



## Church Newsletter December 2020

# The Parish Messenger

### **Mission Statement**

We are a Christian community rooted in God's love growing in Christ through reaching out and serving.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF  
TRINITY AND GEORGETOWN LUTHERAN CHURCHES

## **Worship Times**

### Georgetown

Worship 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School 9:00 a.m.  
Sept.-May

### Trinity

Worship 9:00 a.m.  
Sunday School 10:15  
a.m. Sept.-May



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## **Contact Information**

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## **Join us for Advent Worship!**

On Wednesdays during Advent, Pastor Diane will be posting Advent Worship Videos put together by the staff of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. You can find these videos on either church's Facebook page and they will be sent as the Wednesday devotion by email. Please use these videos for your Advent at-home worship!

# PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

by Pastor Diane House

Today I am pondering verses from scripture for the first Sunday of Advent such as:

“O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.” Isaiah 64

“Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.” Psalm 80

“Jesus said, ‘In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken...But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.’” Mark 13

We will hear these words on the first Sunday in Advent as we begin the forty day period of waiting for the coming of God in the incarnation. We are waiting for more than the baby, Jesus, we are actually waiting for the coming of Christ at the end of all time. This is when God will make all of creation and all creatures new. We will be healed of all the sin that ails us and makes living in relationship with God and with each other so difficult.

That difficulty certainly has been revealed in this notorious year of 2020. I find myself pondering this second coming with yearning, saying along with the Psalmist, “Stir up your power and come!” Here at the end of a very long and trying year it is tempting to feel stuck...stuck in the difficulty, the division, the social isolation of a pandemic. We hear Jesus describe the coming of the Son of Man with the sun and moon darkened, and stars falling from the heavens, etc. and it can sound like a dire and horrible warning. It may match our darker moods, but it certainly isn't something we would yearn for.

But, we do yearn for God to act on our behalf. We expect God to show up and show us what is expected of us as disciples. We pray for the discernment to set aside our dark mood, our doubts and fears so that we can see the way ahead.

We really look at the suffering of the people God loves and we want to be part of God's healing of creation. Here in Advent, as we prepare for the Christmas celebrations that we know and love which will probably be spent in a very different way than in the past, let's not lose hope. Let's ponder and pray about ways we can be part of bringing God's healing to our communities and out world.

I invite you to begin by praying this hymn:

"Rebuilding Starts with Weeping," can be sung to the tune of "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" (Passion Chorale) by Amanda Udis-Kessler

“Rebuilding starts with weeping, with tears that fall like rain,  
With full and honest grieving for years of loss and pain,  
For suffering and sorrow that never had to be.  
Rebuilding starts with weeping for all who are not free.

**Rebuilding starts with praying**, with hopes allowed a voice,  
With visions for our country, with reason to rejoice.  
We offer up our spirits, our hearts and minds and hands.  
Rebuilding starts with praying for strength to heal our land.

**Rebuilding starts with loving**, with care for every soul,  
With yearning in compassion that all may yet be whole,  
That enemy and neighbor may know a better day.  
Rebuilding starts with loving, for love will show the way.”

**May God's love show us the way!** Blessings and Peace,  
Pastor Diane





## The CRISIS of CHRISTMAS<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> - 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.

*Rev. Lauri M. Olson*

Amen

<sup>1</sup> Photo credit: Design by Artist Paul Johnson for the 2019 Concordia College Christmas Concert Mural

<sup>2</sup> Thank you to Dr. Karoline Lewis for her thought provoking presentation to NWSWI on 11/7/2020 that inspired this article.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Karoline Lewis, Working Preacher.org, Dec. 2016

# Announcements

## Luminary Display

You are invited to come and view a holiday Luminary Display! On December 13th from 5-8 p.m. A Holiday Luminary Display will be presented around the Trinity Lutheran Church parking lot. You can drive around the display and enjoy the Christmas music that will be playing. Please put your headlights on the lowest setting as you drive around the display. Come and enjoy this creative way to share the message of Christmas!



