

SIGNS OF NEW LIFE



So Grateful For Our Presiding Pastors in 2024!



- Top Left: Pastor Katharine Redpath • Top Right: Pastor Bonnie Parker
- Center Panel—First Row: Pastor Paul Appel, Pastor Sharon Kapsch
- Center Panel—Second Row: Pastor Katherine Tuttle, Pastor Ele Clay
- Left: Rev. Dr. Tracey Breashears Schultz • Right: Pastor Grant Housewright

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Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop and leader of the 3.7 million member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Luke 2: 10-11

¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:

¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

“Joy to the World, the Lord is come!”

Bishop Eaton reminds us that the message of Christmas is joy, not happiness. Happiness is transient and human-made. But joy given by God is deep and strong and unshakable.

.....

Night. A liminal time. A time when God sends messages and messengers to mortals. A time when nocturnal predators are active. A time when, while the world is asleep, greater vigilance is required of those who keep watch.

What about Bethlehem?

The prophet Micah called Bethlehem “one of the little clans of Judah” (Micah 5:2). Even today, Bethlehem would not be counted among the world’s great cities. In 1950, Christians made up 86% of its population. Now they are under 10%. Its economy is based on tourism, which has been decimated by the current conflict. Bethlehem is in the occupied West Bank, in a war zone.

*In the eucharist, Christ invades us with God’s joy.
We are intimately connected to the source of joy and
grace in this gift.*

And here are these shepherds. Except for Mary and Joseph, they were the first to learn of Jesus’ birth. Shepherds figure prominently in Scripture as metaphors for faithful leaders, good kings, compassionate and brave. David was a shepherd boy called into God’s service. Jesus declared himself to be the Good Shepherd.

But in actuality, shepherding was hard and dangerous work, and shepherds were not considered to be among the elite in society. Shepherds were an out-of-bounds people, living outside of the city, and a little suspect. Why would the news of the birth of the king be announced to them?

To these terrified shepherds, literally sitting in the dark outside of Bethlehem, an obscure town in an occupied province of the Roman Empire, God chose to reveal the birth of the Messiah. What on earth was God thinking? Why not in Jerusalem? Why not in Herod’s palace? Why not in Rome, where the emperor claimed to be soter, “savior.”

How does the angels’ announcement of the birth of the Messiah sound to people living in obscure places far from the centers of power in indescribably difficult circumstances today? To those living in Gaza and Ukraine, in Sudan, in the homes of immigrants in this country who fear deportation?

Continued on page 5

Presiding Pastors/Worship Schedule — January 2025:

Sun. Jan. 5	Epiphany	New Life Worship Leaders	9:30 am Service
Sun. Jan. 12	1st Sun. after Epiphany	Pastor Tracey Schultz	9:30 am Service
Sun. Jan. 19	2nd Sun. after Epiphany	Pastor Katharine Redpath	9:30 am Service
Sun. Jan. 26	3rd Sun. after Epiphany	Pastor Katharine Redpath	9:30 am Service

KUDOS to Christmas pageant coordinators Aimee Castillo and Laura Strickland, plus on-stage talent and stage crew volunteers, for a unique and highly memorable Christmas Pageant worship experience!

On Sunday, December 15, the entire congregation participated in the joyful retelling of the story of Jesus' birth. Worshippers chose the role of either an angel, a stable animal (cow, sheep, or donkey), innkeeper, or shepherd — wearing their character's headgear throughout the service, and all having a speaking (mooing?) part at key moments during the litany.

Diane Tanksley and Charlie Gaevert were Mary and Joseph, and Nolan Patschke was Caesar Augustus. Photo credits to the creative and steady-handed Mary Ann Marcha.

Thanks to all!

Editor's Note:
All New Life shutterbugs are encouraged to help chronicle church events throughout the year with photo submissions. Please email your jpgs to: office@newlifelutheran.com. Not all photos can be used in the newsletter but all are appreciated and saved as church history.

Intergenerational Christmas Pageant 2024





Notes from Rebecca

*by Rebecca McDonald,
Director of Worship
and Music*

*Look at the Candy Cane
What do you see?
Stripes that are red
Like the blood shed for me
White is for my Savior
Who's sinless and pure!
"J" is for Jesus My Lord,
that's for sure!
Turn it around
And a staff you will see
Jesus my shepherd
Was born for Me!*



Thank you!

