

December 2023 Volume 62, Issue 12 www.firstgeneseo.org

WORSHIP WITH US THIS WEEKEND! Informal Worship Saturday 5:30 p.m. Worship & Livestream Sunday 9:30 a.m.

Come and Rejoice at the Birth of our Savior

Sunday, December 17

9:30 a.m. — Advent Lessons & Carols

Join us for "Angels We Have Heard", a service of lessons and carols highlighting the presence of angels from creation and the Old Testament prophecies through the Christmas gospel. Sanctuary Singers, Joyful Praise, and Glory Ringers will present anthems and lead congregational song, and Psalm 150 will provide preservice music.

Sunday, December 24

9:30 a.m. — The ABC's of Christmas

Children young and old are welcome to celebrate the ABC's of Christmas, an interactive family service. Worshippers will play the roles of shepherds, angels, and wise ones with signs and simple responses to the Christmas story as it is told in ABC format. A photo backdrop will be available for family pictures in the Fellowship Room and Christmas cookies will be served following the service.

Christmas Eve ~ Sunday, December 24

4 & 7 p.m. — Candlelight, Carols & Communion

Come join us for candlelight, carols, communion, special music, and children's message at both services. Both services will be livestreamed.

Christmas Day ~ Monday, December 25

10 a.m. — Carols & Communion

11 a.m. — Community Christmas Dinner (see page 6 for more details)

A WORD FROM PASTOR LAURA

Happy New Year!

The season of Advent brings a new year in our church calendar. Our first season of the year is always a season of waiting. We wait for the Christ child to be born, but we also wait expectantly for Jesus' Second Coming.

The readings we use in Worship each weekend are the assigned readings from the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), which is a prescribed set of Bible readings for every Sunday and major festival of the church year. The readings correspond to the seasons of the church year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and time after Pentecost. The RCL is used by Christians in many denominations in many places around the world. So, on any given weekend, the readings we hear proclaimed in Worship are the same readings that Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and Anglicans in Australia are hearing.

The RCL has a three-year cycle. We hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ from Matthew, Mark, and Luke in each respective year, with stories from the Gospel of John interspersed throughout. This year, we are beginning our journey with the Gospel of Mark.

Mark does not include any stories of Jesus' birth or childhood in his Gospel. His Gospel begins with Jesus as a fully grown man, coming to the Jordan River where John the Baptist is at work. That means our Advent readings from Mark focus primarily on Jesus' Second Coming, rather than on his birth.

The devotional provided to the congregation this year for Advent is based on the beginning of Luke's Gospel, which is good for those of us who long to hear the stories preparing for Jesus' birth at this time each year. "How Does a Weary World Rejoice?" is a collection of devotional essays, poems, hymns, and artwork based on the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel.

These devotional resources are created by the team at A Sanctified Art. Each week has a focus theme: We acknowledge our weariness; we find joy in connection; we allow ourselves to be amazed; and we sing stories of hope. The devotional then continues through the season of Christmas and into Epiphany, concluding with the Baptism of our Lord.

Full-color print copies of the devotional will be available at the Resource Center after December 1. A link to an e-reader version will also be emailed to the congregation with the announcements on December 1. We will use some worship resources from A Sanctified Art to accompany the season's devotional theme, including the Prayers of the People (also called the Prayers of Intercession). I will seek input each week on our church Facebook page, as these prayers are being prepared for weekend worship.

The season of Advent will include a special worship opportunity, "Angels We Have Heard" on Sunday, December 17, featuring special music from many of the musicians of our congregation. The Advent season culminates on the morning of December 24, as we present The ABC's of Christmas, a family-friendly worship opportunity for all ages.

I pray that each of you is blessed in this new church year, as we listen closely to hear the story again.

-Pastor Laura

December 2 & 3, 2023

Advent 1

This weekend's texts include Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 and Mark 13:24-37.

December 9 & 10, 2023

Advent 2

This weekend's texts include Isaiah 40:1-11; 2 Peter 3:8-15a and Mark 1:1-8.

December 16 & 17, 2023

Advent 3 | Advent Lessons & Carols

This weekend's texts include Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 and John 1:6-8, 19-28.

