



# The Abounding Joy Herald

Gathering in Joy - Reaching Out with God's Love  
Thursday, January 4, 2023



## ***The Baptism of Our Lord, January 7, 2024***

***Worship is at 10:00 am***

Three Worship Options: In-Person, Drive-in (88.5 FM), Video Message

**GOD'S WORD** Sunday's sermon will be posted to our church website and at [www.ajlcmc.org](http://www.ajlcmc.org) as soon as possible. Prepare your hearts for worship on Sunday, January 07, and read: Genesis 1:1-5; Romans 6:1-11; and Mark 1:4-11.

**SPECIAL GUEST THIS SUNDAY!** This Sunday, we are glad to welcome Pastor Destaye Crawford, who leads the ministry "Every Tribe and Tongue" that meets here at Abounding Joy every Sunday. We welcome her and join in praising God for all that this ministry is doing here!

**ADULT FORUM STUDY** This Sunday at 9 a.m., we begin a brand-new 4-week Bible study titled, "Called." In these sessions, we will look into the letter to the Ephesians at how we are *called* by God, *called* to faith, *called* to service, and *called* to share, with the help of Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler. This study is free to us through Lutheran Hour Ministries. Join us on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship area.

**IN OUR PRAYERS:** *Joshua Claseman, Kevin Johnson, Jeffery Karbedeh, Ken Lucy, Pat Rose, Dolly Swenson, Jim* (Joyce Cass's, Jeanie Frolander's, and Joanie Peterson's brother), *John* (Marie Neumann's brother), *John and Kathy* (Joyce Neyssen's brother & sister-in-law), *Albert* (Ron & Madge Rowe's brother-in-law), *Dan* (Joyce Neyssen's brother-in-law), *Mike* (Judy Kopka's nephew), *Deb* (Joyce Neyssen's cousin), *Bill* (Michelle Bell-richard's coworker's husband), *Gary* (Joyce Neyssen's friend), and *Clayton* (Dan & Belinda Tysver's friend).

**PRAYER REQUESTS** may be made by a request to our Prayer Team coordinator Betty Batdorf: 320-291-5141 and/or [AJ.prayers@ajlcmc.org](mailto:AJ.prayers@ajlcmc.org). She contacts the prayer team for prayer. Daily prayer will be offered for one month. If you wish to have continued prayer, please submit a new request.

**INTERCESSORY PRAYER GROUP** meets on Thursdays at 8:45 am at Abounding Joy. We invite you to join our intercessory prayer group led by Pastor Deb Peterson. We believe that we are called to not only pray FOR others, but to go into our community and pray WITH others. For more information contact Pastor Deb Peterson at 320-250-0647.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY to:**

*Emma Doyle, Thursday, Jan. 4*  
*Justin Bacop, Saturday, Jan. 6*  
*Pat Hagen, Saturday, Jan. 6*  
*Caleb Brinkman, Wednesday, Jan. 10*  
*Will Luepke, Wednesday, Jan. 10*



**"THE RUTHLESS ELIMINATION OF HURRY"** This Lent, we're going to join together as a church to read and study this book by John Mark Comer. The book challenges us to see who we are becoming, and invites us to follow Jesus. Over the next few weeks, we will have a sign-up for pre-orders of the book for \$10. Please sign-up to get your copy and join in the study!

**USHERS and READERS** Those of you who are willing volunteers to Usher and/or be a Sunday morning Scripture Reader, please check the Info table. There are sign-up sheets for 2024 Ushers and Readers. Your help in filling these positions for the next few months is deeply appreciated!

**VISITATION TEAM** Are you interested in calling or visiting members of our congregation to check in on them or bring them communion? Pastor Brandon is looking to gather together folks who have done this in the past, or would be interested in doing so, at Abounding Joy. If this is you, please sign up (sign-up sheet available on Info Table) or contact Pastor Brandon about your interest. In the next couple of weeks, we'll figure out a time to get together and even share some ideas.

**ESTIMATE OF GIVING** cards and Time and Abilities sheets for 2024 are due to be returned next week (January 10). These sheets help us know the areas in which we can connect you to serve in our congregation. *Thank you!*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR -**  
*Thank you to everyone who shared cards and gifts of homemade bread, candy, lefse, money, and other items with us this year! What a wonderful treat all these were, and we are so very grateful! God bless you all! The Fosters*

## God's Word is Powerful and Sufficient

*"When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy." (Matthew 8:1-3, NIV)*

As 2024 begins, my thoughts have been fixed once more on hope. The new year, with its sense of new beginnings, tends to push us to live with hope. I know I've shared over the past few months on this word hope, but hope is something I can't get away from.

Hope is something we affix to our wishes and desires for the way things will be. Hope is meant to be more than self-focused. Hope is meant to show us the very heart of God, the promises He makes to us, and the plans He has for our lives. In looking at Jesus, we get to know this fully.

There's a scene from Matthew's Gospel that points this out directly. Moments after Jesus has preached his longest recorded sermon from a mountainside, as He comes down, a man parts the crowd and rushes forward to Jesus. Maybe it was Jesus' words about those who are "poor in spirit" or "mourning" that drew this man near to Christ. All we know is this man had leprosy.

Leprosy is something we understand a bit more now, but back then, it was downright scary to contract. Many assumed it was caught and passed because of unconfessed sin. We know it was a contagious disease, one that impacted everything about a person's life.

