

***The Monthly Newsletter Publication of Triune Lutheran Church***  
***“Set Free to Serve One Another”***  
***December 2019***

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Office Hours:  
Monday & Wednesday, 10AM-1PM

Worship Schedule:  
Saturdays 5PM (contemporary)  
Sundays 11AM (traditional)

Ministers.....All People  
Pastor.....Brad Ross  
Administrative Assistant.....Jan Piskac  
Organist.....Edith Schatt  
Council President.....Dale Kirk  
Council Vice-President.....Bonnie Piskac  
Council Secretary.....Bill Weidman  
Council Treasurer.....Jack Schwab



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Triune Lutheran Church



**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Sisters & brothers in Christ,

I've started to wonder, as we approach this time of year, if us Christians should get on the same page about something, come up with some kind of game-plan (not that the Lutherans can agree on almost anything, let alone Christians everywhere, but minor detail). And I'm not talking about when sanctuaries can be decorated in Christmas-anything to ensure Advent gets its due end-times awareness, not to mention when pastors can actually be allowed to type out C----mas-anything when it comes to general publications. Instead, I'm thinking we should come to a basic understanding as to how we handle the seemingly infinite opportunities when we're greeted with the politically correct, "Happy Holidays!"

Over the recent years, I've heard there's this "war" on C---mas. I'm assuming it has something to do with that "Happy Holidays!" greeting, and a few places that no longer host nativity scenes on their courthouse or fire station lawns. So, among our various Christian-ish responses to that greeter at the main entrance to the store or the cashier, who basically serves as the line of defense before we break free of that stress-inducing chamber of more humanity galore; we just "kindly" smile, remembering our C----mas-loving mother instilling in us to not say anything if we have nothing nice (even during C----mas) to say at all, or...we boldly assert, "Merry C----mas!" Otherwise, the more "Happy holidays!" than "Merry C----mas!"es, means this "war" is being lost on our watch.

Hopefully most of us Christians can agree we should go easy on the *war* hyperbole, since there are actual human beings dying in military engagements all over the world. Hopefully...*hopefully*, most of us Christians can get back to our theology basics in recognizing that C----mas isn't so much dependent on our word choice anyway. It's already happened, after all. God's already done it. Jesus was already born. . He's already been born in us. God isn't waiting around to become Emmanuel again based on how well we do

the whole C----mas celebration. No matter how convincing we assert “Merry C-----mas,” it isn’t going to make Christ come more than Christ already has among us.

Living in Cleveland Heights, we have a fair amount of synagogues around our general vicinity. Not to mention, only a few miles away are two rather diverse workforces in the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals and even students from all over the world at Case Western. So, the cashier ringing out the Chipotle-lovers near the corner of Euclid and E. 116<sup>th</sup>, might have to stick with “Happy Holidays!” And even if she/he does there or any other retail outlet across the Western world, what can I say? At least, for me, it’s not gonna affect the Incarnation reality, because that’s already in full effect. After all, this Lord of ours didn’t wait around for us to get whatever wording right, before he decided to make his rather humble, but eternal-altering, appearance.

Nevertheless, we Christians are determined to keep *our* Christ in C-----mas in spite of commercialism and everything else. Evidently, we’re under the impression a two-word emphatic statement is our rallying cry. Of course, there’s a little more to the whole C-----mas thing, not to mention the Emmanuel reality, and the whole ministry of Jesus Christ to the world, including to the “Happy Holidays!” smiling greeters. Yet again, this year, this quote will make its rounds from author Steve Maraboli:

*Want to keep Christ in [C-----mas]?*

*Feed the hungry,  
clothe the naked,  
forgive the guilty,  
welcome the unwanted,  
care for the ill,  
love your enemies,  
and do unto others as you would have done unto you.*

And even for us liturgically-appropriate Lutherans, we don’t have to wait around until after Advent for this, or just for twelve days. This is an everyday operation. It isn’t so much about keeping Christ in a certain day or time of year, because he already made the decision to be born here, die here, and return to life here, right here, still, right alongside us. We already have him. We have the Messiah more than ready to keep the 365 day/year love operation going full-Gospel-strength, including through us. Amen (so let it be, o God)!

In Christ,  
Pastor Brad

From your entire Triune Lutheran Church family, we wish you and yours a wonderful Christmas and a great start to 2020! May you experience the comfort and joy of Christ not only during this Christmas season, but through all the days of your life!





We ask you to keep the following sisters and brothers in Christ in your prayers:

Jenny Adams  
Bev Deitrick  
Cathy Gallagher  
Kelly Gilbert  
Richard Jakubcin  
John Kurtz  
Jean Kurtz  
Tim Mize

Mary Phillips  
Hazel Schwab  
Courtney Spencer  
George Tomaselli  
Martha Wasson  
Mardell Weiss  
Clara Wilcox  
Dave Wilcox

If you wish to send any cards, please send them, or drop them off, to the church office, and we will be sure to deliver them.