Throughout the month of December, people at New Life demonstrated the love of Christ through their actions. Many thanks are due to everyone who helped support our ministries and our community during the holiday season.

Thanks to everyone who helped kick off the season by putting up the **beautiful Chrismon tree and sanctuary decorations**. Our worship life was enhanced by everyone who gave their time and talents to our **Helping Hands ministry** on Sunday mornings, as well as at our Christmas Eve services. Thank you for volunteering!

Many of you helped to support the **BEAR Toy Drive** by donating new toys for children, the **Seafarers' ministry** by donating toiletries and wrapping shoe boxes, and **Christian Helping Hands** by donating non-perishables for their food pantry.

Thank you to **Aimee Castillo** and all those who helped put the December 15th **Christmas pageant** together. Everyone really enjoyed wearing a costume piece and becoming a part of the Nativity story during worship. On December 21st, eleven members of New Life visited **Trinity Oaks nursing home** where we enjoyed singing Christmas carols and sharing cookies and conversation with the residents.



Our Christmas Eve services were beautiful and well-attended. Thanks to everyone who sponsored the gorgeous poinsettias that beautified the sanctuary. Kudos to our **New Life choir** members, **Elna Ritter, Helen Beckman, Nancy Bryars, Cheryl Robinson, and Laura Strickland**, for their lovely anthems at the 4:00 service, and thanks to **Bubba Flowers and Jill Olson** for their musical leadership at the 7:00 service. Gratitude also goes out to everyone who quietly and graciously completed numerous "behind-the-scenes" tasks – you know who you are!



Dec. 21: A-CAROLING-WE-WENT — cookies in hand — to sing favorite Christmas carols with enthusiastic residents at TRINITY OAKS NURSING HOME in Pearland!

We send many thanks to **Jennifer Hartman** for her tireless work in the office throughout our transition period, and are excited to welcome **Terri Kiser** as our new office admin. Sincere thanks also go out to all of the **supply pastors** we've had during this time, including **Pastors Grant Housewright, Bonnie Parker, Paul Appel, Katherine Tuttle, Katharine Redpath, Ele Clay, Sharon Kapsch, and Tracey Breashears Schultz**. It has been a joy for me to work with each of them, and New Life has been so blessed by their presence.

On a personal note, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to our faithful and dedicated **Church Council** for their leadership during this transition time, as well as for their unwavering support of me. And finally, I am beyond overwhelmed by the incredible generosity of the Christmas bonus gifts I received from so many of you. I really can't put into words how much everyone's support and kindness means to me. I am blessed and humbled to serve at New Life.

Well done, good and faithful servants.

In so many ways this season we have truly done God's work with our hands. I can't wait to see what 2025 has in store for us!

Pax et bonum – peace and everything good,

Rebecca



Bishop Eaton's Christmas Message of Joy—from p.2

To starving children here and across the globe? How dare we wish them "Merry Christmas"?

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord'" (Luke 2:10-11).

Joy. Not happiness that is transient and human-made, but joy, given by God, that is deep, strong and unshakable.

Joy is a sign of the reign of God. The root word for "joy" in Greek is the same as that for "grace." "Gift" also comes from the same root as does "thanks." All of this points to the nature of true joy. It is gift. It is grace. It is thanks-giving.

Our word "eucharist," a name for Holy Communion, ties this all together in the sacrament where Jesus' body is broken for us and Jesus' blood is poured out for us. In the eucharist, Christ invades us with God's joy. We are intimately connected to the source of joy and grace in this gift.

Perhaps that is why, in the middle of the night, to terrified shepherds outside of a small town, God chose to send the angels to announce the birth of Jesus. No distraction. No interference. Just the simple, deep, profound gift of true and lasting joy. A joy that comes from God, from the essence of God, depending only on God, that no earthly power can take away.

Upcoming Events



Hi Everyone! I'm Terri Kiser, the new Administrative Assistant in the church office. Remember, this newsletter is **your newsletter**! Church news and article ideas are always welcome (space and time permitting). Photos and short write-ups are best for this format. Email your news and pics to me at: office@newlifelutheran.com

THANK YOU!

