

*Our journey of faith leads us to build bridges of understanding and peace, to reach out with compassion, and to share the hope of Jesus.*

# THE ZUMBRO Current

DECEMBER 2021

Zumbro Lutheran Church | A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



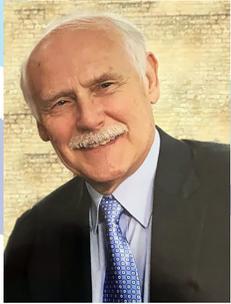
**WHAT  
CAN'T  
WAIT**

**6-7** ADVENT WORSHIP - Sundays will surround the blessings that come with faith. Wednesdays, in preparation for the coming Messiah, we wonder together: What Can't Wait.

**4** BETTER DAYS IN 2022  
Now under construction, the LSS youth drop-in center will offer a place of welcome and respite for youth at risk- or experiencing homelessness.

**5** ADVENT MISSION SUPPORT  
Your contributions and volunteer efforts support mission partners near and far.

**8** BUILDING OUR 2022 COMMITMENT  
We stand together for Statement of Commitment Sunday and Wednesday Dec. 5 & 8.



# From the Pastors

by Pastor Peter Strommen | Interim Directing Pastor

Dear Members and Friends of Zumbro Lutheran,

This year, this Advent, I'm drawn to the verse picked for our stewardship emphasis: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow" (Hebrews 13.8). It grounds me during a time when plenty of things seem to be up in the air. Hebrews invites us to remember Christ's faithfulness in the past and his promises for the future as a reminder for how we embrace the present. Today may require more faith when less is revealed by sight, but let's remember who and *Whose* we are.

First of all, Advent celebrates biblical liminal spaces, when nothing may have seemed to be happening, while amazing things were actually in the making - - Isaiah prophecies being fulfilled, John the Baptist's anticipation and Mary and Joseph's trust in a seemingly impossible promise. So often in scripture, great things are preceded by seemingly empty spaces - - wildernesses. God is here in the disorientation of pandemic, the departure of two beloved pastors, and the enormous missional challenges at the church's doorstep. That is because of Jesus Christ today! We prepare for the future today, in faith, hope and love. And signs abound, even despite all the disruption of the past months. We dedicate a completed construction project in our ministry partnership with Lutheran Social Services that

represents a commitment made yesterday. There will be homeless youth and young adults who will look to a future life vastly different than the common three-pronged alternative of doing nothing: incarceration, institutionalization, or death. Planning tomorrow by acting today, we seek to recover past practices of a balanced budget for 2021 because ministry in 2022 needs to go forward at full throttle with the fuel gauge on "Full." (See article on page 8.)

We look forward to celebrating Christmas as a gathered congregation this year. The call process is moving forward with second interviews having been made in November. As your Interim Directing Pastor, I am privileged to work with a conscientious staff and three great pastoral colleagues all of whom really love this congregation. We are committed to doing our very best. Naturally there will be some adjustments required in early January. The church council meets Tuesday, Nov. 30 to address associate pastor call and interim needs.

So in the spirit of Advent, where some of what we do is wait - - an underrated spiritual discipline by the way- - let's make a commitment to each other to pray for the new pastoral leaders yet to be determined. Let's anticipate the ministry of Zumbro Lutheran as it is guided and supported forward into a challenging future. Prayer gives us the eyes to recognize God's presence and guidance and prepares us for how we may be needed. Sometimes "don't just stand there, do something" is not as helpful as prayerful waiting until things unfold. We become sharper at seeing what is needed. That is Advent. A time of preparing and a time of waiting.

In God's peace,

Pastor Peter

"Hebrews invites us to remember Christ's faithfulness in the past and his promises for the future as a reminder for how we embrace the present."

# 40th Annual Lessons and Carols

by Kristy Giere | Music Minister



St. Marys Hospital Chapel 2017



Zumbro Lutheran Sanctuary 2020

Zumbro members and friends from the Rochester community are welcome to experience the 40th Annual Festival of Lessons and Carols, both in person from the sanctuary, as well as through livestreaming on Sunday, Dec. 19. The prelude will begin at 3:30pm with the service at 4pm.

