DECEMBER

2025

Pastor: Rev. Jackie Short ~ (507) 517-0769 ~pastor.highlandprairie.elstad@ gmail.com
Parish Administrator: Courtney Lee
Parish Office: (507) 864-2731 ~ elstadhighlandprairieparish@gmail.com

You're Invited to Celebrate Christmas Eve with Us! 🎄✨

Join us for one or both of our Christmas Eve Services as we come together to celebrate the joy, hope, and love of the season.

Elstad
37784 Dogwood Rd,Lanesboro
December 24th at 5pm

~ or ~

Highland Prairie
43267 Bowl Drive, Peterson
December 24th at 7pm

Experience the beauty of carols, the warmth of community, and the wonder of the Christmas story. Whether you're a longtime member or visiting for the first time, **you** are welcome to come and make **this** Christmas Eve truly meaningful.
We can't wait to see you!

December Office Hours

Pastor Jackie is typically be in the office on Wednesdays 8-4 pm.
Call or email to set up a time to connect.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EHP PARISH OFFICE

ADMINISTRATOR COURTNEY LEE

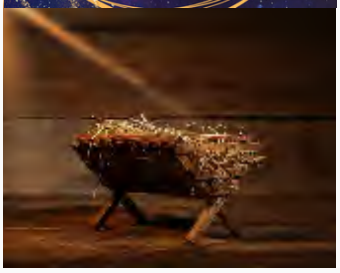
As the holiday season begins, many of us find ourselves busy preparing—whether it's searching for the perfect gift, baking Christmas treats, or celebrating cherished family traditions. In the midst of this joyful busyness, let us take time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas: the gift of Christ's love. May the wonder of this holy season fill your hearts, and may you also find moments to rest, renew, and care for yourselves.

~Courtney, Parish Administrator

A note from your Pastor

Beloved people of Estad & Highland Prairie,
December always seems to hold its breath, doesn't it? The days grow short, the nights stretch long, and the world feels a little quieter—at least for a moment—before the holiday rush begins. In this season, when so much sparkles and shines, I find myself drawn again to the small, ordinary lights that God uses to break through our darkness.
Advent reminds us that God's work rarely arrives with fanfare. Instead, the holy tends to slip in quietly: a whispered promise to a weary prophet, a spark of hope in a discouraged heart, a messenger appearing to an unsuspecting young woman in Nazareth. God's "yes" makes its way into the world through small, faithful moments long before angels burst into song or shepherds run to the manger.
This year, I'm especially grateful for the many small lights I see in our congregation—acts of kindness, hands offered to help, voices lifted in prayer, people saying "yes" to God's stirring in their lives. These simple, everyday faithfulnesses are how Christ's light grows among us. They matter. They make a difference. They illuminate more than you know.
As Christmas draws near, may you feel the steady presence of Emmanuel—God with us—in both the joyful and the complicated parts of this season. May you find moments of rest, glimpses of wonder, and the deep assurance that God's love meets us right where we are. And may the promise of Christ's coming root you again in hope—real hope that does not disappoint.
Thank you for being a community where that hope takes flesh. Thank you for the ways you share Christ's light with one another and with the world.
Blessings on your Advent waiting and your Christmas rejoicing.
In Christ's peace,faith, hope & Joy, Pastor Jackie

Pastor Jackie will be out of the office December 28-January 2nd



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM MY FAMILY TO YOURS!

Elstad

December 7: Nelson Family
December 14:
December 21:

Highland Prairie

December 7: Humble Family
December 14: Gudmundson Family
December 21: Lee Family

Highland Prairie All Church Sunday School Program at 9:00

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM DECEMBER 14TH

Elstad Sunday School Program 10:30
Everyone Invited downstairs for Cookies and Juice after service!

Y BLUE CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE AT 6PM ON DECEMBER 15TH HIGHLAND PRAIRIE

For many, the Christmas season is not only joyful—it can also be heavy. If you are carrying grief, worry, or weariness this year, you are not alone. Join us for a gentle, reflective service of prayer, comfort, and hope.