1 Bill Deitrick  
14 Nathan Schatt  
23 Sarah Bailey



29 Brad & Becky Murphy



WHAT TO BELIEVE? HOW TO BEHAVE?

Monday Bible study/discussion group has started delving into Paul's letter to the Roman church.

Our final Fall meeting will be December 2. After a holiday break, we will resume meeting on Monday, January 13, 1 PM.

JOIN US ANY TIME!



# Mitten Tree



Our mitten tree will be up until Christmas, which gives all of us a special opportunity to provide mittens, hats, scarves, socks and other small winter clothing items to the surrounding community through the Redeemer Crisis Center. So, bring in any such items in new condition during office hours, or before or after worship on the weekends, as we do our part to help our sisters and brothers in Christ!

A special thank you to everyone who participated in making gift cards available for the Adopt-a-Family program through the Brecksville-Broadview Heights Human Services Department! We are grateful for the opportunity to give back to local families in need.



We invite you to join us on Christmas Eve at **5PM** as we worship Christ, our Lord.

The service will be of Lessons & Carols, telling the story of God's love coming to life all the more in the birth of our Savior, through Scripture and some of the beloved songs passed down through the centuries. We will, also, celebrate Holy Communion, as well as sing Silent Night by candlelight.

We hope to see you Christmas Eve at 5PM!

**Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting - Nov. 10, 2019 – Minutes**  
**(to be approved at the next semi-annual meeting)**

The meeting began at 5:15 PM with a prayer by Pastor Brad, followed by a delicious potluck dinner, featuring meatballs, green bean casserole, broccoli bake, fried chicken, mashed potatoes and chili, chocolate cake and brownies.

Attendance was 11, including Jack Bailey.

Since the minutes of the March, 2019, congregational meeting were not included in the meeting packet, they were not approved, and so should be at the next semi-annual congregational meeting. The notes of council/congregation activity since the last semi-annual meeting were reviewed and discussed.

Dale and Pastor brought everyone up to speed about our conversations with the Pastor Julianne Smith, Director of Evangelical Mission for the Northeastern Ohio Synod (ELCA) regarding possible suggestions for growing Triune. Pastor pointed out that the strongest suggestion from her so far was to combine our Saturday night and Sunday morning services into one, so as to give the impression to visitors of a well-attended, thriving church. However, it was pointed out that this wasn't realistic for us, since worshippers had various preferences for contemporary versus traditional, and also personal schedule conflicts.

Pastor, also, pointed out that most people who attend contemporary services in other churches are used to seeing live people performing the music of the service. At Triune, obviously, we are no longer setup to do that.

Another suggestion that Pastor offered was to open the building up to other support groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous, etc., and inviting them to have their meetings and gatherings at Triune. Pastor said it might get new people in our building, along with spreading the image and reputation of Triune out in the community. It was, also, pointed out that the down-side of that would mean more Triune keys out in the world, and being handled by strangers. There are financial concerns, as well, including higher utility bills and paper supplies in bathrooms and sinks.

Jack Schwab gave the financial report indicating we have approximately \$148,000 in our Thrivent mutual fund account, as of the end of the 3rd quarter. There is approximately \$5,000 in our checking account. Adding it all up, including the Messing endowment, Triune's coffers are now at approximately \$250,000.

Jack, also, reported that the stocks in the Messing bequeath had grown from approximately \$96,000 to \$99,000 in the few short weeks since the endowment was placed in the Triune account. A discussion ensued with Dale asking the membership what they would like to see done with the money. The prevailing attitude seemed to be that, at some point, Triune should liquidate 10% of the money and give it to organizations, such as the LMM and the ELCA. But, with the stocks currently making substantial growth, the question becomes when and how do we do this. It was decided that, before anything else, Jack needed to have a conversation with our Thrivent representative, Brian McCarthy, to get his expertise and input on the matter. Afterwards, Jack would tell us what he found out so we can make an informed decision.

Next, Almut Zvosec presented her proposed budget for 2020. It is very similar to the 2019 budget, excepting a potential 3% increase in Pastor Brad's salary, along with adjustments to his compensation and benefits package.

Almut reported that over the past few years, our revenue seems to be about \$1000 per week. She added we continue to be efficient in cutting operating costs, though we are still operating at an annual deficit of approximately \$47,000. Jack, then, pointed out that from time to time, we are receiving very generous offerings in the collection plate from unknown members of Triune, which really help to offset and minimize the deficit.

A motion was made to approve the 2020 budget by Heidi Bailey, and it was seconded by Tim Mize. It passed unanimously.

Pastor Brad reported several items:

The Mitten Tree will go up again in early December.

Worship on Christmas Eve will, again, be held at 5 PM.

The Triune email address has changed to triune948@gmail.com.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 PM.

The next council meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 9, 2019.

With the absence of Bill Weidman, this report was compiled by Dale Kirk.