For years, the service has taken place in the chapel at St. Marys Hospital. In 2020 due to COVID restrictions, the service became a shortened version and was livestreamed from the newly-remodeled sanctuary with many of the musical

performances prerecorded. It is a joy to present Lessons and Carols live this year with a real audience.

This year's theme is "Darkness Awaits the Light." Beautiful choir, handbell, and instrumental music will be heard, favorite carols will be sung, and scripture readings will be included.

Many of Zumbro's performing groups will be a part of the service, including the Zumbro Lutheran Choir, Zumbro Woodwind Quintet, Bel Canto Handbell Choir, horn music with Corey Henke, accompanied by

Susan Henke, brass and organ. Harpist, Claire Honl will perform, and liturgical dancer, Sara Holmes, will make the service extra special as we celebrate forty years.

Following Zumbro's COVID guidelines, masks will be required by those attending and participating.

We hope you will join us in person or tune in through the church's website and YouTube Channel. Seasons greetings from the choirs and musicians of Zumbro Lutheran Church!

# Better Days in 2022

A place of welcome, support, respite and growth for youth ages 16-24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness



## **Intro by Sarah Lichty | Director of Mission**

Our journey to the Better Days Youth Resource Center began in 2019, with the start of my position, the launch of our capital campaign, the promise of a mission tithe, the desire to go deeper with our mission partners, and use our downtown location to fulfill a real need in our community. With the help of an amazing team, the generosity of so many including designer, Erin Schambureck and support from Facilities Manager, Robert Schneider, and the Tuesday crew, this center is finally a reality. Through many fits and starts we have persevered and Better Days in 2022 will be a place of welcome, support, respite, and growth for youth ages 16-24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. **Join us on December 12, 2021 as we celebrate and dedicate this new space.**



## **A word from Elissa Marble LSS Outreach Youth Worker:**

Better Days Resource Center will be filling a much-needed gap within the community. Too often, we work with youth that feel like they don't have a safe place to go. Unfortunately, adult day centers and shelters can feel intimidating, or don't accept children under 18. Better Days will be able to help youth ages 16-24, and their families, meet basic needs. Opening a youth centered space will provide a safe place to access resources and build healthy relationships with peers. Beyond this, the center will provide a warm and welcoming space for youth to feel celebrated and empowered. LSS is excited to feel like we are expanding our services to meet youth where they are at.

Our Youth Leadership Council chose the name Better Days because as one youth put it, when life hits hard LSS has been there to help her through.

We are excited to be partnering with Zumbro to make this long standing dream a reality. To have a space where youth will be able to come in, feel at home, and be themselves will be incredible. We are looking forward to having art projects, and games, and meals together. To make memories cooking, eating and laughing together. We are excited to sit down and have deep conversations; to have support groups and to learn and grow through and with the community. We are excited to watch people have the opportunity to take a break from surviving and get to just be youth. We are excited for Better Days.

Our team has been praying for LSS to fulfill this position and at long last our prayers have been answered!



## **My name is Toby Taylor and I am the new LSS Program Manager.**

I come to you from Rochester, MN and previously worked in Rochester Public Schools for 15 years. My most recent position there was as an Equity Specialist, where I reported to 10 schools assisting with equitable practices for children and staff. During the last 7 years I have also worked at Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge as a Recovery Coach. Personally, I love to spend time with my wife and 7 children and grandson. My passions are serving those in my community, teaching Bible Studies, reading leadership material and writing. I so look forward to this appointed journey with Lutheran Social Service and exciting adventures meeting the needs of our youth.

# Advent Mission Support



## 2021 Zumbro Cookie Brigade

Please sign up online or in worship to bring 2 dozen (or more) cookies for holiday care packages for both our LSS youth and young adults and Luther College students. All types of holiday cookies/candy are welcome! Cookies can be dropped off in the main office (in freezable containers/ziplock bags). All cookies need to be delivered by 9:30am on Sunday, Dec. 12.