A person with leprosy was subjected, no matter what their state in life before contracting the disease, to a life of being an outcast. Not only would skin pigmentation change, but that very skin could fall off in a moment's notice. And everyone wanted to keep their distance.

It's this man, who everyone is afraid of, who runs to Jesus. He, in one statement, asks a profound question of Christ's heart. He asks Jesus if He is willing. And Jesus says, "He is."

Dane Ortlund, in his book "Gentle and Lowly," writes about this passage: "The word 'will' in the leper's request...is the Greek word for wish or desire. The leper was asking about Jesus' deepest desire. And Jesus revealed His deepest desire by healing him...The Jesus given to us in the Gospels is not simply one who loves, but one who is love; merciful affections stream from His innermost heart as rays from the sun."

Jesus' deepest desire for our lives is to experience healing. His heart is affectionate and compassionate towards us in a way that desires to bring us hope. He longs that our lives would be lived from this place of trusting who He is. His deepest desire is that we would know we are loved.

In the leper, we are invited to see ourselves. No, we may not have a disease that affects our bodies. But we do have a disease that has devastated our souls. We have contracted sin and it has devastated us. It leaves us in a state where we are changed. Most of all, sin speaks lies that we are unlovable. But the voice of Jesus claims that He is willing. His deepest desire is that we would be healed, and not just physically. His desire is that we be healed body, mind, and soul. And He willed to do that for you, through His sacrifice and resurrection for us.

This is what gives us life, peace, and hope. In rooting ourselves in this news, we can live our life with the promise of hope. Hold on to that and hold on to His heart in 2024. He will not fail but will heal you.

*Pastor Brandon*

RECHARGE RETREAT at MT. CARMEL As we continue our partnership with Mount Carmel, we have various opportunities to attend events they offer. This winter we want to invite our families and individuals of all ages to a 3-day retreat over President's Day weekend, February 17-19, 2024. This is a great opportunity to get to know Mount Carmel and experience what Family camp is all about - including family worship, age-level programs, broomball, snow tubing, fellowship, fireside Bible Study, and times of rest. The adults will also get to grow in their faith: learning about the book of Galatians with the guest teacher Nathan Hoff. Since we have a partnership with the camp, all AJ members will receive a discounted rate when they register. In addition, we offer an additional \$100 reimbursement to anyone who would like to check out the camp for this winter adventure. For more information and how to register, contact Tim Knorek.

FELLOWSHIP DECORATING We all notice when the décor in the Fellowship Area changes (seasonal colors, table decorations, etc.). Who does this? How much work is involved? I could help with that! If these are your thoughts, please contact Carolyn Fiskness or Margaret Rey. They would welcome new members on their team. *(Thank you ladies!)*

MEN'S FAITH TALK meets at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesdays. Come for some Bible focused discussion. ALL MEN are invited and encouraged to be part of this gathering.

SAVE-THE-DATE WOW Secret Sisters mark your calendars. There will be a 'reveal party' on Saturday, February 10th, at 10:00 a.m. More details later.

Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023

ATTENDANCE: 96

### OFFERINGS

General \$1,755

Building/Mortgage \$270

## *This Week at Abounding Joy*

Thursday, Jan. 4

6:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

The Baptism of Our Lord, Sunday, Jan. 7

9:00 am Education Hour—Sunday School, Confirmation Class, Adult Forum

10:00 am Worship Service

11:00 am Fellowship and Refreshments

2:30-5:00 pm Every Tribe and Tongue Worship

Monday, Jan. 8

6:30 pm Gospel Gals Small Group Bible Study

Tuesday, Jan. 9

10:00 am Selah Small Group Bible Study

6:30 pm Men's Ensemble Rehearsal

Wednesday, Jan. 10

9:00 am Men's Faith Talk

Noon Bible Study

1:15 pm Joyful Sisters Small Group Bible Study

1:15 pm Seekers Small Group Bible Study

4:30 pm Church Council Executive Team Meeting

6:30 pm Acoustic Joy Rehearsal

Thursday, Jan. 11

8:45 am Intercessory Prayer Group Meets

6:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

### *Abounding Joy Lutheran Church*

LCMC - Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ ([www.lcmc.net](http://www.lcmc.net))

NALC - North American Lutheran Church ([www.theNALC.org](http://www.theNALC.org))

**Ministers:** All the people of *Abounding Joy*

Pastor Brandon Foster

Pastor Brandon's contact info: (701) 446-7561 email: [Pastor.Brandon@ajlcmc.org](mailto:Pastor.Brandon@ajlcmc.org)

**Director of Youth and Family Ministries:** Tim Knorek

Tim's contact info: (507) 508-4128 email: [tknorek@ajlcmc.org](mailto:tknorek@ajlcmc.org)

**Church Secretary:** Marilyn Schultz

**Custodian:** Al Kutz

**Minister of Music:** Ginny Shimota

**Acoustic Joy Directors:** Roger DeBoer and Cindi Rhoe

**The Church Council** welcomes your feedback and suggestions.

Kim Mielke, President   Jim Tuorila, Vice-President   Jeanie Frolander, Secretary   Bruce Peterson, Treasurer  
Steve Hancock   Deb Hendrickson   Dennis Holland   Marc Schrantz   Darlene Stover

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Office Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 9:00 am-2:00 pm