December 24, 2023

Advent 4 | The ABC's of Christmas at 9:30 a.m.

No worship on Saturday, December 23 The ABC's of Christmas, a family friendly service with congregation participation.

December 24, 2023

Nativity of Our Lord-Christmas Eve Candlelight, Carols & Communion at 4 and 7 p.m.

This evening's texts include Isaiah 9:2-7, Titus 2:11-14 and Luke 2:1-14.

December 25, 2023

Nativity of Our Lord—Christmas Day Carols & Communion at 10 a.m.

This day's texts include Isaiah 52:7-10, Hebrews 1:1-4 and John 1:1-14.

December 30 & 31, 2023

Christmas 1

This weekend's texts include Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Galatians 4:4-7 and Luke 2:22-40.

Noisy Offering

A *Noisy Offering* will be collected the the Free Community Christmas Dinner. Bring your nickels and dimes!

FIRST WORSHIP & Music



weekend of December 2 & 3 to benefit

Please keep the following Lifelines petitions in your prayers:

World and Community: For the people of Ukraine, Israel, and Gaza. For our leaders: President Joe Biden and Governor J.B. Pritzker. For health care workers. For all who work for peace and justice. For those serving our country in the military, especially Brian Hanshaw (Jan & Steve Weber's son-in-law), Brandon Sandoval, Christopher Unrath, Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders.

PRAYER

FIRST

Church: For our bishops: Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Rev. Michael Burk and Rev. Stacie Fidlar. For our partners in ministry: Pastor Daniel Meiyan and the people of Osupuko Parish in Tanzania, Rev. V. Samuel Kennady, Bishop of the Arcot Lutheran Synod, India. For missionaries who share the Gospel around the world. For Lutheran Social Services of Illinois and Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center. For our pastors, parish staff, Preschool staff and Church Council (names listed on pg. 10).

Health and Wellbeing: Carol Boyd, Karen Bremmer (Leanne Alborn's cousin), Ed Chase, Betty Clark (Mike Clark's mother), Joey Eaker (Jeff & Patti Boyer's grandson), Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Peggy Schram (Doris Swanson's daughter) and Marlee Stiener.

Joys: On the birth of June Ruby Schuler, daughter of Mark & Liz Schuler.

Thanksgiving: First Lutheran Church is forever grateful for the sacrifice and service of all veterans.

Sorrows: On the deaths of Alex Fleming, brother of Adam Fleming and Larry Barnes, member.

If you wish to submit a prayer request, please visit www.firstgeneseo.org and use the password First! to access the prayer request form in the Member Access Section. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or are admitted to the hospital, please call the church office. In the event of an after-hours emergency please contact Pastor Matt at 703-505-9517.

FIRST MINISTRIES



Spotlight On...Community Christmas Dinner

Each month, we highlight an area of volunteer ministry that has "openings" for additional volunteers. This month is the Community Christmas Dinner. Volunteers share their experiences:

Margi Ficken and her family have been volunteering with the Community Christmas Dinner for over 10 years. They have helped with food preparation, serving, and meal delivery. Julie Kunkel and her husband Jeff have been volunteering since 2010.

1. Why did you decide to volunteer for this ministry? Or, why did you say "yes" when you were asked to serve?

Margi: The ministry of providing food to others or the sharing of a meal together has been a passion of mine since I was young. I was blessed to have parents who modeled service and hospitality so I served at many food banks or meal sites over the years. I volunteered to help with the Community Christmas Dinner because I love to help with any event where food and fellowship are shared. I have found great joy by seeing people come together to share in a meal on Christmas Day or have it delivered to their home.

Julie: Our families celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve. Jeff wanted to help other people that either didn't have a place to go or families to be with on Christmas. It was an opportunity to share some Christmas joy with others.

2. How is your faith strengthened by your work in this ministry?

Margi: My faith is strengthened by being God's vessel to serve those who are joining together in a meal. I have enjoyed watching the fellowship, conversation, and laughter during the meal or when bringing the meal to their home. I know that God is always in the midst which strengthens my faith.

