



Central Lutheran Church

Come Share the Spirit!

Mailing Address

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January 2023

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Sign up for electronic giving on our website or through our app.

Download app:

<https://clcaz.net/app>

You can text to give at:
520.636.0505

Our Locations & Phone

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Email at: office@CentralLutheranAZ.org

Mission Statement

We are a Spirit-filled community of loving and caring, light-hearted people who joy-fully invite all to share, through the Gospel, the love of Christ.

The deadline for the February's Newsletter is January 19TH.

Church Directory

Church Office

Arizona City 520-466-5024

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Mission Endowment Team

-Jerry Edwardson -Pastor John Donovan -Dell Hoff -Mary Pietrini

JANUARY'S BIBLE READINGS:

January 1 - Genealogy of Jesus

First Sunday of Christmas

Matthew 1:1-17

Psalms 132:11-12

January 8 - Jesus' Baptism:

First Sunday after Epiphany

Matthew 3:1-17

Psalms 2:7-8

January 15 - Tempted in the Wilderness:

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Matthew 4:1-17

Psalms 91:9-12

January 22 - Beatitudes:

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Matthew 5:1-20

Psalms 1:1-3

January 29 - Treasure in Heaven

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Matthew 6:7-21

Psalms 20:7

February 5 - The Golden Rule

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Matthew 7:1-14, 24-29

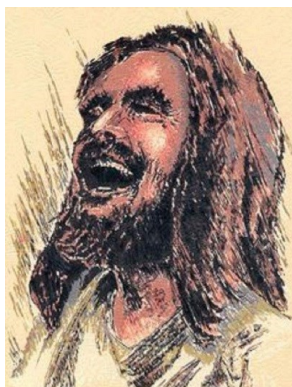
Psalms 37:16-18

His Unfailing Presence

Another year I enter
Its history unknown;
Oh, how my feet would tremble
To tread its paths alone!
But I have heard a whisper,
I know I shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."

What will the New Year bring me?
I may not, must not know;
Will it be love and rapture,
Or loneliness and woe?
Hush! Hush! I hear His whisper;
I surely shall be blest;
"My presence shall go with thee,
And I will give thee rest."

--Unknown Author



New Year, New Things, New Hope

By Pastor Doug Dill

Happy new year, to each and every one that is reading this! Although the secular new year is not a church holiday, the church new year started at the beginning of Advent. Two celebrations? You decide.

As a congregation, we will have a congregational meeting, setting a mission support plan for the next coming year. We will continue to operate off the previous year's mission support plan, until we complete the meeting on January 29th, 2023.

So much is going on, so many things of new hope. We will have four new council members being elected. We will have a new budget (AKA Mission support plan) for the year. Executive council has been hard at work on lowering the costs overall and providing for more mission. As you know, we did a special appeal to help pay off

the Arizona City mortgage and pay back monies that were borrowed internally during 2022. We had a fantastic response and look forward to even more of a response.

We took in new members in 2022 and anticipate doing the same in 2023. God is good and keeps providing us ways of doing ministry. In 2022 The Food Bank was started and Laundry Love. We look to have the Senior Center back up and running later in the year. Adult Community Education (ACE) was awarded in 2022, \$30,000 to be paid out over three years beginning in 2023! God is great!

Annual appeal is going to be starting shortly. This is unlike the special appeal. This is a Stewardship Appeal to fund ongoing ministry. The last that I was able to find evidence of an annual appeal, was back in 2013. I am excited for the possibilities in doing this appeal. It will provide you with a good picture of the ministries, the cost of doing ministry, the impact of ministry and show you how to participate. The stewardship team is working with the consultant from Stewardship for All Seasons, to put this in place.

