

THE PATHFINDER

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Phone (715) 762-4107

Publisher CTS Volume 36 Issue 12 December 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In Sundays and Seasons, the ELCA worship planning guide, I found a sentence that really resounded with me as I was writing this letter.

In this season when the cultural gravity pushes us down the hill to Christmas way too fast, it's time to apply the brakes and slow down." p. 21

Advent in the church year is a time to ponder, to reflect, to pause and let the Holy Spirit work in us as we lead up to the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus. Yet, our world tells us just the opposite by announcing how many shopping days until Christmas. At least this is how things in our world, used to be until 2020 was changed by COVID 19. Our world is up side down now and people are grasping for ways to deal with the approaching holiday season.

In the series we are using this Advent called "Prepare Ye", we will be looking at different ways we can prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child on Christmas. We will take clues from the psalms as well as from those that were intimately involved in the story of how Jesus came to earth as a human being. Our goal will be to "Prepare Ye" to open our hearts for God's love, born in the stable to be with us all.

We will "Ponder" the meaning of birth of Jesus. We will "Pray" as we await the babe born in the manger. We will "Praise" God for salvation through Jesus. We will "Proclaim" Jesus as the Savior of the world. These will be the messages for the four Sundays prior the Christmas beginning November 29th. Along with this series, I will have a special Bible study on Sunday mornings for those who want to dig a little deeper into our response to Isaiah's cry to "prepare the way of the Lord".

I have also purchased devotionals for each family in our congregation to complement their walk through Advent, on the way to the stable in Bethlehem.

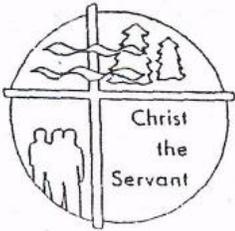
I hope you will take advantage of this series to "Prepare Ye" during December so we don't let the cultural gravity of the world race us through this most precious season on the Church year. Things may look different this year in how we shop, decorate, and gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but don't let that get in your way of pondering the reason for this sacred event; God sent Love to walk among us.

From our house to yours, Rodney and I would like to wish you all a blessed Advent and a wonderful Christmas!

In the Joy of Jesus,
Pastor Gwen



"Christians Serving God By Serving Others"



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A Season of Peace, Real Inner Peace

Everyday is the same now; one more monotonous than the last. Get up, go to school, come home, work, sleep. You'd hope as the holidays come around that things would liven up and be all sparkly, but rather the opposite seems the case. Work gains importance as Christmas draws ever nearer and all else loses meaning.



I curled up under my quilt last evening and thought of how much more 'real' Christmas used to seem. Does all of the charm and excitement just go away as one gets older and get replaced by fear, anxiety and outside pressures? I used to think that being 18 would be the nicest age imaginable, but that is just as much of a childish fantasy as Santa Claus.

As I pondered this thought, it hit me. We always look to the future for answers, like the child who hopes their wish will come true under the tree. What about all those gorgeous memories? Isn't that alone enough to make us yearn for the future? All of those wonderful noises and smells, of clattering dishes, out of tune carols, and salty roast potatoes and rich gravy; the compulsory family time.

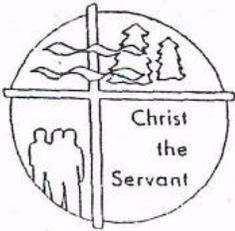
With the toll our hectic lives take on communication, this should have been sheer bliss. Presents used to seem so exciting, tearing off the paper in shreds to reveal the gift below, but now the joy truly seems in the giving.

When I awoke this morning, I decided that to fully appreciate Christmas this year, I have to block out all the negative, and truly embrace the spirit; the spirit of waiting for wonderful things the future has to offer, of what the past has taught, and of the beautiful gifts God has given me.

This way joy radiates around, and you feel like you can conquer anything before the holidays arrive with all their beauty. I really can be a season of peace, of inner peace.

