

## How Some Prepare for Christmas with the Advent Devotional

During Advent, Christians prepare their hearts and spirits by contemplating the meaning and celebration of Christmas. They wonder at the significance of Christ's birth in the world and what it means in their own lives.



The Reverend Michelle Wildridge, Chaplain at Paul's Run, provides copies of the Lutheran Congregational Services Advent Devotional to residents. During Advent, she offers time to reflect in group discussions.

"Residents of any faith are welcome to join us. Those who are not Christian come with a curiosity to learn more. When we get together, we discuss selected writings from the Old and New Testament. The Jewish residents find Psalms particularly comforting, as it's part of their Hebrew Scripture," says Rev. Michelle.

Sister Carol, a resident at Paul's Run, uses the Advent Devotional to read, reflect, and pray about her relationship to Jesus Christ. "I ponder how my relationship with

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## Summer Storms 2023

Summer storms are causing deep heartache and trauma around the world. Here at Lutheran Congregational Services, our hearts and prayers go out especially to families in Hawaii who are still facing terrible uncertainties about the fate of loved ones.



*Left: Pastor Paulette Obrecht is serving as LDR's liaison to four families whose private bridges collapsed in Northampton County after flooding in July.*

The Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is working with leaders in Pacifica Synod and other partners to assess the needs of people impacted by the wildfires. LDR will work with them to provide for immediate needs and recovery amid the widespread destruction. LDR is committed to accompanying recovering communities in the years ahead.



*Above: One of four private bridge collapses following heavy flooding.*

More locally, heavy rains in early July caused significant damage to homes in Berks and Northampton Counties. The week after, torrential rains left six dead and one missing in Bucks County in July. Lutherans locally stepped up immediately to assist those impacted by these storms.

Volunteers from several Lutheran churches, and as far away as Slatington, volunteered at the Multi Agency Resource Center (MARC) in Exeter Township, Berks County, in July, to help folks register with Crisis Cleanup; an online tool we along with our partners in disaster response use to identify families and homes that need help cleaning out immediately after a storm.

One of the groups that helps to do muck outs and debris removal is Team Rubicon, a veterans organization with specially trained volunteers who often travel to assist families with cleanout. Reformation Lutheran Church in Exeter stepped up to host Team Rubicon for the week as their volunteers were in town to help families here in Berks County.

Pastor Paul Metzloff said it was "a no brainer," when the opportunity presented itself. Given that Team Rubicon came with their own cots and really only needed space to sleep, hosting them was no problem. They partnered with a local gym so that volunteers could shower.

Bringing help and hope in the name of Jesus has long been important to Lutherans. In this time of volatile and extreme weather, we are so grateful for

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# Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training

Lay Eucharistic  
Visitor Training is a  
one-day training event.

Fall 2023 Dates:

**October 7th**

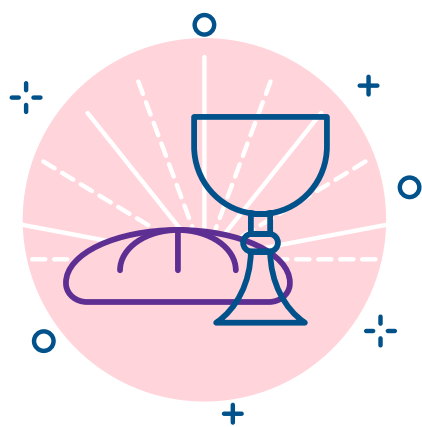
Good Shepherd  
Lutheran Church

190 S Main St, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701

**October 21st**

Advent Lutheran Church

1601 Green Ln, West Chester, PA 19382



Training runs from  
9:30AM – 4:00PM

Cost is \$30.00/per person

Pastors, please direct those from  
your congregation who wish to  
register, to complete the application at  
[LibertyLutheran.org/LEVT](https://libertylutheran.org/LEVT)

Or email the completed registration  
form to Julia Menzo at  
[jmenzo@libertylutheran.org](mailto:jmenzo@libertylutheran.org)

## Where Can We Help?

Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) provides individual counseling, support groups and a Facebook group for those who are grieving. Most typically, those support groups take place in the Lehigh Valley and are well attended!

In an effort to expand these services, last year LCS scheduled a support group outside of that area. When no one registered for the program, we decided to take a step back and reflect on the question of why.

There may be any number of reasons why no one enrolled. Outside of the Lehigh Valley people may be unfamiliar with the LCS bereavement services. We've been told that one of the reasons for the program's success is because grief counselor Sylvia Havlish is well known and respected for her work.

Also, people may seek help from one of many other programs, services and resources available for those who are grieving. Cultural differences may affect whether or not someone seeks help.

