



Worship Notes

Friday, December 4, 2020

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

116 S. B Street, Monmouth, IL 61462; (309)734-2106

www.flcmonmouth.org; email: office@flcmonmouth.org

Pastor Jamie Gallagher
prjamie@flcmonmouth.org
Cell: 630-200-3550

Office: Angela Bradley-Volz, secretary
Custodian: Chris Algren

Musicians: Janice Algren
Jamie Reynolds

Dear Friends and Family,

Our grief from the passing of Raymond Bruyn is still very palpable. As we enter into this weekend's worship, we do so trusting the mercy of our Lord who has come as a baby in Bethlehem, and whose return we anxiously await.

May the message of comfort that is shared in this weekend's message now take on an extra layer of meaning as we seek the comfort from God and from one another in our grief.

Arrangements for Raymond's services are still pending, and more will be shared when it is available.

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, Matt Council, Sara Johnson, Betty Bruyn, the family and friends of Raymond Bruyn,

and we celebrate with Sgt. Lacey Elliott, who has returned home safely from her tour of duty.

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

Online Worship

Creating a sacred space in your living room or dining room, where you set up the computer screen or connect YouTube to your television set, is something very unique to 2020. We are in our second stretch of having the entire congregation participate in worship online. And for some, this has been easy to adjust to, for others, it continues to be a frustration that our normal Sunday morning habits are once again on hold.

There is a certain gift this opportunity has for us. The gift is in the way it opens us to see Jesus in a new way. Forced out of our 'box' of worship, we have lost what idols we substituted as most important, and we find what is really most important—the love of God, which we can never be separated from. I encourage you to remember you are never separated from God or one another. Use this Sunday as a day to reach out to friends within the congregation, share a greeting. Send a message of peace. Don't let our separate homes be a barrier to our togetherness.

Thank you for your generous support of our ministry

Offerings may be mailed to the church. You may designate an offering for the December Vision and Purpose and receive a colored poinsettia on our sanctuary wall.

If you would like to begin automatic giving, please contact the church office and we will get you the form to fill out.

Thank you for returning your pledge cards by December 6th to help our finance team prepare for a new year.



This week in worship

Advent worship is special with all the fun decorations that fill our worship space. This week, we will see the special care that Connie Larimer and Dee Dee Yez put into sprucing up our sanctuary for our worship videos.

Decorations bring joy and comfort, two themes we will explore in this week's Advent message as we echo the words of Isaiah, "Comfort, O Comfort my people," says the Lord.

Thanks to Cecil and Kay Lovdahl who assisted with the Advent wreath, and to Emma Nuckles who leads us in the Lord's Prayer.



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.

For this Sunday, we will meet the Shepherds and the Sheep. The Shepherds in the fields give us a clue about when Jesus was born. And no, it was not on December 25th. We use that date because when Christianity became the official Roman Empire Religion, the emperor replaced pagan winter solstice festivals with the festival of Jesus' birth.

So, what is the clue the Shepherds give us? Watch this week's worship to find out the answer.

Blessings

"His name is John."

Luke 1:63

In the Christmas story, one of the overlooked elements is the birth narrative of John the Baptist. Born to Elizabeth and Zechariah, John was a relative of Jesus through their mothers. Zechariah was a priest who worked in the temple. It was while working in the sacred holy of holies space of the temple that Zechariah met an Angel who told him he and his wife would have a son, named John. Zechariah was a bit surprised, not by the encounter with an angel, but with the news he and his wife would have a son. For they were an old couple who had not had any children. As a sign they would have a child, Zechariah had his voice taken from him. It was not until the baby was born, and Zechariah wrote on a piece of paper "His name is John" that his voice returned and Zechariah then sang a prophetic psalm praising God for what John would do, but also for what God would do through the one John would precede.

See, John is a forerunner. And his story is often overlooked because he is not the main event. Once the main event came, John became less important. When John is an adult, we hear he is baptizing, but once Jesus arrives and is baptized, the Gospels nearly all forget about John, except for his death scene, which even then is all about how Jesus reacts to it, and not about John either. Being the one who points us to Jesus was John's lot in life. But perhaps we shouldn't be so easy to toss him aside now that we have the Messiah clearly with us.

In fact, in many ways, we are to follow the example of John. We are a forerunner to the main event. We are the ones who proceed the Messiah. We are not announcing Jesus' birth, we are in fact the ones who announce that Jesus has come and Jesus is here and Jesus will return when all of creation is complete. We are the ones who, like John, call others to a renewed relationship with God, to get their life oriented with the God of love and forgiveness. We are the ones, who like John, point to Jesus and then get out of the way so Jesus can bring the resurrection into the lives of the broken and downhearted. We are not the miracle. We are not the Messiah. We may even feel like we are tossed aside once someone finds the joy of a relationship with Jesus. But our work is crucial, just as John's was crucial.

So take a moment and read through Luke chapter 1, focus on the story of John's birth. Let Zechariah's song of praise become your song of praise, for God has indeed raised up a mighty savior for the world, and we get to show him to the world.

In peace, Pastor Jamie