YOU'RE INVITED TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS EVE WITH US! 🎄✨
JOIN US FOR ONE OR BOTH OF OUR CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES AS WE COME TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THE JOY, HOPE, AND LOVE OF THE SEASON.
~ WORSHIP AT ELSTAD 5PM
~ HIGHLAND PRAIRIE 7PM

EXPERIENCE THE BEAUTY OF CAROLS, THE WARMTH OF COMMUNITY, AND THE WONDER OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY.

Parish Happenings

Birthdays

1: Ruth Abrahamson, Vance Topness
2: Kathleen Wold
3: Erin Topness
4: Kathy Kendhammer
5: Carol Overland, Carol Dixon
t: Kristi Gudmundson, Ian Anderson
7: Quinn Short
8: Hannah Pearce
11: Peter Peterson
13: Heidi Fishbaugher, Boe Rein
15: Renee Ritter, Madison Smith, Chase Humble
16: Christopher Freese
17: Sue Larson, Tom Feine
19: John Abrahamson
20: Noelle Graham
21: Clair Olson, Steve Ryan, Ethan Grimsrud
22: Matthew Halvorson
24: Gustav Hoiland, Tristen Chiglo
26: Zowie Short
27: Matthew Halverson, Stephanie Erickson
28: Sarah Stensgard, Elin Rein
30: Ashley Johnson, Parker Storhoff
31: Jesse Nelson, Jarod Dybing

Anniversaries

13: Charles & Lynnette Pederson
18: Gordon & Arlene Johnson
19: Tom & Carolyn Smith
27: Philip & Ruth Abrahamson

We love to celebrate with you, if we have missed somebody's Birthday or Anniversary, please email the church office so we can add them to the list!

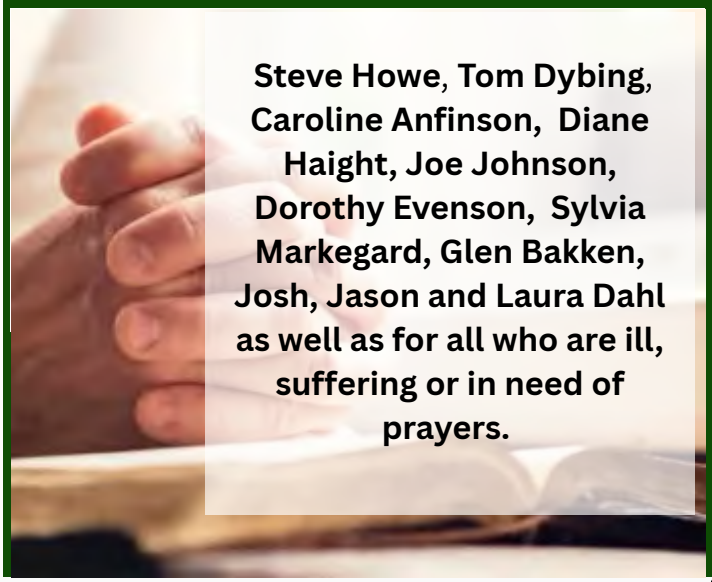
Council Meetings ...

November Joint Council Meetings @ Highland Prairie

Sunday December 14th

Highland Prairie Council Meeting: 12:30pm

In our Prayers



Steve Howe, Tom Dybing, Caroline Anfinson, Diane Haight, Joe Johnson, Dorothy Evenson, Sylvia Markegard, Glen Bakken, Josh, Jason and Laura Dahl as well as for all who are ill, suffering or in need of prayers.

Save the date!!!

SAVE THE DATE!!
ELSTAD: JANUARY 18TH AFTER 10:30 WORSHIP
HIGHLAND PRAIRIE: JANUARY 25TH AFTER 10:30 WORSHIP
JOIN US FOR A TIME OF COMMUNITY, GRATITUDE, AND SHARED VISION.
BRING YOUR FAVORITE DISH AND YOUR VOICE AS WE CELEBRATE THE YEAR BEHIND US AND LOOK FORWARD TO WHAT'S AHEAD. YOUR PRESENCE MATTERS—ALL MEMBERS ARE NEEDED TO ATTEND SO THAT WE CAN FAITHFULLY CARRY OUT THE WORK OF THE CONGREGATION TOGETHER.

