



Advent is a season of spiritual preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas. It often gets totally swept away in the chaos of December, with the extra shopping, parties, and commitments.

As we enter the season of Advent, we are invited to pause, reflect, and prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Advent is a time of anticipation, hope, and joy as we eagerly await the coming of the Light of the World. In the Lutheran tradition, Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year, a time when we focus on hope, peace, joy, and love.

Many families I know do a Santa's elf on the shelf type thing where the elf is anticipating Christmas and gets into all sorts of shenanigans. We've never done that but this year I found what looks to be similar and yet so different. It's called Finding Jesus (a Fun and Meaningful Countdown to Christmas). I haven't had time yet to open the box but it indeed looks fun and meaningful. A tradition that I'm hoping to start with my kids as we prepare for the coming of Christ.

During this season, I hope we can all pause and take time to reflect on the significance of Christ's birth and the profound impact it has on our lives. As we prepare for the celebration of Christmas, I hope we remember those in our community and beyond who are in need of hope, peace, and love. I hope we bear the light of Christ to those around us, spreading kindness and compassion this season. I pray that we adults take time to Find Jesus as we countdown the days ahead.

May Advent this year be a time of renewal, reflection, and spiritual growth for all of us. Let us prepare our hearts to welcome Christ with joy and gratitude, knowing that through His birth, our lives are forever transformed.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Jaci



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The Values We Share...

- Worship weekly.
- Invite others to join us.
- Embrace one another.
- Keep on learning.
- Give regularly and generously.
- Be good stewards and willing servants.

Pastoral Care...

In the event of a need for pastoral support or care, please contact Pastor Jaci Tiell at 419-215-8370 or pastorjacitiell@aol.com.

Thank you.

Dear, Jesus, prepare our hearts for Your coming and remind us that nothing is impossible for You. In your name. Amen

Blessings to each of you for a Joyful and Safe Christmas Season

from Pastor Jaci and the Church Staff

Congratulations...to the

following with a birthday in

December:

Ruth Haar	3
Jane Schlievert	4
Hannah Timbrook	6
Jacob Stahl	19
Tyler Stahl	19
Sharon Dailey	22
Karen Hammel	23
Phoebe Jackson	24
Jennifer Marquardt	25



BEST WISHES also to those

couples celebrating December anniversaries:

Jean & Pr David Wietelmann 19

December Gospel Readings

December 1	Luke 21: 25-36
December 8	Luke 3: 1-6
December 15	Luke 3: 7-18
December 22	Luke 1: 39-45
Christmas Eve	Luke 2: 1-14,(15-20)
December 29	Luke 2: 41-52

Christmas Eve Services...




Christmas Eve worship services will take place at both Bethlehem and Grace on Tuesday, the 24th of December. The first worship service will begin at Bethlehem at 6:00pm. The service here at **Grace will begin at 8:00 PM.**
EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE.

The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive at Grace on Monday, December 16th, from 12:00 to 6:00. Volunteers are needed to help with room set-up and tear-down, sign in and register donors, and help with refreshments. There is a sign-up sheet on the Narthex table. If you'd like to help, please sign up there or contact Joan Eckermann (cell: 419-350-4088); **Thank you!**



WALKING IN GRACE

 With the coming of winter many of us look for a warm place to walk and stay fit. So each Wednesday beginning with December 4, the doors of grace will be opened for walkers from 9:00-10:00 a.m. A walking route will be designated to keep traffic moving in a similar direction, and walkers will walk at their own pace. We'll begin each walk with a brief prayer. Friends are welcome. If you have any questions, please ask Dave Wietelmann

Bake Sale to Benefit Isaiah 117 House

Everyone knows we have some amazing bakers at Grace! Please share your talent by bringing in plates of one dozen of your favorite cookies or other baked items on **Sunday, December 15th** before worship. All proceeds will benefit Isaiah 117 House. Not a baker? Then help us by purchasing some tasty treats for upcoming Christmas festivities. We appreciate your support in raising money for this worthy cause.