## Confirmation Schedule

Students and parents, please check your email for lessons on Wednesday, December 2 and 16. Answers the questions in the lessons and reply to Pastor Diane. Thanks!



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## Christmas Eve Worship

Just like everything in the year 2020, Christmas Eve worship will be the same and yet different this year. It will be different because the service will be virtual and posted on both Georgetown's and Trinity's Facebook pages, as well as YouTube. It will be the same, because the worship service that will be filmed and posted will be the traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight service. So, we invite you to gather with those who have been sheltering with you, turn down the lights in your home, light up the Christmas tree as well as some candles and worship together in the comfort and safety of your home! You will hear the familiar biblical texts and Pastor Diane will share the Christmas story and a brief message. You can enjoy singing the familiar carols together. You can find and watch the service at the time that works best for you. It is our hope that this will be a devotional and meaningful time of worship for you and your family as you celebrate Christmas and welcome the newborn Christ child into your homes and hearts.

# Georgetown/Trinity Joint Council Meeting

November 17, 2020

Meeting was held via conference call.

**Members present:** Steven Anderson (TR president), Tim Frendt (GT president), Robin Denver, Gretchen Frendt, Pastor Diane House, Tom Levi, Roberta Hansen (GT Treasurer), John Gall, Sherry Doornick, Kathy Grenquist (TR Treasurer), Jody Benfit, JoAnn Sellent, Christine Anderson (TR secretary), Stephanie Fansler, Judy Gammel, Keith Ward. **Absent:** Denis Wiese, Debbie Wickstrom

Meeting called to order by Georgetown President, Tim Frendt  
Opened with devotions and prayer led by Pastor Diane House.  
Past minutes were read aloud by Christine Anderson. Motion to approve the minutes as written was made by Sherry Doornick and seconded by JoAnn Sellent. Minutes approved.

## Old Business:

Steve Hansen has agreed to look at the egress window in the parsonage to see about finishing it off.

## New Business:

### **Annual Review discussion:**

Council discussed together things that were going well and areas for improvement for the future. We considered items from the constitution in the area of Worship/Mutual Ministry, Care for the needs of the congregation and Responding to needs of our communities. The flexibility of each congregation to change and experiment throughout the pandemic have been positives. The councils asked about ways to support our pastor during this stressful time. Strategies for reaching out to congregation members without internet connections were also discussed. We all need to continue to think creatively in our current situation.

### **Pastor Salary for 2021:**

Given the pandemic's potential influence on giving, the council discussed no salary increase for 2021. Other benefits (health insurance, pension, vacation, continuing education, etc) would remain the same. Pastor Diane supported this decision. Gretchen Frendt made a motion that pastor's salary have no increase for 2021. Seconded by Robin Denver. Motion carried.

### **Shared Budget questions:**

Questions about the shared internet and phone costs were discussed. Roberta and Kathy will provide a summary of how that expense is currently working. This will help Trinity's council in deciding how to set up internet at Trinity.

### **Worship:**

Thank you to Gretchen Frendt and Sherry Doornick for their continued work on the Facebook Live worship services!

Councils decided to move to all virtual worship. Covid is moving quickly through our communities and we need to do the best we can to contain it. The councils looked at the Wisconsin Health department/Badger Bounce Back plan and the White House gathering criteria for opening and both contain 14 day reduction in new cases as a step to re-opening. Therefore, the councils will watch for this criteria and then consider next possible steps. This means, it is very unlikely there will be no in-person Christmas worship.

Copying worship onto a DVD may be an option for those without internet. Gretchen will look into this.

**Advent/Christmas:**

- Councils discussed ways to provide worship experiences for families to use virtually, as well as a possible drive-through nativity display.
- Advent kits will be assembled and delivered to families with children and those with no internet resources.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by JoAnn Sellent/Sherry Doornick. Meeting adjourned.

Closing prayer

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Anderson