### ***Uplifting Christmas Gifts***

[Last] year, *Living Lutheran* invited readers and writers to submit personal stories of gifts that illuminated the true meaning of Christmas for them. From a kind note to beloved people to a dozen potatoes, the responses surprised, delighted and moved us. Select submissions are included here; read additional stories in part two of this article.

These heartfelt meditations remind us of God's best gift ever—Jesus, a child born for us, a son given to us (Isaiah 9:6), a savior incarnate. May they bring you Christmas joy...

#### **From the heart**

My most meaningful Christmas gift that I ever received was a half dozen potatoes. Back in 1995, our family was going through some tough times. My 8-year-old grandson told me that he knew I liked potatoes, so he gave me some. It was the most precious gift I ever got because it was from his heart.

—Leone Thorne, member of Calvary Lutheran Church, Rio Linda, Calif.

#### **Humble service**

In 1996, I attended a Christmas Eve service at an Episcopal church. There was an appeal for volunteers to serve a Christmas Day meal at their outreach center for Atlanta's homeless community. I signed up and, admittedly, regretted my decision the following morning.

After arriving at the center, my assignment was to wait on its residents. Instead of opening presents, I was serving tables, like those who are humble and harassed. Ultimately, the experience was a gift.

Receiving presents is often about new *things*, but serving others brings about new *life*.

Jesus—the babe born in a lowly manger—came to earth to serve us, telling his disciples: “I am among you as the one who serves.” Waiting on others, ministering to the needy and lifting the fallen, Jesus is the greatest servant and the greatest gift.

—William Flippin Jr., writer and pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Atlanta.

### **An act of kindness**

It was 1993—a bleak December New York City morning. Woolworth’s was closing. Change was inevitable, I knew, but this was going too far.

Running errands and grieving, I barely noticed the individual calling me, “Frau!” I looked up. There was Gunther, a man who was homeless. He usually occupied the back pew of our little German church, separated by 10 empty rows from the elderly women who sat farther forward to avoid him. During the passing of the peace, I was the only one who went to greet him.

Smelling of alcohol and urine, the strong grip of his roughened hand had felt vaguely threatening. What did he want of me here, now, on the sidewalk?

He rummaged around in a dirty cloth sack. “Here,” he said gruffly, pushing a prickly object into my hand—a tiny shopworn Christmas tree with faded branches and miniature colored balls. The tag hanging from one limb read “Woolworth, \$4.50.” He had likely gone through the trash behind Woolworth’s and picked this up. I barely had time to thank him before he moved down the street.

Twenty-five years later, I still remember this act of kindness and memorialize Gunther by setting out his gift every Christmas.

—Marianne Bahmann, an ELCA member from Allentown, Pa.

### **Christmas joy**

I received my best Christmas gift as an adult in 1980. I was recently married at the age of 32. Not only did I gain a wonderful wife, Sandy, but also a teenage daughter, Wendy.

I always, of course, had a family, but not one that I lived with and spent every day with. Because of this, I could not wait to celebrate my first Christmas with my new family. My anticipation was great leading up to Christmas, and the joy of that day was more than I expected.

Incidentally, I first met Sandy when I was choir director in a Lutheran church and invited members to join the choir for our Christmas Eve Service. She did just that in 1979, and we were married the following July.

—Dale T. Rodgers, member of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Quakertown, Pa.



Erin Strybis is a content editor for *Living Lutheran* and member of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Chicago. Find more of her stories on Instagram (@erinstry) and her blog, [www.erinstry.com](http://www.erinstry.com).

# December 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> Worship <u>@11 am</u>	<b>2</b> Bible Study @ 1 pm  Worship at Oaks @ 3:15	<b>3</b>  AA @ 7pm	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>  AA @ 8 pm	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> WORSHIP @ 5 PM <u>TIM MIZE</u>
<b>8</b> WORSHIP <u>@11 AM</u>	<b>9</b> Council meeting @ 6pm	<b>10</b>  AA @ 7pm	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>  AA @ 8 pm	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> WORSHIP @ 5 PM <u>PASTOR BRAD</u>
<b>15</b> WORSHIP <u>@11 AM</u>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>  AA @ 7pm	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>  AA @ 8 pm	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> WORSHIP @ 5 PM <u>TIM MIZE</u>  W.H. RENTED 5-11:30 PM
<b>22</b> WORSHIP <u>@11 AM</u>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> CHRISTMAS EVE  WORSHIP <u>@ 5PM</u>  AA @ 7pm	<b>25</b> CHRISTMAS DAY	<b>26</b>  AA @ 8 pm	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> WORSHIP @ 5 PM <u>PASTOR BRAD</u>
<b>29</b> WORSHIP <u>@11 AM</u>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> NEW YEAR'S EVE  AA @ 7pm				



If you have something you would like to put in the newsletter, please let us know by email, written letter, phone call or stopping by the office.