## Advent Mission Partner Giving Tree

Support Iambi Hospital in Tanzania and LSS Better Days Resource Center and their clients this Advent. Grab an ornament off one of the giving trees, or make a financial donation on the Zumbro website.



**Support Iambi Hospital in Tanzania** by making financial gifts to support pharmaceuticals, services and supplies, and salary support for the new Medical Officer in Charge, Dr. Lightness Gudu.

**Support the LSS Youth Resource Center** and their clients by purchasing holiday gifts, or by making a monetary donation.

A variety of volunteers will be needed to help with the cookie brigade packing and delivery, and LSS gift wrapping and shopping. Youth and adults can volunteer to help by emailing [jennifergruendler@zumbrolutheran.org](mailto:jennifergruendler@zumbrolutheran.org).



# Advent Worship Sundays

## Sermon Series: Blessed Are Those Who Believe

Mary was only a few months pregnant when she shared these words with her cousin Elizabeth, in a song we know as the Magnificat. Against all odds and in unprecedented circumstances, they each found a way to trust that God would bless the world through them. Can we trust that God will do the same for us? In what ways will that blessing bring meaning and peace as we lean into the promise of the incarnation?

"Light Pierces Through" by Lisa Gwynn Garrity | A Sanctified Art LLC | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)

### ALL FLESH SHALL SEE SALVATION

DEC. 5 • Second Sunday in Advent

Luke 3:1-6

Preaching: Pastor Peter Strommen

Holy Communion

Zumbro Lutheran Choir (8:30am);

Kelsey O'Leary, soloist (8:30am);

Corey Henke, horn; Susan Henke, piano

(8:30am and 10:30am)

### WHAT THEN SHALL WE DO?

DEC. 12 | Third Sunday in Advent

Luke 3:7-18

Preaching: Pastor Julie Wright, LSS

Holy Communion

Bel Canto Handbell Choir and

Zumbro Lutheran Choir

### TO BE FAVORED

DEC. 19 | Fourth Sunday in Advent

Luke 1:39-45

Preaching: Pastor Shelley Cunningham

Sarah De Cicco, soloist; Amy Adamson, cello

(8:30am)

Handbell Sextet; Zumbro Lutheran Choir (10:30am)

Faith Formation Christmas Program (8:30am and

10:30am)

### SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

SUNDAY, DEC. 12 | 3pm | ZUMBRO SANCTUARY

The holiday season can be the most wonderful time of the year, but if you've lost a loved one it can also be the most difficult time of the year. If you are grieving the loss of a loved one (regardless of how many months or years it has been), you are invited to come to this Service of Remembrance. This is a holy time to gather, remember, hear God's promises, light a candle, and let your tears become a prayer to God. All are welcome.

### CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

#### A BLESSING BEYOND ALL COMPREHENSION

DEC. 24 | Christmas Eve Worship

Luke 2:1-20

Preaching: Pastor Peter Strommen

**2pm**

Family Worship | Music by Emily Schmidt, soloist; Amy Adamson, cello

**3:30pm**

Candlelight Communion | Music by Zumbro Lutheran Choir, Bel Canto Handbell Choir

**5pm**

Candlelight Communion | Music by Zumbro Lutheran Choir, Bel Canto Handbell Choir

**9pm**

Candlelight Communion | Music by Meredith Pritchard and Janette Davis, vocalists  
Michael Bostwick, clarinet