We will not be changing worship times this year UNTIL after the annual meetings

January Worship Times

Elstad	Highland Prairie
1/04 10:30 am	1/04 9:00 am
1/11 10:30 am	1/11 9:00 am
1/18 10:30 am	1/18 9:00 am
1/25 9:00 am	1/25 10:30am

WE ARE STILL COLLECTING BUCKETS OF BLESSINGS

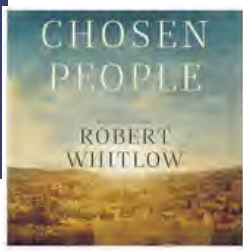
A joyful, hands-on stewardship campaign inviting all members and friends of our congregation's to care for our church home. Just as drops of water can fill a bucket, the small gifts we share; spare change, extra dollars, or folded bills—add up to make a big impact. Together, we can "Repair & Restore: One Pail at a Time."

How It Works

- Each household is invited to bring home a Buckets of Blessings pail from the back table.
- Throughout the year, you are all encouraged to place spare change, extra cash, or intentional gifts into their buckets.
- When your bucket is full bring it to church as an offering of gratitude and support and place it in the large pail up front. If your pail is for a specific mission leave it up front and grab another bucket.

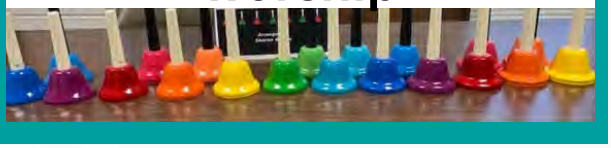
Book Study

Meet @
Highland Prairie
Monday
December 15th
6:00

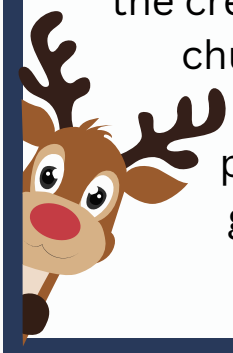


Meet @
Elstad
Tuesday
January 19th
@6:00

Bell Choir Practice 12/7/25 after worship

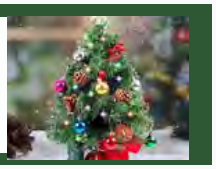


We had another very successful bake sale!
Our tables were loaded with baked goods!
A special thank you to everyone who brought goodies and to everyone who bought goodies.
It was a great day!
We were blessed to be able to do the matching funds donation through IGA
for the food shelf!

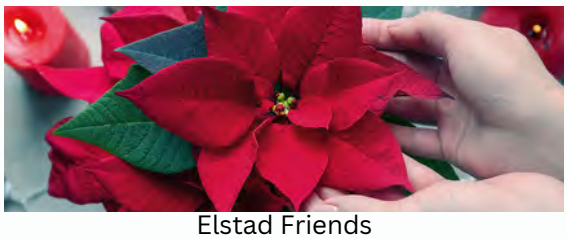


Thank you to Kate for organizing the crew to decorating of the church for Christmas!
Thank you to all the people who pitched in to get the job done!

ELSTAD



No coffee hour planned before church in December



Elstad Friends
Mabel Floral is offering Red Poinsettias for $15.00.
The sign-up sheet is on the usher's table.
The deadline for ordering is
Sunday December 7th!

Highland Prairie

Naomi Bible Study

Discover the stories of the women of the Bible and the meaningful ways their faith shaped God's people.
We gather on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., alternating between Elstad and Highland Prairie.
Whether you're new to Bible study or have been part of many, you are warmly invited to join us.
If you'd like to be part of the group, simply reach out to Pastor Jackie for the materials—we'd love to have you with us!

Bible Study: December 12/3/25 at 1:30pm

Quilting/ Christmas Baskets 12/10/25 at 9:30a

Youth & Family

Advent Family Activity: Build Your Own Nativity

This Advent, everyone is all invited to join us each week as we create a meaningful, hands-on nativity scene together! Each Sunday, families are invited to gather after worship to craft one piece of the nativity—beginning with the stable and adding new figures each week.

By Christmas, you'll have a complete, homemade nativity set to display at home as a reminder of the story of our Saviours birth.

All ages are welcome, materials are provided, and no crafting experience is needed.

Come be part of something meaningful, hands-on, and joy-filled activity as as we prepare the way for Christ together. Come, create, and prepare your hearts for the Christ who comes to dwell among us.

