

Faith Matters - December 2020

150

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Past Present Future

1870-2020

Pastor's Page

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year”—or, at least, it used to be. In 2020, however, what with countless events being cancelled, many people avoiding church services, and corona virus restrictions casting doubt even on families gathering together, it may already feel as if Advent and Christmas will be a huge letdown. The fact that this often actually *is* “the most wonderful time of the year” makes all the constrictions on Christmas even more of a disappointment than all the other events we have missed throughout this benighted year.

Is it possible, though, that having much of our usual celebrating stripped away could prove to be a blessing in disguise, maybe even a cause of renewal? At least since Clement Moore wrote “‘Twas the Night before Christmas” and Charles Dickens published *A Christmas Carol*, the actual event of Christmas, the Incarnation of God’s Son in Jesus, has been increasingly covered over with layers of sentimentality, unrealistic expectations for the season, and a mercenary concern to purchase lots of gifts that are all supposed to be “perfect.” The traditions of Christmas have overwhelmed Christmas itself to the point that, in our increasingly secular and materialistic culture, one can look far and wide among our “Christmas”

celebrations and find not a mention of Jesus’ birth anywhere.

The irony of that is stark and troubling in light of the two accounts of Christmas in Matthew and Luke. They emphasize the humble surroundings of Jesus’ birth, his parents’ poverty, and the quiet solitude in which he was born. As is so often the case in the Bible and the Church, God worked the miracle of Christmas under the sign of the opposite. The Incarnation had earth-shaking significance, but it was disguised in an ordinary birth in a little village, an event that would have gone entirely unnoticed had not the angel chorus announced it to shepherds, who were themselves among the humblest and most despised members of that society.

Jesus’ birth defied all normal expectations for such a momentous event, just as Jesus’ ministry rejected all worldly categories of power, influence and status. The most powerful king ever to reign, he who was Savior, Messiah and Lord, had only a cross-shaped throne of rough-hewn wood, while his subjects either ridiculed him or despaired for him—even as he was securing their salvation from sin, death and damnation.

Continued on page 2



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We are on the  
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RADIO BROADCAST  
SUNDAYS 8 A.M.  
KDUZ 1260 AM

TV BROADCAST  
CABLE CH. 10  
SUNDAYS 10 A.M.  
AND 5 P.M.  
TUESDAYS 5 P.M.

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So perhaps 2020 is the year, since our hands have been forced anyway, to strip away some of those layers of celebration that can come to obscure the actual, historical event of Christmas. This may be the year to focus intentionally on the theological wonder of that simple, but oh-so-profound birth in Bethlehem. This otherwise disappointing year may just be the perfect time simply to gather around that crude manger, look with awe at that entirely ordinary baby who held divinity within him, and pray together the words of that great old hymn:

Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown  
When thou camest to earth for me,  
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room  
For thy holy nativity:  
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus;  
There is room in my heart for thee.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Scott Grorud



*Q: Is the Covid-19 pandemic a sign of God's judgment against us?*

A: The only appropriate answer to that question is "only God knows." Although people are understandably curious about God's actions and motives in a time like this, Christians can only be certain of what God *has* revealed to us, not what He has *not* revealed to us. The Bible testifies that God can use nature as an instrument of judgment, as well as of blessing, but we also know a great deal about how nature works, not to mention the way that sinful human beings can cause or exacerbate different kinds of disasters. Especially with all the uncertainty surrounding this virus, only God knows its origins and purpose.

At the same time, however, the prophet Joel interpreted what was clearly a natural phenomenon, an invasion of locusts, as a call for the Jewish people to repent of their sin and turn back to the Lord. That remains a highly appropriate response to any kind of disaster. Whether or not God directly causes such events, they all remind us of our mortality, drive home that we are creatures and not the Creator, and bring to light our pride, sinful trust in ourselves, and neglect of God's will.

Disasters of all kinds provide a powerful motivation to repent and plead for God's mercy. That is the best response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well. Whether it has come directly from God's hand, arose from a broken creation or resulted from human malice, it is a perfect reason to respond to God's call through Joel: "Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; tear your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing." *Joel 2:12-13*



### Giving Tree

In place of the McLeod County Giving Tree, the Congregational Life Team invites you to purchase new mittens, hats, scarves, and warm socks to place on the tree for our local Common Cup Ministry. Your generosity to help children stay warm in our community this winter is greatly appreciated!

