Grace English Lutheran Church 384 Oak Street, Berlin, WI 54923

A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rebekah Tarras, Pastor

Email: pastortarras@gmail.com Cellphone: 715-897-5393

Jessica Fritz - Worship and Music Coordinator

Jeremy Fritz – Choir Director Sandy Peschke – Office Assistant Penny Bahn – Office Assistant (920) 361-1820

Web site: www.gracelutheranberlin.org Email: gracelutheranberlin@gmail.com

Sunday Worship:

8:30 AM

Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday 9:00 am – 12:00 noon Hometown Broadcasting: Sunday at 9:45 am WRPN AM 1600 at 12:00 PM



THIS NEWSLETTER PREPARED ESPECIALLY FOR

Worship Services

Facebook: www.facebook.com/gelcberlin

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLbOerRk5PMk1QWI9qtZ5 g



December 7 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)

December 14 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)

December 21 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)

December 21 - Blue Christmas Worship Service at 6:30 pm (In person and online)

December 24 - Christmas Eve Worship Service at 4:00 pm (In person and online)

December 28 - Worship Service at 8:30 am (In person and online)

Grace Lutheran's Mission:
We Gather to Worship, Grow, Care, and Share
"All Are Welcome In This Place"

The Season of Advent

Every year, Advent invites us to pause and prepare, not just for Christmas morning, but for Christ who comes to us again and again with grace, mercy, and sometimes a holy disruption or two. This season isn't only about counting down the days. It's about opening our hearts to the One who already dwells among us.

This year, our worship together will follow a journey shaped around four themes: **hope, peace, joy, and love**. These aren't just candles on a wreath. They are gifts God grows within us as we wait, watch, and welcome Christ.

We begin the season with Hope. Isaiah cries out, "Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down!" (Isaiah 64:1). If you've ever prayed, "Lord, could you please hurry up?" you're in good company. Hope isn't pretending everything is fine. Hope is trusting that God is working, even when we can't yet see the ending. It's anticipation rooted in gratitude, not because life is perfect, but because God is faithful.

On the second Sunday of Advent, we turn to one of the most powerful declarations in Scripture: "*The Word became human and made His home among us.*" (John 1:14). God doesn't stay distant. God moves into the neighborhood, into our ordinary, our messy, our real life. This is the heart of Peace, not quiet circumstances, but God's presence.

The third Sunday of Advent brings Joy. Joy doesn't depend on everything going smoothly. Joy comes from knowing that God is with us. The angels said, "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people." (Luke 2:10, NLT). That "all people" includes us—whether we're feeling merry or a little messy this season.

This Sunday we will also share our Christmas program, *Sounding Joy*, where we hear and tell the story together through scripture, song, and the voices of storytellers young and old.

The fourth Sunday of Advent focuses on Love. Not sentimental, greeting-card love, but real, self-giving love. "God showed God's great love for us by sending Christ..." (Romans 5:8, NLT). Jesus is love made visible.

This week, the choir leads us with the Cantata, offering music that proclaims the gospel straight into our bones.

Finally, we gather on Christmas Eve to celebrate the hope, peace, joy, and love fulfilled in the birth of Christ, Immanuel, God with us, then and now.

Blessings on your Advent and Christmas, Pastor Rebekah

T Da

🎁 December 14 – Paper Bag Christmas Program

We the congregation will participate in a creative, joy-filled retelling of the Christmas story.

December 21 – Choir Cantata

Experience the message of Christmas through the powerful gift of song.

Ocember 21 – Blue Christmas, 6:30 p.m. at Grace

A quiet, reflective service for anyone carrying grief or needing space for peace this season.

🧩 December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship, 4:00 pm at Grace and 6:30 p.m. at First

Candlelight, carols, and the "good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born ...a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

Grace English Lutheran Church Congregational Council Meeting October 13, 2025

Call to Order by Linda Reetz

Roll Call- Attending: Terry Wallace, Linda Reetz, Sandy Peschke, Heidi Schramer, Anita Lind, Sue Shemanski, Bonnie Kline, Tim Koch and Bob Prellwitz

Absent: Pastor Rebekah

Terry provided Opening devotion.

Approval of Agenda – Anita moved to approve the amended agenda as presented. Sandy seconded. Motion carried.

Secretary's Report – Anita moved to approve September minutes as printed. Bonnie seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report – No changes to report. Sue moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Second by Heidi. Motion carried.

