



What do you fear?

INSISTING ON HOPE THIS ADVENT

From the Pastor's Pen...

It's that time of year - again - when the dark of night is getting longer. For some that means staying inside, maybe by the fireplace, cozied up and staying in. At least that's what we've come to expect from those images in movies and on TV and on social media. The reality for many of us is that the holidays bring expectations of times gone by - when a loved one was still with us, when there was more money, more food, more friends, more...peace (maybe). Maybe we believe that because of what we read in the Bible this time of year as we light advent candles of peace, joy, love, and hope. Isn't this what we're all after? That feeling of safety and comfort that comes from the image of a newborn babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger?

I remember when the movie "The Star" came to theaters in 2017. It's a cute movie about the birth of Jesus told from the point of view of a donkey. The movie includes a tense chase scene where Joseph and Mary are being hunted by centurions and officials. I remember sitting in the theater with my young children wondering if it was appropriate for them. Is this, the Christmas story, a story of fear?

Our theme for advent this year picks up on the same thread of fear that the movie "The Star" does. The collaboration at a Sanctified Art writes, "Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: 'In the time of Herod...' This detail may seem minor to modern readers, however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability." All we have to do is recall some of our favorite Christmas carols to know it's a thread that's always been woven in with this story: "the hopes and fears of all the years" from O Little Town of Bethlehem; "from our fears and sins release us" from Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus; and "bid our fears be still" from O Lord, How Shall I Meet You.

As a student of history, of course, I know the times we live in are not unusual in their change, uncertainty, fear, and chaos. The difference is that these are the times we are living in. This change, uncertainty, fear, and chaos is ours to experience. We're not living in the time of Herod, but oppression, disparity, uncertainty, and instability are a part of our times.

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From the Pastor's Pen...

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This advent, we'll explore the words of the prophets and the stories of the nativity in the gospels to name and understand our fears. Like Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, we'll consider the words of the angels, "Fear not." These words reach through the ages to direct our attention to hope in the midst of fear and chaos. This is the good news, we will discover yet again: God is with us. It's a bold move of faith to examine our fears and have hope. Hope that comes from the knowledge that in Jesus Christ, God knows our fears.

I'll admit to you that I find these words easy - even predictable - to write. After all, I'm a pastor, and I know what's expected of me this time of year. It's important for me to share that I know these words

Every Advent, we light candles, sing carols, and pray for Christ's coming because we believe God entered a frightened world to bring good news. We hold onto hope because we believe that Christ did come—that's the promise of the season. Our hope is not flimsy or fleeting. It's gritty, resilient, and can endure—no matter what we fear or face. This season, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.

- from Sanctified Art, "What Do You Fear?"

and their expectations, and find it difficult to live in to them. There is a temptation to withdraw from all that could hurt or harm, relationships, systems, structures, institutions. Being in community with others means being vulnerable as we share our hopes and fears with each other. It is our prayer that in sharing our hopes and fears our fears would lessen and our hope would grow. Like a light, shining in the darkness, hope overcomes fear.

May God Bless you all this Advent and Christmas season,

Pastor Melodie



Listen to the **"What Do You Fear" playlist** on Spotify or Apple music, curated by A Sanctified Art:

<https://tinyurl.com/WDYFSpotify>

<https://tinyurl.com/WDYFApple>



Calling All the Angels playlist (by the writer of the book study):

<https://tinyurl.com/AdventAngelsSpotify>

<https://tinyurl.com/AdventAngelsApple>



Coffee and Creativity!

Every Sunday during Advent, after worship, we'll have a

chance to connect and engage in creative activities in the Welcome Center. In addition to our regular treats and drinks, we'll also provide an opportunity to create season-themed crafts that you can take home or share with others. We're thrilled to see what we create together!





HIGHLIGHTS



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS, November 2025

Approve Session Meeting Minutes for October 12, 2025.

