

CROSS WALK

January 2024

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR LOIS

Dear Reformation Nation,

Happy New Year! I say that to you for the second time in three months (the third, if you are reading this after worship on January 7), because the new "church year" (the cycle of liturgical seasons and Bible readings) started with the first Sunday of Advent (which, at Reformation, is better known as "Spaghetti Day").

Thanks be to God, each of us can "hit the reset button" at any time by assessing our shortcomings and then recommitting ourselves in grateful response to the understanding that we are already a "new creation" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). If it would help to talk to someone and hear words of forgiveness, I invite you to drop-by during my scheduled office hours or make an appointment to see me.

"What is God up to here?"

One congregation-related resolution I have for 2024 is to call each individual or couple in our

members-and-friends directory at least once during the year, just to touch bases. If I have trouble reaching you, do not be surprised if I follow-up with an e-mail or snail-mail message (unless I know you like to text).

I would like to propose a congregation-related resolution for your consideration. Once a week, please take a few minutes to pray for one of our council's officers or standing committees. Pray especially that their endeavors are always guided by a faithful discernment of this question: "What is God up to HERE?"

+ Pastor Lois



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Special points of interest:

- What is God up to here?
- How to use the "extra" envelopes 2024 box?
- Learn about Confession and Forgiveness
- What does the Community Outreach Committee do?
- Congregational Meeting Part 2
- A specific prayer at least once a week
- What can you do besides Sunday Worship?
- Support the T.A.S.S.E.L Project

Message from the President

Happy New Year to all! Today has always been very special to us. Our youngest daughter was born on New Years Day and, yes, we did get to the New Years Eve party the night before! Loving traditions as we do, we always have pork and sauerkraut on New Year's

Day for good luck and thank goodness she has always liked this meal since she was a little girl because it has always been her birthday dinner! As we go into 2024, I am looking forward with hopes for good health for all, happiness for all, and strength for all to get through those tough days that may

face us as we move ahead. Thank goodness we have our faith to help us with our needs and to thank God for our answered prayers. May you all have a blessed New Year!

Vickey



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

On December 10, we welcomed Ron and Mary Hatch and Marvin and Kathy Manninen as full members of Reformation.



Ron & Mary have been worshipping with us since May and come to Reformation by transfer from Apostles Lutheran Church in Brandon. They live in Dade City so have a little distance to drive each

Sunday. WELCOME RON & MARY.



Marv & Kathy recently moved to Lakeland from Haines City where Marv was on the call committee at Lamb of God. They are already helping with packing lunches and are looking for other ways to get involved.

WELCOME MARV & KATHY.



Check your calendar! Plan to stay after worship for coffee, goodies, and fellowship on January 28th.

We're looking for 2 people to bring the goodies. Check out the Fellowship page in the notebook on the credenza.

Do you have some "theme" ideas we might enjoy, i.e. "Bet you didn't know I . . .", Where do you tell people you are from? These ideas give us something "extra" during fellowship. We're always looking for ideas! Can we count on you?

AN AMAZING SUCCESS REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR PROJECT

*BIG JOB AHEAD, LET THE
PRICING BEGIN*



AN AMAZING SUCCESS as you can see! For those who participated in the **"Reverse Advent Calendar Project"**, we are pleased to announce that approximately \$1,606.00 of non-perishable food was delivered to Talbot House Ministries. Thank you to Harold Mueller for helping Doug load and the use of his large vehicle to get all the food delivered at the same time.

Marilyn Hodge, Project Chair
Community Outreach Committee

**ALL PACKED AND READY TO
DELIVER**



AARP Tax-Aide **FREE INCOME TAX PREPARATION**

Tax preparation in 2024 will be at Reformation Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall and by appointment only - they will not be processing any walk-ins. Site hours will be: Mondays (8-12) and Thursdays (8-12) starting Thursday, February 1.

You can schedule an appointment by stopping at the site on either Monday or Thursday during site hours. The site will also be open on January 25 and January 29 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30a.m. to schedule appointments.

Information packets will be available for pick up when you schedule your appointment. If you are unable to schedule an appointment when you pick up your packet, you will be given a phone number to call to schedule your appointment or to reschedule, if necessary.

In the packet there will be directions along with an Intake/Interview Form which **MUST BE COMPLETED** prior to returning to the site for your appointment.

All volunteers are trained and certified by AARP/IRS to prepare and e-file tax returns.