Esther Harper

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Office Hours for Pastor - December 2020

December 1st	2:00-5:00 pm
December 3rd	9:00-12:00 pm
December 8th	2:00-5:00 pm
December 10th	9:00-12:00 pm
December 15th	2:00-5:00 pm
December 17th	9:00-12:00 pm
December 22nd	2:00-5:00 pm
December 24th	No Office Hours
December 29th	No Office Hours
December 31st	No Office Hours

Please note the change in Pastor Gwen's hours from Monday and Wednesday to Tuesday and Thursday!

Men's Group—Thursday

December 3rd	5:00-6:00 pm
December 10th	5:00-6:00 pm
December 17th	5:00-6:00 pm
December 24th	No Men's Group
December 31st	No Men's Group

Women's Quilting Group—Thursday

December 3rd	9:30 am
December 10th	9:30 am
December 17th	9:30 am

Bible Study

Sunday following Worship

December 6th
December 13th

Sunday Tuesday School

December 8th	4:00 –5:00 pm
December 22nd	4:00 –5:00 pm

Confirmation

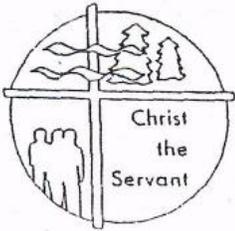
December 1st	2:30-3:30 pm
December 8th	2:30-3:30 pm
December 15th	2:30-3:30 pm
December 22nd	2:30-3:30 pm

Open Sanctuary

December 3rd	10:00 am –noon
December 15th	4:00 –6:00 pm



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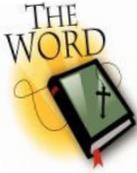
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December Bible Readings

December 6th 2nd Sunday of Advent

Genesis 28:10-17

1 Timothy 2:1-6

Luke 1:5-25

December 13, 2020 3rd Sunday of Advent

Exodus 15:1-3

Philippians 4:4-8

Luke 1:39-45

December 20, 2020 4th Sunday of Advent

Deuteronomy 32:2-4

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Luke 3:1-16

December 27, 2020

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Psalms 148

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:22-40

Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed...

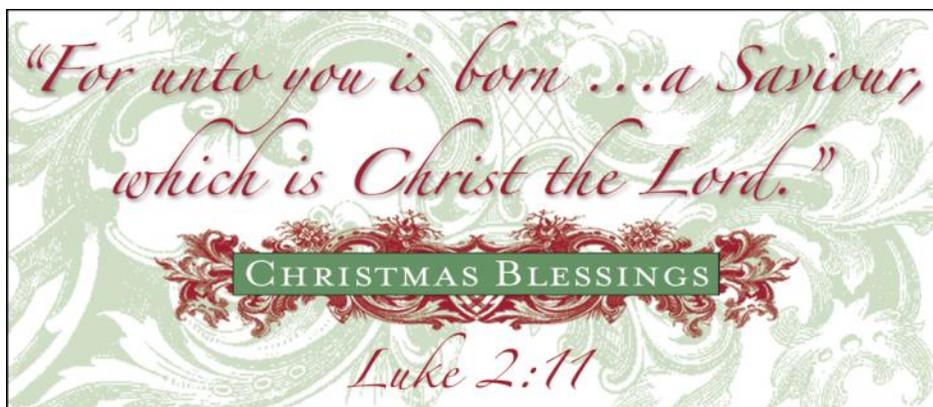
James 5:16.

Please remember these people and requests in your prayers.

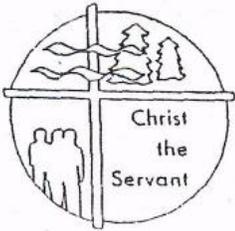
Health/ Concerns: Dale, Scott, Margaret, Tom, Liam, Davis, Burt, Mary, Norma Jean, Angie, Dave, Mary, Ronnie, Jean, and Pete.

Military - Anton, Allesa Marrie and Natalie.