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Food Bank Update

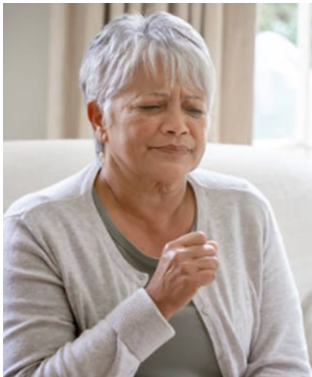
December's noisy offering collected \$370 plus \$250 from a Trivent Action Team.

We take this offering on the 4th Sunday of every month. Bring your loose change & even dollar bills.



Meet Rocio, an ACE Program Alumna's Journey

After attending a voc-tech program to get her certification and then working for years as a dental assistant, her employer informed Rocio that she needed a GED certificate to keep her job. She attempted to take the GED tests and passed all but the math test. After several failed test retakes, she felt defeated. With her job on the line, she pleaded for more time to study and prepare for another try. Thankfully, her supervisor agreed; after all, Rocio



was a valued five-year employee. Yet Rocio had lost confidence that she could overcome this challenge. Math was not her strength and, as hard as she tried, she just didn't get it...and at 52 years of age, she wondered if she ever would.

Responding to an advertisement, Rocio came to the Adult Community Education (ACE) tutoring program frustrated and discouraged. She took an initial math evaluation to help the tutoring team understand her learning needs. Her job was a Monday through Friday commitment, so her availability to get help was in the evenings and on weekends. A tutor with similar availability was assigned and together they began Rocio's learning journey toward passing the math test, the last mountain to climb toward her GED certificate.

Periodic progress reports confirmed Rocio's struggles with math concepts and skills. Bright and capable and already experienced and competent in her dental career, her mind just didn't work that way. "I worried my tutor would give up on me," Rocio confessed. Additionally, her availability to study on weekends was limited because she cared for her younger sister who has a disability. Rocio felt like she was drowning in failure and helpless to do anything about it.

Nonetheless, with regular tutoring, Rocio began to make progress. When she and her tutor determined she was ready for testing, her first attempt at the test resulted in a score only one point away from a passing score.

Yet, in her second attempt, her score was lower, and the third attempt continued the downward trend. Her tutor could see Rocio's confidence was shaken and crippling her ability to succeed on the exam. The tutor urged Rocio to ask her supervisor to not fire her. He responded with an ultimatum: 60 more days to get the GED or she would be dismissed per company policy.

Eventually, Rocio, with persistence and her tutor's support and encouragement, passed the math test. Everyone who had been involved celebrated: her supervisor, her co-workers, her tutor, and of course Rocio and her family. The ACE team even threw a big party to honor her accomplishment. What a journey it had been!

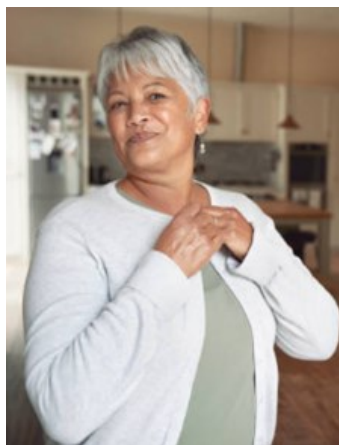
Two years since her graduation, Rocio is no longer working at the dental office. She left that full-time job where she worked Monday through Friday and some Saturdays. She began working as a

material handler at Lucid Motors, a new manufacturer in the community that requires a GED for employment eligibility. Now, instead of earning \$16 per hour, Rocio earns \$23 an hour in her full-time, four-day-a-week position. She enjoys great insurance benefits, stock options, and another supportive boss who recognizes her dedication and potential. Best of all, her work/family life balance is more manageable because her three-day weekends offer more time to attend to family needs, especially those of her sister.

Excited about her future, Rocio shared her dreams. "I hope to be ready to retire in four years after my stocks are vested."

Stories like Rocio's encourage the ACE ministry team to continue patient, persistent, and compassionate individualized attention that serves participants' personal development and helps them to succeed. To all who support the ACE ministry,

THANK YOU!