Information needed: Picture ID's (Taxpayers), Social Security cards or ITIN for all; Income documents (W2, SSA 1099, 1099R, 1099G, 1099Misc, 1099NEC, 1099K, etc.); Brokerage statements (All pages), Healthcare (1095A, B, or C), Mortgage interest; Medical/dental expenses; Charitable donations; Property taxes; Education (1098T & expenses); voided Bank check for direct deposit/debit of refund/balance due.

More details will be given in the February newsletter.

YOU ARE INVITED! JANUARY 7TH NEXT “REFORMATION INFORMATION” SESSION

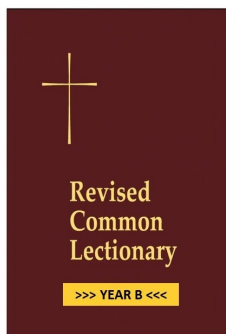
Have you resolved to learn more about Christianity in general, Lutheranism in particular, or Reformation Lutheran Church specifically in 2024. For example, do you want to know how to become a member of the congregation or with whom to arrange a baptism?

This monthly meeting is an informal opportunity to ask questions. Please come to the conference room a few minutes after worship concludes.

If you are unable to stay that day (or are reading this invitation “after the fact”), feel free to contact Pastor Lois directly. You can stop by during office hours, call/text her cellphone (813-494-4052), or send an e-mail to pastorreformationlakeland@gmail.com.



JANUARY LECTIONARY (THE SUNDAY READINGS)*



| DATE | FIRST | PSALMODY | SECOND | GOSPEL |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 01/07 (Baptism of Our Lord) | Genesis 1:1-5 | Psalms 29 | Acts 19:1-7 | Mark 1:4-11 |
| 01/14 (2 Epiphany) | 1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]** | Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18 | 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 | John 1:43-51 |
| 01/21 (3 Epiphany) | Jonah 3:1-5, 10 | Psalms 62:5-12 | 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 | Mark 1:14-20 |
| 01/28 (4 Epiphany) | Deuteronomy 18:15-20 | Psalms 111 | 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 | Mark 1:21-28 |

**Remember: If you watch all three devotions posted on Facebook each week (First reading on Monday, Second reading on Tuesday, and Gospel reading on Wednesday), you have participated in a Lectionary Bible Study for the following Sunday!*

The devotion on Wednesday is normally “live” at 12 Noon.

*** = optional verses are in brackets*

DID YOU KNOW?

INITIAL OFFERING & OTHER SPECIAL ENVELOPES

Those of you who use (or should have already received see the greeter the next time or contact the office to arrange delivered.

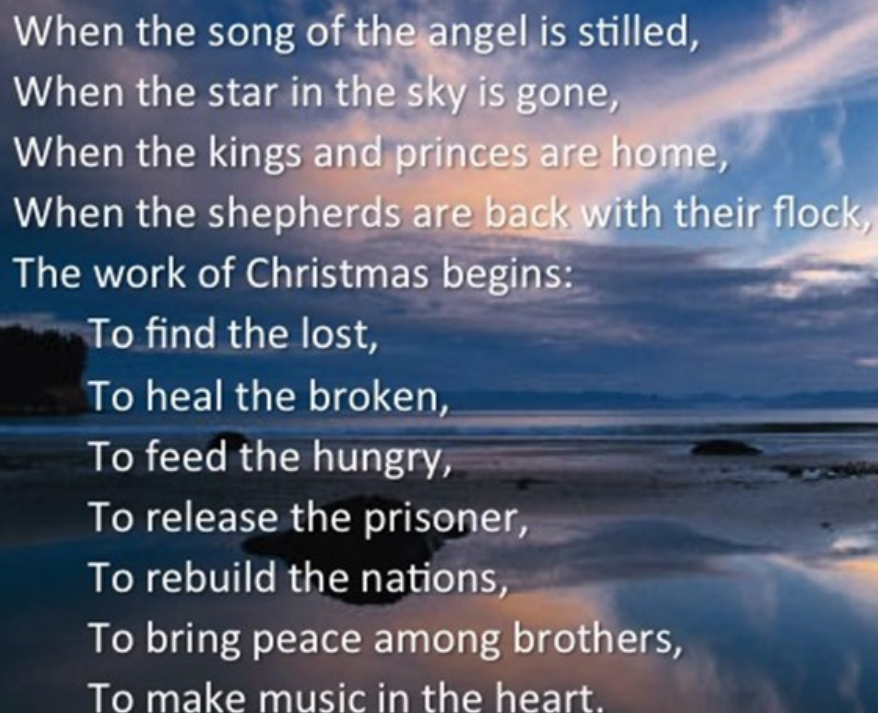
The very first envelope ("Initial opportunity to defray the a year's worth of envelopes to particularly generous, please to cover the cost for someone living on extremely limited means.