December Deacons and Lectors

Deacons

12/1/2024	Jen & Mark Haar
12/8/2024	Bruce King/Pr. Wietelmann
12/15/2024	Randy Jacobs/Gary Anderson
12/22/2024	Mary & Mike Schlievert
Christmas Eve	Deb & Jeff Boos
12/29/2024	Youth Deacons

Lectors

Mark Haar
Rachel Beeler
Steve Blausey
Nancy Bennett
Jean Weng
Youth Lectors

Get in Touch with Grace...

www.graceelconline.org is our web site. Check out the site. You'll find regularly updated info on upcoming events. Joyce is working Tuesday thru Thursday in the church office. The hours are usually 9:00 - 3:00. I am checking messages, email, and mail everyday. Write us with concerns or announcements at graceelc@gmail.com. Got a prayer request? Email it to the address above or call the office and leave a message. 419-862-3630.

Food Pantry Item from Grace for December is Box of Cereal

The Pantry is open the **SECOND FRIDAY** of every month.

The hours are: **9:00am until Noon.**



PRAYER PARTNERS...

It is time to reveal yourself to your partner on **Sunday, December 22nd**. New prayer partners will be drawn in early 2025, watch for more information."



Portals of Prayer...

The January thru March Portals of Prayer are available on the table in the Narthex.

Thank You...

...**from The Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge**... Thank you for your contribution to the Friends of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. Your support is critical to our ongoing efforts to protect and preserve the natural beauty and biodiversity of the Ottawa Refuge. Your \$462.50 will help to make a visible impact on our conservation initiatives enabling to further its habitat restoration, wildlife protection and environmental education.

...**from Back to the Wild**... Thank you so much for your kind generosity and support of our wildlife rehab efforts! Help like yours allows us to keep our doors open to injured wildlife and public education we are truly grateful.

Winter Weather Cancellations...

With winter weather approaching we may have bad weather and there could be cancellations of church services and activities. We will follow the guidelines below:

Level One: Church open and all activities on

Level Two: Church open unless notified

Level Three: Church closed and all activities cancelled

If you have any questions, please call the church office.

WEEKLY OFFERING 2024

Week 1	\$11,833.00	Week 2	\$1,607.00
Week 3	\$2,050.00	Week 4	\$1,757.00
Week 5	\$2,465.00	Week 6	\$1,232.00
Week 7	\$1,502.00	Week 8	\$1,213.00
Week 9	\$4,134.00	Week 10	\$6,041.00
Week 11	\$1,107.00	Week 12	\$1,702.00
Week 13	\$2,309.00	Week 14	\$2,352.00
Week 15	\$1,670.00	Week 16	\$1,412.00
Week 17	\$1,337.00	Week 18	\$3,425.00
Week 19	\$1,762.00	Week 20	\$1,732.00
Week 21	\$1,312.00	Week 22	\$3,157.00
Week 23	\$827.00	Week 24	\$11,647.00
Week 25	\$1,627.00	Week 26	\$1,719.00
Week 27	\$1,885.00	Week 28	\$1,547.00
Week 29	\$1,232.00	Week 30	\$1,775.00
Week 31	\$3105.00	Week 32	\$1802.00
Week 33	\$1497.00	Week 34	\$1182.00
Week 35	\$2,162.00	Week 36	\$1,285.00
Week 37	\$ 992.00	Week 38	\$1,415.00
Week 39	\$3,615.00	Week 40	\$ 758.00
Week 41	\$ 1,073.00	Week 42	\$1,065.00
Week 43	\$1,060.00	Week 44	\$3,573.00
Week 45	\$1900.00	Week 46	\$2,380.00
Week 47	\$ 555.00	Total	110.332.00

Thank You
FOR
GIVING
...
GENEROUSLY

Needed from offering for 2024
\$146,429 Budget Gap
((\$36,097.00))
Weekly Goal: \$2,816
Avg. Week: \$2,347.49
Total: \$118,251.50

Luther Home of Mercy Outreach Wish List or Personal Needs Drive...

