



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for December 11, 2022, celebrating the Third Sunday of Advent.

Pastor Jack Dressler (**519-250-7210**) is our interim Pastor. Please contact him for any pastoral needs.

Upcoming Services:

Date	Comment	Pastor / Lay Leader	Reader
December 18	No Communion	Father Brian	Carol
December 24	Christmas Eve – Communion – 7pm	Pastor Jack	Kathy
December 25	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE
January 1, 2023	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE
January 8	Communion	Pastor Jack	
January 15		Father Brian	
January 22			
January 29		Father Brian	
February 5			
February 12	Communion	Pastor Jack	
February 19			
February 26	Communion	Father Brian	
March 5			
March 12			
March 19			
March 22	Ash Wednesday – 10am	Pastor Jack	
March 26	Communion	Pastor Jack	

Trinity Carol Service – Saturday December 17 at 4pm

Organ Concert and Carol Sing
Featuring Scott Knarr & Eric Swiatoschik
Sunday December 18 – 7pm
St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Leamington
Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door
Proceeds for the St. Paul's Food Pantry
For tickets call 519-326-3966

Introduction

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

Blessed be God's name forever. Amen.

Beloved, now is the time to wake from sleep. Let us confront our sins, and confess them to the one who is merciful and just.

God of new beginnings,

we confess that we have not welcomed your holy reign. We have strayed from your paths. We prepare for war instead of peace. We dishonor one another and your creation. Purify us with your refining fire and set us again on your way of love, that we may bear fruit worthy of repentance, and welcome your coming among us. Amen.

People of God, a new thing is growing in our midst, a tender branch, a living sign. By water and the Spirit you are joined to this wonder. You have put on \mp Christ, and your sins have been washed away. Rejoice in the way of the Lord. **Amen.**

Worship

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you!**

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. I am sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you. *Alleluia.*

First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

¹The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ²it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water;

the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way;

the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;

they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalm: 146:5-10

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

⁵Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,
whose hope is in the LORD their God;

⁶**who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;
who keeps promises forever;**

⁷who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.
The LORD sets the captive free.

⁸**The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.**

⁹The LORD cares for the stranger;
the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.

¹⁰**The LORD shall reign forever,
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!**

Second Reading: James 5:7-10

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

⁷Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

²When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” ⁴Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

The gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

The Sermon: What's For Christmas (preached by Pastor Jack Dressler at Trinity on December 11, 2022)

What do you want for Christmas? What is on your list? A new I-phone? Maybe a new computer or a car or a trip to Europe or Caribbean Cruise? Perhaps your desires are simpler. A new pair of socks and something sweet to eat between meals on Christmas day.

Then again, I know that some of you really do want world peace and new hope for the world. Some of you just want a few minutes of peace and quiet – a chance to calmly reflect on the life that you have been given. I know of a minister's spouse who would just like the reverend to be home every day instead of doing extra services, or going to church, or visiting hospitals or going to meetings. I remember overhearing one grandmother one Christmas being asked if she got everything she wanted. She smiled at that person and said, “Every time I hear my grandchildren laugh on Christmas day I get everything I wanted.” Some of you know just how she feels.

Isaiah writes in chapter 35 of a time when the blind will be given sight, the lame will walk, the deaf hear and the dumb speak. Deserts will bloom. Burning sands will produce crystal clear water. It will be a time when God will vindicate the redeemed. In

other words, the whole creation will be renewed and rejuvenated. The earth and humanity that lives there will be given new life, a new beginning. Amazing stuff when we look carefully at what he is promising.

These are the kind of gifts anyone would want for Christmas. These are the type of gifts we gladly wait for until the dawn of the new day. Isn't this what we really want for Christmas? I know, the computers and the cars and the toys for all sizes and ages are wonderful to get, but the transformation of the earthly and human handicaps that are listed here must be on everyone's list.

Then again, maybe not. If you've lived in the wilderness of disappointment or the desert of broken promises, these words from Isaiah may feel like verses from a cheap Christmas card. Isaiah says, "Do not fear," but how can that be possible when the bills outnumber the income? And that's for many in our community and society. How can we wait for the water to run through the desert when we have already gone without for so long that we can no longer remember the taste?

But Isaiah refuses to give up on this message. He refuses to let despair and agony be the final word. In the season of Advent we are given the hope and promise of a Messiah who will come to change the world. During Advent we are reminded that the saviour coming to the stable in Bethlehem is no less than the Son of God. This child of heaven will bring more than a collection of beautifully-wrapped presents on a sleigh or bags of goodies for girls and boys. He will bring a new creation, a new way of living and being in the world, a way so filled with love and mercy that fear will be no more. The promise in Isaiah is focused on a God who is actively involved in the lives of Israel. I know many of you are worried about our congregation, but God is actively involved in our ministry. This whole reading describes God as one who is in relationship with God's people, with us. This is a God different from the gods of our culture.

You see the other cultures surrounding Israel had many different kinds of gods. Their religions were often powerful, psychologically reaffirming aspects of some part of human life. In many ways they represented humankind's ongoing search for something greater than itself. The single greatest difference, however, was this: the God Israel was above all nature and human action. Yahweh was not the rain god or the sun god. Yahweh was the king of the universes, the creator of all that was, is, and shall be. The promise of the prophet was based on this God, the God of all, who was choosing to act among God's people. The gifts God brings to the world are not wrapped in fancy paper and tied with pretty bows. They are the stuff of being involved with the world and the

people that populate it. This isn't fairy godmother type stuff; this is God delivering the people from exile and redeeming them to new life.