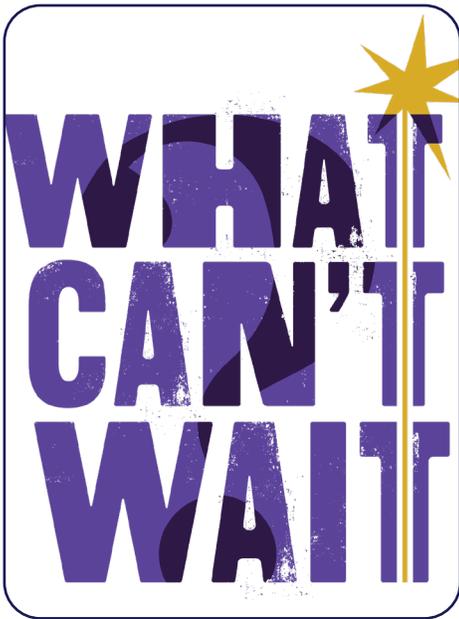
### NO WORSHIP CHRISTMAS DAY

#### DEC. 26 | First Sunday of Christmas

Preaching: Pastor Jason Bryan-Wegner

Music by Will and Ellie Bryan-Wegner, pian

**FOLLOWING ZUMBRO'S COVID GUIDELINES, MASKS ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICES AND EVENTS.**



# Advent Worship Wednesdays

Sermon Series: What Can't Wait

Advent is a season of waiting, but is idle waiting what God wants of us? In preparation for the coming Messiah, we wonder together: What things can't wait? What demands our immediate attention? What requires work and preparation? Join us Wednesdays at 12pm and 6:15pm to imagine, prioritize, and prepare. As we wait, what can't?

**Music: Behold Our Light - Music for Evening Worship by Aaron David Miller 12pm and 6:15pm**

"Graphic Design by Lauren Wright Pittman | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

## HOPE CAN'T WAIT

DEC. 1 | Isaiah 2:1-5 Preaching: Pastor Shelley Cunningham

## PEACE CAN'T WAIT

DEC. 8 | Isaiah 11:10 Preaching: Jen Gruendler

## JOY CAN'T WAIT

DEC. 15 | Isaiah 35:1-10 Preaching: Jason Bryan-Wegner

## LOVE CAN'T WAIT

DEC. 22 | Isaiah 9:2-9 Preaching: Jason Bryan-Wegner | **Pop-up Christmas Program**

**DEC. 29 | NO WORSHIP**



## A CHRISTMAS TO BELIEVE IN

This year's Christmas Program, "A Christmas To Believe In," fits with our Advent focus perfectly. As one of the narrators struggles to believe, his friend guides him through the Christmas story and helps him realize that this story is true and that this really is "A Christmas To Believe In." Join us for worship on Sunday, Dec. 19 to see for yourself!



## LOOKING FOR AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL FOR YOU OR YOUR FAMILY?

We're providing two options this Advent based on our Wednesday Sermon Series, "What Can't Wait."

**ADVENT IN A BAG:** This family friendly devotional provides a simple calendar with daily activities as your family intentionally journeys through Advent and other fun resources to encourage you along the way.

**WHAT CAN'T WAIT ADVENT DEVOTION BOOK:** This daily devotional provides prayers, reflection on scripture, and art for each day of advent.

Both devotionals can be picked up beginning on Sunday, Nov. 28 at worship or outside door 8.

# Building Our 2022 Commitment

SUNDAY, DEC 5 AND WEDNESDAY, DEC. 8

by Pastor Peter Strommen | Interim Directing Pastor

As we sift through, tune out or take in the messages flying at us from all directions, fast forward to 2030 in your mind's eye. How will we have been influenced and shaped by the daily flood of messages that vie for our attention?

Who will have shared the message of God's love? Taught the language of faith? Prayed for you? Where will the face to face, side by side conversations and the shaping experiences of faith have come from? Who will have worked to create communities of caring and outreach?

For most people, faith formation, regular worship, mutual

encouragement, and caring will happen in two communities mainly - - family/friend groups and local church. WE are a local manifestation of Christ's body who will make the greatest difference to the faith of many lives 0-100 in our midst or yet to come.

That's why I believe - - and you believe - - our financial stewardship has never been more important than in these times. Strong congregations, vibrant ministries to and with all ages and family groups matter! And that's the statement generosity makes and funds. THIS IS IMPORTANT.

