CROSSBEAMS

January 2022

A Season of Firsts…

The word *epiphany* comes from the Greek meaning *appearing* or *revealing.* In our Christian liturgical year, it is the celebration of the *revealing* of the baby Jesus to the Gentiles which is based on the account in Matthew of the visit of the Wise Men from the East.

This year, we are reading from the Gospel of Luke so instead of having the story of the Magi, we chose to have the public revealing of Jesus at his Baptism. This is the first public appearance of Jesus as an adult that we have in the gospel. Corresponding to this, we read the account of the public appearance of the Holy Spirit to the early Christians at Pentecost.

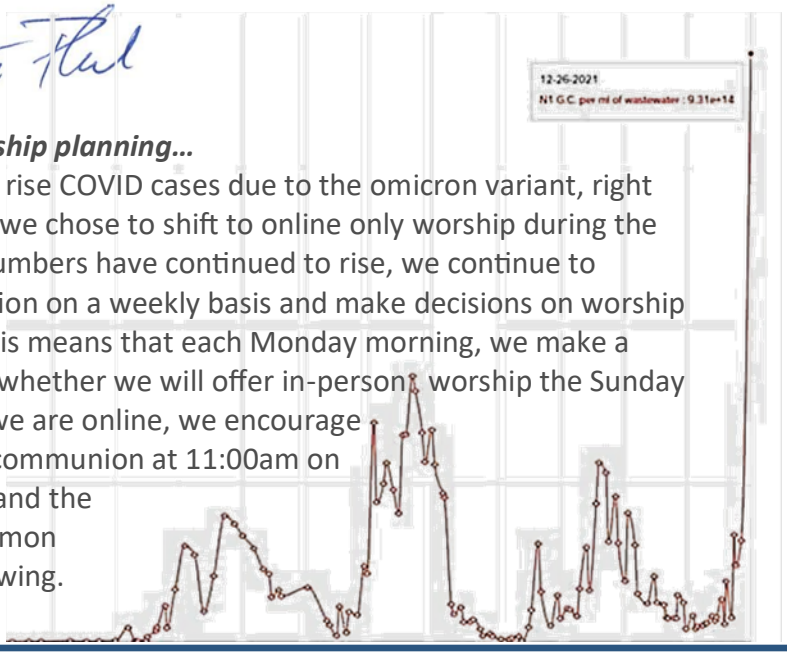
During this season of Epiphany or *Revealing*, we will continue to focus on the stories from Luke of the *firsts* in Jesus' ministry and couple them with resonant texts from Luke's second volume, *Acts*:

The *First* Temptations
The *First* Sermon
The *First* Rejection
The *First* Miracles
The *First* Converts
The *First* Disciples

For those of us who have lived with the stories for a long time, we tend to amalgamate them with the similar stories from the other gospels. During this season, I invite you to try to set aside these stories and try to hear them anew. Imagine that as we read the stories from Luke that this is the first time that you were hearing about this teacher named Jesus. Or imagine that you are an early Christian and you are trying to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Try on re-discovering Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Church during this season…

Peace, Pastor Hud



A note about worship planning…

With the dramatic rise COVID cases due to the omicron variant, right before Christmas, we chose to shift to online only worship during the holidays. As the numbers have continued to rise, we continue to monitor the situation on a weekly basis and make decisions on worship two weeks out. This means that each Monday morning, we make a determination on whether we will offer in-person worship the Sunday after next. While we are online, we encourage you to join us for communion at 11:00am on Sunday mornings and the fellowship and sermon conversation following.

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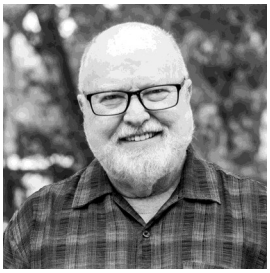
Jesus in the Trinity



As we embark on a journey this year in worship focusing on Jesus work with the Spirit in Luke and the early Christians' participation with the Spirit in Acts, the following daily devotion seems particularly relevant. This daily meditation is for January 10, 2022 from the Center for Contemplation and Action. Father Richard points out how we misunderstand Jesus and his teachings when we think of him apart from the Trinity.

When we try to understand Jesus outside the dynamism of the Trinity, we do not do him or ourselves any favors. Jesus never operated as an independent "I" but only as a "thou" in relationship to his Father and the Holy Spirit. He says this in a hundred different ways—the "Father" and the "Holy Spirit" are a relationship to Jesus. God is love, which means relationship itself (1 John 4:7–8).