### Faith Pen Pals

During this time of COVID and isolation, the Congregational Life Team invites you to be a part of "Faith Pen Pals". Sign-ups will take place at church this month or by calling Marsha at 587-2093. Let's connect by offering an encouraging word, sharing ourselves and our faith with someone new or someone you may already know but will get to know better!



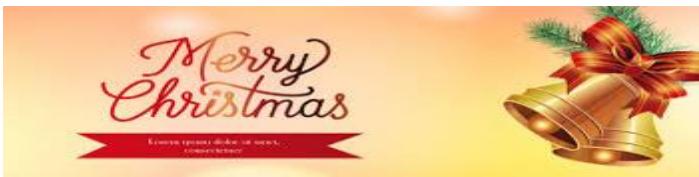
### Upon This Rock *Plus*

To quote secret agent Maxwell Smart from the old *Get Smart* television show, “we missed it by *that* much!” Our dream of paying off the mortgage by the end of this 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year fell just short, but only around \$200,000 remains—a mere 6% of the original loan amount. To finish off that remainder, Faith’s members will be asked to extend their pledges (or make new ones) to Upon This Rock *Plus* for one more year. ***Watch your mail*** for your opportunity to join in this last push to pay off our 25-year loan in less than 11 years! Then, whenever we are able to finish our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, burning the mortgage will be part of it after all!



### Joy to the World Offering

Through most of 2020, the family of Faith supported the church’s ministry with such amazing generosity that it seemed that we had “changed the pattern” of running up huge deficits during the year and relying on huge offerings in November and December. Almost as soon as we shared that good news, however, the old pattern made a comeback. In September and October, offerings were substantially lower than in those months last year. So, we have opened up a deficit in the General Fund. The good news is that it is not as large as in past years, but the church will need about \$140,000 by year’s end to break even. (That is a big number, but it took \$227,000 to close the gap last year, so this should be well within our reach.) Watch your mail for information on the annual Joy to the World offering and please give *as God enables you to do so* (we know these are hard economic times for many people!) to help Faith Lutheran finish the year strong.



#### Advent Services

##### ***Wednesday Evenings at 6:30 p.m.***

- December 2 - Holden Evening Prayer Service
- December 9 - Oneoto Valley Evening Prayer Service by Austin Willhite
- December 16 - Christmas Hymns and Carols

#### Christmas Services

##### ***Christmas Eve Candlelight Services***

- 2 p.m. - Two simultaneous family services in the Sanctuary and Foundation
- 4 p.m. - Simultaneous Sanctuary and Foundation Services
- 6 p.m. - The Night of Jesus Birth: An Outdoor Christmas Worship Service (weather permitting)
- 11 p.m. - Traditional Candlelight Service with Holy Communion

##### ***Christmas Day Service***

- 10 a.m. - Traditional Christmas Day Service with Holy Communion

**All services subject to change in these unusual times.**





**And the Best Supporting Actor, Actress  
Award Goes to...**  
*Reflections from Pastor Paul Knudson*

When it comes to the Academy Awards given out each year, I dare say most attention is given not to the supporting role but to the lead actor and actress categories. Yet, if the truth be told, supportive roles are crucial for a movie’s impact on the audience.

If this is so in the movie world, it is possibly even more important in the world of global witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Once northern European and American missionaries played the lead roles in that witness in faraway places like India, Ethiopia, and Madagascar. In the last fifty or more years, the scene has dramatically changed and for the better. Christian expansion in these and other countries has dramatically grown since indigenous people took over the lead roles. If you can speak rightly of stats in witness, they would win the awards.

Sometimes I hear from people who see these outcomes of millions being added to Christian communities of faith since native people have led the way as indicating that our support and leadership are no longer needed. We can keep our focus and resources closer to home. They can handle the witness there just fine without us.

For me, this totally disregards factors on the ground in those far off places. Today, civil wars, extreme poverty, and now suffering and death from the Covid-19 pandemic place tremendous strains on those seeking to be faithful in witness to Jesus Christ. They cry out for our prayers and ongoing financial support. May our Lord move us to give both to our partners in mission.