2030 will be better for us, our

children, grandchildren and the Rochester community through the commitments made here and now, December 2021. Generous commitments offered in the midst of pandemic, fatigue, Zumbro Lutheran's major leadership transition are an act of trust. Christ Jesus is showing up. And will we too.

Sunday, Dec. 5 is our "Statement of Commitment Sunday." Wednesday, Dec. 8, our mid-week equivalent. How appropriate for Advent. Advent is about hope and expectation for what's to come. Hope's source is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

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## ZLC LIBRARY UPDATE

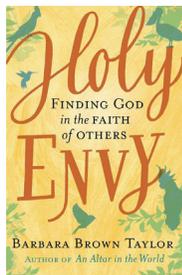
The library is open and we have many new books available for checkout. Look on the new books table and the free standing bookshelves. We also have a table of Advent and Christmas books for all ages that will be up during the month of December.

### Checkout is easy!

Write your name and date on the card found in the back of the book. Place the card in the black box at the circulation desk. You can keep the book for up to 3 weeks.

The Loft Youth Library is still a work in progress. New shelves

have been ordered. Please feel free to browse and checkout books in the boxes.



### Book Reviews:

*Holy Envy* by Barbara Brown Taylor is a great book that spoke to my heart and mind. Like Taylor, I've admired the

rituals and traditions of other faith traditions. I appreciated her insights and her reflections about her journey as a pastor and college professor of Religion 101. Join her class in this book, learn what holy envy is, and

how it can benefit your spiritual walk. Recommended by Jenny Bruenger.



If you like Christian mystery books, I would recommend books by Urecelia Teixeira. I recently read *Every Good Gift*, which is book 1 of a 3-part Adam

Cross suspense series. Teixeira's writing style will keep you on the edge of your seat and leave you guessing throughout the book. Recommended by Johanna Meyer.

# ZLC Call Committee Update

Our call committee has been meeting, discussing, and praying regularly for many months. The month of November has been filled primarily with preparations for in-person, 2nd interviews with key candidates. See below a brief overview of their work and progress. Hopefully, we will soon hear a recommendation!

## COMMITTEE'S REPORT AND PROCESS

- Review and rank written applications and references
- Write interview questions and set up zoom interviews
- **Pray**
- Save multiple dates, host many first interviews
- Review and rank interview results, discuss all first-round candidates
- **Pray**
- Review leadership gifts needed for Zumbro's future, review strengths and gifts of each candidate
- Review rankings and set more meeting dates and assignments
- **Pray**
- Listen to each candidate's worship services and multiple sermons online, ranking once again
- Release several candidates, invite key candidates for in-person 2nd interviews
- **Pray**
- Write post-interview reviews, receive each candidate's interview reviews, inform the Synod of updates
- Setup in-person interviews, build itineraries, write new interview questions, re-read references and applications
- **Pray**
- Host 2nd interviews, offer tours of church and community, take a deep dive into better understanding one another
- Host more committee meetings to review each interview and each candidate's gifts after their visits to Zumbro
- **Pray**
- Discern and determine if we have a recommendation to bring forward to the council, and finally, to the congregation

Exciting days, but if we feel the Spirit leading us in other directions, the process could begin all over again.



## Call Process Open Forum

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 1 AT 7:05PM AND ON SUNDAY, DEC. 5 AT 9:35AM—BOTH IN THE KAIROS ROOM**

Interims are a common expression for pastoral leadership transitions in the church—not because the ministry stops, but because the time between resignations and welcoming new pastors can be unsettling. Calling pastors is

different from hiring a position and usually takes much longer. The final say on the invitation is the congregation's. Questions and concerns naturally occur as the congregation waits. To shed light on the call process for

replacing both Pastor Vern and Pastor Jason, a representative from the call committee and church council will host an open forum on Wednesday, Dec. 1 at 7:05pm and on Sunday, Dec. 5 at 9:35am—both in the Kairos Room.

# Cantus Comes to Zumbro!

SATURDAY, DEC. 18, 2021, 7:30PM | Zumbro Lutheran Church, Rochester | Adults: \$34 Students: \$5



The men's vocal ensemble, Cantus, performs more than 60 concerts each year both in national and international touring, and in its home of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota.