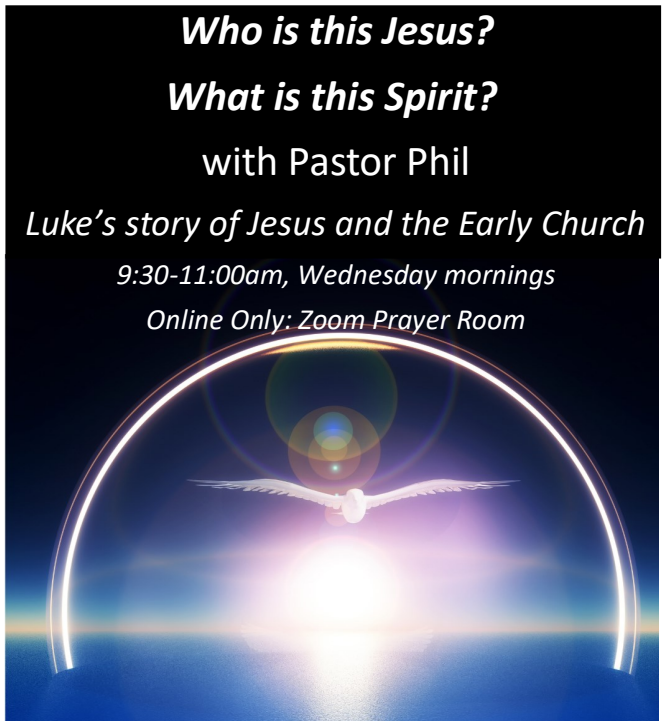
Christianity lost its natural movement and momentum—flowing out from and returning to that relationship—when it pulled Jesus out of the Trinity. It killed that exciting inner experience and marginalized the mystics who really should be center stage. Jesus is the model and metaphor for all of creation being drawn into this infinite flow of love. Thus he says, "Follow me!" and "I shall return to take you with me, so that where I am, you may be also" (John 14:3). The concrete, historical body of Jesus represents the universal Body of Christ that "God has loved before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). He is the stand-in for all of us. The Jesus story, in other words, is the universe story. He never doubts his union with God, and he hands on union with God to us through this fully participatory universe.

Many of the Fathers of the church believed in an ontological, metaphysical, objective union between humanity and God, which alone would allow Jesus to take us "back with him" into the life of the Trinity (John 17:23–24, 14:3, 12:26). This was how real "participation" was for many in the early church. It changed people and offered them their deepest identity and form ("trans-formation"). We had thought our form was merely human, but Jesus came to show us that our actual form is human-divine, just as he is. He was not much interested in proclaiming himself the exclusive son of God. Instead, he went out of his way to communicate an *inclusive* sonship and daughterhood to the crowds. Paul uses words like "adopted" (Galatians 4:5) and "co-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17) to make the same point.

"Full and final participation" was learned from Jesus, who clearly believed that God does not so much promise us a distant heaven but invites us into the *Godself* as friends and co-participants. Remember, *I am not talking about a psychological or moral wholeness in human persons, which is never the case, and why most people dismiss this doctrine—or feel incapable of it*. I am talking about a divinely implanted "sharing in the divine nature," which is called the indwelling spirit or the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16–17). This is the foundation on which we must and can build and rebuild a civilization of life and love. Our objective ground is good and totally given!

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 98, 119-120.

