



Worship Notes

Friday, December 18, 2020

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Dear Friends and Family,

After this Sunday, we will be fully ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus ... well, except for everything we still have to do: baking, wrapping, gathering, masking, distancing, cleaning, cleaning again, cleaning a third time, and of course, still working.

As we do wind down the year and approach the central holy-days of our faith, my prayer is you find a time to take a deep breath and to find rest. Celebrating the Christ child has become a cultural burden, but it is meant to take a burden off our shoulders, to remind us of God's love. May we find comfort as we simply bask in the glow of God's glory.

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

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

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.



Online Worship

So, what is your Online Worship routine? How do you set up your space? What do you do to prepare yourself to be "in" worship, not just "watching" worship?

Pastor Jamie is curious to hear your stories. Take a moment, and write up your story of how you enter into the worship experience there in your home. Email your story to Pastor Jamie.

Pastor Jamie is looking to collect the story of our church experiencing worship at home. This will be both for posterity and history for our church to read years from now when we reflect back and remember how we worshipped during the pandemic, and this will be for sharing through upcoming newsletters so that we can hear from one another just how we are experiencing this time today.

Send your stories to prjamie@flcmonmouth.org

This week in worship



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

Thank you to Ellen and Mark Shrader who recorded our fourth Advent Wreath Candle lighting moment.

Thank you to Derek and Ayla Johnston for assisting with leading the Lord's Prayer. Thank you to Pam Best who served as reader. And Thank you to Heide Gallagher who continues to be our worship assistant.

Our message this week dives us into the Magnificat, the song Mary sings after she learns from the angel that God will birth a son through her who will become the Savior. This simple song has huge implications on the world both in 1 AD and today.

Helping with online worship for December 20

Music: Jamie Reynolds

Worship Assistant: Pam Best

Advent Wreath Lighting: Mark and Ellen Shrader

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 the Magi arrive at the manger this week. These three have traditional names: Mechior, Caspar, and Balthazar. But these names do not appear in the Bible. Nor does the exact number of wise men who come to the manger.

So, why are there three? How did they get names? Join us this week in worship to learn more the Magi, I mean, Wise Men, I mean We Three Kings ... I mean, wow, these gift-bearers have a lot of different titles.

Blessings

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Luke 1:38

Imagine what you would say if God sent an angel with a message to you. I mean, a full-on winged being with flowing white robes and bright glowing effects standing right in your kitchen before breakfast saying, "Hi, I am from the Almighty." After you pick yourself up off the floor, rub your eyes, and double check what the expiration date is on the creamer in your coffee, you come to the realization this is an actual supernatural being standing in your presence. And the angel has a message. And you are expected to say something. What do you say? Now, honestly, most of us will never have that kind of experience. Aside from our friends and families questioning our sanity if we said it did happen that way, it is usually not the way God works when sending us messages. So we can relax on those creamer expiration dates.

Usually, God works like this: the other night, I was scrolling through my Facebook feed and someone I knew as a teenager is a "friend" of mine on Facebook. This person and I never really got along back then, I am not sure how we ended up connecting on social media. But there was a message he posted. He is going through a really difficult time. I could have scrolled past it and ignored it, but then a still quiet voice spoke up within me. This still quiet voice said that I needed to say something to this person who I don't really know very well. What do I say?

No, it isn't the flashy moment Mary experienced when the Angel told her she would bear a child and name him Jesus. No, there was no grand, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord" response from me. It was a moment to stop the scrolling, and type a word of encouragement and offer an ear for listening if this acquaintance from my youth needed it.

Sure, we all want to think God calls us in grand fashions to even grander schemes that will save the whole world. But in reality, God calls us each day with that still quiet voice, nudging us to do something that will make a difference, even in such a simple and small way. I don't know what this Facebook friend of mine thought when he saw my comment. It doesn't matter how he responds. It matters that in the moment when God's still quiet voice called me, I responded. Does this sound like your experience with God? Do you have moments you can clearly point to and say, "Yep, that is when I was Mary, saying to God, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord.'" The Christmas story comes to life in you each time you hear God's message and your response is a blessing to another.

In peace, Pastor Jamie