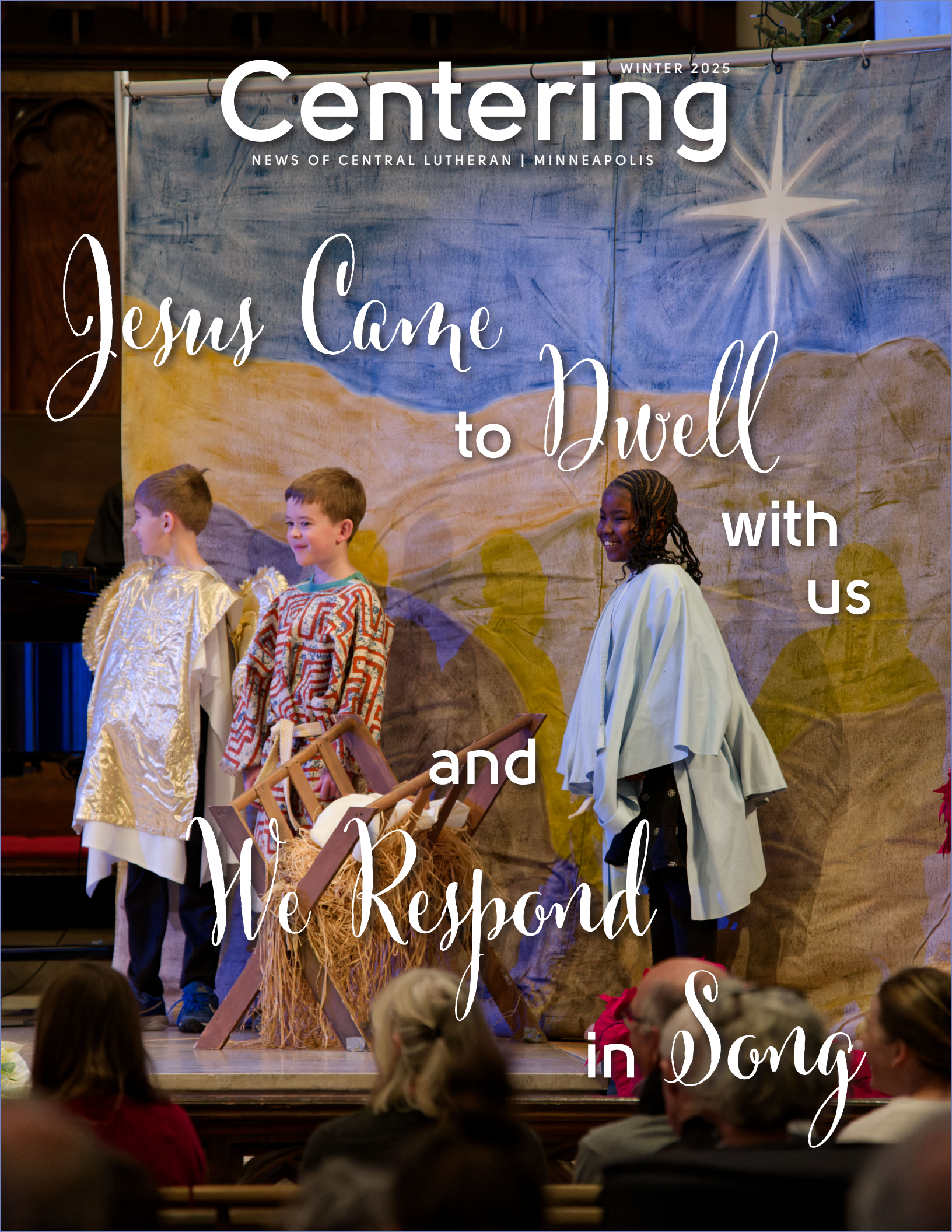


Centering

NEWS OF CENTRAL LUTHERAN | MINNEAPOLIS

WINTER 2025

Jesus Came
to Dwell
with
us
and
We Respond
in Song





“We shall go out in *joy*, and be led forth in *peace*,
as all the
world in wonder echoes shalom.”

*-Light Dawns on a Weary World,
ELW 726*

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Cover art:

Children's Christmas Program during the 10:30 a.m. worship

Photo credit: Phil Holst.



Jesus Came to Dwell with Us and We Respond in Song

The Advent and Christmas seasons are defined by the songs we sing. The hymns, the sanctuary decorated, the ancient story, and our shared life together at our church home ground us in hope. There is such joy in anticipating the good news that Jesus came to dwell with us, and we respond in song.