Officer and Standing Committee Reports

- President-Linda shared some upcoming events:
 - -Nov. 17 Parish Council (Officers) hosted by Grace
 - -Dec 7 -decorate church after service (decided to cut tree at 9AM on Dec. 3rd) Christian Ed will provide a lunch on the 7th.
 - Dec. 24 Christmas Eve 4PM here and 6:30PM at 1st
 - -Feb. 8, 2026 Annual Meeting
 - -2026 Budget- Linda handed out copies of the Budget vs Actual Spending report to date for committees to use in preparing their budgets. Committees should submit their budgets for 2026 by the November Council meeting to be included in the overall church budget.
 - -Mutual Ministry Comm -Looking for 2 members of Grace to replace outgoing members. Send possible names to Linda.
 - -Nominating Comm- Should begin meeting and coming up with candidates for President, Vice Pres., Treasurer and Mission and Christian Ed representatives on Council, plus 3 names for the new Nominating Committee for 2026 (2 should be outgoing Council members)
 - -Endowment Committee also needs replacement suggestions
 - -Narrative Lectionary provides an opportunity for more Bible study groups that could be lead by congregants. Linda will make an announcement in church Sunday asking if anyone is interested in leading a study.
- Pastor's Report- Pastor provided an email report as she could not be here tonight. Her report included the activities
 she has participated in this past month including one baptism and one funeral, along with starting Confirmation which
 is challenging as one student is participating online.
- Committees –

Fellowship and Caring – Bonnie shared that they met on the 14th of Sept. They are going to begin honoring birthdays and anniversaries once per month during the first service of the month. They will be sending cards to shut-ins in Nov. and Dec and asked if Sunday School could make 12 for them in Nov. They are also looking for ideas other than just food to take to shut-ins. Linda suggested bath or personal care items for the women. Mtg again on 11/9.

Building and Grounds – Bob reported that Bob Moriarity has been called to check on the refrigerator as the temp is fluctuating a lot. We do not think that he has come yet. Fall clean-up day went really well. Fall lawn care and leaf clean up will continue, including edging of sidewalks. The snowblower will be prepped for winter.

Christian Education- Anita shared that Sunday School continues to go well with between 5-10 kids attending. Christian Ed. Is planning to host a monthly meal/activity and devotion starting Wed. Oct. 22nd. This will be from 5:30-7PM and the public is welcome. The activity will be decorating pumpkins and cookies. C.E. volunteered to plan a lunch on Dec. 7th following the church decorating and will host a Christmas Program during the service on Dec. 14 similar to what we did last year ("Paper Bag" program).

Worship and Music – Heidi handed out an outline of upcoming dates to remember. The Thanksgiving Service will be at the Methodist church at 7PM on Tuesday night before Thanksgiving. The Cantata will be Dec. 17 and 21. On Dec. 21st at 6:30PM will be the Blue Christmas service. Christmas Eve service will be at 4PM at Grace.

Mission and Outreach – Tim reported that this committee will be meeting this coming Sunday to plan for 2026.

Finance Committee – Terri reported that the Insurance costs for the church are increasing by 7-8% for the next year. He handed out the Minutes of the Sept 16 Finance Comm. Mtg. which explained that we chose Health Ins for Pastor with a higher deductible, but including an HSA which we will contribute \$100 to monthly (divided with First). The premium is going up about \$59 for Grace

Investment Committee – Terry provided an account summary of all accounts showing an approximate \$18,800 total gain in the last month.

Outside the Box Outreach Committee- Donated 78 pairs of snowpants, 84 pairs of boots and 4 coats to the Boys and Girls Club!