might use) offering envelopes your 2024 box. If not, please you are at worship in-person for them to be mailed or

Offering") in the box is an congregation's cost of providing you. If you are feeling consider doubling that amount

As you go through your 2024 box, you will find an envelope for each Sunday and several special envelopes for special days (for example, Ash Wednesday, Easter, and Christmas Eve). These are meant to be reminders to consider an extra donation to support the congregation's ministries, not a different envelope in which to put your regular offering. At a minimum, consider setting-aside a certain percentage of "found money" for future special envelopes (for example, a 10% tithe from an income tax refund or 50% of unexpected cash gifts and money you literally find, whether in a pocket or loose in your purse). Ideally, consider what each special day means to you personally, and give as much as a week's extra offering.



When the song of the angel is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

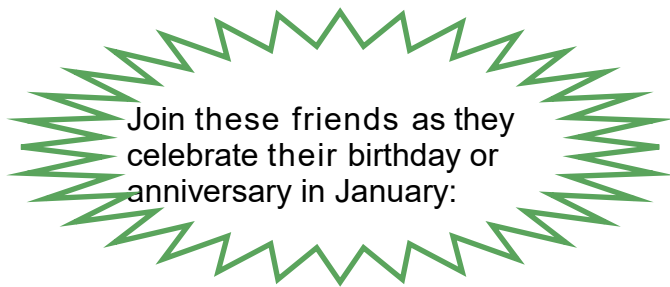
THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!



THANK YOU to everyone who helped make Advent and Christmas special for the members, friends, visitors, and less fortunate neighbors of Reformation. We already applauded our talented musicians, but we also need to applaud the “multitude of heavenly hosts” which take the form of behind-the-scenes volunteers, including: Yvonne Mueller and the crews she recruited to decorate the sanctuary (twice), Karen Hamilton and other members of the Community Outreach committee who implemented our two Christmas gift programs and wildly-successful “Reverse Advent Calendar” food collection, and everyone who stepped-in to fill the “big shoes” of amazing year-round “elves” so that they could spend some time with family.

THANK YOU also to everyone who “rose to the challenge” of hosting the well-attended memorial for Steve Solovitz on “Christmas Eve Eve” (December 23). It meant extra work for the Fellowship committee, last-minute work for the Worship & Music committee (especially Altar Guild), and gracious offers of baked goods to supplement purchased refreshments. Not to mention almost doubling the “normal” Christmas week workload for Elise Knoll and Pastor Lois!

In addition, “**THANK YOU**” from Pastor Lois to everyone who contributed to the generous gift that Vickey presented to her on Christmas Eve! This was “on top of” the cards and other thoughtful gifts that some of you gave her individually.



| | | | |
|-------|---------------------|-------|----------------------------|
| 01/08 | JAHNKE, Tom | 01/01 | MANNINEN, Marvin & Kathy |
| 01/08 | PETRARCA, Linda | 01/02 | HAINES, Dennis & Karen |
| 01/10 | WASON, Karen | 01/07 | ROY, Holger & Hilary |
| 01/16 | ORDONEZ, Marcela | 01/14 | CORNELL, Gary & Dawn |
| 01/19 | CABALLERO, Barbara | 01/20 | SARAKINIS, Andy & Margaret |
| 01/20 | SARAKINIS, Margaret | | |
| 01/21 | JANSSAN, Pat | | |
| 01/21 | TEDESCO, Gabby | | |
| 01/21 | TEDESCO, Gaetano | | |



LUTHERANISM 101

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

*If we confess our sins,
he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

- 1 John 1:8-9

The liturgy of worship each Sunday morning usually contains a “confession and forgiveness” rite. On Ash Wednesday and other occasions, we may offer a longer version of such a ritual. Our “cranberry” hymnal ([Evangelical Lutheran Worship](#)) contains two complete “order of worship” settings specific to confession and forgiveness. One is for corporate (group) gatherings; the other, individual pastoral care.

