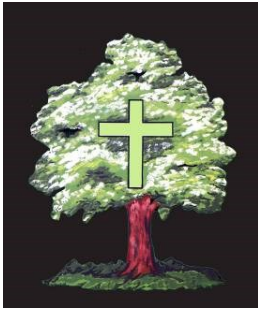


DECEMBER 2023



The Leaflet

**WHAT'S
HAPPENING?!**



LIVE NATIVITY AND CHRISTMAS PARTY

Join Tree of Life as we experience the Christmas story through a Live Nativity, at 2 p.m., Saturday, December 16! We will gather outdoors to see the Holy Family, shepherds, Magi and animals around the manger. We will hear the story of Jesus' birth, and sing some favorite Christmas carols. Then we will go indoors for refreshments, fun and some more singalong. But we need you to make this happen! If you would like to be part of the Live Nativity, please write your name on the sign-up sheet at the entrance to the sanctuary. And spread the word! We are hoping to make this an event for the whole community, so invite anyone you know! If you have any questions, please talk to Pr. Robbie.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT TREE OF LIFE

Join Tree of Life as we celebrate the Savior's birth, and the new life he brings to all! Throughout December, we will celebrate the season of Advent, when we hear the promise of the Messiah's coming and we await his coming again to bring God's final triumph. This year, our last Advent service will be the morning of December 24. Then that evening, we will celebrate Christmas with our joyful candlelight service! On December 31, we will have a special Christmas Service of Lessons & Carols. Rather than our usual liturgy and preaching, we will hear the Christmas story and sing our favorite Christmas songs. We will also pray for God's blessing in the new year. Come and worship at all these times of joy, as we praise our newborn King!

December 3, 10:30 a.m. – 1st Sunday of Advent

December 10, 10:30 a.m. – 2nd Sunday of Advent

December 17, 10:30 a.m. – 3rd Sunday of Advent

December 24, 10:30 a.m. – 4th Sunday of Advent

December 24, 7 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight

December 31, 10:30 a.m. – Christmas Lessons & Carols



Council

O A huge challenge facing our congregation as we pass through a beautiful fall into the chill of winter, is a need for more volunteers. We simply have too few people doing too much of the work to keep us vibrate as a group of Christians trying to share our faith with "Middletown, Odessa, Townsend and the World".

r
n
e To begin, we need volunteers to be ushers, worship assistants, and counters. None of this is hard, but it needs to be done. Additionally, we need volunteers for fellowship, and if you'd be willing to take that on for a Sunday or two now and then, you can talk to Carla Fiske who is the chair for that group. Altar Guild is chaired by Maxine Campbell, and she would love more help.

r We also have Kingdom Kids, Knot Quilters, OWLS and they all need more folks involved. And I haven't even gotten around to our additional activities, such as Adopt-A-Family, which we do every Christmas through Neighborhood House, our live Nativity, and our hopes of becoming more involved with Our Daily Bread in Middletown.

Yes, indeed we are a busy little congregation, but trying to do God's work in the world does not ever lessen. The needs continue, just as our own needs to serve continue. As we strive to be a blessing to others, We become a blessing to ourselves, and besides all that, I've found it to be a lot of fun along the way.

So, Volunteer!

Nicky Zaiser, Council President



TOL has adopted two families for a total of 8 people. The families are vetted through the Neighborhood House program. Tags with gift suggestions (along with the age and gender of the person) are on posterboards in the fellowship room .

All gifts need to be wrapped (no bows please) with the tag from the board on the package and returned to TOL by Sunday, December 10th.

Thank you for helping make this a blessed Christmas for these two families.

From the Pastor

'Check Out This Gift!'

Each Christmas when I was growing up, there was a toy that I really wanted. I'd describe it in my note to Santa, and stress it when I'd sit on the Big Guy's lap at the mall. Come Christmas morning, my biggest excitement would usually be unwrapping that big gift. And then, I'd tell everyone all about it. I'd share every detail of the toy with family at Christmas dinner. I'd bring it to a friend's house when we got together over Christmas break. And on my first day back in school, I couldn't wait to tell my friends, teachers and just about anyone else about that present. "Check out this gift!" I'd say. "Isn't it amazing?!" For when you get a really special gift, you just need to let everyone know!