Unfinished Business- None

New Business

- Pastor's Health Ins for 2026 has been chosen. See above under Finance Comm.
- Oshkosh Conference Assembly at Ripon Grace Lutheran Church on October 18, 2025 from 9-12. Sue S. and Tim K. will be representing Grace.
- We discussed doing another church directory-decided to have it as an agenda item for the congregation to weigh in on at the Annual meeting.
- Model Constitution Changes- Anita moved to approve the changes in the October 2025 version of the Model
 Constitution so that copies can be distributed to the Congregation in Dec. for review and a vote will be done at the
 Annual meeting. Bob seconded. Motion carried.
- Celebration Sundays we will start recognizing monthly anniversaries and birthdays on the first Sunday of the month during announcements. This will start Nov. 2nd. We will continue with same Fellowship plan (whatever the sign-up person provides).
- We discussed having one system for Sign-up genius for flowers, bulletins, readers, etc. Jess suggested an I-pad, but
 older members may want something larger. Terry and Tim volunteered to meet with Jess along with the office staff,
 Penny and Sandy, to review options and make a recommendation to Council.
- Trex recycling Project- Linda shared a handout describing a project where if an organization can collect 1000# of
 plastic recyclables, the Trex Co, will donate a bench made out of recycled plastics. We decided to apply and even if we
 don't collect 1000# (in 1 year), we will be providing a good service for the environment and community. However, we
 do want to try to collect 1000# to prove to Jerry Reetz we can do it! Linda will make the application and we'll see what
 happens.

Closing Prayer – Recited Lord's Prayer together.

Bonnie moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Tim. Motion Carried.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Sue Shemanski Secretary

Linda Reetz – President	920-279-7899	linda.reetz0726@gmail.com
Terry Wallace – Vice President	920-344-1523	tw9696@outlook.com
Sandy Peschke – Treasurer	920-290-1551	kspeschke1950@gmail.com
Sue Shemanski – Secretary	920-361-4506	shemanski5@yahoo.com
Heidi Schramer– Music/Worship	920-361-4097	schramer@charter.net
Anita Lind – Christian Education	920-290-1374	anita_lind@charter.net
Bonnie Kline – Fellowship/Caring	920-570-2787	razn6mom@yahoo.com
Tim Koch – Mission Outreach	920-789-8358	timkoch18@gmail.com
Bob Prellwitz – Building and Grounds	920-361-0669	bobprellwitz@yahoo.com

Endowment Fund

The Endowment Fund was set up in 2019 by the Church Council and is monitored by a professional investment firm and by the Endowment committee. Available funds must meet a performance benchmark to be eligible to be dispersed. It also shows that we are practicing good, safe use of donated money.

- Endowment funds come from bequests in wills, charitable remainder trusts, transfer of property, and life income gifts.
- The Endowment Fund is not intended to generate revenue for general operating expenses.
- It is set up to be a source of perpetual contributions to charities and ministries.
- The amount available is 4% of the year-end market value of the last three years.
- These funds will be used exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes with local community needs given a priority.

Current members: Linda Reetz Interim Chairperson, Tricia Prellwitz, secretary, Barb Bellmer, Mary Lou Neubauer, Diane Toraason

Mission of the Month - ELCA Good Gifts



As people of God, we are called to share in God's work, which includes caring for those living within hunger and poverty conditions around the world. ELCA Good Gifts offers a multitude of ways to reach those in need at a global level. Unique gifts of farm animals, water jugs, school supplies, fees and textbooks, health and dental care, and vaccinations are just a sampling of what can be provided

A donation to "God's global barnyard," allows the ELCA to decide where it is needed most, whether supporting livestock, agriculture or other sustainable development projects that help families have maintainable sources of food, and potential sources of income for survival. A donation to "where needed most" provides funds to the ELCA to respond where and when needed most, reaching globally to share God's love through ministry. Any of these wonderful gifts can save lives, and ELCA Good Gifts can truly make a global difference while providing critical support to many.

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we believe that God is calling us into the world—together. And with generous, loving hands, we can make a difference.

Please support our December mission effort toward ELCA Good Gifts

Recycling Challenge

Members of Grace are being asked to save plastic: grocery bags, bread bags, bubble wrap, dry cleaning bags, ice bags, water softener salt bags, clean food storage bags, cereal bags, pallet plastic wrap, and produce bags. An information sheet with all the items listed is available at church.

The challenge is, we need to save 1,000 pounds within a 12-month period. Our year started on November 1. Seventy (70) grocery bags are approximately one (1) pound. All plastic can be dropped off in the recycle bin at church.

The prize for completing the challenge is a 2-seater Trex bench.

Let's help the environment by recycling and earn a bench.

Decorate the Tree and Church

Needed! Volunteers! It's that time of year when our church becomes transformed for the Christmas season.

We have the generosity of Sue Shemanski's family in providing a tree. That tree has to be selected, cut down, and brought back to church. If you have an interest in going to Shemanski's tree farm, that will happen on **Wednesday**, **December 3**. Arrive at 9:00 am at church and we will travel to the tree farm.