Senior Potluck & Bingo: Wed. Jan. 1

All Seniors 55+ are welcome to join us New Year's Day for lunch at 12:00 noon in the Fellowship Hall. Stay afterward for a rousing session of white elephant BINGO!

New Life Quilters Workshop: Tuesdays, Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28

Meets weekly at 9:00 a.m. This fun group meets year round making quilts and baby blankets for Lutheran World Relief. No experience necessary! If you can tie a knot, we want you!

WELCA Lunch Bunch: Wed. Jan. 8

Meets the second Wednesday of the month at a different area restaurant. This month we'll meet at 11:30 a.m. at 888 Bistro, 1325 E. Broadway (FM 518). Join us!

WELCA Mary and Martha Women's Bible Study: Wed. Jan. 15

Meets the third Wednesday of the month at 9:15 a.m. Now through March we'll be studying "Receiving Grace: A Study of Ephesians." Study materials provided.

Congregational Meeting: Sun. Jan. 26

All members of the congregation are encouraged to attend the semi-annual Congregational Meeting after worship at 10:30a.m. Meet your new council members and vote on the budget for 2025.

Orange Street Clean-Up: Sat. Feb. 1

Meet at the church at 9:00 a.m. for our winter "Adopt-A-Spot" litter clean up on Orange Street. Equipment and snacks provided.

Next Meals on Wheels: Week of Feb. 3-7

If you haven't helped with this great ministry, PLEASE consider volunteering in 2025. Your time commitment is only one day, every 8 weeks. We deliver in pairs and training is provided. Delivery Dates for 2025 are listed on page 9. Questions? Contact Barbara Flowers at 713-817-1012, or talk with other MOW volunteers (list on page 9).

NOTICE: Special Meeting to Discuss Upcoming New Synod Bishop Election

When: Saturday, January 11, 10a.m.-12:00 noon

**Where: House of Prayer Lutheran Church
14045 Space Center Blvd., Houston (Clear Lake)**

As our synod Bishop, Rev. Michael Rinehart, is in his final term, a new bishop will be elected at the next TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod Assembly in May 2025. In anticipation of this, all lay persons in our conference are invited to attend this special meeting where Robert Rivera will lead a discussion concerning the qualities needed in our next bishop. This is an opportunity to have a voice in the discovery/discernment process.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED,

let the New Life office know by Mon. Jan. 6
so House of Prayer can anticipate a head count.



EnviroNews
Helen Beckman

On Thursday, January 2, the Stella Roberts Recycle Center (SRRC) reopens after the holiday break. Hours of operation are from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. Monday through Friday and 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. on Saturday. **Household hazardous waste (HHW)** is accepted on Friday and Saturday. No appointment is needed.

Saturday, December 28 through Tuesday, January 21 there will be a trailer parked at SRRC for **collection of live Christmas trees** to be taken to the Brazoria County coast for building dunes. If you come while the center is closed, leave the tree on the curb by the gate. Be sure to remove all ornamentation.

Saturday, January 11 is the monthly shredding event at SRRC from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. To subscribe to Paper Shredding notifications text "SHRED" to 281-868-3390.

Tuesday, January 14 is the monthly Open House at SRRC at 3 P.M. You will be able to tour the facility, learn about the operation and services, and ask questions.

Saturday, January 18 is Pearland Arbor Day tree give-away from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. There are 252 trees to give away. Each household may have two 3 gallon trees. The choices are American Beauty Berry, American Sycamore, Pecan, Sweet Gum, and Wax Myrtle. A suggested donation of \$10 a tree would be greatly appreciated.

Saturday, January 25 is Dunes Day in Brazoria County. Sign in begins at 9 A.M. at Stahlman Park in Surfside Beach, 2211 Bluewater Highway. It is recommended to wear long pants and long sleeves, closed toed shoes, and gloves. A chili dog lunch will be served starting at 11:30. To reduce trash, no water bottles or cups will be provided, but filtered water will be available for your use.