There are ancient songs that resonate through the whole of creation. This time of year, we can be caught by the sound of geese singing their song as they fly in their V formation, traveling south for the winter.

How do they know when it is time to migrate? How do they know when it is time to travel from one home to another? Somehow, God has woven into their DNA that homing awareness. Somehow, God has woven into *our* DNA the homing awareness to gather for worship and to be God's people in community.

Somehow God has woven into our DNA the homing awareness to gather for worship and to be God's people in community.

The Lutheran poet of the last century, Gerhard Frost, meditated on these themes in his little volume, *Homing in the Presence*:

"We nourish each other whenever we gather to tell and retell the story as we find it in the scriptures and experience it in the daily goodness of God. We help and shape one another when we come together in the common circle around the fire of God's love... The human family strengthens as its members permit their personal histories to be woven into the tapestry of one great story. We add to it every day as we experience God's presence, receive God's gifts, and pass on what we have learned to one another... In a graceful cycle of faith, we move from God to each other and back to God again. Our movement is both personal and communal. It binds together the past and future, and through it we come together in the presence of the Father, Son and the Spirit" (120-121).

Thank you for your faithfulness, your worship and song, and all the ways you share in our "homing" in God's presence.

Pastor Peter

We respond in Worship

The Worship Area Cluster centers on welcome, hospitality, and the central act of the church as people of God gather for corporate worship.

Liturgy and Music Highlights for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany

On November 29-30, we begin a new church year with the season of Advent. This is a season where we take intentional time to prepare ourselves as we await Jesus' coming. Through scripture and song, we hear the stories that will eventually lead to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. December 7, we will have a musical offering from our Bell Choir. On December 14 (10:30 a.m. service), we will hear Mary's great *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), her joyous yet subversive response to the good news of Jesus' birth, in a musical setting by Joanna Forbes L'Estrange. December 21 (10:30 a.m. service), our Sunday School students will present the Christmas program.

On Christmas Eve, we will have two service options. The 3 p.m. service is our family service, which features favorite Christmas carols, led by the section leader quartet. We will have a short carol-sing beforehand. The 10:30 p.m. service features full choir and bells, including a 20-minute prelude. The prelude and service will feature repertoire by Howells, Clausen, Langlais, Cathy Moglebust, Matthew Culloton, and Will Todd. Christmas Day, we will have one service at 10 a.m. On December 27-28, we will have a 5 p.m. Saturday service (as normal) but only one 10 a.m. service on Sunday.

Looking toward the new year, on January 3-4 we will celebrate the festival of Epiphany, remembering the



Singing "Silent Night" at Christmas Eve worship in 2025.

three Wise Men with gifts for Jesus. **January 31-February 1, we will observe Candlemas** (blessing of the candles) and hear the story of Jesus' presentation in the temple. This is the story where Simeon, the old man who had been promised to see the Messiah before he dies, recognizes Jesus in the temple, and

responds with the *Nunc Dimittis* text: "Now Lord, you let your servant go in peace" (Luke 2:29-32). Finally, February 14-15, we will celebrate as Jesus is transfigured atop a mountain (Matthew 14:1-9).



Sharing the light at Christmas Eve worship.



Last Advent, we introduced beautiful new blue paraments.

Advent Paraments

The beautiful blue Advent paraments will appear again in late November on the altar. To enjoy the fullness of their beauty, all four panels were on the altar throughout Advent last year. This season, one panel will be added each week in a similar cadence to that of lighting Advent candles. Watch the gold fabric as it grows from one week to the next. The light appears in just a small patch of the corner of the first panel and builds toward the brilliance of a star which is fully visible by Christmas Eve.



We light candles and tend grief at the Blue Christmas service.

Tickets and information are available here: <https://www.augsburg.edu/advent-vespers/>. (Please note that, since this replaces the Saturday 5 p.m. worship service on December 6, we will have tickets available for 5 p.m. worshippers.)

Blue Christmas Healing Prayer Service

The seasons of Advent and Christmas can be hopeful and joyful. They can also be challenging days as people tend to grief and loss during the holiday season. Once

again, this year a “Blue Christmas” worship service is offered to tend to healing during grief and to name the challenges of the season. We will gather for this service of healing on **Saturday, December 20 at the 5 p.m. service.** There will be time to light candles

and remember, receive prayers for healing and comfort, and gather with others during the complexity of the season. All are welcome as we gather to care for one another, sing songs of hope, and look to God for healing and comfort.

