

The Luther Memorial News January 2021

*We are a
Reconciling in Christ Congregation.*

*A community committed to making
Christ's disciples, dedicated to worship,
study, and prayer while serving all in need.*

Rev. Monica L. Weber, Pastor

Vicar Alyssa Kaplan, Lay Campus Minister

Juanita Smoot, Director of Music Ministry

Michael Spencer, Custodian

Marcia Barrow, Office Manager

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What's in a Word?

By now you may have received an Epiphany card from me, including a new Star Word for 2021, along with a little poem and prayer. Though I knew that we couldn't gather in person to distribute Star Words this Epiphany, I didn't hesitate for one second to write out these words or draw them at random from a pile on my desk, placing each one into a card. I wanted to share a new Star Word with you as together we greet 2021 in the deep hope that follows tragedy.

As the poet T.S. Eliot says, "For last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice." Never has this been more true than our desire to put away the words of 2020: pandemic, COVID, virus, aerosol, mask, social distancing, testing, symptoms, isolation and death. Though we've all sustained deep losses in many forms, our inability to gather in person as the Body of Christ and comfort one another has perhaps been one of the most significant losses of all. No matter what kind of loss we've experienced, we may feel that our grief has nowhere to go, but lingers on, like the pandemic.

We need Star Words to help us recover; to regroup; to transform our sorrow into hope. So how can one word written on a little star-shaped piece of paper help us heal? How can this little word help us imagine a new and brighter future? That is for each of us to explore and discover, and I invite you to spend some time with your new Star Word. Look up its meaning and research the etymology of your word. Think about how your word may shed new meaning on your relationship with God; on your relationships with loved ones; on your dreams and goals. I hope you'll join me and your fellow Luther Memorial members as we consider these and other questions during our Star Words Vespers study every Wednesday evening in January.

Words carry great power, and your Star Word is no exception. God our Creator spoke the world into being; God's angels and prophets delivered spoken messages of God's never-ending love and mercy to an anxious, doubting people. With three words, Jesus gave up his spirit on the cross, yet on the third day, the Risen Christ called out to Mary, the first witness of the Resurrection. Christ Jesus proclaims his eternal love and forgiveness for all people in seven words, "Do this, for the remembrance of me." Whatever your Star Word says to you, never forget that you are a beloved, forgiven, cherished child of God, created in God's holy image and baptized into eternal life with Christ. I hold each of you in prayer as you put away last year's words, and proclaim with your new voice this year's new word.

Peace to all here, *Pastor Monica*

January Council Meeting: January 10th, 11:30am-1pm by Zoom. Staff & Council members please submit your monthly reports to Marcia Barrow in a PDF file no later than Monday, January 4th. Packets and the Zoom meeting link will be distributed by email.

Congregational Council Corner

2021

John Hess jlhess@vt.edu
Mara Knott knott@vt.edu
Tim Larson tilarson@vt.edu
Carol Reynolds carol@quintinz.com

2022

Jay Crone jaycrone@vt.edu
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2023

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Teresa Cassell teresa.cassell@comcastmnet
Carolyn Howard carric2003@gmail.com
Karl Pedersen Karl.Pedersen@msn.com

Authorized payments of remaining benevolence pledges for 2020.

Considered plans for introducing the renovated fellowship hall to the congregation.

Approved discussion of a proposed joint ministry offered by Christ Lutheran, Radford with campus ministry at VT, the Well.

Authorized formation of a committee, chaired by Lois Voss, to review and revise the bylaws of the congregation.

Council extended for one-year the terms of Teresa Cassell and Konrad Kubin on the Committee for Mission Endowment.

Council Annual Reports Due January 31st

All council members who served in 2020 should coordinate with their respective committee chairpersons to prepare and submit a 2020 Annual Report of the committee's activities in a PDF file to Office Manager Marcia Barrow no later than January 31st.

November by the numbers:

General Treasury receipts: \$33,788

General Treasury expenses: \$42,957

Net General Treasury: - \$9,169

Our monthly cash flow is still negative. However, we did have a larger amount come in from pledges in November and we really appreciate that. The main reason for higher expenses this month was due to Council authorizing to pay \$10,000 towards local benevolences in November. Council also authorized to pay the final \$12,500 of outstanding benevolences during the month of December. This should bring us fully up-to-date on benevolences for the year. We are counting on the normal end of year increase we receive in donations to make these payments. Finally, if you have not yet submitted your pledge form for the 2021 year it is not too late. Providing a written pledge gives us more confidence in being able to meet our mission goals for this new year. The Finance Committee thanks you for your tremendous support this year. It has been a trying year for the church's finances and we will be starting off with fewer reserves in the new year as a result. We hope that you will be able to stay up with your giving as we go forward. This year we want to pay our benevolences on a quarterly basis instead of having to wait until the end of the year to do so. The local community needs all the help we can give them. Your support is always greatly appreciated!