That was likely how the shepherds felt on the first Christmas. "When they saw Jesus in the manger, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them" (Luke 2:17-18). Immediately after beholding the Babe, the shepherds share the news of Jesus' birth. They go into Bethlehem and tell the townspeople what God has done in their village. They go to neighboring fields and tell the other shepherds what the angels told them. The miracle of Christmas was just too good to keep inside! The advent of God's anointed King, the manifestation of God's salvation, the

promise of God's peace and goodwill – all of this simply had to be shared! Just like I couldn't keep quiet about a big Christmas gift as a child, the shepherds couldn't keep quiet about the greatest Christmas gift of all.

This held true throughout Jesus' ministry. In the Gospels of Mark and John, which we'll be reading in worship over the coming year, those whom Jesus encounters often respond by telling others how Jesus changed their life. The news of Jesus' healing, forgiving and proclaiming God's love spreads because people tell what they have seen and heard, and others want to experience Jesus for themselves.

And this can still be true today, right here at Tree of Life. Each of us is a Christian because, in some way, Jesus has changed our life. Each of us is a part of Tree of Life because, in some way, we have experienced Jesus through the work and worship of this congregation. When we gather on Sunday morning, we don't just come to hear stories about a distant God, but to experience the God who became incarnate on Christmas and who remains present in the Word, the Bread and Cup, and the joy and life of our Christian kin. When we gather on Christmas Eve, we're not just coming to hear a story from 2,000 years ago, but to experience for ourselves the wonder and

Cont'd from page 3—'Check Out This Gift!'

amazement of God coming to earth.

And like those shepherds, we need to share this experience! Just like we tell someone about a special Christmas gift, we should want to tell someone about the gift of Jesus. We should want to tell others how Jesus has changed our life for the better, and how we have come to experience Jesus at Tree of Life.

A focus for the coming year will be exploring how Tree of Life can reach out to the MOT community, especially those who might not have a church home. Most people don't visit a church because of slick advertising campaigns or huge events, but because someone they know invites them. This doesn't

mean being obnoxious or overly aggressive, but it does mean joyfully sharing the joy we find in Christ, and the joy we find in this community of Christ.

So why not be like the shepherds this year, and make known the joy of Christmas? Why not invite someone new to our Christmas worship this year? For soon, we will celebrate the greatest Christmas gift in all human history – and given the news that a Savior is born to us, how can we keep quiet?

A blessed Advent and merry Christmas to all,
Pr. Robbie +

PLEASE NOTE

PR. ROBBIE AT CONFERENCE

On Dec. 4-5, Pr. Robbie will attend a regional conference of the Society of the Holy Trinity, an organization of traditionalist Lutheran clergy. Because of this, he will not hold regular office hours on Tuesday, Dec. 5.

PR. ROBBIE ON VACATION

Pr. Robbie will be out of town from Dec. 26-30 on vacation. An on-call pastor for any urgent needs will be announced in the Burning Bush.



(Older Wiser Lutheran Seniors)

Join the OWLS for their holiday luncheon at the Fish Whistle at the Granary (100 George Street, Georgetown, MD) Thursday, December 14th, at Noon.

This event is always a festive and popular luncheon so please RSVP with Dee and George Matz or Janet Parks as soon as possible. Don't forget to mention if you need to carpool.

Also, mark your calendars and bring your ideas to TOL for the annual planning meeting—a bag lunch affair—on Thursday, January 11th.

Treasurer's Report

Expenses for October 2023: \$12,762.48
 Year to Date Expenses: \$133,416.61
 Income for October: \$8,863.00
 Year to Date Income: \$104,813.94

Thank you to everyone who turned in their pledges for 2024. Time, talents and financial help are all very valuable in the life of our church. If you weren't able to turn in a pledge card on November 12th, there is still time. Pledge cards are available on the table near the sign in sheet. You can fill one out and put it in the offering plate during offering.

Your continued support towards the ministry at Tree of Life is greatly appreciated.

Denise Lindquist Treasurer

DECEMBER

John Collett	Dec. 5
Vinnie Fratta	Dec. 6
Linda Schuler	Dec. 6
Duane Dillard	Dec. 11
Mitch Vetter	Dec. 11
Nicky Zaiser	Dec. 14
Elizabeth Zaiser	Dec. 15
Michelle Brill	Dec. 16
Nicole Null	Dec. 19
Cecelia Conner	Dec. 30



Do we have your birthday? If not, please let the office know so we are able to acknowledge and celebrate your special day.

Stewardship Report

The results of Consecration Sunday are in. On November 12, 20 pledges were laid on the altar in an act of thanksgiving and worship. These pledges amount to \$93,792.

