



# Worship Notes

Friday, December 4, 2020

## FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Jamie Reynolds

Dear Friends and Family,

We have reached the mid-point of Advent. This season, we are missing our poinsettias, altar flowers, lighted sanctuary trees, and singing together our favorite Advent and Christmas hymns. We are also missing an important feature of getting together—just getting to chat and visit and catch up on the family. Take a moment today to check in with a few of your friends from the congregation. Give a call, send a text, share a word of peace and greeting and catch up on the family. We are the family of God, and while we may not be together on Sunday mornings, we are still connected through Christ.

*Thank you for your generous support of our ministry*

Your continued giving makes an impact in our community as our church continues to be a beacon of hope.

Mailing your donations to the church office and maintaining your automatic giving helps support ministries across the nation and around the world.

In December, all poinsettia donations will go to our Vision and Purpose Giving to support the Warren County Ministerium Emergency Aid Fund.



*Please keep in prayer the following:*



Bradley Anderson, Josie Blake, Bev Coulter, Nancy Dowell, John Ellison, Linda Ellison, Dave Erlandson, Jim Erlandson, Brad and Jodie Haist, Cassie Jern & Family, Delores Johnson, Graham Johnson, Bob Kerschke, Ila Roseberry, Norman Worthington, Evelyn Volz, Darrell Thirtyacre, Donna Larson, Beckie Bean, Joy Johnson, Pat Root, Diane Bradley, Anna Lovdahl, Kim Anderson, Matthew Council, the family and friends of Raymond Bruyn.

*Please let the church office know any updates that are needed to our prayer list.*

### Online Worship

Online worship is truly a unique experience. We are used to saying our responses with a large group echoing together. We are used to hymns being belted out, and just by the sound knowing who is in worship and who is not on any given Sunday. Now we are sitting in comfy clothes, on a couch or at our kitchen table. Now we have our phones out and we scroll through social media while we skip through portions of worship to get to the important stuff—which, of course, is the sermon, am I right?

Online worship is truly a unique experience. And while so much is very different, one thing never changes. The experience of the transcendent God. God is fully present with us, even when we are not fully present with God. God is binding us together across neighborhoods, through computer and television screens. God is hearing all our voices in one harmonic resonance. And it gives God great joy that even in our separate spaces, we are still together, worshipping the Almighty for all he has done.

### This week in worship



The third week of Advent is celebrated this week in worship.

Thank you to Kurt Volz for lighting our Advent wreath this week. Our prayers go with Evelyn who was dealing with an on-going health issue (not covid-related) and was unable to join in this time.

Thank you to Maddie and Elise Blaesing for assisting with leading the Lord's Prayer. Thank you to Jim Johnson who served as reader. And Thank you to Heide Gallagher who continues to be our worship assistant.

Listen for a message this week that will excite you with the words of faith that you have always known, as they come to life as your testimony to who God is.

## Helping with online worship for November 29

Music: Jamie Reynolds

Worship Assistant: Heide Gallagher

Advent Wreath Lighting: Butch and Kaye Johnson

### **Living the Creed through Advent**

As we return to online worship, we will resume saying together the Apostles' Creed. Living the Creed PDF's will continue. On our website, Pastor Jamie has uploaded a PDF of a 6-page packet of specially designed Advent coloring sheets. Take a break from the hustle and bustle of pandemic holiday chaos. Color a page each week. Let your coloring bring you peace and serenity. And remember, James 4:8 says: "Draw near to God and God will draw near to you."

## Nativity Scene

Each year at the beginning of Advent, a large nativity set with 12 inch high figurines is carefully unpacked and set up in the front of our sanctuary.

This year, as a feature of our worship, Pastor Jamie will introduce to the Nativity scene a different set of figurines each week.

This week, Pastor Jamie introduces two figurines that are unique to our church's nativity set. Based on Italian customs, we meet Ezra and Joshua. Ezra carries a basket full of eggs, and Joshua plays an Italian instrument that is similar to the bagpipes.

Who are Ezra and Joshua? Why, if they are not in the Bible, are they at our Nativity scene?

Join us in worship this week to meet Ezra and Joshua to learn more.

## *Blessings*

"for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples."

Luke 2:30-31

In Luke the Christmas story does not end until Mary and Joseph take their 8-day old baby to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate him to the Lord. Mary and Joseph are being faithful to their faith traditions much like a family today brings their newborn to be baptized. The Temple is a very crowded place. Throughout the Temple were many people that Mary and Joseph greeted, walked past, tripped over, bumped into, stopped to do that funny side dance we all do when passing someone and can't decide who will pass on the right and who will pass on the left. There were pleasantries, nodded greetings, nervous looks, and the very cautious opening of the purse for purchasing the required sacrifice. In the midst of this chaos, Luke tells of two encounters.

Simeon, a resident of Jerusalem, was guided by the Holy Spirit. Locked in like a pet cat locked in on one of those laser lights we tease our pet cats with, Simeon entered the Temple, scanned the crowd, found who he was looking for and nudged his way through everyone until he stood in front of the young couple and laid his eyes on the baby who represented the salvation from God. He sang a tremendous song celebrating what God has done, including the line above. We sometimes sing these words as a dismissal song at the end of worship.

Anna the prophet who lived at the Temple, likewise, found herself suddenly next to this young couple. Her keen prophet senses opened her to what God was doing through this child, still nursing at his mother's breast. She whirled and sang out to the crowds, drawing their attention away from their Temple business to all gaze at Mary and Joseph. It must have been a truly overwhelming moment. All eyes on them. Mary and Joseph still uncertain what the fullness of God's salvation through their son meant.

In a crowded world of 7 Billion people, it is hard to imagine we have had a chance to see the salvation of God. Yet we have been offered this gift. And much like Anna, we are called to tell everyone, to stop them in their tracks, to help them see the same Christ who offers redemption and salvation to all. The gifts of the Advent season are our reawakening to what God is showing us and our reinvigorated voice crying out so that all can hear—for our eyes have seen God's salvation, which God prepared in the presence of all people.

In peace, Pastor Jamie