What Does Your 2021 Star Word Say to You?

Watch your mail for a card from Pastor Monica containing a new 2021 “star word.” The word written on a little paper star was selected at random for you, since we cannot worship in person due to the pandemic. Join us every Wednesday in January for a Star Word Vespers study at 7pm by Zoom, to reflect and consider how your Star Word can impact your life and your relationship with God in this new year. The Star Word **Vespers Study begins Wednesday, January 6th** and the Zoom link will be emailed on Monday Jan 4th.

January 3rd Worship & Songs of the Nativity

Director of Music Ministry Nita Smoot presents “Songs of the Nativity,” a special piano concert for the season of Epiphany. Visit mlc.org and scroll down on the Home page for the “Special Concerts” button to watch and enjoy!

Calling ALL Teens for Fun and Fellowship

All teenagers 13-17 are invited to attend the first Blacksburg-Radford ELCA Fellowship Youth Group on Sunday, Jan 31st, from 2-4pm at Luther Memorial in the covered picnic shelter, rain, snow or shine! The Fellowship clergy will fire up the fire pits so we can stay warm to share games with Vicar Alyssa, enjoy snacks and get to know each other, but mostly we want to hear your ideas about how you’d like to have fun and serve Jesus in 2021. Masks are required for this gathering and social distancing will be observed. **Parents, we need snacks:** please contact Pastor Monica (pastormonica@mlc.org) to bring pre-packaged food/drink items.

Winter Celebration is the Virginia Synod’s annual weekend faith-formation retreat for youth in 9th through 12th grades and adult leaders. **This year we will gather ONLINE** for Large Group experiences with lots of singing and skits and fun and Small Group experiences with lots of new friends, games, conversation, more games, and faith sharing! **Deadline to register is January 5th, 2021. NOTE:** Please email pastormonica@mlc.org if your teen would like to attend, so we can pay for his/her registration!



ToOurHouse IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

The pandemic has upended so many of our lives. This has been especially true for the clients served by To Our House. The staff has had many challenges as they continue to serve those who are not fortunate enough to have a permanent shelter. Providing a safe shelter with showering capabilities has more than doubled their budget and the responsibilities of the staff members.

I want to commend the membership of our congregation upon its response during our two week time of service. You have helped to make the lives of ten un-homed individuals (and four staff) better by easing their struggles.

Thank you to our members for the homemade hot meals that were delivered seven nights. The sign up was filled in record time. St. Michael Lutheran provided meals the second week of our service with the exception of Thanksgiving. It was gratifying working with a sibling congregation.

Thank you to the Virginia Synod for the grant that helped provide lunches. With this and our budgeted funds, we were able to provide gift certificates for lunches at various local restaurants. (The clients really loved the opportunity to go indoors during the day). A special note of appreciation to Pastor Monica who arranged for all of the gift certificates.

A special shout out to the students of the Well and Vicar Alysa for taking on the laundry!! And to our ever helpful office staff for taking up the slack in their absence the second week when the students were away.

We also need to recognize the generosity of the owner and staff at Bull and Bones/Black Hen restaurants in Blacksburg. They provided a marvelous full Thanksgiving Dinner at cost (which was practically nothing!)

And many of you have responded in another important way. At this writing, the Parrish Office has received \$2450 in donations for TO OUR HOUSE.

So much can happen in the next year. We do not know what form our area hypothermia shelter will take next November. But I do know that LMLC will respond with generosity and caring. Thanks to each of you for playing a part in this ministry, Wava Vigen.

A Worship Update from the Blacksburg-Radford ELCA Fellowship:

Dear friends in Christ, we give thanks for the many ways we have gathered virtually and for monthly drive-in worship during the global pandemic. We especially give thanks for our Fellowship musicians and church administrators, and for Daniel Taylor, our capable Audio-Video Technician. We're excited by the community service and outreach our congregations have performed together during these past 10 months, and we are discussing how we can strengthen these relationships and expand programs for Youth, Confirmation and Campus Ministry. We look to this new year with great hope that soon we can worship together in person safely, however until that time arrives, we continue to record worship every week as the Fellowship of 5 ELCA Congregations in the New River Valley: Christ, Luther Memorial, New Mt Zion, Saint Michael and Shiloh. Please hold us in prayer as ministry during a pandemic continues to bring unforeseen challenges.

Peace, Pastor Monica; Pastor Michelle; Vicar Bryan; Vicar Alyssa and Daniel.