Julie: Our faith has certainly grown through this ministry. Giving of ourselves, serving others, being there for someone isn't hard to do. Jeff is also committed to the funeral ministry and I help when I can. This ministry and the funeral ministry are absolutely amazing. I think we have both become a little more patient and more understanding regarding certain situations.

- 3. What might you say to encourage someone who is considering joining the team?

 Margi: Volunteering for this meal is rewarding and meaningful and help is always appreciated.

 Julie: It is very fulfilling and time well spent. Whether you are washing dishes, serving food, or picking up dishes and engaging in conversations, it is all time well spent. It is just one big family gathering. The kitchen is crazy. It can all be a little hectic at times, but a good hectic. Everyone has a "job" to do, and we all work together to make this an enjoyable day for everyone.
- 4. How do you get to participate in the work of "Sharing Christ's Love" by serving in this way? Margi: Sharing Christ's love is the focus of this ministry, and it is heartwarming to see the gratitude on people's faces when a meal is delivered to their door or shared in our Fellowship Room.

Julie: Strangers, people of our congregation, people who come regularly all come for the same reason: to share a meal, to share in conversations, to be welcomed. We are all gathered to give them a little grace, comfort, friendly conversation and a great meal - sharing all our gifts.

5. What do you like best about this work?

Margi: What I like best is working together with members of our church to provide a place for many to experience the birth of Christ through a meal and Christian community.

Julie: It's just a wonderful day! It's busy, it's fun. Some people have been coming year after year. It's nice to see them and they enjoy coming. They appreciate the Christmas Dinner and that's how they spend their day, just like Jeff and I do.

The Community Christmas Dinner is coordinated by Janet Larson. A sign-up is located at the Welcome Center, or you can contact Janet at 507-2997. More details about the dinner can be found on page 6.

Faithtime Kids (Wednesdays Afterschool)

Last month, we spent a lot of time in the desert! This month, we are getting ready to enter the Mystery of Christmas. We began with a discussion on the color change at church to purple, the color of kings. We wonder together about what kind of king the people expected and how God surprised them all.

FIRST MINISTRIES

All children Grades K-5

December 6 The Holy Family

December 13 The Shepherds (Faithtime Meal at 5 p.m.)
December 20 No Faithtime (Christmas Break)
December 27 No Faithtime (Christmas Break)

• Faithtime resumes January 10 ~ Mark your calendar!



Milestones Ministry

Our next Milestone event will be "Pray and Play" on January 20 from 10-10:45 a.m. for any child in pre-k. (Ages 3-4) More information to come!

Our QUEST: To Be Good Stewards & Cheerful Givers

While reading scripture to learn what God says about our monthly themes, the 6th graders in QUEST are finding that Bible language can be "weird" and "confusing." To answer our QUESTions about what the words mean, we study various versions and translations of our passages.

In November, we also turned to the dictionary to understand what STEWARDSHIP means. Did you know that a *steward* is someone who *supervises*, *manages*, or *takes care* of something? That's what God asks us to do: to take care of God's creation and all of our resources and gifts.



Time, for example, is a precious resource. The students colored a time wheel to see how they use each hour of the day. As 6th graders, much of their schedule is

set by grown-ups (the adult stewards of these young lives!) who insist that the kids sleep and go to school. Still, the students found ways to spend time praying and helping others.

We also talked about stewarding money. To practice being "cheerful givers," the students learned about 10 global and local charities, then received a stack of Monopoly money to allocate as they saw fit. These young people have big hearts; most asked if they could take a loan from the fake bank so they could do even more good!

Next: BEGINNINGS

Though the calendar year is drawing to an end, the church year is about to begin anew with Advent. So, when QUEST resumes on November 29, we'll shift our focus to BEGINNINGS. The students will be making plans to *start something new*. Will you join us?

As an always-growing child of God, what's something YOU'd like to start?

Confirmation

Confirmation Classes continue on Wednesdays, 5:45-7:00 p.m. in Conference Room A. Our lessons for December are:

December 6 — Exodus	December 20 —	No Class	(Christmas Break)
December 13 — Kings	December 27 —	No Class	(Christmas Break)

FIRST MINISTRIES

Christmas Poinsettia Garden

Poinsettias for our Christmas Garden may be ordered in memory or honor of a loved one. This year's plants will be large 4-5 bloom plants and will cost \$17. Order and payment are due by Monday, December 11.