YOUTH & FAMILY OUTING TO LACROSSE FOR LIVE NATIVITY & ROTARY LIGHTS ON DECEMBER 14TH

WE WILL MEET AT THE HP AT 3 PM

WE WILL BE GOING TO A LIVE NATIVITY AND THEN ON TO THE ROTARY LIGHTS! BRING A CANNED GOOD DONATION FOR THE ROTARY LIGHTS. LET PR. JACKIE KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS!

DECEMBER 28TH YOUTH GROUP CAROLING @ GOOD SHEPHERD 5PM

EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO JOIN US

THE COMMUNITY YOUTH WILL BE DOING A BRIEF PROGRAM THEN GO DOWN HALLWAYS CAROLING AND HANDING OUTCARDS/GIFTS.

January 3rd - 4th

Youth Lock-In

7-12 grade Students - Come Spend the night at church enjoy an evening of Games - Food - Fun and Fellowship!! Invite a friend or two or TEN!!

NO need to pack your Sunday Church Clothes because Sunday January 4th is wear your Jammies to Church Sunday!!!

Let's kick off the New Year together!!

This is a PARISH Event and all are welcome to attend!!

Please reach out to Pr. Jackie to sign up or with any questions!!

January 4th is Pajama Sunday!

Elstad and **Highland Priaire!** Come cozy and comfy—wear your favorite pajamas to church as we start the new year with joy and fellowship! This is not just for the littles all ages are invited to wear PJ's!!!

Elstad Sunday School

December 7

December 14th Program

Winter Break

Dec. 21 & 28

Resumes on January 4

Education

HP COMMUNITY SUNDAY SCHOOL WILL RESUME ON JANUARY 4TH

CONFIRMATION

SCHEDULE

DECEMBER

Dec. 3: Class @ Elstad
Dec. 10 Class @ Elstad
Dec. 17: Class @ Elstad
Dec. 24: No Class
Jan. 31: NO Class

Starting on Jan. 7th Class will start meeting at Highland Prairie

Parents please remind your student to keep up on their sermon notes. During the holidays if you are worshiping with family in another congregation you can make notes on your bulletin and hand it in for credit.

Elstad Council Meeting Minutes

Elstad Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes
Sunday, November 9, 2025
Elstad Lutheran Church

The meeting was called to order by President Gene Topness at 12:09 p.m.
Roll call: Council members present were Gene Topness, Kathy Abrahamson, Jennifer Nepstad, Morgan Knutson, Amber Arends and Tanya Wolfs. Pastor Jackie Short was also present. Matt Nelson was absent. A Quorum was called.
The agenda was reviewed: A motion to approve the agenda was made by Morgan Knutson, seconded by Amber Arends. Motion carried.
Congregation members present to address the council: None
Pastor's report: No additional report at this time.
Treasurer's Report: Treasurer's report was reviewed by the council. Jennifer noted she had received an anonymous donation to help offset expenses. The council greatly appreciates the gift. Morgan Knutson made a motion to approve, seconded by Amber Arends. Motion carried. Report will be placed on file and audited at a later date.
President's report: None
Correspondence received: None
Old business: No old business to discuss.
New business:

- 2026 salaries - Council reviewed current salaries for lawn mowing, custodian and organist. Amber Arends made a motion to approve a salary increase for all 3 positions next year. Kathy Abrahamson seconded. Motion carried.
- 2026 church staff - Council members will be looking to find replacements for the following positions. Staff going off next year that will need replacements:
  - Amber Arends (Council)
  - Krissy Overland (Board of Education)
  - Tom Dybing (Auditor)
  - Rich Nepstad (Cemetery Board)
- 2026 Annual Meeting - Sunday, Jan. 18 after 10:30 a.m. worship.

