fix again, as a roof or a road
21. What the Tin Man asked the Wizard for
22. Alaska, in relation to Texas
23. Baked-goods company whose Nasdaq trading symbol is DNU
25. Courtroom events
26. Rocker Don of "The Heart of the Matter"
28. "Oof, there's gonna be a bruise there"
29. Band with the 1979 hit, "When You're in Love with a Beautiful Woman" (anagram of OH DORK)
30. Earthy color, or a Toyota minivan
33. Misgivings
34. Double-curve, as in yarn
37. Bygone Pan Am competitor
48. "_____ in Heaven", Eric Clapton's heart-breaking 1992 song about his son's death
50. British _____
51. Heckle or mock
53. Adv. degrees for creative types
54. Hearing: Prefix
56. Stock exchange debuts: Abbr.
57. Most-quoted author in the Oxford English Dictionary: Abbr.
58. _____ Christian Andersen, author of "The Little Mermaid" and "The Ugly Duckling"
60. "Don't text and drive"-type ad, for short
62. Woman in a personal ad: Abbr.
63. Iraq War danger, for short
64. Gun advocacy group: Abbr.

SOLUTIONS

INTO ALL THE WORLD

1	E	M	O	J	I	6	G	A	I	L	S	11	Q	B	S
14	C	I	N	A	S	15	A	N	N	E	E	16	A	R	A
17	O	N	E	P	M	18	M	A	T	T	E	19	N	A	Y
20	T	H	E	R	I	21	G	H	T	P	A	22	T	H	S
23	A	L	E	E	25	H	E	R	E	26	S	C	A	M	S
27	R	U	N	T	H	28	E	R	A	C	E	29	E	S	S
31	T	I	T	H	E	32	M	A	Z	E	S	33			
34	A	S	H	35	M	B	A	36	N	R	C	37	B	H	A
42	A	I	O	L	I	43						44	H	B	E
46	I	B	A	R	47	W	A	L	K	48	W	O	R	T	H
52	O	R	S	E	53	A	54	B	L	I	P	55	A	H	A
56	W	E	L	I	V	E	A	N	D	M	O	V	E		
59	A	X	E	60	A	R	M	E	D	61	F	A	S	T	
64	N	I	E	65	S	T	A	S	I	66	U	D	D	E	R
67	S	T	P	68	T	E	N	S	E	69	S	O	A	K	S

LOST AND FOUND

1	F	L	O	P	5	A	H	E	A	P	10	S	S	T	S
14	U	R	S	I	15	L	E	A	P	A	16	E	T	O	N
17	J	O	H	N	18	N	E	W	T	O	N	19	T	A	P
20	I	N	A	B	O	X	21	D	I	D	A	F	L	I	P
25	F	A	B	L	E	28	A	R	T	29	E	E	C		
30	E	L	A	L	31	O	N	T	32	W	R	E	T	33	C
35	L	A	N	36	A	N	Y	37	S	Y	S	38	I	R	E
39	L	I	K	E	M	E	41	B	I	O	42	I	T	A	R
43	R	N	A	44	L	R	G	45	A	N	E	Y	E		
46	A	B	O	L	I	T	I	O	49	N	I	S	T		
50	A	L	L	I	N	E	E	D	51	B	E	E	F	E	D
55	M	I	L	S	56	S	L	A	V	E	T	57	R	A	D
58	C	N	E	T	59	T	O	T	E	S	60	I	S	E	E
61	O	D	D	S	62	S	W	E	E	T	63	M	O	N	T

GHOSTLY MESSAGE

1	T	A	Z	4	J	U	D	O	8	P	R	E	S	T	O
14	O	P	E	R	A	B	O	X	16	H	E	A	T	U	P
17	M	E	N	E	M	E	N	E	18	O	C	T	A	N	E
19	T	A	R	T	Y	20	T	E	K	E	L				
21	A	L	K	A	24	E	T	H	A	N	E				
27	H	A	R	R	O	D	S	28	R	E	N	32	H	Q	S
35	E	R	I	36	W	R	I	T	I	N	G	38	O	U	T
39	A	G	S	40	T	H	E	W	A	L	L	41	L	A	W
42	R	E	P	43	H	O	N	A	L	E	E	44	D	L	I
45	T	R	Y	46	A	O	N	47	S	Y	S	48	T	E	M
49	K	I	T	K	A	51	T	52	E	R	S	T			
53	M	A	R	S	H	55	A	I	S	H	A				
59	F	U	E	L	U	P	60	U	P	H	A	R	S	I	N
65	A	R	M	E	R	S	66	N	O	A	N	S	W	E	R
67	S	I	E	S	T	A	68	T	S	K	S	69	F	D	A

THE NAVIGATORS

The ELCA is guided by the vision of “a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.”

The phrase **“God’s Love Made Real”** is shorthand for this vision statement.

The strategic recommendations are part of how the ELCA is working toward this vision and how the Churchwide Organization is doing its part in the world to make the gospel message of God’s love more widely known.

The recommendations that follow are connected to the current purpose and priorities of the ELCA.

The purpose of the ELCA is to: “Activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love.”

The priority areas of the ELCA are:

- 1. A Welcoming Church: Engaging new, young and diverse people “Your young ... shall see visions, and your old ... shall dream dreams.” — Acts 2:17**
- 2. A Thriving Church: Rooted in tradition and radically relevant “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? ... You are the light of the world.” — Matthew 5:13–14**
- 3. A Connected, Sustainable Church: Raising the bar together “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” — John 15:5**

What might the future of the ELCA look like if it were more fully reflecting God’s love in the world? Several perspectives might give us a glimpse.