Augsburg Advent Vespers

We are honored to host the 46th annual Advent Vespers: “Guide Our Feet Into the Way of Peace,” here at Central, **December 5 at 7 p.m., and December 6 at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.**

In times like these, God sends prophets to point us in a new direction, to remind us of God’s loving intentions for the world. While peaceful times may feel far off, we join the defiant song of Zechariah that points toward a future day when the fullness of God’s shalom dawns once again in our lives.



Augsburg Advent Vespers is a seasonal favorite.

Save the Date

Winter is full of opportunities for us to worship and be together in community.

November 30

Sunday

9:30 a.m.

Advent Fair



December 17

Wednesday



6 p.m.

Advent Stories of Home Bible Study



December 3

Wednesday



6 p.m.

Advent Stories of Home Bible Study

December 18

Thursday

4:45 p.m.

Homeless Memorial March

December 5-6

Augsburg Vespers

Friday, 7 p.m.

Saturday, 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

December 9

Tuesday

11:15 a.m.

OWLS Christmas Luncheon

December 10

Wednesday



6 p.m.

Advent Stories of Home Bible Study



The choir leads us in Christmas Eve worship.

December 20

Saturday

5 p.m.

Blue Christmas
Healing Prayer
Service

December 21

Sunday

10:30 a.m. service

Sunday School
Christmas
Program



Volunteers serve up turkey dinner at the Restoration Center's Christmas Meal.

December 22

Monday

11 a.m.

Christmas Worship and Meal

December 23-January 1

Restoration Center Closed

December 24

Christmas Eve

3 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

December 25

Christmas Day

10 a.m.

December 27-28

First Weekend in Christmas

Saturday, 5 p.m.

Worship

Sunday, 10 a.m.

Worship (one service)

January 14

Wednesday



6 p.m.

Epiphany Bible Study begins

January 18

Sunday

12:15 p.m.

Empowering Conversations

January 24

Saturday

10 a.m.

Winter Family

Festival

January 25

Sunday

11:45 a.m.

Open Budget

Meeting

February 8

Sunday

Noon

Congregational
Annual Meeting



We receive communion during Christmas Eve worship.



We have lots of fun at the Winter Family Festival!

Responding in Song:

Music as Home, Music as Praise

By Isaac Drewes

Advent is a time of new beginnings. With a new church year, we prepare for the arrival of the Christ child into the world. Our theme for this season is “Jesus came to dwell with us, and we respond in song.” There are numerous examples in the Bible of “responding in song,” but perhaps the most famous is Mary’s *Magnificat*, which she sings after learning that she will bear the Christ child: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior” (Luke 1:46).

Just like Mary, we too respond with music (both sung and played). In the context of worship, music grounds us in God’s presence, forms us in faith, and gathers us into beloved community with one another. As we respond to God’s presence in our lives, we find our home among God’s people, just as Jesus did 2,000 years ago.

Robin Helgen, our Alto Section Leader, reflects that “music in itself, without connection to text, is centering for me. The sound: rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and dynamics, affect my whole being. They raise up hope, joy, sorrow, and contemplation. When you add words/text which gives specific meaning, the music then enhances the text.”

Marty Stortz, a regular Saturday 5pm

worshipper, cites the oft-quoted saying that one who sings “prays twice” (attributed to St. Augustine), and further reflects that “when you sing, you breathe the words, taste them, and phrase them into sentences.”

Ben Longman notes the healing power of music: “sometimes music in worship can unearth a lost feeling I had from the past week, and whether it brings joy or pain, it appears, is tended, and is released.” In this way, music gives us the grounding we need to

release distractions, and enter into an intentional time of prayer and praise. In this practice, we find home in God’s presence.

Music also has a formational function in worship, elevating the scripture and themes for the day and season. For

Robin, “the worship order really speaks to me with structure, and within that structure there is creativity and freedom to shape the focus of the day.”

Jenna Harvieux, an 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. worshipper, notes that the music “helps me connect to the readings, gospel, and sermon, and continue to think about what was said in worship.”



Choir music is one way we respond in song.

Marty recalls that she learned scripture, particularly the psalms, by singing liturgical responses in her church's junior choir growing up. When we internalize foundational stories of faith, these stories become "home" for us. Music helps us learn and return to these stories.