Once the tree has been put up, the decorating begins. There are lights to string and ornaments to hang on the tree. There are wreaths to be hung, garlands to be put up. All the materials are found at church with pictures of where things go. The work is not difficult when we have enough hands. Church decorating will take place **Sunday, December 7** immediately following the worship service.

When the decorating is finished a soup luncheon will be provided by the Church Council and the Christian Education Committee.

Please consider lending a helping hand and staying for lunch.

Grace Women's Advent Party
Sunday, December 14th
11:30 AM
Dinner served at 12:00 Noon
\$15.00/person

Please join us on Sunday, December, 14th for our Annual Women's Advent Party. We will meet at 11:30 am to reveal our 2025 Prayer Pals and choose Prayer Pals for 2026. A delicious dinner catered by Moose Inn will be served at 12 noon, following dinner we will be entertained with a Christmas Recital featuring the students of Jess Fritz.

A full dinner menu and sign-up sheet is posted on the kiosk. Someone will be available to collect money after services on November 30^h and December 7th or can be paid in the office.

We hope to see you there!

October Income			October Expenses			
Weekly Income		8,342.84	Wages and Payroll Expenses	\$16,546.49		
RBC Earnings	1	11,597.00	Building & Grounds /Utilities	1,085.50		
Bulletins/Radio Ministry		280.00	Worship Licenses/Supplies	394.30		
Thrivent Choice Dollars		109.00	Radio Ministry	300.00		
Shared Ministry		4,386.95	Office/Miscellaneous 71			
i i			Caring Ministry 40			
			Outside the Box - Outreach	661.33		
TOTAL	24	1,715.79\$	TOTAL	\$ 19,740.13		
Missions (In/Out)		481.38	Missions (In/Out)	\$ 680.56.		
Good Samaritan Fund		0.00	Good Samaritan 0.			
Soul Food		142.69	Soul Food	0.00		
Women of Grace		0.00	Women of Grace	0.00		
Men of Grace		69.00	Men of Grace	0.00		
Christian Education/Youth		0.00	Christian Education/Youth 0.00			
Scholarship Fund		0.00	Scholarship Fund 0.00			
Endowment Fund		0.00	Endowment Fund 0.00			
Beginning Balance January 2025			e	Ending Balance October 2025		
Investments:			Investments:			
Leonard Jones Fund	\$	1,361,456.39	\$	1,476,436.15		
Capital Improvement Fund	\$ \$	321,917.64	\$ \$	333,729.06		
Endowment Fund		123,890.51	\$	133,181.57		
Auxiliary Fund (Started in April	\$	29,841.29	\$ 29,687.52			
Scholarship Fund (Started In June)	\$	5,903.55	\$	5,975.93		

Thank You From Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Grace Lutheran,



Thank you so much for the mission support to the FCA Ministry in which I serve. We truly appreciate every gift that helps us reach the area schools with the hope we have in Jesus. We share God's love with the students to impact their lives for His Kingdom.

Again, Thank You!

God's Blessings, Jeff Tarras, FCA Area Rep



Poinsettias

Once again we are decorating the church with poinsettias for the Christmas season.

If you would like to donate a poinsettia, please bring it to church anytime.

We will arrange the flowers on December 7th, when the tree will be put up.

The Grace Lutheran Choir Presents:

"A Weary World Rejoices

A Christmas Cantata by Joseph M. Martin

Wednesday, December 18, 6:30 PM, Grace Lutheran, Berlin Sunday, December 21, 8:30 AM, Grace Lutheran, Berlin Sunday, December 21, 10:30 AM, First Lutheran, Poy Sippi

Blue Christmas Service

a time of reflection for those who are grieving, sad, or lonely this holiday <u>season</u>

