

Faith Matters - December 2021

150

THE LIFE OF FAITH

Past Present Future

1870-2020

Pastors' Page

One intriguing and sometimes frustrating part of Christianity is the constant tension between events or claims that seem to be simple, but on close examination turn out to be endlessly complex. Christmas is a classic example. There is nothing hard to grasp about the birth of a child to first-time parents. It is poignant and sweet, and who doesn't love a baby? Even small children understand Christmas. It is no wonder that it is so many people's favorite holiday.

Yet, that sweet story of a kid born in tough circumstances harbors within it the doctrine of the Incarnation, which is a whole lot harder to comprehend—how God's only-begotten Son gave up divine glory to take on mortal flesh in order to reconcile sinners to their Creator. It is so confounding, in fact, that I think the full, amazing truth of Christmas often gets lost in the sentiment of the sweet baby Jesus, asleep on the hay. Even if we trust that the Incarnation is true and awesome news, it can simply be too much to wrap our heads around it,

Søren Kierkegaard was a brilliant, passionate, quirky philosopher and theologian who lived in Denmark in the 19th-century. He once wrote a short parable to try to capture the significance of the Incarnation. Having celebrated Faith Lutheran's Danish roots this year, I thought this would be a good time to tell it as one explanation of Christmas.

His parable concerned a prince riding

through a city where he happened to see a young peasant woman. He was captivated, and despite her poverty and the huge gap in their social standings, he fell madly in love and wanted to marry her.

That posed a major problem, however. How could he genuinely win her love? He could simply command the marriage, but he wanted to win her heart. He could dazzle her with his wealth and grandeur, but he wanted her to love him as a person, not a royal figure. He could pose as a peasant until he won her heart and then reveal his true identity, but that would start their marriage on a false premise.

"How would he ever know if she loved him for himself," Kierkegaard wrote, "or for all that he had given her? And how could she know that he loved her, and would love her still if she had remained only a humble peasant? Would she be able to summon confidence enough never to remember what the king only wished to forget—that he was the king and she had been a humble maiden?

"Every alternative he came up with came to nothing. There was only one way. So one day the king arose, took off his crown, relinquished his scepter, laid aside his royal robes, and he took upon himself the life of a peasant. He dressed in rags, scratched out a living in the dirt, groveled for food, and dwelt in a hovel. He did not just

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TUESDAYS 5 P.M.
THURSDAYS 10 P.M.

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take on the outward appearance of a servant; he became a servant—it was his actual life, his actual nature, his actual burden. He became as ragged as the one he loved so that she could be his forever. It was the only way. His raggedness became the very signature of his presence.”

It is hard enough to imagine a prince giving up his royal status to pursue marriage to a peasant girl. But the real power of Kierkegaard's little parable is that the prince did that with no assurance that the girl would ever fall in love with him or agree to become his bride. Out of passionate love, he sacrificed his wealth, glory and position, yet might well have ended up being bitterly disappointed.

That was the sacrifice God's Son made in order to become human in Jesus. He entered this mortal life with no assurance that sinners would love him in return and, without doubt, he was bitterly disappointed when his passionate love was met with rejection and torturous execution. Yet, God was determined to win the hearts of His creatures, no matter the cost—and what a grievous, glorious cost it was! That is the true gift of Christmas, the astounding reality of the Incarnation and the absolute assurance of our salvation from sin, death and condemnation.

Merry Christmas!
Pastor Scott Grorud

Greetings to you as we begin December and the start of the Advent journey! I am writing this article during the first snowfall of the season. As I look out my window, I am filled with anticipation of Christmas. I shared the schedule for the Faith Lutheran concert series in last month's edition, but I am including it here again with some updates and added information.

December 5 – Christmas Harp concert featuring guest artist Reuben Correa at 3:00 p.m.

December 15 – Christmas Community Strings Ensemble during the Advent worship at 6:30 p.m.

December 22 – Christmas Faith Singers featured during the Advent worship at 6:30 p.m.

Faith Singers will be Christmas caroling on December 19. Time and practice TBD. If you would like to join in some enjoyable caroling, call or e-mail Austin Willhite for details on how to join in.

In addition to these special events, there are many other special music and special worship opportunities this month that I hope you take advantage of. May the light of the Christ child shine in you and through you this month that you may know and share His peace with everybody you see!

Soli deo Gloria!

Austin



Stewardship Matters

As the end of 2021 approaches, it *appears* that Faith Lutheran may not need the typical flood of offerings at the end of the year in order to cover all its expenses.

Hallelujah! Can you believe it? This may be the first time in the history of the church that offerings have met expenses throughout the year. **Thanks be to God** and **thanks to all of you** for your faithful support of God's work in this congregation.

One word of caution: the situation could change, so watch for more information to see if this situation holds. If it does, there is another great option for year-end gifts: *Faith Forward: 150K for the Next 150*. This short campaign is designed to celebrate Faith Lutheran's 150th anniversary by making a \$150,000 gift to the future of the church. The funds raised would be used to begin a creative program for training future church leaders right here at Faith. What a great opportunity to give thanks for the past, prepare for the future and help assure that the good news of Christmas continues to be proclaimed until the day Christ returns in glory!



