

December Worship



Sunday, December 3	9:30am	Trio Sings Isaiah 64:1-9
"Garbology and God"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i> <i>A Celebration of The Lord's Supper</i>		
Wednesday, December 6	5:30pm	
"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i>		
Sunday, December 10	9:30am	Bells Ring & Choir Sings 2 Peter 3:8-15a
"What Sort of Person Should We Be?"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i> <i>Celebration of Olivia Lureen Baptism</i>		
Wednesday, December 13	5:30pm	
"Angels From the Realms of Glory"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i>		
Sunday, December 17	9:30am	Kids' Christmas Pageant Celebration of Willa De-Souza Baptism
Wednesday, December 20	5:30pm	
"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i>		
Sunday, December 24	9:30am	Luke 1:26-38
"Mary Didn't Know"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i>		
Sunday, December 24	5:00pm	Christmas Eve Psalm 36
"In Your Light, We See Light"		
11:00pm	Luke 2:1-20	
"A Wonder-Filled Life"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i> <i>A Celebration of The Lord's Supper</i>		
Sunday, December 31	9:30am	Luke 2:22-40
"A Word from the Wise"		
<i>Pastor Doug Dent</i>		

Dates to Remember

Sunday, December 3	Communion 10:30am Pre-K Sunday school
Monday, December 4	Annual Reports Due
Wednesday, December 6	5:30pm Advent Service 6:00pm Supper
Sunday, December 10	Olivia Lureen Baptism Bells Play Choir Sings
Tuesday, December 12	6:30pm Ministry Nite
Wednesday, December 13	5:30pm Advent service 6:00pm Supper
Thursday, December 14	10:00am Sewing & Coffee
Sunday, December 17	Christmas Pageant Willa De-Souza Baptism
Wednesday, December 20	5:30pm Advent Service 6:00pm Supper (?)
Thursday, December 21	6:30pm D&E Meeting
Sunday, December 24	Christmas Eve 9:30am Worship No Sunday School 5:00pm Faith Family Worship 6:00pm Potluck Supper 11:00pm Candlelight w/ Communion
Monday, December 25	Christmas Day Church Office Closed



The popularity of the ballet *The Nutcracker* skyrockets during Advent and the Christmas season because of its pageantry, dancing, and timeless classical music. But have you ever wondered what the story is really about? If so, you're not alone.

The story is much clearer, says the Reverend Matt Rawle, the lead pastor at Asbury United Methodist Church in Bossier City, Louisiana, if we use a "lens of faith" to look more closely at the characters and the action. The story actually resonates with strong parallels to our faith and helps us prepare for Christmas.

We can see many parallels to our faith in what happens to the characters. Clara, the main character, is at that "in between" age, always waiting to grow older, waiting for someone, waiting to understand the world. She is loved dearly by her peculiar godfather who gives her a special gift: the Nutcracker. After the Nutcracker comes to life, he battles the evil Mouse King, only to die in battle. However, the loving godfather resurrects the Nutcracker, who then takes Clara to his kingdom to the acclaim of many who have awaited his return. Sound familiar?

Like Clara, we Christians understand what it's like to live in an "in between" time of life. We live in this world, raise families, enjoy traditions, and celebrate holidays and holy days. Yet Paul encourages us to not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of your minds." (Romans 12:2). Like Clara, we find that it is often in these periods of waiting that we see the most growth in our lives.

Or consider Herr Drosselmeir, Clara's peculiar godfather, who gives her the Nutcracker. He also produces a puppet show that foreshadows future events, though it doesn't disclose everything that will happen. If we are watching the play for the first time, we may not know this. But, if once we have seen the play in its entirety, we know what events lie ahead.

Similarly, the Scripture passages during Advent foretell the coming of the Messiah, God's gift of God's only begotten son. We know now that Jesus is the King of Kings, but people in the first century did not know the full story. "Scripture doesn't tell us everything we want to know," writes Rawle, "but it does reveal everything that we need."

The Mouse King is the villain of the story. We're not quite sure who he is or why he wants to battle the Nutcracker, but Clara fears him from the start. Are there times when fear and suspicion are the dominant feelings in our day? Are we constantly fighting battles, both real and perceived ones, throughout the day? Clara finds comfort when the Nutcracker is by her side, but what about us? Do we truly feel peace and the hope for a new life by realizing that God will never abandon us?

The Nutcracker himself is "the greatest gift." When Clara receives the Nutcracker at the Christmas party, she doesn't know what to think about the gift. It wasn't something that she wanted, but she found out later that it was a gift that she needed.