Joel, our Saturday Musician, plays during worship, leading the hymns.

music as "folk meets blues meets faith," noting that "Monday music, when it connects, can breathe life into the community, and people see each other." Music helps us find our church home in the people around us.

Music brings us together in community. Jenna reflects that "singing as a whole church from the pews makes me feel connected to others even without having a conversation." For Ann Oyen, Psalm 141 (often sung on Saturday nights to Marty Haugen's *Holden Evening Prayer* setting), captures this well:



Ben often leads the Monday worship music with the help of his dad and others.

As we enter this Advent season, we contemplate what it means for us that God took human form in Jesus. For Ann, the Advent hymn *All Earth is Hopeful* or *Toda la Tierra* (ELW 266) "helps explain and enrich my welcoming and belonging at Central."

All earth is hopeful; the Savior comes at last! Furrows lie open for God's creative task—

*Let my prayer rise up like incense before you,
the lifting up of my hands as an offering to you.
O God I call to you; come to me now,
O hear my voice when I cry to you.*

*This, the labor of people who struggle to see,
How God's truth and justice set everybody free.*

Ann reflects: "Jesus came to dwell with us, and in us, and all around us. We pray that

Ann writes: "although I sing the words 'I, me, and my,' I'm thinking 'we, us, and our.' My hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows, mingle with those of all who have gathered to pray."

Ben, who plays original music with his dad, Kevin, for the Monday worship service, describes his



The bell choir is another way that we respond in song.

we will notice his comforting, guiding presence. Then yes, we respond with songs expressing both joy and sorrow, seeking and finding. Then we get to work, doing the work Jesus came to do – finding, accepting, and loving all the people we meet in the furrows of life."

May it be so.

We respond in Community

The Community Area Cluster centers on welcoming all into life-giving community where relationships are fostered and a range of human needs are met.

Restoration Center Christmas Appeal

As we roll into the holiday season at Central, we have both anticipation and a bit of dread. The anticipation comes from our opportunities to gather and celebrate and eat. There will be both a Thanksgiving Meal and a Christmas Meal on the Mondays before those holidays at Central. The one stark difference from last year to this year is that food scarcity has raised its ugly head in our community. The holidays come with a bit of dread if you aren't sure how you are going to celebrate these feast days with significantly less food resources. At the end of October, we had 30% more guests at our Sunday and Monday meals than previous weeks. With food assistance programs being threatened at a federal level, the Restoration Center at Central Lutheran has stepped up to try to fill even a tiny part of the gap.

What do we need to make everyone's holidays a bit more cheery? Your support. The Central Community has been an amazing support in volunteer hours, donated clothes and toys and housewares, and in donated money. Our fantastic staff and volunteers can stretch a donated dollar like you would not believe. This

holiday season, please consider giving a special offering to the Restoration Center as we feed, clothe, and heal folks. You will find special envelopes at church and you can always give on Realm (choose "Restoration Center" as the fund you are donating to). Your generosity will find its way to people who need it, and we all appreciate the ways we get to care for our neighbors.

Homeless Memorial March

For 41 years, hundreds of community members have come together for the Homeless Memorial March and Service. Join us on this milestone anniversary as we

honor the memories of individuals who passed away in 2025: people who died while experiencing homelessness, who were previously homeless, or who were advocates.

On **Thursday, December 18 at 4:45 p.m.** we will gather at Plymouth Congregational Church for the silent march and vigil and return to the church for the memorial service. The service will be livestreamed on the Simpson Housing Facebook page for those who cannot attend in person.



A silent march precedes the service of remembrance at the Homeless Memorial March.



A delicious turkey dinner is served each year at the Christmas Meal.

Christmas Worship and Meal

On **December 22 at 11 a.m.** we will celebrate the Birth of Jesus in worship with a service of lessons and carols. It will be led from the congregation who gathers, so if you would like to participate by reading one of the lessons, please arrive a bit early and let Pastor Melissa know. Isaac Drewes will lead us in singing many of our favorite Christmas carols that help welcome in the season. After worship, we will eat together our traditional turkey dinner with all the fixings, and there will be Christmas cards with a gift inside for people who gather for the meal. Please join us on December 22 to celebrate this season of God's greatest gift to us.



Isaac plays Christmas carols during the Monday Christmas worship.

Restoration Center Break

The Restoration Center will be on Christmas break from **Tuesday, December 23 through Thursday, January 1**. We will reopen on Monday, January 5. This closure includes the Free Store, the Community Meal, the Augsburg Central Health Commons, Emergency Rental Assistance, and Street Voices of Change.