LEAD … love God with all your **mind**

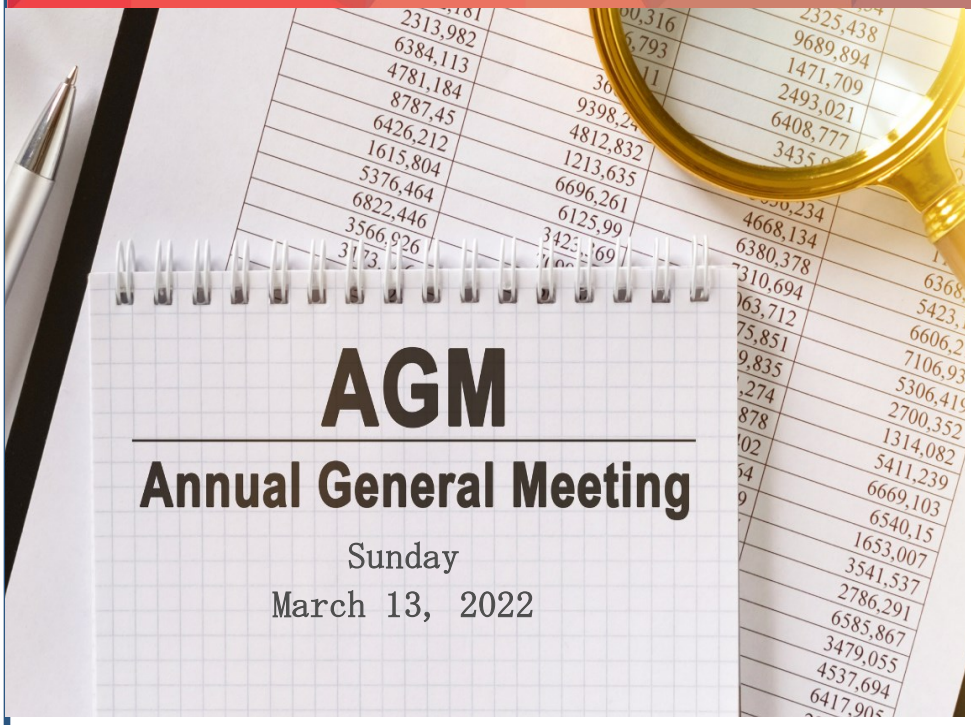


On Wednesday mornings, you are invited to join a conversation about the Bible, God and life as we try to figure out what it means to navigate life as a Christian! No prior Bible knowledge is required and questions are encouraged. Those that have attended know that *no rabbit trail is left unpursued!* The scripture texts below are the starting point for these conversations:

Jan. 12 – *Jesus' Temptation (*Luke 4:1-13)
*Ananias & Sapphira (*Acts 4:32—5:11)
Jan. 19 – *Jesus' First Sermon (*Luke 4:14-22)
Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-40)
Jan. 26 – *Jesus' First Rejection* (Luke 4:21-30)
Peter and John On Trial (Acts 41-22)

In order to minimize exposure, **we wire currently gathering online only**. Please go the website and click on the link to the Zoom Prayer Room.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS



Lutheran

Church of the Cross

Annual

General Meeting

March 13, 2022

(after Worship)

In hopes of being able to hold the AGM in person, the congregational Council has scheduled the AGM for Sunday, March 13. Though this is later than usual, it is within three months of the end of the 2021 fear year which is prescribed by our constitution and bylaws.

In the month of February, the Annual Reports will be distributed. There will also be presentations on the 2022 budget, governance, Listening Response Team, and Constitution and Bylaws proposals.

MONTHLY FINANCIALS

Church of the Cross Financials through November 30, 2021			
	2021 Budget	**Budget YTD**	**Actual YTD**
Income*	$350,000.00	$320,833.37	$291,445.06
Expenses**	$354,667.00	$325,111.27	$311,781.18
Balance	($4,667.00)	($4,277.90)	($20,336.12)
General Fund Bal-	$14,189.27		
Designated/Pass	$114,465.98		

*Includes $19,935.50 of CEWS benefit and $12,600.00 of Canada Summer Jobs grant
**Includes $12,600.00 reimbursed by Canada Summer Jobs grant

Membership Conversation

7:00-8:30pm, Wednesday January 26, 2022 (Zoom)

Are you thinking that you would like to become a member of our congregation?
Are you interested in finding out more about Lutheran Church of the Cross?
If so, you are invited to a conversation with Pastor Phil and other members of the church to learn about our congregation, what we believe, what we do, and who we are. Because of COVID, this will be an online conversation at 7pm, Wednesday, January 26th.

December saw the advent of a new group. While sitting and discussing how we could share Good Cheer with the members of our congregation an idea was hatched. There is already a group of people that volunteered to be on the phone tree and connect with members at the beginning of covid. There are already members that call up other member to say "hi, how are you doing". There are already members that pick up devotionals and drop them off to those less able to venture out. There is so much love being shared—and so much more love to give. It is our hope that we can gather that love and share those Blessings and Good Cheer more often.

Our first act as this start up group was Christmas Blessings. Dianne was able to secure a very sizable batch of Christmas Hampers from a group called "Tree of Life'. We added some homemade cookies, chocolates and Christmas Cheer and delivered almost 50 Christmas Greetings to families in need, some of our senior members, those unable to venture out, and some that were just in need of a little Good Cheer.

We have received many thanks back from those that received the packages on their doorstep

Including from Doris Urquhart:

> Don and I wish to thank you for the lovely bag of Christmas goodies we received a few weeks ago. We thank all of you for your prayers and well wishes for Don after his fall off our back stairs. He is covering quite well and you will see him back at church when Covid allows.

We have no formal plans for how this group will grow and continue but if you would like to help form this group please email the office to add your name or text CHEER to (833) 542-1147 .

Do you have a project you would like to bring to life at Lutheran Church of the Cross? The Mission Endowment Fund could make that happen. We have achieved our goal of $100,000 so we can accept applications from interested parties.