In one sense, Jesus is the gift we wanted, but we are surprised to find that he is also the gift we need. Jesus calls us all to turn the other cheek, welcome our neighbor, feed and clothe the poor, even carry his cross. If we are to welcome the Christ child into our lives at Christmas, we must also embody his teachings and act more like Jesus during the rest of the year.

Much like our journey as Christians, Clara's story is one that begins with uncertainty, fear, and struggle, yet ends with comfort, hope, and joy. Both *The Nutcracker* and the Advent story unfold just as we know they will, but not without the hope and anticipation that always accompany both the dance and the season.

Merry Christmas! God's blessings to you in the New Year. Pastor Doug





Holidays, including any special day, can be an especially difficult time for people who have experienced the death of someone dear to them even if the loss isn't recent. It's often a time when the experience and feelings of loss are heightened. The holiday season feels different, especially if it is the first one without your loved one. It is important that we recognize these feelings of grief, loss, and sadness rather than avoid them. I have put together a list of ways to acknowledge this part of the season as well to honor your loved ones who are not here to celebrate this year.

- **Make a plan:** Create a plan about what you'll do to mark the holiday and who you'll be with. Let go of the "shoulds" and focus on what you need. Make a plan that is respectful of your feelings and energy, and it can include things you have always done or something different.
- **Realizing grief is unique:** We all experience grief in our own way and so each family member may have different needs. Communicate with each other about your needs and discuss what each person is most worried about or what they are dreading about the celebration. The actual day may or may not be as bad as imagined. For some the anticipation of the day is harder and for others the aftermath is harder.
- **Stay flexible:** Keep your plan as flexible and as simple as possible. There may be times when you need to skip certain activities depending on how you or family members are feeling. Don't feel pressure to over-commit yourself and accept every invitation that comes your way. Give yourself permission to make your final decisions the day of the event.
- **Make time for feelings and self-care:** It's important to acknowledge that you'll need time and space for the feelings that are likely to arise. Be sure to include self-care in your plan—take a nap, warm bath, or walk, eat nutritious food or use a journal to express your thoughts and feelings.
- **Find ways to remember your loved one:** Finding ways to remember your loved one during the holidays gives everyone permission to acknowledge the loss and provides a way to continue the relationship with the loved one. Some ideas for you to consider: Lighting a candle, setting a place at the table, sharing stories during a gathering, make a donation in their memory, create a memory book or box, keep a tradition that they enjoyed.
- **Do something different:** Break tradition or create a new tradition. Change what you eat for Christmas dinner or decorate in a different way. Acknowledge that not everything is the same as it has always been.
- **Be honest with God:** Don't put your prayer life on the back burner: God wants a real relationship with you, even if that means being angry or sobbing when you try to pray. Shed your expectations of what you "should" and "shouldn't" do for prayer, and just show up to let God love you.
- **Prepare for the holiday letdown:** Realize there is a new normal about what the holidays will mean for you from this point onward.
- **Grief support:** You will survive this time, even if it is painful. Joining a group or talking with a counselor can give you important support during this difficult time. One of the most important things you can do for yourself when you're grieving is to get support, whether from friends, family and/or outside support.



Christian Education and Youth

Rev. Karen Anderson

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."
Luke 2:10-11

Kidz Club and Sunday School

The anticipation of Christmas is always exciting and busy for Christian Education at Federated! We are working on our annual Christmas pageant during Kidz Club and Sunday school for the first few weeks of December. The pageant is at 9:30am on Sunday, December 17th. We hope to have as many young people participating in this event. It's a great way for pageant participants and congregation members to focus our attention on the true meaning of Christmas. This year we will be telling the Christmas story and singing some traditional Christmas carols while highlighting specifics like angels, the manger, shepherds, the star, and the three gifts. I hope you all plan to attend this holiday service and support our kids!

Our next Pre-K and Parent class will be held on December 3rd in the youth room after worship.

Youth group

Our senior high youth group is looking forward to doing some special activities in December. The Christmas season is always a good time to reach out and do things in the community. Our group has been doing some deep talks on things such as "What is evil?" and Near-Death Experiences, and we also had the opportunity to hear Chaplain Pete's faith story.

We are looking forward to the Senior High Winter Retreat at Clearwater Forest this January 5th-7th (Friday-Sunday). Our theme will be on discovering the person God created us to be and discerning our spiritual gifts. It is never too early to begin the process of learning how God wants us to serve in the church and in the world. This is always a great time for fellowship, outdoor fun, good food, and games. Pray that the weather cooperates to make this a special time for everyone!

Important note: There will be NO youth activities (Kids Club, confirmation, or youth group), on December 20th or December 27th. All activities will resume on January 3rd, 2024.