Saturday, February 1 is the winter litter cleanup in Pearland. Meet at the church **at 9 A.M.** to help pick up litter on our adopt-a-spot, E. Orange Street. Snacks, juice, coffee, and equipment will be provided. Students will be able to get volunteer credit for school and scouts.

Garden Lectures on Keep Pearland Beautiful Facebook will resume in February.

Enjoy the peace and beauty of God's gifts around you and give thanks and praise. Love has come down to bring us grace and hope.

Happy New Year, Everyone!

I have noticed that the majority of our recycling contains water bottles, sometimes still containing water. One of the main ways I have of cutting back on plastic use is by **never** buying bottled water or accepting bottled water that someone else has bought. It certainly has its place, such as in an emergency when our water system has been compromised, but daily use for convenience is not necessary.



My goal for environmental responsibility at New Life Lutheran is not to have bottled water at church. Many of you have your personal to go cups with you. BRAVO! For your convenience we have a Britta filter in the Kitchen and a large pitcher of filtered water in the refrigerator. We make coffee with filtered water. Feel free to add tap water to the filter when you use the filtered water in the pitcher.

If you continue to use bottled water, please continue to recycle your bottles. Remember the first and most important "R" is **Reduce**, meaning to avoid using what isn't needed. The second "R" is **Reuse**, meaning use again and again to increase its usefulness and avoid having to buy something else. The third is **Recycle**, meaning to take and change back to its original components, even chemically, to be remade into something useful again. The fourth is **Rebuy**, meaning to buy recycled products to make recycling worthwhile. After all, recycling was modeled by God in nature, God's creation.

Shining Our Light

¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

SPOTLIGHT ON: Our Talented Young Musicians

by Laura Strickland

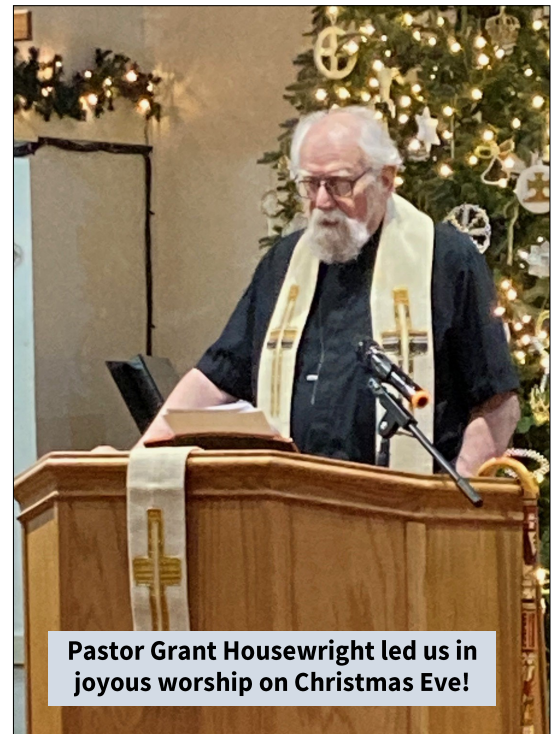
We are delighted to recognize three incredible young musicians from our church family who have achieved remarkable milestones in their musical journeys.



Dawson High School student **Austin Tatuaca** — shown at left with parents **Holly and Edward**, and brother **Alex** — had the honor of performing at the prestigious Midwest Clinic in Chicago on December 18th. The Midwest Clinic is an internationally renowned music conference that attracts thousands of attendees each year. Ensembles compete for the opportunity to perform, submitting applications and recordings to be considered for this coveted invitation. Austin's hard work and dedication to his craft have led him to this exceptional accomplishment, and we couldn't be more proud.

We also celebrate **Lucas Cummings and Emily Weber** from Pearland High School, who have earned spots in the Freshman Region Band. This is a significant achievement that highlights their talent, perseverance, and love for music. Making it into the Region Band requires countless hours of practice, and a deep commitment to mastering their instruments. Congratulations Austin, Lucas, and Emily!

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES



Pastor Grant Housewright led us in joyous worship on Christmas Eve!