The Home is asking for help in collecting cleaning supplies for the Eastpointe and Corduroy Homes and personal needs items for the Advent Center.

There are flyers on the table in the Narthex to provide ideas of items that are needed. The items can be brought here to the church and put in the plastic tote in the Narthex. Arrangements have been made to deliver them to the Home. ***Deadline for donations is Sunday, December 8th***

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

The Wreaths Across America organization will be laying wreaths on Saturday, December 14th.

If you would like to attend one of the ceremonies, they will be at 11:00am at River-view Cemetery in Port Clinton and Union Cemetery in Oak Harbor.



Student—Led Movements from Slovenia...

I (Jay) first met Gregor six years ago in 2018! At the time he identified as culturally Catholic but agnostic, not really believing that it was possible to prove God's existence. He had said at the time, "I don't think I will ever really believe like you, I don't think it's possible for me." Despite that, he enjoyed our time together, so over the years we met week by week reading stories from the Bible, discussing them, and applying them to our lives. There were times where he seemed to be quite close to God, and some



times where he seemed further away, but he was always engaging with the word in a deeply intellectual way. I would tell him regularly how I was praying for his intellectual understanding to one day connect to heart transformation.

About a year ago he had an experience that pushed him quite far from God, and I wasn't sure he would ever come close again. We stopped meeting regularly, and beside the odd message here and there we didn't have much contact. Then out of the blue, he messaged me this month, and I was overwhelmed with joy by his words. **"For the first time in my life, I believe in Jesus, and I live like you told me, in everything that you do, try to put Him first"**

I quickly responded, and not long after we hosted him for dinner, and I could tell right away that something had truly changed in him. There was a humility and softness in him that I had never seen in our years of friendship. Not only that, but I could just feel that there was a new spirit in him. It was incredible to see. As we discussed what brought this change about, he shared how once he had strayed so far from God, he felt just so empty. He picked up his Bible, started reading it like I had shown him, and he said finally it just clicked. He could feel the power of the Gospel finally move from his head to his heart. Our years of prayer had finally landed, and God opened Gregor's heart to truly receive him. We will now work together to see how we can pursue his continued spiritual growth together, and I am so thankful for God's work and faithfulness.



Pray For Gregor! Praise God for Him bringing him from darkness into light. Pray for Gregor as he is in a transition in his life, that he would have wisdom about what to do and pursue. **Pray** for Zina this weekend as she goes to Moldova for a two-day coaching training. Pray that she will teach with confidence and wisdom. Pray that the staff there would be encouraged by the training and that they would be able to live out and apply the principles there. **Pray** for our upcoming MyFriends trainings with a few churches in Slovenia. Pray that people would be open and excited to living out disciple-making lifestyles. *With Love Zina & Jay Herman*

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UPDATE.



Classes for all ages are geared up for Advent and Christmas.

There will be a **Christmas Pageant** on **Sunday, December 22nd during 10:30 worship**. We will practice during Sunday School time (9:30-10:15 A.M.) on December 8th, 15th, and 22nd. All children Pre-K through 8th grade are welcome to participate! Any young guests in attendance on December 22 will be invited to participate as well. **A punch and cookie reception will follow the worship service."**

Dec 31 - No classes; however, the kids will meet at 10:00 to prepare for Youth Sunday lessons and carols.

Salvation Army Angel Tree...The Angel tree is in the Elmore and Woodville Libraries. If you wish to help out a needy family from our community please consider choosing a name from the tree and donating for these needy children.

SENSORY SENSITIVE SERVICE:

Sensory Sensitive Services continue monthly at Trinity Lutheran, Elmore. The service is primarily spoken, however, hymns and liturgical responses are sung a capella. Everyone is welcome to attend but are asked not to wear perfume or cologne as well as refrain from bringing any food, drink or chewing gum. If you know anyone who would benefit from this service, please invite them. The next service, celebrating Christmas, will be Monday December 23, 2024 beginning at 7:00 p.m.