Here is what you need to know:

-applications are available on the church website (https://www.churchofthecross.ca/pages/mission-endowment-fund) or from Stacey at the church office.

-your project needs to focus on enlarging the mission of our church in areas of Social Ministry, Outreach, Education, Worship and Youth.

-the deadline for applications is from February 28th to June 1st, 2022

Hopefully this will be an annual event with proceeds from investments. If you are wondering what could qualify just ask. It could be VBS, Summer camp, mission...just some ideas but yours. Questions? Ask Hanna Janzen, Gates Fortier, Stephen Maunual, Kathy Bishop or Pastor Phil.

LEAD

DAY TO DAY

Online Worship

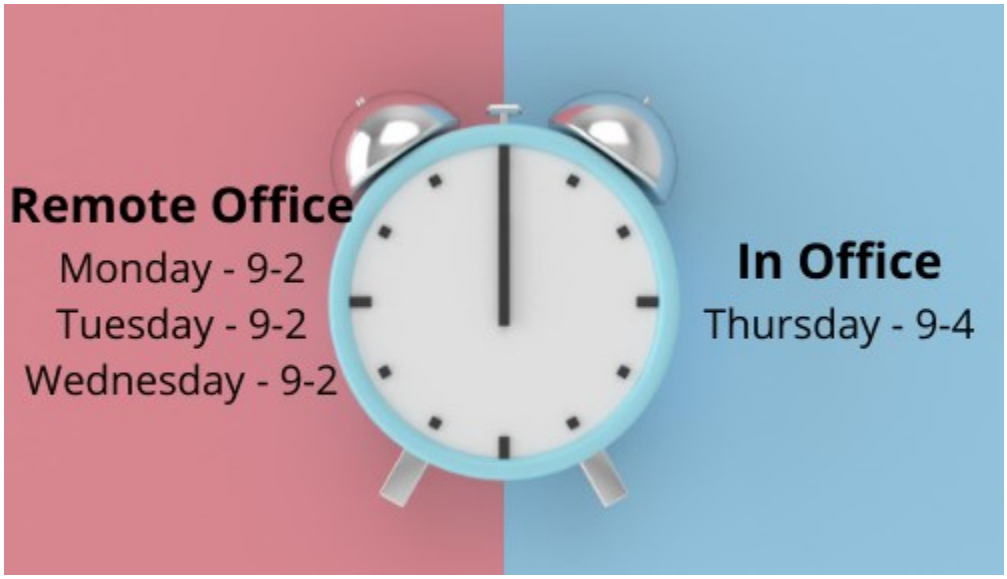
We are deliberatly keeping our worship team small.

It is a choice to protect our staff and volunteers and lessen exposure for everyone.

We will keep monitoring the numbers and plan 2 weeks out.

Jan 26rd will be online.

We will continue to remain fluid and pivot and the situation changes.



WE SUPPORT

Cause of the Month

January

S.W.A.R.M.

South West Area Refugee Mission

South West Area Refugee Mission - Our mission: 'To support refugees in Calgary as they become independent, self-sufficient Canadians'.
We are Lutherans (and non Lutherans) from all of the churches in the Southwest Area of the Synod. SWARM supports refugees by offering assistance with orientation for new families to connect with settlement agencies, assist with medical and dental needs, language practice, friendship, and encouragement. We help new families to navigate government supports during the pandemic, support young students through online learning, help families feel supported and embraced in their new city.
We look forward to welcoming a new family (Prince of Peace sponsorship) and another from Honduras in the near future.
Our committee meets through Zoom monthly and anyone is welcome anytime –
email: calgaryswarm@gmail.com

To support SWARM, donations may be sent to Lutheran Church of the Cross and designated 'SWARM'.
Also needed: clothing and household items, volunteers for welcoming newcomers, a truck to move goods, and non-perishable food items.
ELCOC contact is Doug Normandin

Once again our project 'Socks for the Mustard Seed' was successful. We delivered 30 pairs of stuffed women's socks, 33 pairs of stuffed men's socks, 30 pairs of empty socks, and 39 scarves, mitts and toques. Our thanks to all who supplied stuffing items and miscellaneous items.

PARTNERS

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

SYNOD OF ALBERTA AND THE TERRITORIES

January Message for Lay and Rostered Leaders and Congregations

Dear friends and family in †Christ--

So here we are. We celebrated the coming of the Christ child into the world. Worshipped with candlelight and carols, smiles (even through masks) and family (however that may have looked).

It has been and continues to be my favorite time of year. And even during the pandemic, now edging itself towards the completion of its second year, the power of this season cannot be masked. It is a season of hope that cannot be denied. Hope echoes repeatedly as John triumphantly proclaims, that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5, NRSV).