Sunday, December 21, 2025 6:30pm

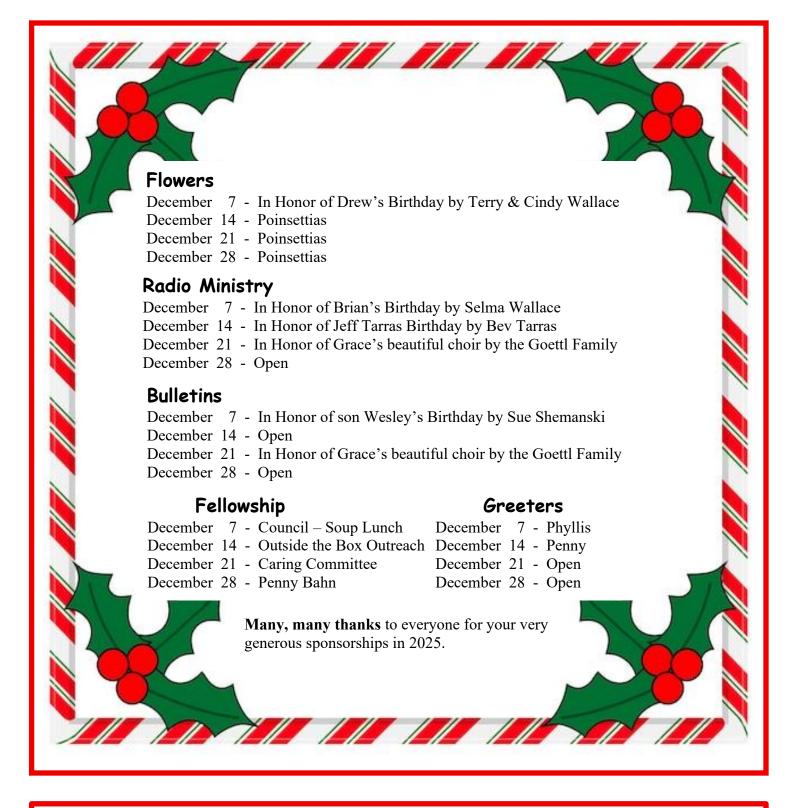
Grace Lutheran Church
384 Oak St. Berlin
live-streamed at
www.gracelutheranberlin.org



"A Dog Named Christmas" by Greg Kincaid is the Grace Book Club's pick for December.

When Todd McCray, a developmentally challenged young man still living at his parents Kansas farm, hears that a local animal shelter is seeking temporary homes for its dogs during the days leading to Christmas, he knows exactly what he wants for the holidays. His father objects, but Todd's persistence quickly wins out. Soon the McCrays are the short-term foster family for a lovable pooch the young man names Christmas. But what about all the other dogs at the shelter? Will they be forced to spend their Christmas all alone in a cage? Todd comes up with a plan and makes it his mission to find foster homes for all the dogs in the shelter. His small act of kindness will teach his family, and his community so much about peace on earth and good will toward men ---and animals!

We will meet on Tuesday, December 9th at 12 Noon in the Grace Church Library. We will discuss the book, enjoy a delicious potluck lunch, and watch the movie "A Dog Named Christmas". If you would like to read this book and be part of the discussion, there are copies available in the Church office. And, if you would like to join us on December 9th to watch the movie "A Dog Named Christmas" we would love to have you.



Angel Tree

Grace will participate in Green Lake County's Angel Tree Program again this year. The Angel Tree program is a program that helps make the holiday season a little brighter for individuals and families who are experiencing financial difficulties.

Each Angel contains the age of the participant and a gift suggestion. Once you have chosen an angel, shop for the participant, attach the angel to the gift, and place the **unwrapped** gift back under the tree by December 2nd.





Happy Birthday

&
Happy
Anniversary

December Birthdays

- 1 Susan Carpenter
- 2 Leighton Cox
- 3 Jeremie Schmidt
- 4 Andrew Rozek
- 6 Jeremy Fritz
- 11 Ann Dehn
- 11 Grace Dobbs
- 11 Tayler Peschke
- 12 Gene Hess
- 12 Kristine Labbus
- 12 Drew Wallace
- 12 Darlene Wilkes
- 13 Kaden Fritz
- 13 Kara Fritz
- 14 Heather Schmidt
- 15 Allan Janes
- 19 Tammy Greening
- 19 Jeff Tarras
- 20 Edmund Roehl, Jr.
- 21 Bonnie Kline
- 24 Griffin Boeck
- 24 Jai Dobbs
- 25 Scott Wolfe
- 28 Laurence Thompson
- 29 Edmund Roehl, Sr
- 30 Conrad Falk
- 30 Elias Klawitter
- 30 Tom McCarthy

December Anniversaries

- 3 Phil & Karen Pik 20th
- 12 Michael & Kristine McElligott
- 30 Scott & Amber Dutcher

If any birthdays or anniversaries were missed, please let the office staff know.