Children's Christmas Party



HEARTFELT THANK YOUS from Linda Stavino, Children's Christmas Party Coordinator

I want to **THANK** my wonderful group of ladies and men again for helping me with the Children's Christmas Party on Dec. 14:

Lynn and Rylynn Cope, Terri Kiser, Mary Ann Marcha, Brenda Pritchett, Elna Ritter, Cheryl Robinson, Kathy Scott, Diane Tanksley, Ryan Strickland and girlfriend Bailey Jackson, Laura Strickland and Julie Watkins for making the party so much fun. This group of ladies and men is beyond amazing!

Thanks also for the many donations to our kids' door prizes and BINGO prizes, especially **Brenda Pritchett, Cheryl Robinson, Elna Ritter, and Charlotte Thurman.**

And finally a **BIG THANK YOU** to **Bob Leach**, for seed money for these memorable special events!



OUR MEALS ON WHEELS 2025 DELIVERY DATES

Feb 3-7

Mar 31-Apr 4

May 27-30

Jul 21-25

Sep 15-19

Nov 10-14

A huge "THANK YOU" to everyone who helped fill the slots in December. Some people even pulled double duty (again). Those who helped during December are:

Doug & Lynn Barron
Helen Beckman
Mary Anna Vance
Lynn Cope
Samaira Siajee
Tamsey Mims
Cheryl Robinson
Nancy & Roland Bryars
Brenda Pritchett
Marlene Heinrich
Vince Gottleib



Women of the ELCA (WELCA) Christmas Party Dec. 8

Church Council News

Our Church Council meets monthly to plan, implement, and evaluate the ministry, outreach, and resources of New Life Lutheran Church. Below are items discussed during the December meeting, taken from the recorded minutes.

Old Business: New Council members will be installed during regular service in January. Interim invited to a separate meeting to discuss contract and salary. Cheryl to contact Wendy, the florist manager regarding credit. Postage machine contract to be released in March 2025. Members will be reminded to contribute stamps. Michael Napoleon is working on Quickbooks. Prayer team leader position still open. Jennifer Hartman sending prayer requests from attendance cards. The council discussed the admin assistant position. The position is part time up to 20 hours a week with 3 months trial period and option to go 'permanent'. Starts in January 2025. Motion made by Gordon M., Tamsey M. seconded, and motion accepted. Decision to stay with Pulpit supply pastor until contract discussion with interim pastor.

New Business: Officers voted in for 2025 year are: President-Laura Strickland Napoleon, Vice President-Nancy Bryars, Secretary-Evelyn Baldauf, Treasurer-Brenda Pritchett. The council retreat was postponed to March 1 and will be Saturday one day only. Budget review was discussed by Nancy B. in preparation for congregational meeting in January.

Stewardship Report - Financial Snapshot
Total December Giving Through 12/30: \$22,835.44
Total Yearly: \$240,404.16
Budget for 2024: \$295,404.00

FROM THE STEWARDSHIP TEAM

20 Stewardship Commitment cards have been returned. The goal was 40. You can still return yours.

EVERYONE HAS A SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE TO GOD'S MISSION

Think about the abilities you have been given. Then use your abilities to serve GOD by serving others.

- **Share your Interests with Others**
- **Share your Skills**

God gave each of us the TIME and TALENT to benefit others as well as ourselves. The STEWARDSHIP TEAM gives thanks for all of you using your time and talent to serve GOD.



Synod News MLK Jr. PARADE- HOUSTON Jan. 20

Everyone loves a parade! The **47th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Black Heritage Society Parade is Monday, Jan. 20 in downtown Houston.** Come join in the fun while honoring Dr. King's vision of unity, justice, and progress.

Our TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod Bishop Mike Rinehart – along with a bunch of **energetic Lutherans of all ages from across the synod**– will walk with the bands, VIPs, dance ensembles, and other groups through the cheering crowds in downtown Houston to support our black brothers and sisters, celebrate our community and our diversity, and honor the legacy of Dr. King. The banner we walk behind proclaims **“Lutherans are here!”**

We will gather as a group on Allen Parkway at Crosby St. at 9 am; parade starts at 10 am; we should be at the end of the route before 12 noon.

For more information, contact Rebecca Shields at 281-389-3616 or email rshields63@gmail.com.