Joys and Heartaches in Mission Partnerships

A Word from Pastor Paul

Gone are the days when congregations like Faith sent off funds to “Church Headquarters” to support a missionary or missionaries in some faraway countries. Now we can and do experience the joys, sorrows, and dread of our indigenous partners.

We at FLC, along with our partners in the Augustana District, support a leading congregation and synod of the Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in their outreach witness. Great joy and satisfaction has come in seeing how Jesus Christ is being lifted up in marvelous and successful ways through dedicated servant leaders, pastors, and evangelists. A congregation sending out 25 evangelists is now able to send out 60. A synod is able to bring its pastors and evangelists in one weekend a month for in-depth training in the faith, making their witness more powerful.

Now, however, a dark cloud has descended upon Ethiopia through a bloody and awful civil war. Much could be said, but sharing briefly with you the



sorrow of the synod we in the AD support brings particular anguish. An invading internal military force has taken over for now the city of Dessie, the home of the North Central Ethiopia Synod of EECMY. Those forces made it necessary for the synod president and family to flee the city. The synod compound was looted, including the president’s home. At present, we can only pray for these partners in this very troubled land.

What is amazing is how our Lord so often uses human crises in long-term constructive ways. We are invited to pray and work with our partners in Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, and Estonia that the name of Jesus will continue to be lifted up in ways that strengthen our partners and bring many into the Community of Christ Jesus.

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 people stay warm in our community this winter is greatly appreciated!



Free Community Meal Invitation Stroll

The church in the world ministry team took a stroll around town to invite folks to the free community meal on Sunday, November 7. Weather permitting, they would like to do this again for future meals. If you are interested in walking with them, please contact the church office.



SENIORS’ SCENE

When I was serving as chaplain in a nursing home, I knew this 95+ years old lady. She had been a public school teacher for many years. She never married; her students were her family. She was so beloved that every year her walls would be full of greeting cards on her birthday and at Christmas time. Many stopped to visit her, from right there in Madison or even California. She was always a delight to visit.



One day her nurse supervisor told me she had lost her vision. Instantly, just like that, she went from seeing fairly well to nothing but blackness. Of course, it was hard. She was filled with heavy grief. She was also a devout Christian. In time, she got through the heavy emotions and found new ways to adapt to her loss. She liked music of all kinds. She learned how to turn her stereo on and off, how to adjust the volume and change DVD’s. She had two kinds of music she liked best. One was recordings of a barbershop quartet with all four of the singers her nephews. The other...hymns which had been with her for almost a century.

One day, I asked her what she does to take up the time when she used to read and play bingo, etc., things she could do easily when she could see. She quickly answered me: I sing all the songs and hymns I’ve known since dad played them on the old piano and we as a family sang our hearts out. She knew many of them, melody and words, by heart. They stirred her heart into states of peace and joy. She added, “I recite all the Bible verses I can remember memorizing in Sunday School, confirmation, Bible studies and my own devotions. I never liked memorizing;” but suddenly the value of doing so began to take on special meaning. Did you know there is an interesting connection between *music and memory*? There is. We’re going to hear about it at **SENIORS’ POTLUCK**, on **Thursday, December 9**. Our music and worship director, Austin Wilhite, has done some study on this subject and will share that in an interesting way. Does music stimulate memory? Does remembering music stir something positive in me? What else brings music and memory together?

Bring your favorite food to share in a fellowship potluck at **12:00 noon**. Then we’ll be ready to listen, sing, and even reminisce a bit about our favorite music, as we listen to Austin tell us about “*Music and Memory*.” Bring a friend. See you at SENIORS’ POTLUCK.



Lutheran Social Services Volunteers Needed



LSS Meal Program:

It’s a poppin’ great time to be a volunteer to help provide hot meals for those 65 and older who need help. LSS is looking for people to prepare and people to deliver meals. Pick up a bag of microwave popcorn or two around the church and find more information on the bag about how you can help.

Senior Companions:

Make a difference in your life and in the lives of those in your community! Share your time and talents as a Lutheran Social Services Companion and help older adults in your community with a friendly visit each week. Provide friendship, transportation, and support to someone in need! Senior Companion volunteers are 55 years of age and older and spend 10 hours per week visiting the same 3-5 older adults. Our volunteers can earn a small hourly stipend and mileage reimbursement.

If interested, please contact Pr. Paulus or Marsha.



Stump the Pastor

Q: I love “Silent Night,” but I can’t make sense of the last stanza. “Radiant beams from your holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace.” Shouldn’t there be a verb in there, like “radiant beams (shining) from your holy face?”

A: Not only should there be a verb in there, there is one. It’s just easy to miss it. Poetic language can often be confusing, because of the unusual ways that poets often use words or if the words have to fit a strict rhythm. That is especially true of song lyrics, since the meter of the music does not allow for much flexibility.