The secretary's report was given. Motion to approve was made by Amber Arends, seconded by Morgan Knuston. Motion carried.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Amber Arends, seconded by Morgan Knutson. Meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

Next council meeting is at Highland Prairie on Sunday, Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Submitted by: Tanya Wolfs, Council Secretary

Elstad October Budget	$8407.00
Received October	$6043.00
Under for October	$2364.00
Elstad Budget YTD	$75633.00
Receved YTD	$51748.00
Under YTD	$23915.00

Highland Prairie & Elstad Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes
Sunday, November 9, 2025
Elstad Lutheran Church

The meeting was held at Elstad Lutheran Church with Elstad's president Gene Topness calling the meeting to order at 12:59 p.m.
Roll call was taken. Council members present were Val Howe, Courtney Lee, Kathy Abrahamson, Amber Arends, Tanya Wolfs, Gene Topness, Jennifer Nepstad, Morgan Knutson, Kristi Gudmundson, Amy Jacobson, Chellsey Lind, David Markegard, and Mary Gudmundson. Mike Pepin, Robert Anfinson, and Matt Nelson were absent. A Quorum was called.
Others present: Pastor Jackie Short
Agenda was reviewed. Motion to approve the agenda was made by Morgan Knutson, seconded by Chellsey Lind. Motion carried.
Devotions were read by Pastor Jackie.
Congregation members present to address the council: None
President's report: No president's report at this time.
Pastor's report: Pastor Jackie updated the council on meetings and events that have happened and will be happening through the end of the year. There is a Blue Christmas worship service being planned for Monday, Dec. 15. This is an opportunity for those who have lost loved ones, or who find the holiday season to be a hard and sad time, to come together and worship. All are welcome to attend.
Correspondence received: None
Old business/committee reports: No old business to discuss.

New business:

1. Pastor's salary - Council reviewed Pastor Jackie's 2026 salary and benefits package as presented by the SE MN synod. David Markegard made a motion to approve the package, seconded by Mary Gudmundson.
2. Church 40 bids - The council reviewed 2 bids for a 3-year land lease on the 40 acres owned by the parish. Kathy Abrahamson made a motion to approve the highest bid from Doug Lind. Amber Arends seconded. Motion carried.
3. Performance review of parish secretary - An official performance review will be scheduled at a later date. However, the council agreed Courtney has done a great job getting up to speed on the position this year. Amber Arends made a motion to approve a salary increase for 2026, Chellsey Lind seconded. Motion carried.
4. 2026 church calendar - The council reviewed the proposed 2026 calendar for accuracies and made adjustments as needed. To lessen confusion around annual meeting times, Elstad will stay at the 10:30 a.m. service until January 18 (annual meeting) and Highland Prairie will move to 10:30 a.m. service on January 25 (HP annual meeting). The congregations will vote on the calendar at the annual meetings in January.

The secretary's report was given. Motion to approve was made by Amber Arends, seconded by Kristi Gudmundson. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m. and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Next joint council meeting is at Highland Prairie on Sunday, Jan. 11 at 5:30 p.m.
Submitted by: Tanya Wolfs, Elstad council secretary

Highland Prairie Council Meeting Minutes

Highland Prairie Lutheran Church Council Meeting
November 9, 2025
President Val Howe called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.
Council Members present were Kristi Gudmundson, Mary Gudmundson, Val Howe, Amy Jacobson, Courtney Lee, Chellsey Lind, and David Markegard. Robert Anfinson and Mike Pepin were absent.
Devotions were given by Mary Gudmundson. A quorum was determined, and a motion to approve the agenda was made by David Markegard, Chellsey Lind seconded. Motion carried.
Congregation members wishing to address the council. None
Treasurer's Report was given by Courtney Lee for October. The Month-to-date information provided was income of $10,829.00, expenses of $8,341.69; Income exceeded expenses by $2,487.31. A motion to approve the report was made by Chellsey Lind, Amy Jacobson seconded. Motion carried. Complete updated and printed reports for August,September were disbursed.
President's Report – Message of appreciation to Pastor Jackie and Courtney.
Pastor's Report – Given at Parish meeting.
Correspondence – None
Committee Reports: Church Committee – Kitchen stove replacement pending approval by WELCA.
Grounds Committee – Water lines have been drained. Garbage pick up has been changed to every four weeks.
Worship Committee – Advent theme – The Power of Yes is the theme. Jeff Michel has been at church to review our needs and will submit a quote for candle holders, however no further action will be taken until funds are available.
Youth &; Education Committee – Meeting on Tuesday, November 18 th
WELCA – Fall Bakesale is Friday, November 21 st at Sterling Drug
Endowment Committee – None
Old Business – Logo design update – Kristi Gudmundson presented four options. A motion to accept the 3 crosses logo was made by Chellsey Lind, Val Howe seconded. Motion carried. Financial software update – Will be discussed at the budget meeting, Tuesday, November 18 th Water survey update – tabled until spring Memory tree update – moving forward for Advent season Biesanz stone update – a couple options were presented, tabled.
New Business – Council update for new year – 2 council members and Vice President will be open
Budget meeting – Tuesday, November 18 th , 6:00 pm
Snow plowing – contract update – Val Howe will contact current provider
Reflections
The Secretary's report was read and a motion to approve as read was made by Amy Jacobson, Chellsey Lind seconded.
Motion carried.
A motion to adjourn with the Lord's Prayer at 3:20 p.m. was made by Amy Jacobson, David Markegard seconded.
Motion carried.
Respectfully submitted. Mary Gudmundson
Next Meeting December 14 th , 12:00 at Highland Prairiet