I have a friend who has been married to his wife Mary for 16 years. It is his second marriage. He said to me a while ago that he would gladly go through the pain, sadness, and emotional trauma of his first marriage if he knew that at the end of it all he would still be married to Mary. That is a wonderful compliment to his wife, but it is also a view that comes from having lived in the wilderness. The promised land of milk and honey looked as sweet as it did because the Israelites knew about the desert in their lives. They knew what it was like to wander from one dry watering hole to the next. They had experienced hunger and famine. When the Promised Land lay before them, they rejoiced because they had been to the desert.

There is no way, though, that they could fully anticipate and appreciate what lay before them. They had nothing more than hope and the spirit of God to lead them onward. My friend did not wade through the muck and the mire of his failed marriage chanting little prayers about how "it's okay now because in the long run I'll get out of this hopeless situation." But he will tell you that somewhere, somehow, through the power of the community of faith and the grace of God's re-creative ability, he discovered something new. One of the results of living through his first marriage is the fact that he is a better person and a better spouse because of it.

The question we need to ask today is this: What kind of a Messiah are we waiting for? One that will come and transform our lives and our congregation into something new and miraculous? Or are we just hoping for a friendly uncle who comes bearing gifts and presents but never utters a challenging word? What do we want? A Jesus who will change our lives and congregation and challenge us to move through the desert to something new, or a sweet little baby who will be nice to cuddle with but nothing more? Are we expecting a Messiah who massages our egos but never requires anything in return? What do you want for Christmas? The Messiah who is coming to the world is one who will call us to move forward in new and creative ways. We will be challenged to look at our congregation and our world with an entirely new set of eyes.

I know this is not easy to do. We might be thinking well we've been a faithful congregation for over a 100 years, we deserve to be recognized for who we are and what we do. I know many pastors throughout my ministry who have thought the same thing, never having attained going to the big church or attaining a big salary. A theologian, Fred Craddock, was talking about these things with congregations and pastors at a church conference and I think he was resonating with a lot of people. And then he said

this, “Well, since you are wondering about upward mobility, let’s go to the upper room and ask Jesus when we are going to get what we deserve. We’ll have to wait, though. You see, right now he is washing the feet of the disciples. He may talk with you later about upward mobility.” The point was made and it stunned the audience into silence.

Ministers and churches must deal with their egos and with the reality of a God who does not call us to fame and fortune but to new life and new hope. Knowing who we are and telling the truth about that is one of the most difficult things we will ever have to do in our lives. The really tough questions faced by ministers and churches today are not “what do you want for Christmas” or “when do we get the gifts we deserve,” but rather, in this season of Advent, “where is God calling us to next? Where and who are we to serve? Where does God need us to go to celebrate the water flowing in the dry sand? What can we do in response to this wonderful gift of life?”

We need to be reminded that the Messiah being sent to the world is the one who said to his cousin, John the Baptist, “the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense.” Not a single word in there about us getting what we deserve. Nothing about moving up in the world to a new level of income or notoriety. Those things are fine in their place, but in the long run they have nothing to do with the promises of God.

Do we want a Messiah? Is that what we really want for Christmas? Tangible proof of the God of the universes living and working among us? Then maybe what we need to do is turn our gaze from heaven and look a little lower. Perhaps what we need to do is look among the poor, the lame, the blind. Probably what we need to do is travel to the dry sands of poverty and despair and look around. If we do not find the Messiah, it will be because we are not looking in the right direction.

I saw something on the internet a few years ago about a Christian conference center that had posted this sign on the door: *Church service in progress. Please do not ring the bell. Please come back later.* Have they forgotten? Have they failed to remember who is they are worshipping? The promise of the prophets and the words of the Gospels are reminders to us that we can’t keep God to ourselves. No matter how hard we try or how clear we make it to others that we do not want them around, God is always going to invite the whole anyway.

So, the question we are left with is this: Where is God calling me/us to next? Wherever it is, it is a place with a bright and hope-filled future. In the service of the poor, and the communion of the saints, we will discover that the deserts are blooming, the blind

are seeing, and the people of God are loving in ways they never dreamed possible.
Amen.

Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

The Prayers of Intercession

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

Gracious God, we rejoice in the gifts of your Spirit. Equip the global church to magnify your love and peace in every land. We pray for the work of the Lutheran World Federation and ELCA Global Mission. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Abundant God, we rejoice in your creation. Revive lands we have squandered and depleted. Make gardens flourish in cities and neighborhoods. Cleanse polluted air and water so living things may breathe, drink, and praise you. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Righteous God, we rejoice in your justice. End racism and oppression. Deliver all who are unjustly imprisoned or persecuted. Reconcile nations and peoples in conflict. Help us pray for our enemies. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Healing God, we rejoice in your compassion. Comfort any in distress because of worry, illness, or loss. Strengthen and protect health care workers, rescue teams, crisis counselors, and all who risk themselves to keep others safe. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Abiding God, we rejoice in your company. Give us calm and patient hearts as we gather with family and friends. Keep us mindful of those for whom this season is not happy. Console the grieving and surround them with loving support. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of presence, bless those of this community who cannot be with us this morning, and those who walk with them, especially:

In Residence: Margaret; Maria; Stan; Katie; Katherine; Cordelle; Dorothy

Needing our prayers: Ed; Pastor Mike & Patti, Donna; Sharon B; Jeffrey; Art; Joan

Friends of our Members Needing our prayers: Audrey; Greg; Hilda; Mary; Anna

...and all members who may have needs unknown to us

And all those we name in our hearts...

God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, we rejoice with Mary, Mother of our Lord, and with all the saints, that your mercy endures for all generations. Look with favor on those who have died and lead us to joyfully sing of your everlasting promises. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

God the eternal Word, who dwells with us in Jesus, and who holds us in the grace of the Holy Spirit, ✠ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is near. **Thanks be to God.**