

December 2020

We've begun a new church year, moving into the liturgical calendar that features scripture lessons from the Gospel according to Mark, and for some festival days, the Gospel according to John. No matter which telling of Jesus' life, public ministry, passion, death and resurrection we use, we know, first and foremost, that God is with us. Emmanuel.

It is God's presence, which we experience today most frequently as the impact of God's Holy Spirit in our daily lives, that helps us get through the challenges that we face, especially due to COVID-19, with the need to isolate from people not part of our immediate families, the anxiety that might follow from losing our job or business, the fear that we might lose our home because of loss of income, the distress that comes from not having sufficient food for our family (or even ourselves).

It is God's presence that keeps us hoping. And it is God's presence that keeps us helping. Now, more than ever, our support of the emergency services such as those Lutheran Social Services offers, is needed. So, if you are inclined to help people meet their needs in this way, until we can return to fuller lives – more fully employed and feeling safer and more secure – please support these services.

It is God's presence that keeps others going. One of the most significant programs that the ELCA maintains is Good Gifts. You can connect to the Good Gifts catalog by going to www.ELCA.org/goodgifts and find ways that you can make contributions in honor of your loved ones that bring tangible resources to the lives of people all around the world – like chicks, goats, piglets, cows, fish, honeybees, clean water, or the support that will send children to school, or a woman to farmers' field school, or a man to start a small business, and on and on. These gifts range from \$10 to \$2250 each, so there's a possibility for almost everyone who wishes to participate. Every time we support programs such as Good Gifts, we are bringing God's presence into the lives of people who have the will to improve their lives, but not resources.

It is God's presence that gives our lives meaning and purpose. Rejoice in God's presence!

Live and love in God's presence,

Pastor Marianne