In each case, the purpose of a “confession and forgiveness” rite is to help each person renew and restore their relationship with God. Participation in the weekly rite prepares us to hear the Word (Holy Scripture and its interpretation in preaching and singing) and receive the Sacrament (Holy Baptism and/or Holy Communion). The additional, occasional rites can help us delve more deeply into our shortcomings, which can be particularly meaningful during the season of Lent or when an individual struggles to forgive themselves.

The role of a Minister of Word and Sacrament (called and ordained pastor) in confession and forgiveness is referred to as “the office of the keys” (a reference to Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23). Although this may sound like gatekeeping, it is more often a matter of serving as a conduit of God’s grace.

It’s an unwed woman who carries
God.

It’s the pagans from the East who
recognize God.

It’s the workers in the field who hear
from God.

It’s the marginalized neighborhood
who welcomes God.

It’s God who chooses the lowly and
the broken to rise.

Christmas is here.

Let hope in.

ON THOSE DAYS

On those days
when you miss someone the most

as though your memories
are sharp enough
to slice through skin and bone
remember how they loved you.

Remember how they loved you
and do *that*
for yourself.

In their name
in *their* honour.
Love yourself
as they loved you.

They would like that.

On those days
when you miss someone the most
love yourself harder.

*Donna
Ashworth
"Loss"*



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*

This is the greatest and first commandment.

And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

- Jesus, as quoted in Matthew 22:37b-40

Community Outreach is the committee through which we, the people of Reformation Lutheran Church, love our neighbors. We have historically focused on “mercy” projects (collecting items to meet the needs of children and adults in our community). The following table from the congregation’s most recent annual report lists one year’s worth of committee projects:

| Project | Monetary Value (11/22-10/23) |
|--|------------------------------|
| Monthly Food Barrel (for clients of Talbot House) | \$3,797 |
| Monthly Lunches (for North Lakeland Homeless) | \$1,874 |
| Harvest Sunday (food for Talbot House) | \$ 820 |
| Christmas Gifts (for Guardian Ad Litem children) | \$3,549 |
| Reverse Advent Calendar (food for Talbot House) | \$1,310 |
| Lenten Projects (food for Talbot House & KidsPACK) | \$2,441 |
| School Supplies (for Padgett Elementary students) | \$1,629 |
| God’s Work Our Hands - Laundry Kits (for local homeless and Padgett families) | \$ 902 |

Way to go, Reformation Nation! That’s a total of \$16,322 in direct community impact over the course of one year! For more information, please read the annual report. Updates on projects conducted in November and December can be found in last month’s and this month’s newsletter.

SAVE THE DATE! – JANUARY 14TH

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING (PART 2)

PART 2

“Part 2” of our constitutionally-required annual meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, January 14, 2024, immediately following worship. During “Part 1” (held December 10, 2023), we approved the 2024 budget and we began discussing two items that will be voted on in our “Part 2” session.

First, we have six lay leadership positions to vote on. As this article is being drafted, we have candidates for the three 3-year terms on the congregational council. We are still seeking nominations for one 2-year term and one 1-year term on the congregational council and also one “voting member” for the synod assembly (May 31 – June 2). Please refer to one of the stewardship articles for more information on these opportunities to serve.

Second, we have proposed amendments to our congregation’s constitution to vote on. The goal is simply to update our constitution to reflect changes to the model constitution for congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) which were approved during the churchwide assembly in 2022.

Paper copies of these proposed amendments were presented on December 10 and have remained available in the narthex. By the time you read this article, an electronic copy will have also been sent in an e-blast and the December 31st “Town Hall” meeting will have been an opportunity to discuss these proposed changes.

If you would like to watch “Part 2” on Facebook, please email lovinglutherans@gmail.com by Friday, January 12. If no timely requests are received, it will not be available online.

“LET’S DO LUNCH!!”



Fourteen ladies met at The Olive Garden for a Christmas Lunch Bunch on December 21st. We enjoyed great food and conversation. What a way to spend a portion of your day!



In January, we will meet at 12:30 on the 25th and go to Red Lobster. We haven’t been there in several years. All ladies and their female friends are welcome. Watch for the sign-up sheet on the credenza in the narthex. It’s good to take a break and meet with friends for good conversation. Look forward to seeing you for lunch.

Karen Hamilton, 863-853-9678

LET'S INVEST IN AN OUTCOME!