**Cancellation of the “Coming Together in Song” Concert  
Means Lost Revenue for Common Cup Ministries**

One of the largest fundraisers for Common Cup Ministries is the annual “Coming Together in Song” concert. Due to the pandemic restrictions, the 2020 concert has been cancelled. However, a musical DVD has been put together compiling the mass choir songs from concerts over the past years. It is a way to celebrate Christmas while listening to some of this beautiful community music. These DVD’s can be picked up in the church office for a free will offering to Common Cup Ministries.

**AWAKEN YOUR HOLIDAY** *Spirit*

Monday, December 7, 7:00 p.m. at Crosspoint Church (1215 Roberts Rd. SW.) Seating is limited or you can watch via livestream @CPHutch.church

This benefit concert will support the United Way of McLeod County and Common Cup Ministry—Hunger Free McLeod.

This live holiday musical performance will feature music by “The Awaken Band” (Mona Hjerpe, John Rodeberg, Adam Krumrie, Ronda Eckhart and Steve Olcott).

A freewill offering will be appreciated and there will be a donation match. Donations can also be dropped off at Hometown Realty at 130 Washington Ave., Hutchinson. Make checks payable to United Way of McLeod County.



### **Ringers of Faith - CALLING ALL MUSICIANS!**

As we rapidly approach the Christmas season, I extend an invitation to any and all musicians at Faith. There are many opportunities to plug in for special music during Wednesday Advent services, Sunday mornings, and our SIX Christmas Eve services. I encourage young musicians, returning college students, and experienced players with any voice or instrument. If you need help making selections or would like to purchase some new music, I would love to help! In this season, we remember that the greatest gift to the world is baby Jesus. Our goal should be to glorify God and refresh our spirit through offerings of music and praise. Please reach out with any offerings you have by contacting the church or me directly. Soli deo Gloria!

Austin



### **A Word From the Faith Lutheran Church Women (FLCW)**

The board of the FLCW would like to extend our love and blessings to all of you. May you be well, thankful and at peace during this Christmas season. In order to keep everyone safe we have made the decision to cancel the Advent Tea and the December Annual Meeting.



### **A Look Back . . .**

In the past, an annual Uff Da Dinner was part of Faith Lutheran Church's Advent/Christmas celebration. You may recognize a face or two from this picture taken in December of 2009. We are all looking forward to the day when we can gather for food and fellowship again!



There are two ways that Thrivent policy holders can support Faith Lutheran Church.

- 1) **Thrivent Choice Dollars** - people with qualifying policies are eligible to direct their **Choice Dollars** to the non-profit of their choice. You can direct yours to Faith by calling 800-847-4836 and speaking with an agent or by going to [Thrivent.com/Thriventchoice](http://Thrivent.com/Thriventchoice) and direct your **Choice Dollars** to Faith Lutheran Church Hutchinson.
- 2) **Thrivent Grants** - each policy holder is eligible for two \$250 grants EACH YEAR for fundraising and program support. There is a list of events that need grant support at the church. Please stop by or call the office for more information.

You can also contact your Thrivent Agent for more information on either of these programs.

**As you are doing your Christmas shopping this year, please remember two things:**

- 1) Shopping locally supports your neighbors' business in these exceptionally difficult times.
- 2) *IF* you are going to shop on-line, please remember that **AmazonSmile** will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible **AmazonSmile** purchases to FLC. Select Faith Lutheran Church Hutchinson as the organization you want to support when you place an order at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com).

If you have any questions about this program, feel free to call or stop in the church office for more information.



GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

We know there are people who are grieving losses of many kinds—death of loved ones, divorces, loss of employment, and much more. We have a tendency to dismiss such difficult things from our minds and not deal with those difficult matters—like grieving.



Marsha and Pastor Paulus have been trying to find a time, other than Sunday mornings, to meet for help and strength in our grieving. However, we cannot seem to come up with an alternative suitable for all.

So beginning January 10, 2021, we have scheduled six Sundays, through February 14, for grief sharing. We will use the book, *“Good Grief”* by Granger Westberg, a classic for decades. This short book helps us view our grieving issues spiritually, as well as emotionally. It is brief, easy to read and concise.

No matter how long it has been since you first experienced your loss, join us for learning how to face, resolve and grow in faith and understanding as God leads you through the valley of grieving to new and more mature directions in your daily life.