SOUP (AND BREAD) WITH THE SAVIOR!

Join us on Wednesdays during Advent for soup and bread suppers at 6pm followed by Holden Evening Prayer at 7pm! Bring your favorite soup or bread to share! The first service will be December 4th. The following services will be December 11, & 18. The Advent offerings are designated for ELCA Good Gifts "Entrepreneur with Vocation Training" program.



EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!!

Blue Christmas Service ...

Not everyone is up and cherry for the Christmas holidays. Dealing with the death of loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with illness, and a number of other human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our community. There is a growing attentiveness to the needs of people who are blue for whatever reason. We, like other churches, will create sacred space for people living through dark times. The service will be reflective, accepting where we really are, and holding out healing and hope. We will hold our service on **December 8th**, at 3:30pm. The service will be conducted by Pastor Margaret Mills at St. Johns UCC at 448 Rice Street in Elmore. Pastor Jaci will be helping with the service.



EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Operation Oreo...

Goodie boxes filled with Christmas items were shipped out this past week. Each box had Oreos, puzzle book, TicTac's, gum, toothbrush, toothpaste, dental floss, unocards, individual size snacks, Christmas stocking, candy canes and a Christmas card. Also included in the Christmas boxes were handmade Christmas ornaments by the Sunday school class. Many thanks to the children for their help in preparing and packing the boxes!! Please keep all of the Military in your prayers but especially: A1C Marissa Mapes and E3 Cassandra Nissen. **God Bless Our Soldiers**



Witness & Mission

The three members of the board accept the responsibility of allocating the benevolence funds that come from the weekly offerings. 10% of the weekly offering is designated for benevolence. Based on the 15 of 50 surveys returned the agencies we have selected match your preferences.

The speakers we invited shared what their agency does and how your donations are used to support their work. The board appreciates the positive feedback regarding the information shared by each speaker.

Benevolence funds are divided into two categories. Traditional benevolence shares 53% of the amount received with the ELCA to support their operation, Directed benevolence does not. Each fund contributes 21% to ELCA world hunger and 26% to the benevolence category we have named First Fruits. 53% of the Directed funds are designated to support 5 agencies. The largest recipient of Directed funds goes to CRU to support Jay Herman, and the missionary work he is doing in Slovenia. We base our giving on the projected giving from our members. This year \$3400 has been allocated to each benevolence category for a total of \$6800.

As of the end of November, we are \$1300 below the amount needed to support our final three recipients.

Your help is needed to erase this shortfall. A donation to either benevolence category, \$800 to First Fruits or \$500 to Directed will ensure the agencies receive your support. Make your check payable to Grace Lutheran and write either First Fruits or Directed on the memo line.

Grace Lutheran Council met on November 14th.

Treasurer... Mike Schlievert report the church finished with a small loss for the month of November, mainly because we used quarterly interest and transferred it into the operating fund. Our giving is still low, resulting in averaging just over \$1,000 a month shortfall. We do have one more CD coming due soon to provide some interest income. **Education:** The Noisy Offering resulted in a huge donation of \$297.20 for Operation Oreo. Christmas cards were made for shut-ins. **Property:** The preventative maintenance was done on the furnaces and boilers. The parsonage have been put on the market. Water samples are good and the yard has been repaired and grass growing. **Worship:** Soup Suppers will begin December 4th at 6:00pm. Join us for soup and bread and Holden Evening Prayer at 7:00pm. Thanks to Rachel Beeler for writing the bulletin articles about the liturgical seasons and colors. Issues with the organ are being evaluated. **Old business...** Pastors will meet to talk about small churches leading to the small church symposium. **New Business...** Jayne Klett was appointed to lead a future plan committee. Deb Boos and Linda Jacobs will co-chair as financial secretaries. The children will be presenting a Christmas Pageant during worship on December 22. Punch and cookies will be served after the Christmas Pageant. Christmas Eve worship is planned for 8:00pm on the 24th. The service on the 29th is Lessons and Carols with the children participating.