If you have not pledged your support of God's work in Middletown, Odessa and Townsend, there are pledge cards in the Narthex and they can be placed in the offering plate. But please give prayerful and timely consideration because the 2024 budget is being prepared and we need your input.

The 2024 budget will be presented for your approval at the congregational meeting.

Don't miss your opportunity to give back a portion of what a generous, loving God has given you.

Faithfully,
Gene Zaiser
Stewardship Chairperson



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KNOT QUILTERS

Tying knots for Lutheran World Relief

Now known as KNOT QUILTERS, we still meet the second Wednesday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Tree of Life. At this point, we have 22 quilts to add to the 43 we have already donated to Lutheran World Relief, which is quite something considering that we are a small church. And if you follow the news, you have noticed that our world is as much in need of warmth and comfort as ever.

We had considered branching out into fleece blankets, but upon further investigation, realized that production and shipping difficulties would be real show stoppers. (They become too bulky, for one thing, and don't stand up as well to really hard times) so we are continuing with pieced and knotted quilts. So we are working on simplified piecing techniques that we feel show real promise.

We had a good turnout for our last meeting, and it was great! So come join us. Maybe we can't change the world, but we can do something!

Nicky Zaiser

December 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Pr. Robbie will be in the office Tuesdays & Fridays 10 AM - 1 PM except for 12/15, 12/26 & 12/29 Secretary Maria will be in the Office Mondays & Fridays, 1-4 PM except 12/25						
3 9 AM Bible Study 10:30 Worship Service	4 PR. @ Confer- ence	5 PR.@ Confer- ence	6	7 6 PM Worship & Music Mtg.	8 3:30 Kingdom Kids/Confirmation	9
10 9AM Bible Study 10:30 Worship Service Adopt-A-Family Gifts Due	11	12 6:30 PM Council Mtg.	13 10 AM Knot Quilters	14 Noon OWLS Outing	15 3:30 Kingdom Kids/Confirmation	16 2PM Live Nativity
17 9AM Bible Study 10:30 Worship Service	18	19	20	21	22 NO Kingdom Kids/Confirmation	23
24 NO Bible Study 10:30 Worship Service 7 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	25 Office Closed	26 Pastor	27 Robbie	28 On Vacation	29 NO Kingdom Kids/Confirmation December	30 26-30
31 NO Bible Study 10:30 Worship	All Sunday worship services are live streamed at 10:30 AM and thereafter can be found on YouTube to view at any time. Find the link on our website www.treeoflifechurchde.com					



Date	Usher	Acolyte	Worship Assistant	Altar	Fellowship	Offering Counter
Dec. 3	G. Matz	Kaitlyn Yetsko	J. Pilleggi	M. Campbell	N. Zaiser	M. Campbell
Dec. 10	B. Lindquist	Liana Yetsko	E. Kruah	S. Vetrano	B. Bullock	E. Kruah
Dec. 17	C. Lewis	Olivia Brill	G. Zaiser	N. Zaiser	C. Fiske	G. Zaiser
Dec. 24 10:30 AM	M. Campbell	Adult Volunteer	J. Adams	G. Zaiser	C. Lewis	M. Campbell
Dec. 24 7:00 PM	M. Campbell	Anders Fratta	J. Adams	N/A	N/A	M. Campbell
Dec.31	C. Lewis	Kaitlyn Yetsko	G. Zaiser	G. Zaiser	N. Zaiser	G. Zaiser

Want to volunteer ? Contact ~Gene Zaiser, Coordinator~

Tree of Life Gets a New Outdoor Nativity Set

Twelve Silhouette style nativity figures were made from scrap wood, some pattern tracing, cutting out and painting. The figures range from approximately 4 feet to 6 feet tall and will be placed in the side yard at TOL with night time spot lights; people traveling north on Route 13 will be able to see them.

A big thank you to Donna Parks, Jeff and Gail Russell and Sylvia and Hanno Schill for their time and efforts on this project.



Above left Gail traces a camel on wood. Above right Jeff and Hanno cut out figures. Below left Gail and Donna paint figures. Below right figures have stands and painting continues.





Musical Performances with TOL Members

The Chester River Chorale (whose members include TOL's Pam Nichols and Gail Russell) will perform two concerts, Friday, December 8, at 7 PM, and Saturday, December 9, at 4 PM at the Presbyterian Church of Chestertown (905 Gateway Drive). The theme is "Meet Me at the Movies" and its Christmas and holiday movie music with some sacred music mixed in. Admission is free with donations appreciated.