This common translation of the text seems to pit the darkness against the light, indicating that these two forces have always been locked in struggle with each other. That is often how we view the light and the dark, good and evil, as two diametrically opposed forces that are constantly struggling against each other. That is how our faith has often been taught to us. God against the devil, good against evil. War raging for the very soul of creation. And though there is a great deal of truth to that image, how that conflict plays out may look different than what we expect.

I recently encountered another translation, one that seemed to change the focus of this text. The text reads,

5 · The light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood it .
kai ho phōs phainō en ho skotia kai ho skotia katalambanō ou katalambanō autos

(Mounce Reverse Interlinear New Testament). I had not heard that translation before.

The darkness did not understand the light. What does that mean?

I often think of our belief that good is warring against evil. It is common language, and it has been used as a justification for many terrible things done in the name of Christianity. The crusades, the residential schools, the wars against believers who "corrupted" the pure faith are all examples of such acts. We insert the word "warrior" into a lot of things to do with our faith. We take passages from books like Ephesians, which references the armor of God, and talk about how we need to arm ourselves against the dark.

A video game in a local Christian bookstore was like a Dungeon and Dragons style role playing game. The goal was to find and use the armor and sword of God, again derived from Ephesians, to defeat the evil one. Both were patterned after the Roman armor of Paul's own day and age, an inherently war like empire that had known more years of war than of peace throughout its 1000-year history.

Many find comfort in this image of warring against the principalities of evil and being guarded by God in the process. But I harken back to this interpretation of John from Mounce Reverse Interlinear New Testament and wonder if there is a little bit more to it.

For me, comprehend means to understand and so this text would seem to be saying the light has come into the world, and the darkness cannot understand it. Something about the light, the way it shines, confounds the darkness. The darkness cannot overcome it because this light, this Christ, is so different from anything it has ever encountered that the darkness just doesn't understand.

The darkness is about hate and exploitation, about harm and destruction. It is about breaking people's relationship with God and with each other. It is about chaos and a destruction of all that is beautiful and good in God's creation. The light, Christ, is about love and restoration, about healing and the end of

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

warfare. Christ is about healing the relationship between ourselves and God, with each other as part of God's creation.

And Christ does not seek to win the day with the same means as the darkness. Jesus wields no sword and bears no shield. His way is the way of God's peace and love, and it stands in direct opposition to the darkness, so much so that the darkness cannot comprehend it. The love Jesus shows is a love that is contrary to everything that hate and greed and the worst forces in our world represent, and the darkness is befuddled and confused by the light. It cannot overcome it. It cannot begin to understand it.

My daughter loved the movie 'Frozen' when it first came out. Two sisters left orphaned; one of them with mystical powers to freeze things, which she cannot control, and of which she is terrified; the other full of life and a desire to fully engage in life; talking snowmen; and the apparently incessant sound of 8-year-olds singing "Let It Go". Cinematically, the film was a triumph for Disney's animation team. Throughout the movie, Anna is struggling to heal a broken relationship; her sister Elsa is struggling with the fear of her uncontrollable power. The message throughout the movie is that 'True love can melt a frozen heart'. At the climax of the movie, Anna performs that selfless act of love that brings healing to the frozenness – The Act of True love melts the Frozen Heart'.

Think about the moments that changed the world. On one hand, we have the acts of love. Mary said "yes" to God and she and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem to bring the Saviour of the world into that world. She was not a person of power, nor did Jesus grow up as an influential member of society. But God chose that way to work into the world. Or think of people like the disciples, or Paul, who stood even against the empire to declare their message of the Gospel. We wouldn't be here, celebrating, if they had not done this. Or the works of others, like Martin Luther King Jr., or non-violent protestors that altered the fabric of society for the better. Their legacies are legacies of love and have given us hope, God's hope, by which to live.

Thus, when we say the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it, it is not simply a statement of trust or a defiant statement to the powers and principalities of darkness. It is a faith statement. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it. As people of the light, our way forward is a different way. It is God's way. To state these words is to say that as children of the light, our path will take us down very different avenues.

The light shines on us, as we sing our praise to the light of this world, the love of our lives, Jesus the Christ, born in Bethlehem, born for us all, born for all creation. And it will guide our feet into the way of light, the way of Christ, the way of love.

For dear friends and family in Christ, the light indeed shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. The darkness cannot comprehend it, this light, which is world changing, this love which is life altering.

Christ is born!! Let us all cry out, "Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" Amen.

Blessing and Peace in ✝Christ,

Rev. Prema

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God;
and that is what we are.
1 John 3:1