Restoration Center Holiday Hours

**Closed Tuesday, December 23 –
Thursday, January 1**

Interfaith Thanksgiving Offering

The offering this year at the Interfaith

Thanksgiving Service goes to Align Minneapolis to support the work of Emergency Rental Assistance.

Align's Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program supports over 120 households each year to stay in their homes and prevent homelessness following a short-term financial crisis. With high rent

and limited incomes, people fall behind on rent because of emergency car repairs, loss of hours, being between jobs, or needing to take time off from work to care for loved ones or attend a funeral. Align's program

has seen a significant increase in people seeking assistance as other community programs and resources have closed or had decreases in funding. If you miss donating at the service, you can still help Align continue this important program by giving today, using the QR code above!



*Scan to donate to
Align Mpls.*

We respond in Generosity

The Generosity Area Mission Cluster centers on the invitation for every child of God to share their gifts of time, abilities, and finances for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Fall Generosity Ingathering Thank you!

Stories of Home was the theme that helped us center in God's abundance and generosity as we made our faith promises / financial intentions as an act of worship on November 22-23. Thank you for all the ways you live from a home in God and God's home in your life. Thank you for your remarkable financial support for the ministry and mission of Central Lutheran. Your generosity is inspiring as we gather for worship, grow in faith, care for all in need as a community, and live generous lives. If you have not yet returned your financial intention (pledge), you can still do so!

Thank you to the Generosity Ministry Team for their leadership and work this fall with the appeal and ingathering: Kathy and Ron Fiscus, Tom Edelen and Ken Hardy, Deb Bauknight, Chris and Steve Dahlberg, John Severtson and Seth Peter!

Year-end Giving Reminder

A reminder that your year-end gifts need to be **postmarked by December 31 or received**

in the office by Tuesday, December 30.

If you are planning a stock gift or other distribution, please contact Sara Masters in the church office to share your plans and for any support you need. You can email her at smasters@centralmpls.org. Thank you for your generosity and support for our shared mission here at our church home.

Invitation to Serve in Leadership

The Nominating Committee invites you to consider serving in a leadership role for 2026. There are a variety of options with different levels of commitment. If you are interested in serving in a leadership role and would like to learn more, please email Pastor Peter at pnucklemoe@centralmpls.org. There are many ways to serve, and a variety of gifts are needed!

Congregational Annual Meeting

You are invited to the annual celebration of ministry and mission on **Sunday, February 8 at noon**. We will gather for the community meal; the Annual Meeting will follow around noon. We meet for ministry reports, hear the



We gather for the Annual Congregational Meeting each February.



Thank you for making your faith promise intention and participating in the Generosity Ingathering Weekend!

update on the Casavant organ project, review finances, approve the 2026 budget, elect leaders, approve updates to the constitution, and give thanks for stories of our home in God and God's home in us. The meeting will be livestreamed, and you will have the option to call in or email questions during the meeting.

In preparation for the Annual Meeting, the Open Budget meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 25 at 11:45 a.m.** We will gather in the Fireside Room to review and walk through the detailed version of the proposed 2026 budget. This is the meeting for specific questions and conversation, rather than at the Annual Meeting.

Constitution Update and Open Meeting

The last review and update of the church constitution was in 2017.

The ELCA updated the model constitution for local congregations at the national assembly last summer. It is the perfect time for an update of our constitution. Kevin Lile has chaired the Constitution Review Committee. We are grateful for Kirstin Hash, Christopher McCarty, Rexanne Spicer, and Pastor Peter for their careful, line

by line review and update of the constitution. The updated constitution will be available by January 8 on the church website for you to review in advance of the annual meeting. There will also be an open constitution

meeting for all interested on **Sunday, February 1, at 11:45 a.m.** in the Fireside Room.

At this meeting we will go over the specific updates and answer questions in advance of the annual meeting.

Casavant Organ Project Update

The design bid process was completed over the summer, and the plans prepared by Richard and Fowkes (the organ builders) were received by the Casavant Organ Committee, Isaac Drewes and our organ consultant, Russell Drager. The timeline for the start of the project moved back significantly in a very competitive organ restoration culture at this time in the country. The Casavant Organ Committee is currently

looking at options for how we might respond to the change in timeline. The committee, led by Isaac and Russell, along with Pastor Peter, will have an update for the congregation at the Annual Meeting on February 8. If you have questions currently about the project, timeline, or capital appeal, please send Pastor Peter an email at pnucklemoe@centralmpls.org.