“Giving to church is an investment in an outcome”, not just paying the electric bill. Yes, we do need to pay the electric bill but by so doing we are able to provide

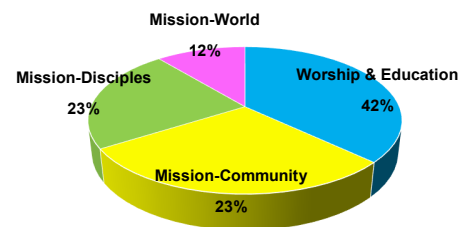


worship both in-person and online, furnish services to our community, like packing lunches for the homeless, collecting school supplies, providing Christmas for kids,

and above all, receiving the spiritual health and blessings we all need.

When the 2023 Spending Plan was approved, I projected that we would have a financial shortfall for the year. Like all of us, Reformation is feeling the increased costs of everything. Through November, we have received \$152,765 from various sources including several families who gave their entire annual commitment in January or February. Our expenses total \$170,270.

At the annual congregational meeting in December, the 2024 Spending Plan was approved as proposed. Projected income for 2024 is \$148,391; projected expenses are \$204,067. Each donated dollar will go to support the following missions:



PRAYER REQUEST

In her message this month, Pastor Lois proposed that, at least once a week, everyone take a few minutes to pray for one of our council's officers or standing committees. Here are some specific suggestions for you to embrace:

- Offer a prayer of our 2023 council Zelazny; Vice and Beth Walton; Secretary, Barbara Secretary, Barbara
- Offer a prayer of discernment for all council members (especially those continuing their term or likely to be re-elected on January 14), that they might consider serving as an officer during 2024.
- Offer a prayer that the council meeting on January 16 is particularly productive. This will be the organizational meeting during which council members will elect their officers and select which standing committees they will liaison with for 2024.
- Offer a prayer for Community Outreach (the committee that is featured in a newsletter article this month). At a minimum, give thanks for the 2023 efforts of its core members (Karen Hamilton, Marilyn Hodge, Yvonne Mueller, Bev Nelson, Pastor Lois, Jeannie Yager, and Vickey Zelazny) and their many helpers (especially Doug Hodge and Harold Mueller).
- Offer a prayer of intent, that we have the people and fortitude in 2024 to continue our many needed “mercy” outreach efforts and begin to address at least one community “justice” concern.



thanks for the service of officers (President, Vickey Presidents, Bobbie Harney Treasurer, Karen Hamilton; Duncan; and Financial Caballero).

WHAT DO YOU DO (BESIDES WORSHIP ON SUNDAY)?



CONSIDER SERVING ON COUNCIL

As was recently reported in an e-blast, all three incumbents (Barbara Caballero, Karen Hamilton, and Phil Zelazny) have agreed to run for re-election for a 3-year term on the congregational council. If you do not want to run against any of them, we are still accepting nominations for one 2-year term and one 1-year term, both of which are being vacated.

Serving on council involves attending a council meeting once a month (usually on Zoom, and we will provide training if you have not used it before), participating in the life of our faith community (attending and giving, as you are able) and serving as either a liaison with one committee (not necessarily leading the committee, but reporting on its efforts once a month).

Interested? Send an e-mail to lovinglutherans@gmail.com or contact Pastor Lois. Elections will occur during our “Part Two” meeting January 14.

CONSIDER ATTENDING SYNOD ASSEMBLY

As also recently reported in an e-blast, we are still accepting nominations for someone to serve as Reformation’s “voting member” at the synod assembly (the afternoon of Friday, May 31 through the morning of Sunday, June 2). The assembly will take place at the Embassy Suites - Lake Buena Vista, and the two-night hotel stay is budgeted to be paid by the congregation. This is not the same hotel as last year (there is less walking and it is all inside).

This will be a “workshop year” (less synod business to vote on, more time for break-out sessions on various interesting topics). The keynote speaker will be Reverend Rafael Malpica – Padilla, who holds a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Puerto Rico (1977 Cum Laude), a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now part of United Lutheran Seminary), and several honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees.

Serving as the “voting member” means voting as needed on synod business during the assembly and authoring an article for the congregation’s newsletter afterwards. Interested? Send an e-mail to lovinglutherans@gmail.com or contact Pastor Lois.

God specializes in things fresh and firsthand. His plans for you this year may outshine those of the past.... He's preparing to fill your days with reasons to give Him praise.

T.A.S.S.E.L. PROJECT

[Polk County Public Schools T.A.S.S.E.L. project](#) began back in 2016 to help students overcome barriers keeping them from attending school, including the lack of school supplies, clothing and hygiene products.