A complete set of minutes can be accessed on the Grace web site. graceelconline@gmail.org or in the church office.

A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT MATTHEW'S NATIVITY STORY

About this Month's Bible Study. The story about the birth of Jesus that we celebrate every year as the culmination of Advent appears in only two Gospels, Matthew, and Luke. This month's Bible Study takes a fresh look at Matthew's version, the players in that story and the roles that they play in this great drama. **Gary Anderson**



SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:18-23 (NIV)

¹⁸***This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.*** ¹⁹***Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.***

²⁰***But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."***

²²***All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:*** ²³***"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").***

The nativity stories recorded in Matthew and Luke are really about God intervening in human history by becoming a real, human baby boy. Martin Luther put it this way: "The virgin birth is a mere trifle for God; that God should become man is a greater miracle." These Christmas stories are the beginning of the most consequential drama in all human history, God's plan to deliver humankind from sin and death.



Mary, the mother of Jesus as depicted by the Renaissance's 16th century Lucas Cranach workshop.

Matthew's version of this story involves a complex cast of characters with unique relationships to each other. Comprehending the magnitude of the **INCARNATION (GOD COMING AS ONE OF US THROUGH THE BIRTH OF JESUS)** starts with knowing the players in this story and how they are linked to each other.

JESUS. Matthew begins his Christmas story by stating, "***This is how the birth of Jesus occurred.***" Jesus' name tells who the baby-to-come was and what he was expected to do. Joseph was instructed to name Mary's son "***Jesus.***" This is a name derived from the Hebrew verb (ya'sha) which means "to save;" Jesus' mission would be to "***save his people from their sins.***" The Magi who came to pay homage to the new-born child called him the "***king of the Jews***" (v2:2). The Old Testament prophets had prophesied that the Messiah who was coming would be a **new Davidic King**. And people will call him "***Immanuel,***" which means "***God with us.***" Jesus may have grown up as a Galilean carpenter's son, but he was really the **Son of God.**

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS. Very little biographical information about Mary is available. She is described as a young woman; scholars think she was 13 or 14 when Jesus was born. Matthew identifies her as the "***virgin who will conceive and give birth to a son.***" Today In the ***Apostles' Creed***, we confess that Jesus "***was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.***" Thus, if we believe that the Holy Spirit is part of an indivisible Trinity, this makes Mary the "**Mother of God.**"

JOSEPH, FATHER OF JESUS. Joseph was a carpenter who lived in Nazareth in Northern Israel, but whose family was from Bethlehem and the Tribe of Judah in Southern Israel. Both Matthew and Luke identify Joseph as the descendent of a royal lineage that included Abraham and King David. He was an observant Jew who was engaged to marry a young woman named Mary. When he learned she was already pregnant, God had to send a messenger (angel) to counsel him to accept Mary's pregnancy. That made Joseph Jesus' legal father.

HOLY SPIRIT. Mary was a young virgin whom Matthew says became "**pregnant through the Holy Spirit**" (Mt. 1:18). A key point in the Christmas story is that God was acting in the affairs of humankind. It was God, acting through the Holy Spirit, who caused Mary to become pregnant with Jesus.