In this case, two issues obscure that part of “Silent Night.” One is that we naturally read lyrics line by line, since they are broken into lines to fit the bars of the music. So, this stanza is read as five separate phrases:

Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love’s pure light
Radiant beams from your holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

But the meaning of lyrics often flows from one line to the next without stopping. This line of “Silent Night” does not actually start with “radiant beams,” but with “Son of God, love’s pure light” in the previous line. Note that there is no punctuation after “light,” so that the phrase flows on into the next line.

Once we start there, the other issue is simply one of grammar. Since the subject of the sentence is “love’s pure light” from the previous line, “radiant beams” is not a adjective and noun (as in “radiant beams of sunshine”). “Beams” is a verb instead (as in “she beams with joy”), while “radiant” is an adverb that describes the beaming. If it did not have to fit the music, the phrase would read more clearly as “Son of God, love’s pure light radiantly beams from your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace”—which is both a beautiful image and not nearly as confusing!



“Faith Seeks Understanding”
Continuing Learning Opportunities for Adults
Sundays at 9:15 a.m.



The Content of the Carols

Christmas carols are some of the most beloved songs in the Christian faith. Many people know them (or at least the first stanza!) by heart. Despite that familiarity—or perhaps because of it—people often miss the deep theological claims that the carols proclaim. This class will analyze the lyrics of several carols to reveal how much meaning is packed into those familiar words.

Meeting in the Faith Center, November 28 through December 19.

The Incarnation for Nerds

This 4-week class will dive into the deep theological debates and implications of the incarnation as they were hashed out by the early church Fathers. We’ll explore ancient heresies, theological corrections, and modern-day implications, while examining some of the earliest Christian writings to gain an even deeper appreciation for the Word made flesh! Join Pastor Dave in the main floor Conference Room.



Advent and Christmas Worship Opportunities

Advent Services

Advent services will be held on Wednesday evenings, December 1-December 22, at 6:30 p.m.

- * December 1 - Hanging of the Greens
(*Preceded by the Soup and Chili Supper from 5-6 p.m.*)
- * December 8 - Vespers Service
- * December 15 - Service featuring the Community Strings Ensemble (*Followed by cookies, coffee and fellowship*)
- * December 22 - Faith Singers Christmas Music



Christmas Eve

- * 2 p.m. Family Service
- * 4 p.m. Simultaneous Sanctuary and Foundation Services
- * 6 p.m. Sanctuary Service
- * 11 p.m. Candlelight Service with Holy Communion

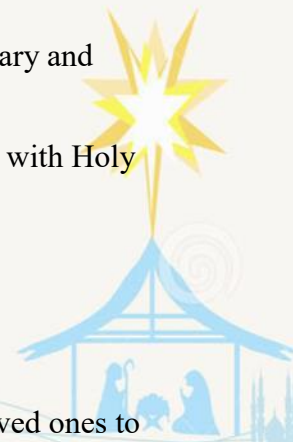
Christmas Day

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

Poinsettia Orders

Poinsettias may be ordered in memory or in honor of loved ones to decorate the Sanctuary and Foundation. Order forms will be in the office and in the December bulletins. **The deadline to order them will be Monday, December 20.**

You are welcome to pick up your poinsettia to take it home, or deliver it to a loved one, anytime after the Christmas Day service.



Faith Lutheran Church Women (FLCW) Events

It is time for a good old fashioned Ladies Aid church kitchen cleaning day! If you have an hour or two to share, stop in on Monday, December 6, at 9 a.m. to join in the fun. Along with making the kitchen sparkle again, there will be coffee, treats and awesome fellowship. Hope to see you there!



The annual **Christmas Tea** will be held on Saturday, December 11, beginning at 2 p.m. This event is always a joyful time of celebration during the Advent season for friends and family. There will be beautifully decorated tables, delicious food and, this year, the event will include a portrayal of women from the Bible.

Tickets are \$10 and they are available for purchase in the church office until the limited number of seats are sold out.



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)
Petty Officer 3rd 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)
Trevor Wersal (MN National Guard, son of Roger and Laurie Wersal)



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



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SUNDAYS 8 A.M.

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

Faith Lutheran Church

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Patricia Lambert
Lucille Wehking

Cokato Nursing Home
Clara Betker

Harmony River
Margaret Alrick
LeRoy Barrick
Ruth Larson
Ellsworth & Delores Lorentzen
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Karol Nolte
Jean Pittman
Harriet Thor

Haven Homes - Maple Plain
Ardell Novotny

Oaks
Marcella Brede

Pines
Ralph and Phyllis Blum
Milt Lueneburg

Prairie Senior Cottages
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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:
FOLLOW JESUS
ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL
INVITE ALL PEOPLE
TEACH CHRISTIAN TRUTH
HELP ALL WHO ARE IN NEED

Christmas Worship
Opportunities - Details Inside

Christmas Eve
2, 4, 6, and 11 p.m.
Christmas Day
10 a.m.
Come, and worship
the New Born King!