HP budget for October	
Expenses	**$10,829.00**
Received in October	**$8,3341.69**
Income exceeded expenses by	**$2487.31**

DECEMBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3 **Pastor Office** 8-4 **HP Bible Study** 1:30pm **Confirmation** 6:30 pm **Bulletin Deadline**	4	5 **Feed my Neighbor Craft Bazaar** 9am-2pm	6
7 HP- 9am Elstad- 10:30am **Elstad WELCA** Christmas Tea @ **9am**	8 Bible Study Bethlehem 9am	9	10 **Pastor Office** 8-4 **HP WELCA** Quilting/Christmas Baskets @ **9:30am** **Confirmation** 6:30 pm **Bulletin Deadline**	11	12	13
14 HP- 9am Elstad- 10:30am **HP** Council Meeting @ **12:30 pm**	15 **HP~ Blue Christmas Service** @ 6:30 pm Bible Study Bethlehem 9am	16 Book Study @ **HP 6pm?**	17 **Pastor Office** 8-4 **Confirmation** 6:30 pm **Bulletin Deadline**	18	19	20
21 HP- 9am Elstad- 10:30am	22 **Newsletter Deadline** Bible Study Bethlehem 9am	23 Naomi Bible Study 6:30pm @ Elstad	24 **Christmas Eve Service** **Elstad**~ 5pm **HP**-7pm **Bulletin Deadline**	25 **Merry Christmas!**	26	27
28 HP- 9am Elstad- 10:30am	29 Bible Study Bethlehem 9am	30	31 **New Year's Eve** **Bulletin Deadline**			

Elstad Highland Prairie Lutheran Parish
43267 Bowl Drive
Peterson, MN 55962

Highland Prairie
Acolytes/Readers/Greeters

Sunday, December 7, 2025
Acolyte: Dominic Humble
Readers: Hudson Lee, Kristi Gudmundson
Advent Family: Humble Family
Greeters:

Sunday, December 14, 2025
Acolyte: Slade Pepin
Readers: Slade Pepin
Advent Family: Gudmundson Family
Greeters:

Sunday, December 21, 2025
Acolytes: Brody Gellersen
Readers: Brody Gellersen, Mary Gudmundson
Advent Family: Lee Family
Greeters:

Christmas Eve Service: December 24, 2024
Acolytes:
Readers:
Greeters:

Sunday, December 28, 2024
Acolytes: Mathew Gudmundson
Readers: Mathew Gudmundson, Paula Howe
Greeters:

ELSTAD
Acolytes/Readers/Ushers

Sunday, December 7, 2025
Acolyte: Norah Eide
Readers: Norah Eide
Advent Family: Nelson Family
Greeters:

Sunday, December 14, 2025
Acolyte: Mason Wolfs
Readers: Mason Wolfs, Tonya Wolfs
Advent Family:
Greeters:

Sunday, December 21, 2024
Acolyte: Quentin Daniels
Readers: Quentin Daniels, Marcia Randall
Advent Family:
Greeters:

Christmas Eve Service: December 24, 2024
Acolyte:
Readers:
Greeters:

Sunday, December 28, 2024
Acolyte: Nolan Eide
Readers: Nolan Eide
Greeters: