***The Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church***

***Lindy, Nebraska***

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**The Rod and Staff**



**November and December 2020**

**The Worst Time to Be Alive?**

***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***

* **John 1:5 ESV**

It has been quite a year, has it not? To be honest, this year of 2020 A.D. has been for me something of a blur. In some ways, it feels as though it has gone quickly. In other ways, it feels as though it has dragged on forever. It seems like not long ago that many of us were in lockdown mode, rarely venturing outside of the home. I remember recording and posting sermons. I remember getting excited about taking necessary trips to the grocery store. At the same time, there has been so much activity this year, much of it negative, that I can hardly wait for the moment we get to leave 2020 A.D. in the rearview mirror. Now, my own children have at different times been required to quarantine due to coronavirus exposure. Everything is unpredictable. I am still processing my personal feelings about this year, and that process might take a good long while. The appearance of COVID-19 and its far-reaching effects, rioting and social unrest, and a bruising election season here in the United States will make this year memorable, even if that memory is one we would like to forget.

I have heard some people claim that this year, 2020 A.D., must be the worst time in human history. For some, they say this as a joke. Others are serious. It helps to have some historical perspective.

Beginning in the year 536 A.D., most of Europe was engulfed by darkness for at least eighteen months. Can you imagine? The Roman politician Cassiodorus commented, “We marvel to see no shadows of our bodies at noon.” He went on, “The seasons seem to be all jumbled up together.” Reports by others of the time are similar. What was this all about?

Historians believe that a volcanic explosion from Iceland was responsible for the massive cloud of smoke that blocked out the sun from most of Europe during that time. This explosion had far reaching effects. The temperature of Europe dropped significantly. That and the lack of sunlight led to widespread crop failures. This led to massive starvation. This also led to an occurrence of the Bubonic plague a few years later. Estimates are that as much as a third of the population of the Byzantine Empire (the remnant of the Roman Empire in the East) was dead by the time things returned to normal. This was, according to some, the worst time to be alive.

At least for now, the sunlight has not been blocked out of the sky for us in 2020 A.D. At the same time, this has been a challenging year on a lot of levels. And there is no guarantee that the coming year will be much better. We will likely continue to live with the effects of this coronavirus for some time to come. If history teaches us anything, it is that we cannot expect that things will ever be perfect on this side of eternity. We live in the world in which we have been placed. But while we do, we have faith that Jesus, the light of the world, is still shining for us to see with the eyes of faith.

This time of year is often known as the “holiday season.” For most of our world, the “holiday season” begins with Thanksgiving and goes through the New Year. There is nothing wrong with this, and in such an odd time, the familiarity of our Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions might have special meaning for us. I pray that the chaos of the world would, if anything, help us to look at what is truly important in life. At Christmas, we remember that Jesus Christ, the light of the world, appeared for the first time. He is alive for us today.

God calls us to faithfulness in hearing his Word that brings life and salvation, even in dark times. There are no guarantees in life from day to day. But while we have breath, we are called to praise and serve the Lord as a congregation and as individuals. May it be so among us as we conclude this year and move into the next.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present. They form a “great cloud of witnesses” as we remain pilgrims and strangers on earth (Hebrews 12:1).

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For November and December of 2020, we remember the life of **Søren Aabye Kierkegaard**, a Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic, and religious author. He lived from 1813 to 1855 and is commemorated on November 11.

The life and influence of Søren Kierkegaard is difficult to describe or summarize adequately in a few words and phrases. Some observe that his writings are negative and gloomy, perhaps reflecting his personal disappointments in life. But more importantly, Kierkegaard is known for his emphasis on a person’s experience of faith as absolute commitment to God, even when faced with opposition from outside and within. He was critical of what he called “cultural Christianity” and the state Lutheran Church of Denmark, as he felt it reduced Christianity to formality and outward participation in rituals. For Kierkegaard, the true meaning of life comes from a person’s radical commitment to the will of God. So, even though Martin Luther from the 1500s did not think that the letter of James in the New Testament was the most important book of the Bible, Kierkegaard placed it at the top of his list. He believed that the message found in the letter of James, namely that faith needs to be accompanied by our works and outward commitment, was much neglected in his time. Kierkegaard was an advocate for an active and committed faith among church members. His writings have influenced the fields of philosophy, psychology, and theology.

*Heavenly Father, whose beloved Son Jesus Christ felt sorrow and dread in the Garden of Gethsemane: help us to remember that, even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death and desolation, you are ever with us, that, encouraged by the writings of Søren Kierkegaard and others, we may believe where we have not seen, trust where we cannot test, and so come at last to the eternal joy which you have prepared for us, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever. Amen.* (Prayer from justus.anglican.org).

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

***What man, if he were God, would humble himself to lie in the feedbox of a donkey or the hang upon a cross?***

**Martin Luther (1483-1546)**

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Ten Commandments**

***The Introduction***

*I am the Lord your God.*

***The First Commandment***

*You shall have no other gods before me.*

***What does this mean?***

*We should fear, love, and trust God above all things.*

**Featured Hymn for November and December**

***Prepare the Royal Highway***

*(Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home 102)*

Prepare the royal highway, the King of kings is near; let every hill and valley a level road appear. Then greet the king of glory foretold in sacred story: [Refrain]

*Refrain: Hosanna to the Lord! For he fulfills God’s Word!*

God’s people, see him coming: your own eternal king! Palm branches strew before him; spread garments; shout and sing. God’s promise will not fail you; no more shall doubt assail you: [Refrain]

Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king; your king, yet every nation its tribute too should bring. All lands, bow down before him; all voices, thus adore him: [Refrain]

His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heaven above. His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love. So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding: [Refrain]

Text: Franz Mikael Franzen (1772-1847)

Trans: Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978

*Franzen, an accomplished writer and bishop of the Northern Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, worked to eradicate the scourge of drink among his people.*

**Monthly Watchword for November**

“With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back.”

* Jeremiah 31:9 ESV

**Ushers for November and December:**

* Head Ushers (November):
  + Randy and Karen Hanson
* Ushers:
  + Les and Amy Johnson
  + Jamie and Mica Olson
  + Jim and Sarah Petersen
  + Dave and Diane Kumm
  + Ashley Guenther
* Head Ushers (December)
  + Keith and Donna Nielsen
* Ushers:
  + Gene Eckmann
  + Tony and Brenda Petersen
  + Kris True
  + Kathy Koops
  + Dylan Kauth

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**Martin Luther’s Morning Prayer**

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I ask you to protect me this day also from sin and every evil, that in all I do today I may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all that is mine. Let you holy angel watch over me, that the wicked foe have no power over me. Amen.

**Birthdays for November and December**

*Note: This list of birthdays is a work in progress, as we are currently trying to gather membership information from the old congregational record into an electronic form. If your name is not listed in the appropriate month, please let pastor know your birthday so that it can be added in the future. If you would not like your name to be listed, simply let pastor know. The birthdays are provided here as a way of giving thanks for the lives of members of the congregation. Happy birthday to all!*

* November 5: Richard Beckmann
* November 5: Jesse Eisenhauer
* November 26: Natalie Cross Peetz
* November 27: Tony Petersen
* December 4: Regg Eckmann
* December 9: Margo Poppe
* December 13: Jaiden Johnson
* December 21: Patty Kumm
* December 25: Doug Stewart
* December 31: Samantha Stewart

**Baptismal Anniversaries for November and December**

*Note: Just as it is important to acknowledge the beginning of our earthly lives with our birthdays, it is even more important for us as Christians to remember the day when God has given us a new birthday, a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Lutherans confess that baptism is the means by which God gives us as a part of sinful humanity a new relationship with him, a promise that our faith can look to all our lives. In turn, we are called to a life of repentance and faith that trusts in Christ as our salvation. As with the birthdays, this list is a work in progress. Blessed baptismal anniversaries to everyone!*

* November 1: Tim Jessen
* November 11: Perry Kolterman
* November 12: Madisen Petersen
* November 13: Beverly Kumm
* November 14: Marlin Kumm
* November 15: Jeff Barger
* November 18: Connie McDonald
* November 23: Jake Eckmann
* November 29: Sarah Arens
* December 9: James Carlow
* December 18: Jesse Eisenhauer
* December 24: Del Cross

**Weekly Watchwords**

Note: These “watchwords” for each week can be considered “theme verses” on which to reflect for the week.

**Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost (All Saints Sunday) (11/1/20):** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. – Romans 12:21 RSV

**Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost (11/8/20):** Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. – 2 Corinthians 6:2 RSV

**Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost (11/15/20):** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. – 2 Corinthians 5:10 RSV

**Last Sunday of the Church Year (Christ the King Sunday) (11/22/20):** Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning. – Luke 12:35 ESV

**First Sunday of Advent (11/29/20):** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.– Zechariah 9:9 ESV

**Second Sunday of Advent (12/6/20):** Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. – Luke 21:28 RSV

**Third Sunday of Advent (12/13/20):** A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”– Isaiah 40:3 RSV

**Fourth Sunday of Advent (12/20/20):** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. – Philippians 4:4-5 RSV

**First Sunday after Christmas (12/27/20):** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. – John 1:14 RSV

**Shepherd’s Garden**

The Shepherd’s Garden began a number of years ago and has been supported by the dedication of many church members in that time. Though the garden has just been cleaned up for the winter, we include this reminder that the Shepherd’s Garden, located behind the church building, is available in the spring, summer, and autumn for anyone, church member or not, desiring a quiet place for prayer and reflection. In the Bible, gardens appear at significant points. It is our hope that the Shepherd’s Garden can be of service to our world in encouraging people to pray and listen to God.

**Important Announcements**

* Many thanks to everyone who participated in the cleanup for the Shepherd’s Garden! Without your help, this initiative would not be able to continue.
* We continue to meet for in-person worship at the church at the usual time of 10:30. We have been taking and will continue to practice the following precautions in light of COVID-19:
  + Hand sanitizer is available at the entrance to the sanctuary.
  + Bulletins are placed in every other pew in order to encourage some distance in seating.
  + Masks are available to wear if you prefer.
  + We will not engage in any greeting time after worship.
  + For the distribution of Holy Communion, we will do so at the altar rail, with family units invited to come forward on either side. Pastor will use hand sanitizer before the distribution and will drop the bread in open hands. Wine cups are spaced apart in the trays for you to take as Pastor comes by with the tray. Pastor will also wear a mask during the distribution.
* Pr. Tom has begun the practice of recording short devotions of around fifteen minutes each, usually every other week. These recorded devotions involve a time of morning, evening, or afternoon prayer, a Bible reading and brief comment on it, as well as a hymn. These devotions may be accessed on the church Facebook page as well as on the church website: gselclindy.weebly.com
* In November, we will have the special Thanksgiving worship service on Wednesday evening (November 25) before Thanksgiving Day, at 7:00 PM; this year has been strange and challenging, but there is still much for which to be thankful.
* The Christmas Eve worship service will be held on December 24 at 5:00 PM.
* Stay posted for information on the November annual meeting. In addition to usual business, we will need to vote as a congregation on some proposed changes to the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) constitution, which were proposed and approved by the convocation at the online meeting in August. As a part of the NALC’s structure, whenever major changes are proposed and approved by a vote of the convocation, such changes need to be ratified by a majority of the member congregations. The proposed change has to do with changing the frequency of the NALC national convocation. Currently, the national convocation is held annually. Partially because of the expense of holding the convocation, some believe that it should be changed to holding the convocation every other year.
* Confirmation class will not be held on November 25, December 23, or December 30 due to the holidays.
* As we began at the beginning of the school year, we will continue using a different set of Bible readings (lectionary) on Sunday mornings. This “Narrative Lectionary” includes a single main preaching text along with an accompanying reading. It is an opportunity to become more familiar with the Holy Scriptures, hearing the stories of the Bible in chronological order, beginning with the book of Genesis.

What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of days has become an infant. He Who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. And He Who cannot be touched, Who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infant’s bands. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.

**John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.) “Homily on Christmas Morning”**

**November 2020**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| 1  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  All Saints Sunday  White | 2 | 3 | 4    Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  Green | 9 | 10 | 11  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45  Church council, 7:00 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  Green | 16 | 17 | 18  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s meeting, 10:00  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  Christ the King Sunday  White | 23 | 24 | 25  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Thanksgiving Worship, 7:00 PM | 26  Thanksgiving Day | 27 | 28 |
| 29  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  First Sunday of Advent  Blue | 30 |  |  | | | |
|  |  |  |  | | | |

**December 2020**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  | 1 | 2    Pr. Tom in Lindy    Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  Second Sunday of Advent  Blue | 7 | 8 | 9  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45  Church council meeting, 7:00 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  Third Sunday of Advent  Blue | 14 | 15 | 16  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s meeting, 10:00 ?  Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  Fourth Sunday of Advent  Blue | 21 | 22 | 23  Pr. Tom in Lindy  No confirmation class | 24  Christmas Eve worship, 7:00  White | 25  Christmas Day | 26 |
| 27  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  White | 28 | 29 | 30 31  Pr. Tom in Lindy  No confirmation  class | | | |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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