Women's Covenant Bible Study Begins Thursday January 21st @ 7pm

Join Pastor Monica & Pastor Michelle of St Michael Lutheran for a women's Zoom Bible study that explores the origins and history of how the Bible came to be, and what God is saying to us through Scripture. This 3-part study features contemporary Biblical scholars sharing their insights on DVD and participants receive a workbook. We begin on January 21st with "Creating," an 8-week dive into God as Creator. If you ordered a workbook, please pick it up from the LMLC Office. If you would like to participate but did not already notify Pastor Monica, please email her (pastormonica@lmlc.org) by January 10th so we can order your materials. The "Creating" study runs through March 11; the second installment, "Living," runs from April 8 through May 27th; the third installment, "Trusting," will resume on August 12 after a summer break. Each study is self-contained, so join us for any or all sessions!

Midwinter Power in the Spirit Online

Join us for our first-ever **Midwinter Power in the Spirit Online** event **Sunday, January 31 to Thursday, February 4, 2021**. Our most recent summer event was forced to go online, but then we found ourselves enjoying the experience! So we thought gathering for prayer, study, worship, and conversation would be a great way to spend some of the coldest days of the year.

This winter's theme will center on the illuminating festival of Candlemas and our keynote presenter will be **The Rev. Dr. Dave Delaney**, Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Virginia Synod!

If you sign up to attend Midwinter Power in the Spirit Online, you can expect:

- A daily devotional to arrive in your email each morning, Sunday through Thursday. Here you'll receive readings, brief videos, and guides for at-home arts and crafts.
- An invitation to daily Zoom workshops, from 5:45 PM to 6:55 PM, Sunday through Thursday. Listen to presenters from across our Virginia Synod share from their areas of expertise. Sign up for the sessions that interest you most!
- A closing vespers service at 7:00 PM, live and online, led by worship leaders from across the synod. Each weeknight you'll participate in different ways of worship, even while physically apart.

There is no fee to attend, but we do suggest a **donation of \$25** to the Virginia Synod. One hundred percent of donations will be used to support neighbors in need around the world through the ELCA Good Gifts catalog (our goal is to give a "family farm" to help a family break the cycle of hunger and poverty—only \$715!). Please give as the Spirit leads you!

Registration will open on **January 4, 2021**. For now, save the date! I hope to see you for Midwinter Power in the Spirit Online: January 31 to February 4, 2021

Nita's Notes – January 2021

Christmas 2020 brought to most of us a new kind of celebratory experience in the midst of our Covid-19 pandemic life. For the first time in 64 years I spent the day alone; although with video calls with my sons and phone calls with friends. After I completed a jigsaw puzzle of the Twelve Days of Christmas, I realized that God was planning to bless me with 12 days of gifts. It would be a new tradition of discovery for me. With this awareness and a sense of growing anticipation, I began paying closer attention to God's affirmations, promises and revelations. Since I am writing this newsletter article on Day #4, my list is incomplete, but this is what I've managed to unwrap so far.

On the first day of Christmas...**SANCTUARY**

I took not one, but two walks on Christmas Day. Wandering about the farm I found my usual sacred spaces within the wild Rhododendron and Mountain Laurel thickets, up on the ridge and in the midst of the forested areas. I listened to a Christmas song performed by a chorus of birds accompanied by my gurgling Mill Creek. I was silent in the Holy presence of God. *Be still and know that I am God...* (Ps. 46:10) This is a sanctuary I already know and appreciate, and it was the gift of Day #1.

On the second day of Christmas...**CREATIVITY**

The creative spark or inspiration is both around and within us. It is a gift to create from an idea or sound. After spending time listening to masterworks by famous composers, I started my own work session. It was time to create the theme for the extra music on Jan.31st and read through scores to find the piano selections to practice and record. The theme, "A Word of Light and Love" was inspired by the Gospel Acclamation for that Sunday: *The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; for those who sat in the shadow of death light has dawned.* (Matt. 4:16) All the hymn arrangements reflect this theme of light. Creativity takes many forms and was a reminder gift on Day #2.

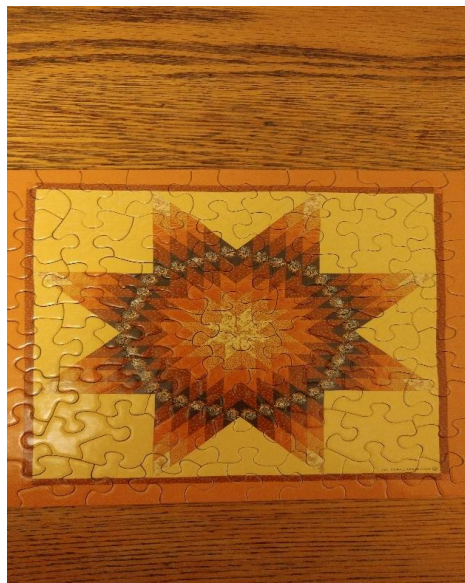
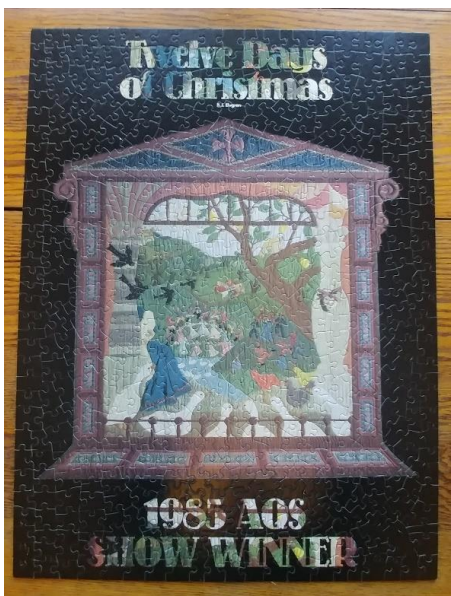
On the third day of Christmas...**LIGHT**