CTS Church Council, Men's Group, WELCA, Quilting Ministry, Adult Bible Studies, CTS Youth, AIDS orphans in Malawi, Hunger and poverty in the world, and those struggling with the Coronavirus.



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Important Information

Men's group meets on Thursday evenings from 5:00-6:00 p.m. All men are welcome to join in. You can call Mike Roberts or Terry Tarras for more information.

Bible study. Bible study continues on Sunday mornings after worship. Our Advent series is called "Prepare Ye". There is no homework or study guide needed. Come and join us.

Due to the mandate by our Governor, masks are required when in our building. Social distancing of 6 feet should also be observed as well. Masks, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes are available throughout the building.

Something New- Pastor Gwen will be hosting an open sanctuary time twice during the month. December 15 from 4-6 p.m. and December 3 from 10 to noon, the sanctuary will be open for private prayer during that time. Pastor will be available to serve Holy Communion if requested. Private Holy Communion can also be requested for other times by making an appointment with Pastor Gwen.

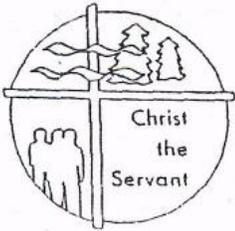
Christmas Eve Service will be held at 6:30 pm on Christmas Eve.



Worship Volunteer Schedule December 2020

Date	Assisting Minister	Altar Guild	Greeter/Usher
December 6th	Terry Tarras	Jill Nelson	Mary Rusch & Dave Shaw
December 13th	Pat Brosier	Margaret McCulloh	R.B. & Beth Melvold
December 20th	Mary Rusch	Ann Wojcieszak	Chuck & Barb Schindhelm
December 24th Christmas Eve			Paul & Nancy Miller
December 27th		Pat Knutson	

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The CRISIS of CHRISTMAS

Dear Members and Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

Christmas 2020 will occur while we are living through of a series of crises. Here's the list: the pandemic, economic losses, protests against racial injustices, an ongoing climate crisis, and a divided country following a contentious presidential election. I'm not going to lie, it's been stressful for me, and I imagine it has been for you, too. As Christians, we have been moving through these crisis-filled days with the expectation that God is present and God's promises are true. We move forward with hope.

The two Chinese characters for the word “**crisis**,” 危机, have often been translated as “danger” and “opportunity.” Others say that a better translation is “danger” and “change point.” What dangers do you see as your congregation moves toward celebrating the Birth of our Savior – Christmas - in a totally new way? What “opportunities” or “change points” do you see that could propel your church forward in a positive way into God's future?

Mary experienced a theological crisis when the angel Gabriel revealed to her God's plan to enter this world by the baby in her womb. Mary's body was the center of a theological crisis - much like the theological crisis caused by a virus that has invaded the bodies of our loved ones, and the theological crisis of abused and broken black and brown bodies, and the theological crisis experienced in the misuse of this planet on which all bodies live. Where is God in the crisis? What does this mean?

In a crisis, God comes to us. John 1:1,14 *In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and lived among us.* Jesus is God, divine *and* human. God took up residence and moved into our neighborhood. God goes where God's people go and is who the people are. This is the theological promise of John's gospel. God is present with us in our times of crisis and suffering. This is the foundation of Luther's theology of the cross.

God is revealed through the crisis of Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' untimely birth in a Bethlehem barn. God is revealed in the crucifixion; through the body of Jesus, hanging on a cross. God is revealed through the risen body of Jesus on Easter Morning.

No matter how different Christmas is for you this year, no matter what crisis arises, God is there, present as promised, in the WORD made flesh. May the story of Jesus' birth bring you much needed joy and hope this holiday season and may the presence of God comfort you in the new year.

AMEN

Photo credit: Design by Artist Paul Johnson for the 2019 Concordia College Christmas Concert Mural
Thank you to Dr. Karoline Lewis for her thought provoking presentation to NWSWI on 11/7/2020 that inspired this article.

Dr. Karoline Lewis, Working Preacher.org, Dec. 2016

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