Faithtime Meal

Our Faithtime Meal is on Wednesday, December 13, and will feature lasagna, salad, green beans, and birthday cupcakes! This month we will celebrate December birthdays and June half-birthdays. The meal is served from 5-5:45 p.m. in the Fellowship Room. No sign-up is needed. Come and see, and most importantly, eat! Take a night off and enjoy some food, fellowship, and fun!

Cost: Adults: \$5 - Children aged 3-11: \$3 Family: \$20 per household

Altar Flowers for 2024!

Altar flowers can be donated in honor or memory of a loved one, special occasion, or simply for the glory of God. We will continue to purchase arrangements from a florist as we have in the past. The cost of two arrangements is \$50. If you would like to purchase altar flowers, please sign up at the Welcome Center and place a check mark in the box next to your name if you plan to take the flowers with you after worship. Payment can be made to First Lutheran Church; if paying with a check please write "altar flowers" in the comment section.

Worship Participants Needed for Christmas Eve & Christmas Day!

Lectors, communion assistants and ushers are needed for the 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Christmas Eve services and the Christmas Day service at 10 a.m. Sign up at the Welcome Center.

Community Christmas Dinner

"We love each other as a result of Christ loving us first." 1 John 4:19

Our First Lutheran family will once again host the annual Community Christmas Dinner on Christmas Day from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for a free traditional dine-in dinner. Our mission is to bring our neighbors and friends together to celebrate Christ's birth and to extend this meal as a free gift to our community. We welcome you to join us for this warm Christmas dinner including: turkey, ham, mashed potatoes & gravy, stuffing, green bean casserole, salads and special Christmas cookies

- <u>Home delivery</u> will be provided for to those in Geneseo/Atkinson/Cambridge communities who are unable to leave their home. Home or curbside deliveries can be scheduled by calling the church office at 944-3196, Janet Larson (309) 507-2997, by December 23 to reserve meals to be delivered on 12/25.
- <u>Volunteers needed</u> to help prepare food on Saturday, December 23 and to deliver meals and set up and serve guests on Christmas Day. Please sign up at the Welcome Center if you are interested in serving this Christmas.
- <u>Christmas Cookies are needed</u> Please bake a few extra this year and drop off in the church kitchen Christmas week.

Military Cards & Care Packages

In the spirit of Christmas, Social Ministry will be sending Christmas care packages and/or cards to our military personnel who are able to receive mail. We want those serving our country to know how much we appreciate the sacrifices they are making for us. We hope you will sign their cards, and if possible, help with filling their care packages. It won't take a lot to fill the boxes, with single-serving non-perishable snacks (nuts, cookies, powdered drink mixes, etc.) as well as Crossword and Sudoku puzzle books, small personal hygiene items and AA and AAA batteries. If you are a friend or family member, personal notes and pictures are meaningful, as well as that special snack or small item you know would bring a smile to their face. Donations may be put in the gift boxes located at the display in the Fellowship Room by *December 10*. Thank you all for your continued and generous support of the Military Ministry.

Women's Ministry Cover Girls Quilting

Cover Girls is ready to start another year of quilting. We pray for the ability to continue in our mission. We would like to thank everyone for the monetary donations, sheets and material. They are put to good use in making quilts. You are invited to come to Grace Place some Wednesday morning and see what we do. December dates are the 6th, 13th, and 20th at 9 a.m. Thank you for your support.

Women's Bible Study will gather on Wednesday, December 27 at 1:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Room. We will be using the Lutheran magazine, "Gather" for our study guide. All women are welcome to join us!

FIRST MINISTRIES

First Friends

Come celebrate the Christmas season with First Friends! Christmas music by Chris Ahlstrand, a seasonal dinner of ham & scalloped potatoes, sides & dessert on Thursday, December 14 at 11:30 a.m. Cost of the meal is \$7. Please sign up at the Welcome Center or call the church office. ALL are welcome & encouraged to attend....you're only a 'first timer' once!!!