Women's Bible Study

Our women's Bible study is beginning 1 Samuel this month. We just completed studying Philippians, and we are now gearing up for a total change of pace by exploring God's word in the Old Testament. There are so many incredible events that take place in this book, and we hope to gain new insight as we gather. Please feel free to join us on Tuesdays at 11:15am in the church parlor.

A Season of Giving

With the season of giving upon us I invite you to share with children in the Otter Tail County Foster Care system. Federated Church has been given a Christmas wish list for 20 children in the county. We currently have 1 mitten left. We are looking for individuals/families to get a wish list, purchase a few items on their list, wrap the gifts and return them to the church by December 6th. A staff member from the county will pick up gifts and deliver them. Help spread love, comfort and joy to a child this Christmas season. Children are not just our future, they are our present moment. They bring hope, joy and the promise of a brighter tomorrow.

Bring your wrapped gifts to the church no later than Wednesday, December 6th with the red ID mitten taped to the top. If you have questions or would like to get a mitten please contact Brianna in the church office or you can pick a mitten wish list up from the church.





Church News

Church Office

The church office hours in December are from 10am-2pm Monday-Thursday and 9am-12pm on Fridays. The church office will be closed on Monday, December 25th (Christmas Day) and Monday, January 1st (New Year's Day).

Annual Reports

Chairs of Committees need to get their Annual Reports in by December 4th. Contact the church, if you have questions on how to create an annual report. Please, type your report. Thank you!

Newsletter Deadline

The Holiday season can be busy. Please don't forget to get your newsletter information to the church by December 15th for January.

A Note About Pre-pledging

As we approach the new year, please remember the following when pre-pledging: If you prepay your pledge, by law it must appear on the statement in the year it is received. For example, 2024 pledges received in 2023 will appear on 2023 statements.

Christmas Eve Services

Join us on Sunday, December 24th for our Christmas services. Sunday morning worship is at 9:30am, Faith Family worship is at 5pm and Candlelight with communion is at 11pm.

Poinsettias

If you ordered a Poinsettia, you may take it home after the Christmas Eve services or come in January 2nd from 10am-2pm.



Vacation

Doug will be out on vacation from January 1st-6th and return on Sunday, January 7th.

Local Mission

Thank you for your continued generosity with the Local Mission Fund! Those who are helped by this fund are extremely grateful for the extra support they receive during tough times. According to our policy, we are able to help each family or

individual three times during a 12 month period, with up to \$100 a time, depending on funds. We assist with food, utilities, rent, and, in emergency situations, a night at a hotel. Donations can be put in the offering plate with Local Mission Fund in the memo line or dropped off in the church office. Thank you!

Coffee Hour

Women's - Tuesdays at 10am
Men's - Fridays at 10am

Xyola Holm

Church family, I would like to invite you to join me and others in raising \$15,500 for Xyola Holm. Xyola's grandma, Tiny Macheel, was a member of our church for many years. They both have given generously of their time and talents. Tiny's death about a year ago, coupled with Xyola's complicated health, make it challenging for her to go to college, work several jobs, continue treatments for XLH and Ehlers Danlos, pay bills, and move to Colorado in January to start a 1- year Americorps position creating a group home for people with disabilities.

I recently created a web page at <https://gofund.me/3bc764c7> where we can give any amount of money to help Xyola pay remaining medical bills from the surgeries since Tiny died and associated bills that accumulated while Xyola recovered and was unable to work. You can read more details and updates there and see photos. You may also give by writing checks made out to Xyola Holm and mailing them to the church, placing them in the offering plate, or giving them to Xyola directly. (Please refrain from making checks out to the church to expedite processing.) Other ways to help include sharing Xyola's page with people you know, talking it up, repeat giving, and prayers are always welcome.

Thank you for coming together as a community of caring hearts and rallying around Xyola, a former Kids Club child and an inspiring young woman.

With love and gratitude,
Molly Stoddard



Committee News

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee is Looking for music students to do some holiday music for preludes. Piano, instruments or vocal. Preludes do not stream, so no worries about copyright information. Please contact Brianna in the church office with names and contact information if interested in sharing talent with your church family. Dates that are available are Sunday, December 3rd - Sunday, December 24th.

We are delighted to welcome members from St. James Episcopal Church to worship with us on Wednesdays in Advent. Pastor David Strom will assist in worship and organist Deb Embretson will lead the music on December 20th.

Midweek Advent Services

Wednesday Advent Services are at 5:30pm and supper at 6pm.

December 6th - Fellowship Committee (chili)

December 13th - Boy Scouts (Soup)

December 20th - St. James Episcopal Church (TBD)

Praise Team Rehearsal

The praise team practices on Tuesdays at 6pm.