Grace's Tree At Nathan Strong Park



Thank you to Linda, Bob, Mary, Cindy, Heidi and John (camera man) for decorating the tree.



Blood Drive!

When: December 30, 2025

Where: Grace Church

Time: 10:30 am - 5:30 pm

Grace will be hosting the lunch for the Blood Drive.

Please watch the kiosk for sign-up sheets for helpers and desserts.



2026 Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes are ready to be picked up after church on Sundays or during office hours.





This summer, while helping a group of campers gather supplies for their project, one of our leaders noticed raindrops starting to pick up. She went over to check on our Day Camp crew, expecting a scramble for shelter or a little panic at the change in plans.

Instead, she walked into a woodland fairy village mid-construction.

Campers were building tiny homes in stump notches, balancing twigs over mossy logs, tucking small treasures between rocks, completely unfazed by the rain. No disappointment. No stress. Just *pure delight* in what they were creating together.

God meets us in those small, quiet, tactile moments that ground us, in mossy logs, shared creativity, and good work done side by side. When we're connected to creation and to each other, we remember the truth that God is present in all things, even rain!

This is what camp does:

- ... it makes space for joy to take the lead,
- ... for worries to fall away,
- ... and for God's presence to feel *close* enough to touch.



Camp Registration Opens Dec 1

Summer 2026 is calling!

Registration opens December 1, and it's shaping up to be a season of new friends, campfire songs, lake days, and all the memories waiting between pine trees.

A few helpful notes:

- Secure your spot with a deposit and divide the balance into easy monthly payments.
- Gift certificates are available, perfect for grandparents, godparents, and anyone who loves giving experiences over stuff.

SAVE YOUR SPOT →

This young man is Marshall Evans from our congregation. Marshall and his sisters attended camp last summer.

Giving Tuesday Dec 2

One day of generosity. One shared goal: **fill the Scholarship Fund** so every camper has access to camp, no matter what life looks like at home.

Our community shows up with generosity that ripples outward into real lives, real cabins, real moments of joy. Let's make that happen together on Giving Tuesday!



Summer Staff Applications Open Nov 23

It's almost time. This Sunday, our Summer Staff application form goes live and the race for the *best summer job on earth* officially begins!

Know someone who thrives on community, silly songs, late-night laughter, and making a real impact?

This is their moment



For all camping opportunities and information go to https://www.crosswayscamps.org/



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
7	1 4:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	2 9:00 am Staff Meeting 9:00 am No LWR Quilting 3:00 pm Bible Study at Grace 7:00 pm Book Discussion	8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 6:30 pm Confirmation Class 7:00 pm Choir Practice	11:45 am Soul Food Grace Hosts	5	13
8:30 am Worship with Communion and Sunday School 9:30 am Decorate the Tree and Church – soup lunch to follow	7:00 pm Council Meeting	9:00 am No Staff Meeting 9:00 am Pastor Conference 12:00 pm Book Club 3:00 pm No Bible Study at Grace	8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 6:30 pm No Confirmation Class 7:00 pm Choir Practice	11:45 am Soul Food River Shores Hosts	12	8:00 am Men's Breakfast at Grace Lutheran 9:00 am - 4:00pm Craft Day at First Lutheran
14 8:30 am Worship with Communion Paper Bag Christmas Program 11:30 am Ladies Advent Dinner 1:00 pm Recital	15	9:00 am Staff Meeting 9:00 am 9:00 am No LWR Quilting 10:00 am Finance Committee Meeting 3:00 pm No Bible Study at Grace	8:30 am 8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 6:30 pm No Confirmation Class 6:30 pm Cantata	18 11:45 am Soul Food All Saints Hosts	19	20
21 8:30 am Cantata Service – No communion 10:30 am Cantata Service at First Lutheran 6:30 pm Blue Christmas Worship Service 28 8:30 am	22	9:00 am 9:00 am Staff Meeting 3:00 pm No Bible Study Grace 30 10:30 am - 5:30 pm	8:30 am Chair Yoga Class 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service at Grace 6:30 pm Christmas Eve Service at First Lutheran 31 8:30 am	25 Merry Christmas	26	27
Worship with Communion no Sunday School		Blood Drive – Grace Hosts 3:00 pm No Bible Study at Grace	Chair Yoga Class 6:30 pm No Confirmation Class			