The Spiritual Corner

Kris Dill Spiritual Director
James 5:16 The Voice

16 So own up to your sins to one another and pray for one another. In the end, you may be healed. Your prayers are powerful when they are rooted in a righteous life.

I am very, passionate about a prayer life. It is one of the most important things we should be doing daily.

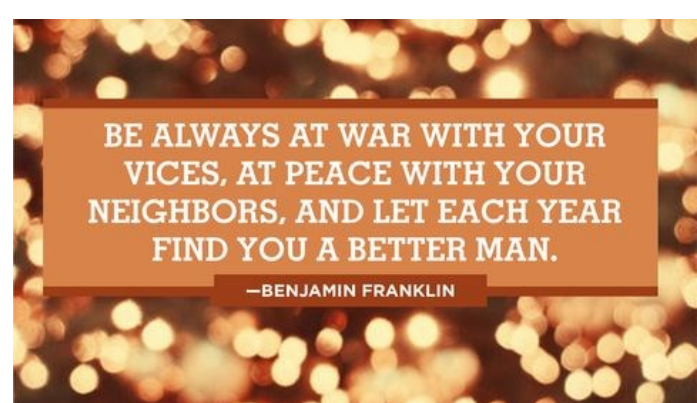
Prayers don't have to be flowery or wordy. Prayers don't have to be said only in church. In fact, **You** can pray all day, every day. God loves to hear from you. God wants to know all your good news and bad news. God wants to help you with your worries and struggles, as well as your celebration and laughter.

Don't you love hearing from your children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, other family, and friends? Of course, you do. Sure, you can watch it all happen on social media, but isn't nice to hear a voice?

Yes, God does know all your needs and wants. However, he'd rather hear it from you directly. Your prayers are God's way of communicating with you and you with God. Of course, he can just fix it all, or is present in your celebrations, but God gives you a free will. So, it's your decision what you want to share.

I've said it many times before. Prayer is powerful. Have you said your prayers today?

Gracious God, you love hearing from us, just as we love hearing from others. Helps to remember you are just a prayer away. **Amen**



BE ALWAYS AT WAR WITH YOUR
VICES, AT PEACE WITH YOUR
NEIGHBORS, AND LET EACH YEAR
FIND YOU A BETTER MAN.

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

New Year, New Things, New Hope

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There is a Music Team in place to help pick all the music for worship. That team then works with the Music Leader Team, that will be singing on Sundays and other special worship days. Both teams will have input on what is sung and when. As before, the music will be pulled from a variety of sources and will be picked based upon the scriptures of the day, and the church year.

Did you see the new website? Because the former web host decided to drop many of their services, one being a website host, a new site and additional domain were developed. We have more options with the website. We also have a new app that will also allow us to send messages to you to keep you up to date. There is new electronic giving that is fully in place now.

The cottage meetings were great! I really appreciate the participation that we had. Some groups were smaller and were able to participate more and some were larger, which made it a little more difficult to participate. We will be having further meetings to help the visioning process. This will happen sometime in February, with our visioning consultant. We will have a sign up for those that participated in the cottage meetings, to continue in the visioning process.

Sounds like so much, and it is, but it is all what God is calling us to be involved in. It takes many hands to get the ship moving. It takes many hands to keep it moving. As the ELCA yearly theme promotes the opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The theme for the ELCA and us, God's work. Our hands. In September there will be an opportunity for the God's work. Our Hands. Sunday. Would you like to help work on planning? Please let me know.

As I wrap this up, let me do so on the studies we had and will have. We started off with the sermon series on the Six Marks of Discipleship. The follow-up was a book/video study of "If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat". We had three-week study during Advent, The purpose of Christmas. Starting January 19th, running for 8 weeks, will be a Spiritual Gifts course.

You may have taken a Spiritual Gifts survey before. This course you will too, but we will delve further by “Discovering God’s Vision for Your Life”.