Approve Special Session Meeting Minutes for October 19, 2025. Acknowledge that communion was served on Sunday, November 2 at 9:30 a.m.

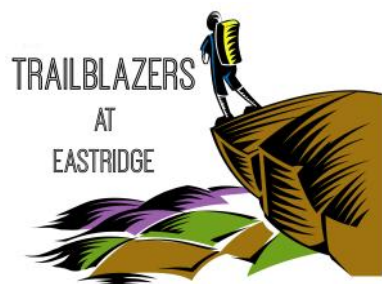
A motion was carried to receive new members Lynn Ayers, Karen Buell, and Sharon Wilson. Please welcome these new members to Eastridge!

A motion was carried to approve use of the sanctuary for the Girl Scouts annual awards ceremony the afternoon of May 31, 2026. The Girl Scouts meet at Eastridge.

The Food Pantry has seen an increase in Wednesday shoppers and the Sunday drive-thru due to food insecurities. A Food Pantry training was held November 15.

The Homestead Presbytery Meeting was held November 20 at Tekamah.

Rev. Thomas Dummermuth was nominated as co-president for Justice in Action.



Trailblazers is a group of older adults at Eastridge that provides an opportunity for men and women, singles as well as couples, to participate together in the life of the church—in service and fellowship. We usually meet the third Friday night of the month, September through May.

December 19: Carols and White Elephant Gift Exchange



2025 Advent at EPC:

9:30 am worship every Sunday
special music every week
fellowship and activities to follow (Sanctuary and Welcome Center)

"Calling All Angels" Bible study Monday or Wednesday evening
"Preparing for Christmas" Bible study Wednesday morning

December 14
EPW Cookie Sale following worship
7 pm McGuire Family Christmas Carols (streamed on Facebook and Youtube) in partnership with The Coffee Roaster and Basement Creator's Network

December 24
4:30 pm Candlelight service led by our children and youth
7 pm Candlelight service led by Chancel Choir and Kirk Ringers



Advent at EPC:

9:30 am worship every Sunday.

Special music every week, fellowship and activities to follow.

"Calling All Angels" study on Monday or Wednesday evening, "Preparing for Christmas" on Wednesday morning.

December 14: EPW Cookie Sale following worship; 7pm McGuire Family Christmas Carols (streamed on Facebook and Youtube) in partnership with The Coffee Roaster and Basement Creator's Network.

December 24:

4:30 pm Candlelight service led by our children and youth

7:00 pm Candlelight service led by Chancel Choir and Kirk Ringers.



Advent Book Study: “Calling All Angels – An Advent Study of Fearlessness and Strength”

Wednesdays, December 3, 10, and 17 •
6:00–7:00 p.m. • Led by Pastor Thomas

What would you do if you were not afraid?

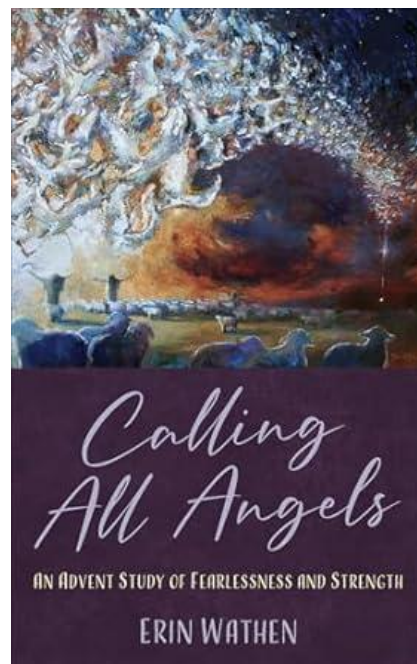
That question lies at the heart of this captivating Advent study on the timeless messages spoken by the angels.

Life can be daunting, filled with uncertainty and worry. It wasn't any different two thousand years ago when Jesus was born. An aged priest is told he will become a father for the first time. A young woman learns she will bear a child outside of marriage. A carpenter is asked to believe the impossible. Shepherds keeping watch at night are startled by a host of angels shining in the sky.

Yet each of these encounters begins with the same refrain: Do not be afraid.

In *Calling All Angels*, pastor and author Erin Wathen invites us to hear these words not merely as comfort, but as a divine calling—to live with courage and faith in the face of fear. Together, we'll explore what might change in our relationships, vocations, and communities if we truly trusted that message.

All are welcome to join this three-week Advent journey. Books will be available at the church (or you may order your own). Sign up here: <https://bit.ly/callingangelsepc>



How You Can Help:

- Check our list of needed items and donate what you can
- Make a financial contribution designated specifically for the Pantry
- Volunteer your time to help distribute food or assist shoppers
- Share your excess garden produce with us
- Pray for pantry and our clients
- We can use your clean plastic bags from grocery/retail use.



toilet paper

- Cleaning items i.e. laundry soap, dish soap
- Feminine hygiene products
- Canned fruits, vegetables, tomato products
- Canned meats
- Spaghetti pasta

Items we can use:

- Personal care items i.e. shampoo, conditioner,

Eastridge Food Pantry volunteer sign ups:

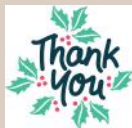
- Distribution: <https://bit.ly/FPDistFood>
- Filling boxes: <https://bit.ly/FPFillingBoxes>



YOUTH DINNER: We LOVE having visitors at Youth Group on Wednesday evenings. It's a chance for us to get to know others in the congregation outside of the normal Sunday morning setting. One of the ways to get to know our youth, and be in fellowship with them, is to provide dinner on a Wednesday evening. It can be a group of people providing dinner, a couple of families getting together, or individuals. We feed around 8-10 people each week. If



you provide dinner, it is most helpful for us if the volunteers can set up, serve dinner, and clean up, and most importantly JOIN US for dinner. It's a great time to hear about what the youth are doing in their life. Often times, you only have to ask one question and they will take it and run! If you would be willing to volunteer, you can sign up with the following link or QR code. Thank you in advance for your support of our youth! <https://bit.ly/youthdinner25-26>



THANK YOU to everyone who shopped the Handspoken (formerly Ten Thousand Villages) sale! It was a huge success. The youth will receive about \$450 that will go toward the summer mission trip. This year the group will travel to Colorado to do some work around the Estes Park area.

The Gratitude and Generosity of Giving

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:7-8

"If our first response to the receipt of gifts is gratitude, then our second is reciprocity: to give a gift in return." - Robin Wall Kimmerer, *The Serviceberry*, pg. 13.

Please consider turning in an estimate of giving cards for 2026 so that our stewardship/financial committee can plan a budget for next year. We give thanks for the generosity that keeps our ministries going!



Youth Ministry News

The Eastridge Youth Group has formally joined with the youth group from First Presbyterian Church. We are excited about this partnership and believe that it is beneficial to both groups to work as a team. The youth really do enjoy being together and get along really well! In one of our more recent gatherings, we started working on Advent crafts. The youth enjoyed the time to be creative and talk about Christmas traditions.





Per Capita



Per Capita/Denominational Giving: For 2025 the assessed Per Capita is \$ 38.54 per member of Eastridge.

However, if you are so called, a gift of \$100 will help us cover our denominational funding obligations and assist those who may not be able to contribute towards this obligation.

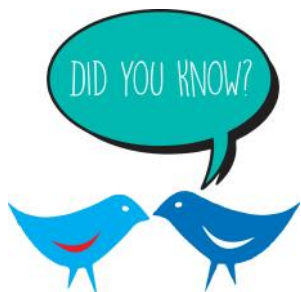


ELEMENTARY FAITH FORMATION:

Do you have cloth napkins and napkin rings laying around that you no longer use?

If so, our children's ministry program would love to take them off your hands. They don't have to be matching sets. The more random they are, the better! We are going to learn a little bit about hospitality around the table, and we can use them for our snack time on Tuesday afternoons.

DID YOU KNOW?



Did you know?

The bulletin board in the hallway outside the women's restroom has volunteer opportunities and other community information.

Check it out!



We welcome these new members to Eastridge: Lynn Ayers, Karen Buell and Sharon Wilson.

Some "tidbits" they have shared with us:

Lynn: she is the founder and former executive director of the child advocacy center, BraveBe.

Karen: she has two birds and enjoys math.

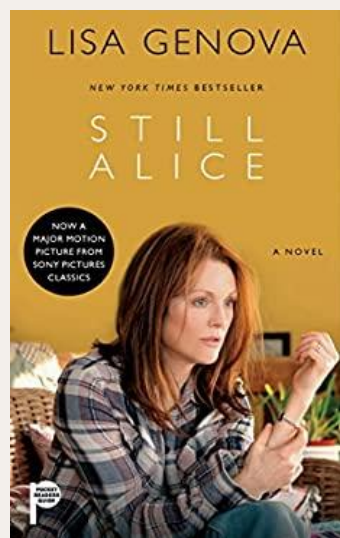
Sharon: she is a retired neonatal ICU nurse.

Christmas Eve Services:

4:30 pm - candlelight service led by the children

7:00 pm - candlelight service led by the Chancel Choir and Kirk Ringers





Faith Partners: Eastridge Faith Partners met this week to discuss our recent survey responses, and our first event will be a **book/movie discussion of *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova. We will meet Monday, December 8 at 7:00 pm in M12.** **A synopsis of the novel:** From author and neuroscientist Lisa Genova comes the definitive--and illuminating--novel about Alzheimer's disease. Alice Howland is proud of the life she worked so hard to build. At fifty years old, she's a cognitive psychology professor at Harvard and a world-renowned expert in linguistics with a successful husband and three grown children. When she becomes increasingly disoriented and forgetful, a tragic diagnosis changes her life--and her relationship with her family and the world--forever. As she struggles to cope with Alzheimer's, she learns that her worth is comprised of far more than her ability to remember. **Sign up here:** <https://bit.ly/stillalicediscussion>

Soup & Charcuterie!

Celebrate the season with us on **Sunday, December 21** right after worship! Warm up with a cozy bowl of **wild rice soup** and enjoy a cheerful **charcuterie spread**—crackers, cheeses, nuts, olives, berries, and more.

We'll provide the soup—**sign up to bring a charcuterie board and share in the holiday joy!**

Sign up here: <https://bit.ly/charcuterieboardpc>



Find your daily Advent Calendars:

- *Printed copies are available in the Welcome Center
- *Copies can be e-mailed by request
- *Daily prompts will be posted on Facebook and Instagram

A weekly Advent devotional following our theme "What do you fear?" is available in the Welcome Center. Large print copies are available. If you would like one mailed to you, please contact the office.





EASTRIDGE PRESBYTERIAN ANGEL TREE:

It's that time of year when one of the ways our Eastridge family helps brighten the holidays for others is by filling the needs hanging on our Angel Tree. In recent years, we've learned that sometimes the most empathetic and compassionate way to do this is to provide the recipients with financial resources they can use to meet the needs and/or wants of themselves and their family. We can do this by providing gift cards to be used at businesses that have been recommended as accessible by the agencies we will be supporting.

This year Angel Tree gift cards will be divided among Aging Partners, Fresh Start, and Lefler Middle School. These agencies have recommended businesses where they can be used by the recipient to purchase a variety of things - toys, clothing of various sizes, personal care items, food, books, gas for their car, etc. Amazon cards have also been included for those that might not have transportation to shop in person. It's recommended that the gift cards be in increments of \$25 and \$50.

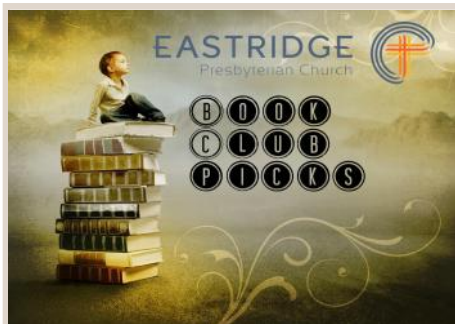
Recommended businesses include: Target, Dollar Tree, Super Saver, Walmart, Russ's, Hy-Vee and Amazon.

You're invited to purchase one or more gift cards from the above businesses and place them in one of the envelopes hanging on the Angel Tree. Please fill in the blanks on the envelope and then drop it in the black dropbox by the office door anytime between now and December 14.

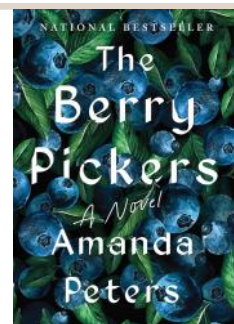
As we think about the impact of these gifts on the recipients, these words from the song *Angels Among Us* by Alabama seem appropriate:

*Oh, I believe there are angels among us
Sent down to us from somewhere up above
They come to you and me in our darkest hours
To show us how to live, to teach us how to give
To guide us with the light of love*

Thank you for being an angel, by participating in this effort to brighten the holidays for others among us.



The Eastridge Presbyterian Book Club meets again January 12. Our January pick is ***The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters**. The EPC Book Club meets monthly from September—June in M12. Join us for discussion and refreshments! To view the year's list, head to the Eastridge website, calendar page.



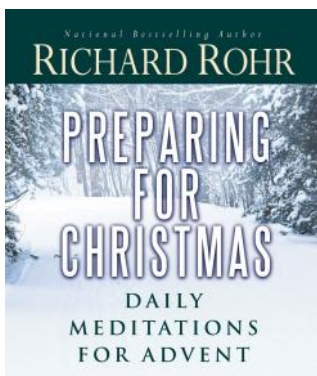


THE GATHERING PLACE:

Eastridge Presbyterian Church arranges to provide 4-5 volunteers at The Gathering Place, a local soup kitchen, on the 4th

Monday of each month. For more information on what this entails, contact the church office. Thank you to all Eastridge members who volunteer to serve at The Gathering Place. **Sign up here:**

<https://bit.ly/epcgatheringplace26>



The **Wednesday morning Bible study** group is doing **"Preparing for Christmas"** by Richard Rohr for Advent.

This group meets each Wednesday at 10:30 am. For more information, contact the church office!

Rev. Dr. Melodie Jones Pointon.....Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Dummermuth.....Associate Pastor

Kris Adler-Brammer.....Youth and Children's Ministries

Donna Gustafson.....Office Manager

Andy Kalnins.....Night/Weekend Custodian

Brent Shaw.....Organist & Adult Choir Director

Will McGuire.....Worship Leader

Vince Ruhl.....Director of Online Ministries

Brett Meier.....Audio/Visual Technician

Laura Siensen.....Administrative Assistant

Office number.....402-488-7844

Melodie Jones Pointon: mjonespointon@eastridge.org

Thomas Dummermuth: tdummermuth@eastridge.org

MEET THE STAFF

Did you know?

Some interesting statistics on pledged giving at Eastridge:

Approximately 30% of our Eastridge members pledge gifts to the church. Pledged giving is appreciated, as it allows our finance committee to plan a budget for the coming year. This year at Eastridge, we have 6 new family units that have pledged, and 28 that have increased their pledge! Thank you for your gifts to the church.



Eastridge financial update:

We need approximately \$ 22,000 per week (Nov—Dec) to make our 2025 budget goal. For comparison, we took in \$ 18,926 last week (November 23-26).

Thank you to those who have responded to the fund match!





1135 Eastridge Drive
Lincoln NE 68510



Instagram



Like us on
Facebook