Shannon Gillespie, Senior Manager of Social Work Services for Polk County Public Schools, the founder of T.A.S.S.E.L., said the acronym means **Teamwork Achieves Student Success and Encourages Learning**.

After hearing about T.A.S.S.E.L. PROJECT'S Holiday Toy Drive, I contacted Shannon and told her of our interest in working with the social workers at Padgett Elementary School. We received the Christmas wishes and needs for 20 students at Padgett who were currently not receiving support from any other social services group. We rallied and purchased gifts for all 20 students. The requests were a bit more than what we furnish for Guardian Ad Litem.



After receiving gifts for both Guardian Ad Litem and T.A.S.S.E.L. Joy Boxes, we ended up with all the T.A.S.S.E.L. gifts needing to be wrapped. What better way to combine with fellowship than by having a Wrapping Party on December 7th! 13 people arrived armed with wrapping supplies and got to work. We broke for lunch and were finished by mid-afternoon.



It took a picked up. I want to contributed gifts and cash \$5,900 for both GAL and You" from T.A.S.S.E.L.



van to hold all of the gifts T.A.S.S.E.L. personally thank each of you who for a combined total this year of T.A.S.S.E.L. Below is the "Thank



God's Blessings to each of you.

Karen Hamilton, Project Chair
Community Outreach Committee

*In
Loving
Memory*

Remember our fellow brother in
Christ and his family.

12/08 SOLOVITZ, Steve


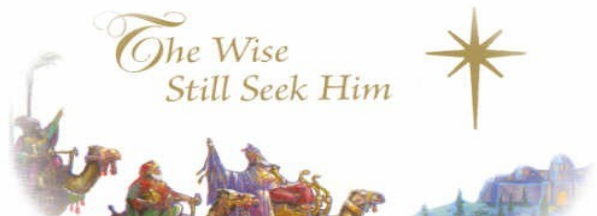
Hello there!

On behalf of Polk County Public Schools (PCPS) School Social Worker's TASSEL Program, we would like to express our gratitude for your generous donation. Because of your giving, we are able to meet the basic needs of students and families county-wide. For this, we thank you.

Thank you for partnering with us as we work to support our community.

- TASSEL Team

JANUARY 2024

| sunday | monday | tuesday | wednesday | thursday | friday | saturday |
|--|---|--|---|--|--------|--|
| | 1 New Year's Day  | 2 | 3 12:00 Devotions on Facebook Live | 4 | 5 | 6 Epiphany 10:30 Undecorate the Sanctuary  |
| 7 10:00 Worship w/communion In-Person & Facebook Live Reformation Information | 8 | 9 9:30 Evangelism 12:00 Noon ← | 10 12:00 Devotions on Facebook Live Pastor Away Lent Planning Retreat | 11 3:00 PM → | 12 | 13 |
| 14 10:00 Worship w/communion In-Person & Facebook Live Annual Meeting (Part 2) | 15 | 16 9:30 Chimes 6:30 Council | 17 12:00 Devotions on Facebook Live | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 10:00 Worship w/communion In-Person & Facebook Live Pack Homeless Lunches | 22 | 23 9:30 Chimes | 24 12:00 Devotions on Facebook Live | 25 12:30 Lunch Bunch @ Red Lobster | 26 | 27 |
| 28 10:00 Worship w/communion In-Person & Facebook Live Coffee Hour | 29 ← Pastor Away Tallahassee Advocacy Days → | 30 | 31 12:00 Devotions on Facebook Live |  | | |



Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

(in-person and Facebook Live)

Lectionary Bible Study

(3 online devotions/week)

Liturgical Worship

Congregational Singing

Weekly Communion

Mostly "55+" Members

Rev. Lois Sorensen, Pastor

460 Old Polk City Road



Lakeland, FL 33809

863-859-2264

lovinglutherans@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/lovinglutherans



| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Online Visit Facebook/Reformation Lutheran Church or https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z95R/home and click GIVE to set up a one-time or recurring donation to the ministries of Reformation Lutheran Church.</p> |
|  | <p>QR CODE Scan the QR code to visit our online giving page.</p> |

Cross Walk is the monthly (September - June) newsletter of Reformation Lutheran Church, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are the "loving Lutherans" with a brick-and-mortar presence on the northside of Lakeland, Florida. To receive the newsletter by e-mail or send a draft article, please contact us at lovinglutherans@gmail.com.