First Book Club

Come and join us for discussion on the content of the book *Visions of Sugar Plums* and faith response to the author Janet Evanovich on Thursday, December 21 at 2 p.m. in Grace Place.

It's five days before Christmas and things are not looking merry for Fugitive Apprehension Agent Stephanie Plum. She hasn't got a tree. She hasn't bought any presents. The malls are jam-packed with staggering shoppers. There's not a twinkle light anywhere to be seen in her apartment. And there's a strange man in her kitchen. Sure, this has happened to Stephanie Plum before. Strangers, weirdos, felons, creeps, and lunatics are always finding their way to her front door. But this guy is different. This guy is mysterious, sexy—and he has his own agenda. His name is Diesel and he is a man on a mission. And Diesel is unlike anyone Stephanie has ever met before in her life. The question is, what does he want with her? Can he help her find a little old toy maker who has skipped out on his bail right before Christmas? Can he survive the Plum family holiday dinner? Can he get Stephanie a tree that doesn't look like it was grown next to a nuclear power plant? Be sure to curl up and read this holiday treat — spicier than gingerbread, with more nuts than a fruitcake!

FIRST MINISTRIES

First Lutheran Preschool

Merry Christmas! All preschool children will be busy creating and wrapping gifts for their families this month. They will be learning about Christmas traditions. We will use many of the symbols of Christmas in our stories and art and we'll be identifying and sharing our blessings. We will be busy decorating our classroom tree, making Christmas cards and gifts and singing songs of the season. Both classes will present a Christmas program for their families.

• Christmas Break ~ No school from December 25-January 5, 2024. Preschool will resume on Monday, January 8, 2024.

Christmas Walk Lighted Parade

First Lutheran will once again participate in the lighted parade during the Christmas Walk on Saturday, December 9. *We need volunteers!* Here's how you can help:

- Meet in the south parking lot at church on Friday, December 8 at 10 a.m. to help assemble the float and light it up!
- Meet in the parking lot of Grace Methodist Church on Saturday, December 9 at 4:30 p.m. to walk with or ride on the float. The parade begins promptly at 5p.m.! Lighted necklaces and headbands are encouraged!
- Meet in the south parking lot at church immediately after the parade concludes to help take the float apart and put it in storage.

Sign up to help at the Welcome Center, and contact Jeff Boyer with any questions.

Advent Devotionals

Two options available on the table below the bulletin board in the Fellowship Room...choose the one that best meets your needs!

Open Before Christmas ~ Families with children How Does a Weary World Rejoice? ~ Adults of all ages

Thank You

Dear First Lutheran Church, Please accept our heartful thanks for collecting food door-to-door for the Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry. Your generosity will directly benefit the families and individuals served by the Food Pantry.

—Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry

Council Highlights for November 13, 2023

- We approved 2 funding requests: \$475 Social Ministry request for FLC Secret Santa and a request for Pastor Matt to attend a continuing education retreat in 2024.
- We discussed some amendments to our Constitution, including the changes necessitated by the Model Constitution.
- We discussed allowing a Girl Scout Troop to place a compost bin on FLC property for compost from FLC.
- We had qualified interest in both the Nursery Coordinator and Parish Accountant positions, and voted to extend employment offers to both candidates.

October Financial Report

General Fund Offering:

 October actual
 \$36,762

 October budget
 \$33,825

 YTD actual
 \$379,055

 YTD budget
 \$370,351

Net Income Over Expenses:

October actual \$1,833 surplus
October budget \$4,856 deficit
YTD actual \$12,058 deficit
YTD budget \$35,378 deficit

An Invitation for Your Congregation

FIRST MINISTRIES

The LSTC Learning Communities offer no-cost theological education programs via Zoom designed to enhance lay theological education, enrich parish learning programs, and foster a stronger relationship between the seminary and its constituent congregations.

Mark your calendar and join us!