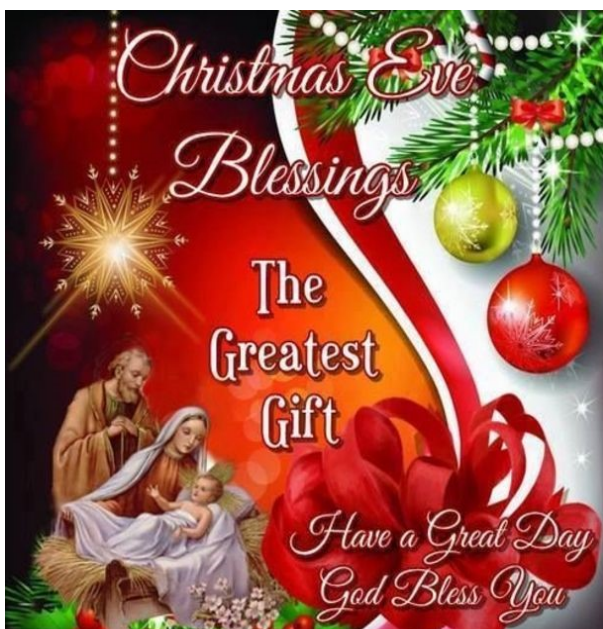
ANGELS OF THE LORD. An "**angel of the Lord**" appears three times in Matthew's nativity story, each time "**in a dream.**" Whether there were three angels or one, we don't know. God sent messengers to tell Joseph to accept Mary's pregnancy, to instruct the Magi not to disclose Jesus' location to King Herod and to advise Joseph to escape to Egypt to save Jesus from Herod's murderous design. God controlled the outcome of this story by sending messengers with specific instructions. In the Bible, angels are God's messengers.

PROPHET. The "**prophet**" is 1st Isaiah, who prophesied in the 8th century BCE (*over 700 years before Jesus was born*) that a virgin would bear a son whom people will call "**Immanuel, God with us**" (Is. 7:7). Actually, the original Hebrew speaks of a "**young woman**" (*al'mah*), not a virgin. By the time Matthew was written, this had become the Messianic prophecy of a virgin who would give birth to the Messiah.

GOD. Each of the players in this Christmas story acted according to God's plans for them. They were players in the drama where God intervened in human history by becoming a real, human baby boy. Matthew's Christmas story was the beginning of the Gospel accounts of how God carried out his plan to deliver humankind from their sins.



Lucas Cranach, Electoral Saxony's court artist depicted Mary, with the baby Jesus and the visitation by the Magi in this 16th century painting.



A Note on the Liturgical Season:

The season of Advent (liturgical color: blue) traditionally is associated with preparing our hearts and minds for the coming gift of God, Christ Jesus. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin word 'advenire', or 'adventus' which means 'to arrive' or 'to come to'. Advent for most Christians is the expectant waiting for the birth of Jesus. We remember the longing of the Jews for a Messiah and our own longing for and need of forgiveness, salvation and a new beginning. But the season also seeks to awake our longing for the surprising ways that God comes to us in the world around us.

December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1 9:00 Property Board First Sunday of ADVENT 9:30am - Sunday School 10:30am - Worship Clyde Bame-Preaching</p>	<p>2 7:30pm-Dartball @ St. John's #3</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4 6:00pm- Advent Soup Supper & Evening Prayer Service</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8 Second Sunday of ADVENT 9:30am -Sunday School 10:30am - Worship Temple Talk-Jay Herman</p>	<p>9 7:30pm - Dartball vs Oak Harbor #9 HOME</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11 10:00am - Witness & Mission 6:00pm- Advent Soup Supper & Evening</p>	<p>12 7:00pm - Council</p>	<p>13 Food Pantry 9:00 to Noon</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15 Third Sunday of ADVENT 9:30am - Sunday School 10:30am - Worship</p>	<p>16 Red Cross Bloodmobile 12:00-6:00pm 7:30pm - Dartball @ Zion #23</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18 6:00pm- Advent Soup Supper & Evening Prayer Service</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 Christmas Party Fellowship Hall 12:00-8:00pm</p>
<p>22 Fourth Sunday of ADVENT 9:30am - Sunday School 10:30am - Worship Children's Pageant during worship</p>	<p>23 Sensory Sensitive Service @ Trinity Lutheran in Elmore @ 7:00pm</p>	<p>24 Christmas Eve Service 8:00pm</p>	<p>25 Christmas Day </p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29 First Sunday after Christmas 10:00am - Sunday School 10:30am - Worship</p>	<p>30 31 Reflect: How will you carry your learnings about rest into the New Year?</p>		<p></p>			

Solomon Lutheran Christmas Concert and Carol Sing

Featuring musicians from the congregation and friends of Solomon

Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 3:00pm

Solomon Lutheran church 305 W. Main St. Woodville