Later in the year, I am looking at bringing the study from the ELCA, Honoring our Neighbor’s Faith. A look at other Christian and non-Christian faiths. This will be an opportunity to learn more about our ELCA Lutheran faith, through examining other’s faith. Learning what is the same, similar, and different.

In hope and peace

Happy New Year

Pastor Doug



Shield A Badge Needs you!

Contact: Kris Dill

Have you ever thought about what it might be like, if we had no one to enforce the law? A home is broken into, and there is no one to call. A child is missing, there is no one to help look for them, someone just had their car stolen, the list goes on and on, who is there to catch the evil doers?

Police officers today are in high demand, and sadly, many police departments are short staffed. That means those who take the call to protect you, are tired, burnt out and maybe even scared. How can you help them?

You can help through prayer! It so easy to do and it’s free! All you need to do is sign up on the sheet’s located at both the Arizona City and Casa Grande site. Right down you name, and the badge number or dare I say more than one number, you have chosen. Then commit at least one year to praying for that badge number daily. The nice thing about it, is it can be done anytime, anywhere. Add that badge number to your prayers in the morning, or at night. Pray throughout the day, or when you think of it. This is so easy but so necessary! After one year, you don’t have to pray for them, but why wouldn’t you?

If you are already a part of the program, Thank you! If not, can I ask why you haven’t signed up yet? You don’t even have to live her full time.

I am challenging this congregation, to put a name by every badge, and start praying for them!

Prayer is powerful!

Do you except my challenge? If not? Why not?

Gracious Lord: you asked us to pray for everyone, I ask you now to help those in this congregation, to pick and badge to pray for their safety, comfort, and strength. Thank you for those who are currently participating in the program and have joined me in prayer.

Continue to watch over all of law enforcement officers who work hard to keep us safe. AMEN

Did you pray for the badge today?

Sermon on Reconciliation

by Jarrod Iversen

12/21/22 – The 3rd Reason for Christmas- Reconciliation. Inspired by the book, The Purpose of Christmas” by Rick Warren

Good evening. So here we are the final night of Advent services for 2022. Christmas is only a few more sleeps away. We’ve been celebrating with family and friends; we’ve joyously embraced our salvation in Christ. We continue with our look at the “The Purpose of Christmas” by Rick Warren and the third purpose of Christmas, Reconciliation.

Sermon on Reconciliation Cont...

What is reconciliation really? Dictionary.com defines it as:

The restoration of friendly relations.

The state of being reconciled, as when someone is resigned to something not desired.

Having been through a few Christmases I get the last one. I can't tell you how many times I have received a gift that was something I did NOT desire? Has that ever happened to you? To all the husbands sitting here or listening at home, a household appliance is NOT what your wife wants for Christmas. But most of the stores are open late and you have a few days to take it back that new Iron or pots and pans set you got her. And ladies, so you're not left out no man wants or needs another tie.

Reconciling to God is like that. Something not desired. We think we can do it better. We believe we know what's best. However, as we have heard during past Advent services, God is with us, God is for us, God loves us. We just need to get out of the way. Submit to God's plan and give up that control.

I fight like crazy when I have to give up control. Anyone else? We exhaust ourselves trying to get a square peg in a round hole doing what we want, instead of what God wants. It's not until we've beat our heads against the wall that we finally hear what was in our Gospel tonight. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Or in today's vernacular, "Let Jesus take the wheel". I have always found that bumper sticker funny. Every time I see it, I think to myself "Why do I want Jesus to take the wheel? Does He have a driver's license? They didn't even have cars back then!" It's so hard to give up that small thinking and "Let go and let God". That's where I struggle. I continually find it difficult to trust God to have MY best interests at heart.