THANK YOU

Thank You! From Church Council and Staff

- Thanks to the **property team, congregation members and Raymond's boys** for putting up the tree and greening in the sanctuary; also for the nativity scene placed on the outside lawn
- **Ryan Strickland, Austin, and Edward Tatuaca** and the boy scouts team for parking lot striping and spiritual labyrinth
- All contributors of toys to BEAR gifts project, to **Aimee C.** for coordinating the effort and **Elna R.** for delivering
- All the Seafarers' donations and our seniors for packing the boxes
- All members of the congregation contributing food for Christian Helping Hands
- Thanks to all women and visitors for a wonderful WELCA Christmas party
- To **Cheryl R.** for beautiful and festive decorations throughout the church property
- Thanks to outgoing council members for all their work in 2023-2024
- To **Kathy Yeates** for the beautiful artificial Christmas tree that she donated to the church office
- Thanks to **Nancy Bryars, Vince & Robin Gottlieb, Elna Ritter, Cheryl Robinson, Linda Stavinoha, Diane Tanksley, Julie Watkins** and **Frank and Jeffrey of the Pearland Saints** for helping with the Greening of the church for Christmas
- And to our Special Christmas Party Guest — SANTA — who was just wonderful with the kids, full of patience, and allowing us to take family photos

We appreciate you ALL so much!

Church Council Executive Team:

President

Laura Strickland Napoleon

Vice President

Nancy Bryars

Secretary

Evelyn Baldauf

Treasurer

Brenda Pritchett

Council at Large:

Elna Ritter

Cheryl Robinson

Ryan Strickland

Church Staff:

Rebecca McDonald
Director of Worship
and Music

Terri Kiser
Office Administrative
Assistant



NEW LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Livestream Worship on Facebook: [newlifepearland](https://www.facebook.com/newlifepearland)

Email Council: office@newlifelutheran.com

Email Rebecca McDonald: music@newlifelutheran.com

January 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 New Year's Day 12pm - Senior Potluck & Bingo - Fellowship Hall	2 6pm - Property Team 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal	3 6pm - Women of Worth (WOW) - Fellowship Hall	4 10:30am - Phoenix Group (Women's AA) 4pm - Word Fellowship
5 9:30am - Traditional Worship 10:30am - Sunday School 12pm - Word Fellowship	6 6:30pm - Girl Scouts 8pm - AA Meeting (Co-Ed) - Fellowship Hall 8pm - AI-Anon Meeting - Sanctuary	7 9am - Quilters Workshop 7pm - Word Fellowship	8 11:30am - WELCA Lunch Bunch	9 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal	10 6pm - Women of Worth (WOW) - Fellowship Hall	11 10:30am - Phoenix Group (Women's AA) 4pm - Word Fellowship
12 9:30am - Contemporary Worship 10:30am - Sunday School 12pm - Word Fellowship	13 6pm - Church Council 6:30pm - Girl Scouts 8pm - AA Meeting (Co-Ed) 8pm - AI-Anon Meeting	14 9am - Quilters Workshop 7pm - Word Fellowship	15 9:15am - Mary & Martha Bible Study WELCA	16 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal	17 6pm - Women of Worth (WOW) - Fellowship Hall	18 10:30am - Phoenix Group (Women's AA) 4pm - Word Fellowship
19 9:30am - Traditional Worship 10:30am - Sunday School 12pm - Word Fellowship	20 M L King Jr Day 6:30pm - Girl Scouts 8pm - AA Meeting (Co-Ed) - Fellowship Hall 8pm - AI-Anon Meeting - Sanctuary	21 9am - Quilters Workshop 7pm - Word Fellowship	22	23 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal	24 6pm - Women of Worth (WOW) - Fellowship Hall	25 10:30am - Phoenix Group (Women's AA) 4pm - Word Fellowship
26 9:30am - Contemporary Worship 10:30am - Congregational Meeting & Sunday School 12pm - Word Fellowship	27 6:30pm - Girl Scouts 8pm - AA Meeting (Co-Ed) - Fellowship Hall 8pm - AI-Anon Meeting - Sanctuary	28 9am - Quilters Workshop 7pm - Word Fellowship	29	30 6:30pm - Choir Rehearsal	31	