If bereavement services are not a priority, are there other programs or services that congregations need? Or are bereavement services being requested elsewhere but a different delivery method or approach to promoting them would be better for different communities.

To find answers, this Fall LCS will investigate with churches and pastors what they're seeing and hearing within their congregations. Through interviews and focus groups, LCS hopes to gather insights into whether bereavement programs and services are wanted, or if there are other issues that LCS could help congregations address.

Once we analyze the information gathered during this process, LCS will work with our Advisory Board and leadership to devise a plan and initiate strategies on how to support congregations in eastern Pennsylvania.

If you or someone in your congregation is interested in participating in this process, please contact Julia Menzo at [jmenzo@libertylutheran.org](mailto:jmenzo@libertylutheran.org). We welcome your valuable input.



## Info for Journeys Through Grief Fall 2023:

**Grace Lutheran Macungie**  
28 W Main St, Macungie, PA 18062

**Monday nights**  
4:30pm - 6:00pm

**Oct. 2nd to Nov. 6th**

Sponsored by *Kulik and Schantz*  
Funeral Home

**Heidelberg Union Church**  
5187 Irvin Rd, Slatington, PA 18080

**Thursday nights**  
5:00pm - 6:30pm

**Oct. 5th to Nov. 9th**

Sponsored by *Heintzelman*  
Funeral Home

## How Some Prepare for Christmas with the Advent Devotional (Cont.)

Jesus has deepened and changed over the years," she says. "I like to reflect upon the Devotional writings in Chapel services, and while seated alone in my apartment, with my Advent wreath candles lit."

"When we are in the discussion group, I appreciate the hour of sharing reflections inspired by the Devotional. We discuss how we individually interpret, relate to, and find hope through specific writings," asserts Sister Carol.

Sister Krysta, also a resident, uses the Devotional prayerfully to nurture her own spirit and relationship with Jesus. She encourages others to similarly contemplate His presence in modern life. "He has been here, and he is still here among us, offering love, hope and peace," she says.

She adds, "I read and think about the writings in my room, with candles lit, while listening to Advent music playing on YouTube. I listen to others' insights during Rev. Michelle's weekly discussion group."

Pastor Paulette Obrecht, volunteer for disaster response and member of the LCS Advisory Board contributes to the Devotional. "I feel like I am part of something bigger- a community of believers- a great cloud of witnesses-sharing our stories of how the Christ child enters our lives during Advent. As we prepare for God becoming one of us, I hope others gain that same sense of community from these devotions."

## Summer Storms 2023 (Cont.)

those who are partnering with LCS to serve those who have the most challenging barriers to recovery.

Unmet needs we are uncovering include the loss of four private bridges in Northampton County, and several whose furnaces and appliances were ruined in Berks County. We welcome volunteers who would like to staff resource centers, make call backs, provide administrative services, and swing a hammer as recovery in Berks and Northampton Counties will likely go on for months and longer.

As storms become more frequent, your donations are more important than ever. If you'd like to be kept in the loop as opportunities arise, please follow us on Facebook or email Julia Menzo at [jmenzo@libertylutheran.org](mailto:jmenzo@libertylutheran.org) to be put on our distribution list. God bless.

## A SPOOK-TACULAR EVENT



WITH **TRINITY**  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
LANSDALE

PRESENTS

# PUMPKIN FEST 2023



**SAT. OCT. 21ST**

**FROM 6:30PM TO 8:00PM**

**AT TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**



SCAN HERE FOR MORE  
INFORMATION AND TO  
REGISTER YOUR PUMPKIN

**WALK THROUGH AND SEE  
THE SPOOK-TACULAR PUMPKINS  
AND THE DECORATED TRUNKS  
WITH THEIR TREATS.**



Lutheran  
Congregational  
Services  
**THE SERVANT**  
c/oTheLutheranCenter  
2354 Grove Road  
Allentown, PA 18109



[LUTHERANCONGREGATIONALSERVICES.ORG](http://LUTHERANCONGREGATIONALSERVICES.ORG)



**MLK  
DAY**



**Join Lutheran  
Disaster Response –  
Eastern PA for MLK  
Day to help disaster  
survivors near and far.**

We'll be assembling and collecting disaster kits and hygiene kits!

Join us on **Monday, Jan. 15, 2024**

**At the Mt. Airy Campus of United Lutheran Seminary,  
7301 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia.**

**Registration required.**

To register or for more information, please contact  
Heidi Shilanskus at [hshilanskas@gmail.com](mailto:hshilanskas@gmail.com).



United  
Lutheran  
Seminary