Even though I say it every day when I pray, and we say it out loud every single Sunday. "THY WILL BE DONE". We say it, but do I really mean it? Have I reconciled with that, Do I submit and relent to know and trust that God sees the Big Picture? I even sing about that on a lot of Sundays, In Sunday service we sing "perfect submission all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blessed."

Our last "If You Want to Walk on Water You've got to get out of the boat" by John Ortberg book study meeting, one of the topics we discussed was, "How Big is Your God?" The God you worship, the God that is in your heart, The God that sent God's one and only Son to die on the cross and wash away our sins, How BIG is that God? What can't God do?

Is that question and your personal answer enough to submit, relent, to reconcile yourself to God?

One of the synonyms of reconciliation is Harmony as in peace together. Every Sunday we share the peace with one and other and during the Christmas season the word peace is in so many songs. From Sleeping in heavenly peace to peace on Earth and mercy mild. There's lots of wanting peace on Earth. But how can there be peace on Earth when there's not peace in our country, how can there be peace in our country when there's no peace in our communities, how can there be peace in our communities when there's no peace in our households and how can there be peace in our households when there's no peace in me?

"Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me." Lightbulb moment. Like so many changes to the world, peace for our world begins with each of us.

How can we get that peace within ourselves? The first step is to admit to ourselves that we are selfish, self-centered creatures. Each and every one of us. I want things my way and you want things your way and those ways are often different and often lead to sparks or full out explosions

Sermon on Reconciliation Cont...

in relationships. When there's no room for compromise, no room for Love. And since God IS love, there's no room for God's will. No room for God to change and expand our hearts and minds, no room for God to work miracles in our lives. "Thy will be done", remember. Not ours.

I'm sure over the past few weeks or months or even Christmases past you have been asked "What do you want for Christmas?" and you reply, "Oh I don't know, nothing really." It's almost as horrible as the spousal question of "What do you want for dinner?" And what we do get is not satisfying and leaves us empty. But it's not the physical gift from a loved one that has left us empty. It's that feeling that something is missing. The second cause of no peace in our lives is expecting others to meet the needs in our lives that

only God can meet. That "something is missing feeling", that emptiness is our deep desire inside us to be reconciled to our Creator to be reconnected with God. We need realize that and trust that God is right there with us. That God is SOOOOO Big and loves us SOOOO much. That God is Love. That God gives us what we need, (whether we like it or not sometimes) and NOT what we THINK we want or need. And submit, relent to that love.

Then, once we have relented, once we have opened our hearts, then Christ, the Prince Of Peace, can enter our hearts and through Him we are reconciled to God and through that reconciliation, we are drawn closer to God. The old is gone, the new is here. We are filled with Love, Grace, Mercy, and Peace to share with the rest of our household, our communities, our country, and our world.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS:

For a full & most up-to-date calendar visit: <https://clcaz.net/calendar/>

Sundays:

Worship: 8:30 am in AZ City,
10:00 am in Casa Grande

Mondays:

AA Meeting in AZ City 5:30 pm

Tuesdays:

Senior Center in AZ City 9a-3p Starting Feb 21
Bible Women in Casa Grande 6 pm

Wednesdays:

Pastor Doug's Office hours in Casa Grande 9a-2p

Thursdays:

Quilting Group in AZ City 9a-2p
Food Bank Distribution in AZ City 9a-11a
Praise Band Practice in Casa Grande 6:15p-7:30p
Discovering God's Vision, AZC 6:p-7:30p Starting 1/12

BELIEVE!

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."
Mark 9:23

You all have shown that belief can change anything. It is your belief in the power of God to change and provide, that we are doing well.

Our 2023 Theme Verse will be Mark 9:23

"If you can?" Said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

ANGEL TREE UPDATE

A big shout out to all of you who participated in our annual Angel Tree. All the tags were picked up and the children received gifts. It is great to see this ministry happen. This year the Wednesday Quilters added their quilts into the mix. Angel Tree children were able to receive a warm blanket through the Quilters Ministry! Way to go Central Lutheran!