Jim Pileggi's 18 piece band with two singers will be performing on Wednesday, December 6, at 7 PM at St. Mark's High School., 2501 Pike Creek Road, Wilmington, DE. See Jim for more information.



The Tree of Life Youth Faith Formation classes are held on Fridays after school, 3:30pm-5:00pm.

There are two classes: one for young elementary students with Pam Nichols; and another for older youth with Pastor Robbie. It is combined Confirmation Class (two years) and Youth Group.

Kingdom Kids and the Confirmation students helped service men and women overseas enjoy Christmas by putting together 53 "Snowman Packets" (hot chocolate packets, marshmallows, Hershey kisses and candy canes) for the Stockings for Soldiers holiday outreach.

See more at www.stockingsforsoldiers.org.

Also on the organization's list are wool caps: we donated nine 100% wool knit caps for the soldiers! Thank you!

We continue to collect pill bottles to Matthew 25 Ministries.

Please note there will be NO CLASSES 12/21 & 12/28.



Do you know CPR? How about how to use a defibrillator? Had the course but it's been a while? Well, Tree of Life will conduct a Hands on Life Saving Program sponsored by the New Castle County EMS on Sunday, January 7th, starting at 11:30 AM (after worship service).

This will be a certificate program. You must sign up to receive the certification. A sign up form will be available soon. You may also just audit the course and not receive a certification. This opportunity is open to the public so share the info with your friends and neighbors.

See Dirk Schulze for more information.

327 pounds of prescription medicine collected during Drug Take-Back

In addition, 60 Sharps (needles) backpacks and winter jackets. Twenty-nine people took the time to be trained in Narcan use (a drug that reverses opioid overdosing); and 75 people took home Deterra bags (which contain a chemical that, when combined with water, allows you to safely dispose of small quantities of prescription pills.)

Twice a year (spring and fall) the members of the So. New Castle County Communities Coalition sponsor a Drug Take-Back Day which is a national effort from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to get unused and/or expired medications out of homes and properly destroyed.

Tree of Life is represented on the board of the SN4C (currently by Pam Nichols). On October 30, at the Middletown Police Dept. approximately 75 cars drove through a line of non-profit organizations, and then handed over their pill bottles, liquids, creams, etc.

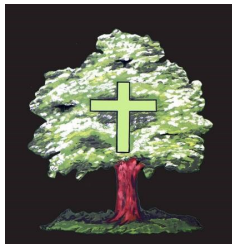
People are always thankful that there is a place where they can responsibly dispose of unused medications so that they don't end up in our water systems or in the hands of someone who should not take them.

If you don't want to wait till next Spring, the CVS Pharmacy at 674 Middletown-Odessa Road, as well as the Smyrna Police Dept., have anonymous drug disposal locations (pills only).

What happens now with all of those medications? An officer with the Drug Enforcement Agency has taken the 327 pounds of prescription medication (taped up in large boxes) to a DuPont incinerator to be burned. And the sharps were picked up by MedPro Disposal, an organization certified in Delaware to safely dispose of sharps and other medical waste.

Watch for an announcement about the next DEA Drug Take-Back Day – a Saturday in late April 2024.

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Odessa, DE 19730-0064
(302) 378-3345 / treeoflifelc@verizon.net
www.treeoflifechurchde.com
www.facebook.com/TreeofLifeLutheranChurch/



We are the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Liberated by our faith, we embrace you as a whole person--questions, complexities and all. Join us as we do God's work in Christ's name for the life of the world.

Rev. Robbie Ketcham
Duane Dillard, Music Director
Maria Gue, Office Manager

Nicky Zaiser, President
, Vice President
Sylvia Schill, Secretary
Denise Lindquist, Treasurer
Analise Fratta
Merna Smith
Dirk Schulze

Altar Guild
Christian Ed— Analise Fratta
Outreach—Denise Lindquist
Property— Dirk Schulze
Stewardship—
Worship & Music— Sylvia Schill

Altar Guild—Maxine Campbell
Facilities—Dirk Schulze
Christian Education—Pam Nichols
Fellowship - Carla Fiske
Interior Review—Janet Parks
Outreach
Stewardship—Gene Zaiser
Worship & Music—Sylvia Schill

Burning Bush—Pam Nichols
Financial Secretary— Ed Bullock
Leaflet Editor—Donna Parks
OWLS—Janet Parks, Dee & George Matz
Quilting Circles—Nicky Zaiser
Volunteer Coordinator—Gene Zaiser
Webmaster— Paul Schuler
Worship Folder—Gail Russell