Cantus has performed at Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, UCLA, San Francisco Performances, Atlanta's Spivey Hall and Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival.

In *Christmas with Cantus*, Cantus weaves together three holiday stories with time-honored carols and new classics. Blending narration and song, the program features *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree*, alongside the newly-written *Dakota and the Snow Phoenix*, offering an opportunity to reflect on the meaning and joy of the season.

Tickets are available to purchase online anytime at [cantussings.org](http://cantussings.org) or by calling the Cantus box office at 612-435-0055 Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday from 10am to 3pm.

Cantus accepts all major credit cards. Ticket buyers can also pay with cash or check in person at the concert venue 30 minutes before the program begins.

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## Zumbro Travelers and Friends

The three trips scheduled in 2022 include air transportation, lodgings, experienced guides, and all transportation and inclusions listed in the brochures.

### **ALASKA LAND & CRUISE:**

**June 14-25, 2022**

A tour including Fairbanks, Denali, Domed Rail trip, Anchorage, Glaciers Hubbard and Glacier Bay, Skagway, Juneau, Ketchikan, and the inside passage.

### **HERITAGE OF AMERICA:**

**Sept. 23-October 3, 2022**

A beautiful time for fall foliage from Philadelphia, Gettysburg, Harpers Ferry, Shenandoah National Park, Charlottesville, Monticello, Colonial Williamsburg, Arlington, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian, and Mt. Vernon .

### **SPOTLIGHT ON TUSCANY:**

**Oct. 19-27, 2022**

A Highlight of this tour is staying in one grand lodging for the majority of the tour and taking included day trips out to Montecatini Terme, Lucca, Gothic Line, Winery tour, Florence, Pisa, Cooking Class, Cheese Farm, and Gimignano. Hard to beat the beauty of Tuscany and the surrounding areas.

Itineraries and reservation forms are available in the church office for tours that are planned.

For more information, call or email Carol Wilkinson at (563) 277-1111 or [cwdw2916@aol.com](mailto:cwdw2916@aol.com).

# From Pastor Vern



Dear Friends of Zumbro,

I am profoundly grateful for the outpouring of cards, well-wishes, and gifts on the occasion of my retirement. Your words were incredibly thoughtful and encouraging.

As I read the expressions of your gratitude, please know

that what we did at Zumbro was accomplished together. Everything from staff leadership, to worship planning, to serving burritos, to quilt sewing, to partnering with a hospital in Tanzania, to teaching confirmation classes, to lefse making, to renovating our worship space, to becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation was an expression of God's work in and through us. We did it together!

I have no doubt that our journey of faith was leading us, and that the journey of faith will continue to lead the good people of Zumbro for months and years to come.

Filled with gratitude,

Pastor Vern



## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Help decorate the Zumbro sanctuary by purchasing a Christmas poinsettia in memory or in honor of a loved one. Our goal is to purchase at least fifty plants. Help us reach the goal! Plants are \$15 each.

I would like to purchase # \_\_\_\_\_ red poinsettia(s) in memory/honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (as you would like it printed in the bulletin on Christmas Eve): \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Return this order form and a check for \$15/per plant to the church office, mail to: 624 3rd Avenue SW, Rochester MN 55902 or order and pay online at [ZumbroLutheran.org](http://ZumbroLutheran.org) Orders need to be received by December 7,



624 Third Ave. SW  
Rochester, MN 55902

www.zumbrolutheran.org  
(507) 288-2649

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Rochester, MN 55901

Return Service Requested

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# Zumbro Staff

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- William Deng**  
Dinka Lay Evangelist
- Jeremy Stortz**  
Sound and Livestream Technician

**Newsletter Deadline:** Please submit items for the January issue of *The Zumbro Current* to [margaretdillard@zumbrolutheran.org](mailto:margaretdillard@zumbrolutheran.org) by December 10.



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