(Most of the) 2025 Congregation Council



Casavant organ

We respond *in* Formation

The Lifelong Formation Area Cluster centers on lifelong faith formation where all can develop a closer relationship with God and deepen their call for mission.

Annual Advent Fair

The Advent Fair is scheduled again this year as an intergenerational learning event on

Sunday, November 30 at 9:30 a.m. This Central tradition is a beautiful way to launch your Advent season with displays, activities, treats and crafts. In keeping with our theme, Stories of Home, we are inviting members to bring in items that capture the essential stories of home in your Advent tradition.

We'll have a large display of Nativity sets again this year and invite you to bring an item to share at a display table or to share at tables over coffee and cookies. Bring your stories, your imaginations, and your curiosity for sharing Advent traditions and memories and join us on November 30 as we begin a season of waiting for Jesus' birth.

Sunday School Christmas Program

The Sunday School children and their shepherds are working hard to learn songs and lines for this year's Sunday school program scheduled for **Sunday, December 21 at 10:30 a.m.** This time-honored tradition is a

must-attend for all who long to experience Christmas through the eyes and heart of a child. One of the ways children embody their faith is by retelling the story of Jesus. There is no better way to begin their faith journey than by putting on the costumes, singing the songs and reading the story of Jesus' birth. While children will learn about Jesus through scripture and worship, they embrace Jesus as a baby because Jesus, the newborn, is familiar. Jesus the newborn was once a child, just like they are. Come and celebrate the

Sunday School kids with your presence and your delight this December.

Winter Family Festival

You are invited to help us fill the Great Room at Central on **Saturday, January 24 at 10 a.m.** for the 2026 Winter Family Festival. Designed with children in mind, there will be a bouncy house, face painting, balloon art, and dancing,

all in an attempt to chase away the winter blues and give families an opportunity to enjoy a fun-filled day at church in the spirit of holy and healthy play. This year we are adding games and a craft station for kids to play and create while having fun with their friends



There is a lot of intergenerational fun to be had at the Annual Advent Fair.



The Sunday School kids reenact the story of Jesus' birth at the 10:30 a.m. service during the Christmas Program.



The Older Wiser Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) gather each December for their Christmas Luncheon.

and peers at church. If you've not attended this family-fun event in the past, join us! It will bring out the kid in you.

OWLS Christmas Luncheon

The OWLS Christmas event is being planned and you are invited to join your friends for lunch and holiday cheer. Put on your Christmas sweaters and shoes, your holiday jewelry and accessories and plan to celebrate with your OWLS friends as we bring another year of trips and adventures to a close. This year's entertainment is well-known Twin Cities personalities and entertainers Dan Chouinard and Dane Stouffer. They will warm our hearts for the holiday season with music and stories. Mark your calendars now for **Tuesday, December 9 at 11:15 a.m.** to gather with friends old and new for day of Christmas cheer.

Winter Bible Studies

The Wednesday Bible Study turns to "Advent Stories of Home" which include the beautiful prophecy texts from Isaiah that prepare us for a new kind of home with Jesus. The anticipation and curiosity with which we look

toward Jesus' birth inspire us in the ways of hopeful anticipation. The Advent studies are scheduled for **December 3, 10, and 17** and they will include a time of study and devotion.

In January, we will shift to "Stories of Home in Acts and Paul's Letters." Throughout Epiphany, we will explore the stories in Acts and the inspiring words of Paul's letters that lead to and

ground us in faith as one in the body of Christ. Join us for these holy conversations.

Empowering Conversations

Empowering Conversations continue in the new year with a focus on Stories of

Home from individuals who will open us to our strategic planning work around Communication, Seasons of Life, and Mental Health. We will also have speakers identified by Central Cares for Creation (C3) to help us understand how to best care for our planet home:

Earth. Empowering Conversations are hosted

on the **third Sunday of each month and they begin at 12:15 p.m.** Watch the *Spirit* for specific topics and speakers.



The Winter Family Festival is a bouncing good time!



Join in person or online for the Wednesday night Bible studies this winter.



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Christmas Eve Services:
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Christmas Day Service:
10 a.m.

Winter Family Festival:
January 24

Annual Meeting:
February 8



Exploring the promise of God for all

AN EVERYDAY CHURCH FOR EVERYONE

Member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Align Minneapolis: www.alignmpls.org

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