Theological Intersectionality for the 21st Century Church

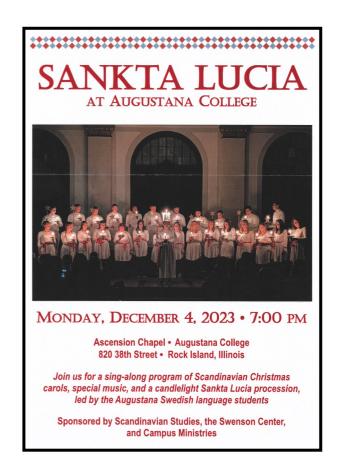
Engage in a thought-provoking 4-part series on intersectionality with LSTC'S Dr. Linda E. Thomas. Delve into the intersections of race, class, gender, and more, and explore anti-oppressionistic approaches to theology and parish life. Sunday sessions begin January 7, and Wednesday sessions begin January 10.

Stewardship 2024 ~ From Generation to Generation

Thank you to all who returned 2024 Commitment Cards. As of November 21, we have received 93 commitments, totaling \$317,978.72 toward our mission and ministry for the coming year at First Lutheran Church. We will continue to receive commitments in the offering plate, drop box or online.

HHH Community Health Series Upcoming Men's Topic: "Vision"

Men's Health Program will be held at Hammond-Henry Hospital in the first floor conference room on Wednesday, December 6 from 7 to 8 a.m. Those attending may purchase breakfast in the hospital dining room. For information or to register call Hammond-Henry Hospital at 944-9112 or email hhhfound@hammondhenry.com.



NESEO - ATKINSON

Food Pantry Collection

The Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry is collecting 100% juice, coffee, low sodium chunky soups, crackers, tortillas, laundry detergent, denture cream, deodorant, lotion, and size 4, 5, and 6 diapers to share with those in our community. Donations may be left in the basket by the church office.

Here's another easy way to make a difference for those in need! ... The Food
Pantry has a charity wish list of items currently needed on Amazon. You can even choose to have the item(s) shipped directly to the Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry, 620 W Main St., Geneseo, IL 61254. If the purchase is more than \$25 with eligible items, shipping is free. Thank you for your support! Visit geneseofoodpantry.org to see our Amazon Charity list.



Geneseo, Il 61254-1566 309-944-3196 www.firstgeneseo.org e-mail: first@firstgeneseo.org

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



On behalf of the Pastors,
President, Council and Staff
of First Lutheran Church
we wish everyone a
Merry Christmas and
a blessed New Year!

STAFF DIRECTORY

Rev. Laura Kamprath lkamprath@firstgeneseo.org

Rev. Matt Kamprath mkamprath@firstgeneseo.org

Melinda Wildermuth
Director of Worship & Music

Director of Worship & Music worship@firstgeneseo.org

Mary Jo Brummet

Parish Administrator

mjbrummet@firstgeneseo.org

Abbey Cathelyn

Director of Youth & Family Ministry youth@firstgeneseo.org

Linda Bloomberg

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} Reception is t \\ reception is t @ first genese o. org \\ \end{tabular}$

Jim Luikart, Parish Accountant jluikart@firstgeneseo.org

Patsy Andress, Financial Secretary financials@firstgeneseo.org

Charlene Daniels, Custodian cdaniels@firstgeneseo.org

Larry Lord, Livestream Technician

COUNCIL

Lance Camp—President
Lendol Calder—Vice-President
Kathy Heller—Secretary
Mike Ficken—Treasurer

Jeff Boyer, Mike Eckwall, Cindy Groene, Jill Laingen, Lorrie Lord, John Peters, Linda Sheley

Meeting Schedule:

Cabinet — December 11 Ministries — December 11 Council — December 18

PRESCHOOL STAFF

Misty Slaymaker, *Director*Margi Ficken
preschool@firstgeneseo.org

NEXT CHIMES DEADLINE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

OFFICE HOURS

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Permit No. 91

Geneseo, IL

Monday-Tuesday-Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Wednesday

8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Friday Office Closed

Closed for Lunch ~ Noon-1 p.m.

STAFF SCHEDULE

Rev. Laura Kamprath Monday-Thursday

Rev. Matt Kamprath

Monday & Wednesday

Melinda Wildermuth Monday-Thursday

Mary Jo Brummet

Monday-Thursday

Abbey Cathelyn

Monday-Thursday

Linda Bloomberg

Monday-Thursday, select hours