Bell Choir Rehearsal

The Bell Choir practices on Tuesday nights at 7:30pm. If you are interested in joining, please contact Tessa Nord at 218-205-8627.

Choir Rehearsal

Choir Rehearsal will be held on Wednesday evenings at 7pm. If you are interested in joining or know someone who might be interested, please contact Jack Raaen at 701-367-0021 or by email: jackraaen@yahoo.com.

Mission Committee

Meals By Wheels

Federated Church is scheduled to deliver Meals by-Wheels Monday-Friday, December 4th-8th and December 11th-15th. Drivers should gather at the Senior Center at 11:00am. It takes about an hour to deliver these meals. If you can help please contact Char Zielin 218-205-8762.

Stewardship Committee

Our stewardship theme for this year was rich with reminders of how we are blessed by God and how God invites us to respond. What we believe matters. What we do about what we believe matters even more. Our congregation is committed to putting our faith into action and this is one opportunity to measure what really matters to us.

As we finalize our budget for 2024, we're blessed by your support of the ministries of Federated Church.

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation — the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ — for this will bring much glory and praise to God. Philippians 1:9-11 (New Living Translation)

Thank you to everyone who returned your 2024 estimate of giving card, allowing us to appropriately budget for what we need, what we want, and what we wish for. Your support helps put our faith into action both in our church and in our community.



Greeters

December 2023
Sunday, December 3
Worship @ 9:30am w/
Communion
Lu & Dennis Echelberger

Sunday, December 10
Worship @ 9:30am
Jan & Gary Nelson

Sunday, December 17
Worship @ 9:30am / Christ-
mas Pageant
TBD

Sunday, December 24
Worship @ 9:30am
Matt & Donna Solin

Worship @ 5:00pm
Matt & Donna Solin

Sunday, December 31
Worship @ 9:30am
TBD

REMINDER: Greeters are also passing the offering plate for that Sunday. Check your email for reminders on greeter duties. Greeters are asked to refrain from contact (please do not shake hands or pass out bulletins). If you are uncomfortable worshipping in person or serving as a greeter, please let Brianna know. We understand the need for safety and respect your choice.



The church staff wants to know...

We rely on you to contact us with your email, phone or address changes. If you are not receiving our emails, but would like to, please contact to church office. Also contact us for pastoral care needs. Please call 218-739-3227 or email church@federatedff.org

Ministry Nite: December 12 - 6:30PM

Please email your minutes to church@federatedff.org. If you are unable to attend, please contact your chairperson. If your committee does not make a quorum, please schedule a time for your committee to meet before the next Ministry Nite. Church committees do not meet in July.

Stewardship Report

General Fund Report	
Revenue	\$33,584.48
Expenditures	\$29,825
Year to Date Pledge Offering	
Budgeted	\$315,598
Actual Received	\$333,228

Newsletter Deadline

Articles and announcements are due the 15th of each month. Please send the by email whenever possible. The church staff reserves the right to edit articles for content and space.





Federated CHURCH

224 North Union Avenue
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

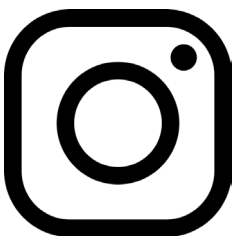
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Time sensitive information
Please deliver by December 1st

If you would like to Text "give", please **text the message give to 855-235-5961**. Click on the link to the setup page and enter your information.



If you would like to receive text updates from Federated Church, please **text the message @ federated to the number 81010**.



December Birthdays

12/01 Dave Loeks	12/24 Iyla Iverson
12/02 Sophie Rufer	12/25 Jesus Christ
12/03 Patty Shol	12/28 Amber Underdahl
12/05 Aaron Link	12/28 Courtney Meder
12/05 Kason Sytsma	12/29 Molly Stoddard
12/09 Jamie Brause	12/29 Jonathan Collins
12/10 Tami Anderson	12/29 Jonathan Dent
12/11 Carolyn Fransen	12/29 Jacob Hatling
12/13 Doris Davis	12/30 Mary Olson
12/16 Rorey Rodning	12/30 Daniel Anderson
12/18 Syler Steinbrenner	12/30 Camen Andrews
12/19 Perry Werner	12/30 Daxton Thompson
12/21 Amy Donoho	12/31 Don Davenport
12/21 Jacob Gustafson	
12/21 Jessica Steinbrenner	
12/21 Mara Braaten	
12/22 Lori Beske	
12/22 Makenna Stenstrom	
12/24 Phil Link	
12/24 Ronnie Becker	



The Federated Church is a joint ministry
of The Presbyterian Church (USA) and
The United Church of Christ.

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