Pr. Paulus Pilgrim  
Marsha Schmit

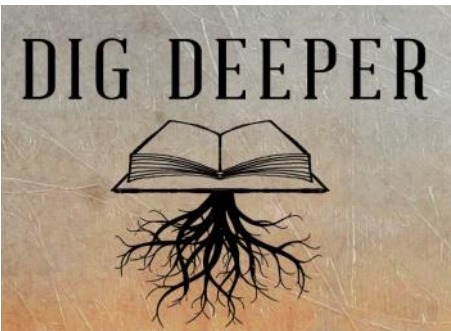


“Faith Seeks Understanding”  
Continuing Learning Opportunities for Adults

Sunday morning Digging Deeper  
through December.

Christ’s Second Advent

A closer look at Christ’s second coming.



In the creed we confess, “He will come again to judge the living and the dead.” What does this mean? What is the Lutheran understanding of this? And how does it tie into the church season of Advent? This four-week class will explore what to know and what to ignore about second coming teaching, and how ultimately it is a coming of hope. Join Pastor Dave and Pastor Scott in the Faith Center or on-line.

Current Covid-19 Pandemic Protocols

As Covid numbers rise, we ask you please to observe the following protocols when coming to worship.

- \*If you or anyone in your home feels at all unwell, please stay home and watch one of the broadcasts.
- \*If you are anxious about gathering at the church, feel free to stay home for now.
- \*Parents, if you have a child who is not feeling well, please keep him or her home from Sunday school or confirmation classes and participate in the on-line offerings instead.
- \*In light of current health guidelines, we encourage you to print and bring your own copy of the bulletin to cut down on contact. The bulletins can be found weekly on our website.
- \*We ask family/household groups to maintain social distance when in the church building.
- \*According to state guidelines, wearing a face mask indoors is mandated, with some exceptions.
- \*More information is available on Faith’s Facebook page or in the church office.



# Please Remember in Prayer

Please remember all those who are  
serving our country through active duty:

Braiden Bjorge (Marines, Jacksonville, NC - grandson of Sandy Curtiss)  
Mike Bjorge (Air Force - son-in-law of Sandy Curtis)  
Corporal Colin Bos (Marines, Camp Pendleton, CA - son of Dawn Bos)  
Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Mason Rutledge (Navy, New Orleans, LA - son of Lenny Rutledge & Patti Rutledge)  
LT Brett Stadsklev (Navy, Corpus Christi, TX - son-in-law of Judy & Tom Felber)  
SPC Ryan Wersal (Army, Fort Meade, MD - son of Roger & Laurie Wersal)



Remember our Faith members in  
nursing homes & health care centers:

Faith Lutheran Church		
INFORMATION & STAFF DIRECTORY		
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Dave Wollan	320-583-2385 (cell)	davidw@faithlc.com
Paul Knudson	320-587-2227 (home)	paulk@faithlc.com
Paulus Pilgrim, Visitation	320-234-9753 (home)	paulusp@faithlc.com
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Wendy Magruder, Administrative Assistant	wendym@faithlc.com	
Jim Brodd, Custodial Services Coordinator	brodd@hutchtel.net	

**Bryant Homes - Maple Plain**  
Ardell Novotny

**Cedar Crest – Silver Lake**  
Patricia Lambert  
Bernice Vorbeck  
Lucille Wehking

**Harmony River**  
Margaret Alrick  
Ruth Larson  
Doris Nelson  
Karol Nolte  
Joanne Olesen  
Jean Pittman  
Harriet Thor

**Oaks**  
Marcella Brede  
Beverly Kirchner  
Ellsworth & Delores Lorentzen

**Pines**  
Mayonne Martin

**Prairie Senior Cottages**  
Pat Fimon  
Harold (Swede) Sandgren

**Woodstone**  
Betty Garberich  
Gerry Grams

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OUR MISSION IS:  
**BUILDING FAITH**  
*“EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY,  
FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST”*  
EPHESIANS 4:12  
TO LIVE OUT THAT MISSION, GOD CALLS US TO:  
**F**OLLOW JESUS  
**A**NNOUNCE THE GOSPEL  
**I**NVITE ALL PEOPLE  
**T**EACH CHRISTIAN TRUTH  
**H**ELP ALL WHO ARE IN NEED

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