Strategic Recommendations for the ELCA

The book of Revelation paints a picture of people from every nation, tribe, people and language who stand before God in worship (Revelation 7:9), as well as the reality that God will dwell with the people, wiping every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain (Revelation 21:3-4). The ELCA has a unique role to play in carrying out the important ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:11–21). Structurally and organizationally, it might mean that the ELCA no longer experiences numeric decline of baptized members but grows in the number of people who are disciples of Jesus and the number of congregations that are vibrant and vital.

When we asked nearly 1,000 ELCA rostered leaders what they think the future of the ELCA will look like, their most common responses were that the ELCA would be marked by the grace and love of Jesus Christ, centered on the cross and the gospel, welcoming and inclusive of all people, and defined by justice, advocacy and service.

Several future-oriented and hope-filled quotes about the future of the ELCA stood out across this project, including:

“Our current church buildings would be functioning more like community centers. Our pastoral care and other offerings would be hyper-locally focused and relevant to people in each community.”

“We would lean even more into the aspects of Lutheranism that make us unique, including our strong theology of the cross and emphasis on the grace of Jesus Christ. People who engage with ELCA churches would know that they are valued and accepted, and there is nothing they can do to separate them from the love of God.”

“Our world has too much hurt and hate. Lutheran churches must help those who experience them to know they are not freed because of the good work we do, but because of the good work Jesus has already done for us. We offer an incredible message of liberation.”

“Our metrics will have changed — no longer just butts in seats, but toward things like injustices addressed and lives transformed. We would focus even more on engaging in community and love of neighbor.

“We would ... invite others into the joy of the love of Jesus. I believe that if we focused primarily on that, the rest would probably take care of itself.”

Presently, the ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the U.S., with nearly 3 million members and about 8,500 congregations. The ELCA has a rich history, tracing its roots to the reformer Martin Luther. Much might be possible through the strengthened collective efforts of those across the ELCA to reflect God’s love in the world.

NATIONAL REALITIES THAT SHAPE THE ELCA’S MINISTRY TODAY

As the ELCA seeks to realize its vision, any strategic recommendations must take into account the broader landscape of life and faith in the United States.

Strategic Recommendations for the ELCA

Clergy are expressing higher rates of burnout and lower contentment with their work. Younger people’s major life decisions and engagement with institutions look very different than previous generations’, leading to a need for new forms of ministry. Many of these realities can make the future of the ELCA seem bleak. However, these realities also present many opportunities the ELCA can grasp.

Some denominations and traditions, as well as many churches, are experiencing significant growth in the midst of these challenges. People still find Jesus compelling, and people are in need of both grace and truth, demonstrated by a loving Christian community.

One of the widest recent studies on U.S. churches over the last two decades has found that congregations that are growing and spiritually vital are also more likely to:

- **Have strong leadership that fits well with the participants.**
- **Have a clear and compelling mission.**
- **Be innovative and open to change.**
- **Be active in the local community.**
- **Have more vibrant worship that is thought-provoking and stimulating.**
- **Have a community of participants that represents a diversity of ages, genders, races and other differences.**
- **Be good at incorporating new people.**
- **Have significant lay involvement, including contributing financially and volunteering.**
- **Live out their faith commitments in everyday life and tell others about the congregation.**

KEY FEATURES OF THE ELCA TODAY: ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

While the ELCA faces great challenges, we have also observed substantial assets and opportunities. These assets and opportunities also specifically inform the recommendations that follow in the report. In no particular order, they include:

1. Clear and Abundant Signs of Hope and Possibility: While the number of baptized members in the ELCA is decreasing, we anticipate many other markers such as service efforts in the wider community, donations to worthy causes and other forms of engagement beyond membership actually paint the picture of a denomination in the midst of a renewal, not a decline.

2. Rich, Accessible, Conversational, Justice-Oriented, Grace Filled Theology: The ELCA has strong theological and historical foundations, tracing its beliefs to Martin Luther's efforts to reform the Church in the 16th century. The focus on being saved by God's grace and God's grace alone, as well as God's unconditional love in light of the cross, provide the ELCA with a relevant and much-needed gospel message for today's world. This has uniquely positioned the ELCA to engage in many forms of ministry, including ministry with the LGBTQIA+ community. Combined with the fact that the ELCA is deeply self-aware and recognizes its present challenges, a grace-filled posture could position the ELCA to respond very well in this moment.

3. Deep Resources, Significant Donors and Committed Leaders: In light of its history and significant systems and structures, the ELCA has abundant resources that could be utilized in terms of real estate and property ownership. Many generous donors who value the Lutheran tradition and church have significant capacity to make transformational gifts (nationally and locally). Thousands of leaders (rostered and lay leaders)

4. Extensive Camps, Campus Ministry and Youth Ministry Expertise: In most conversations we had with leaders about areas of potential in the ELCA, camps, campus ministries and many youth ministry efforts were named (including the Youth Gathering). When we spoke to many of these leaders, however, they felt undervalued and under-resourced.

5. Building on Clear Need and Existing Momentum: One of the difficult aspects of any change effort is establishing the initial need for change. We find the ELCA is already self-reflective (sometimes to a fault), asking good questions and making initial movements and efforts toward change. By using our recommendations to view current challenges and barriers in new ways, as well as making better use of existing resources, there is opportunity for both evolutionary and revolutionary transformation.