I awoke before dawn and watched as daylight began. Throughout the day, I became very aware of the variations of light and color. On such a day, the blue of the sky seems brighter and the sunset, even though subdued, more rich. Yes, it was a good day for light and the reminder to *Arise shine; for your light has come...* (Is 60:1)...*you will have the Lord for an everlasting light.* (Is. 60:19) Embracing such light was the gift of Day #3.

On the fourth day of Christmas...**PURPOSE**

This was a fun day to practice the organ and make selections for the JAN 31st service and extra music as well as practice for future services and begin preparations for Lent and Easter music. Our music ministry at LMLC looks somewhat different in a Covid world, but serving as your Director of Music Ministry is a treasured part of my life. *Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before the Lord with joyful singing.* (Ps. 100:2) This time of calling and purpose is my other place of sanctuary and is the gift of Day #4.

My prayer is that we will all be aware and thankful for God's many gifts this Christmas season and especially for the gift of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. *The Lord is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation.* (Ps.118:14)



Joyfully yours, NITA

Thank you Thank you Thank you for Supporting Christmas Outreach

We had extremely successful fundraising effort. In 2020, we raised \$ 8,026.34. We were able to provide \$380 in tuition reimbursement and financial support to 20 low- income families whose children attend Valley Interfaith Child Care Center. In addition, we were able to provide a couple of prepackaged snacks and one books for all 39 children who attend the center. VICCC also provides the same book each month to each child as part of their curriculum. We were able to provide 2 months of books for the center. We could not have provided a Merry Christmas to the VICCC families without the generosity of the members of Luther Memorial. Thank you again.

In Peace,

Teresa Cassell

Micah's Backpack Food Collection

Final count from Christmas Eve food drive:

1,180 food items!!! What a blessing.

In Thanksgiving,

John Stramiello

In Deepest Gratitude

Dear Luther Memorial friends in Christ:

Once again I am humbled and overwhelmed by your generosity to me and to our beloved church staff. Thank you so very much for your Christmas gift, but above all, thank you for your faithfulness in attending virtual and drive-in worship; for your ongoing contributions to the many agencies we assist; and for your servanthood by keeping connected with one another during a year that brought us great challenges and significant loss. I am truly blessed to pastor God's holy people at Luther Memorial, and I look forward to worshipping, serving and enjoying fellowship together in this new year, whatever that may look like! God walks beside us, every day. Blessings to you and to your families in 2021,

Pastor Monica

Fellow members and friends of Luther Memorial,

I want to sincerely thank you for the kind and generous Christmas gift, it was a joyous surprise at the end of a hard and strange year. I look forward to coming back together in person and sharing the feast. I wish for all of us a Healthy and Happy New Year and that we may grow in our continued journey with Christ. Your happy servant,

Marcia Barrow

We've gone social!

LMLC congregation members and friends please take a few minutes in this new year to post a review of Luther Memorial on Google (here's the link: <https://g.page/r/CZvHfC5I-b0IEAg/review>) or on the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/luthermemorialblacksburg>).



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THOSE BORN IN JANUARY

January 01	<i>Harvey Peterson</i>
January 03	<i>Bennet Cassell</i>
January 08	<i>Jan Gilbertson</i>
January 09	<i>Bill Crabtree</i> <i>Mandy Wilson</i>
January 14	<i>Aaron Howard</i>
January 18	<i>Nelda Buss</i> <i>Joanna Stallings</i>
January 20	<i>Rachel Peterson</i> <i>David Wechtaluk</i>
January 22	<i>Whitney Akers</i>
January 23	<i>Barb Shifflett</i>
January 29	<i>Adam Marickovich</i>
January 31	<i>Phil Gilbertson</i>



Happy Anniversary



Bill & Bertha Crabtree; January 15th

Luther Memorial Lutheran Church

600 Prices Fork Road

Blacksburg, VA 24060



STEWARDSHIP NUGGET FOR JANUARY 2021

“The happiest people on earth are the people who have discovered the joy of giving.” *Unknown*

