



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for January 8, 2023, celebrating the Baptism of Our Lord (First Sunday After Epiphany).

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
January 15		Father Brian	
January 22		Greg	
January 29		Father Brian	
February 5		Greg	
February 12	Communion	Pastor Jack	
February 19			
February 26	Communion	Father Brian	
March 5		Greg	
March 12			
March 19			
March 22	Ash Wednesday – 10am	Pastor Jack	
March 26	Communion	Pastor Jack	

We need your help to assist in the above services – readers and lay leaders.

Thank you again for your support for Trinity. Please continue to mail in cheques, or drop them off in the church's mailbox or make your donation either through PAR or through the Donate button on the church's website, at "www.trinitylutheran.ca".

We supported the James L Dunn School (which used to be across the street in the old W.D. Lowe High School) at Christmas – providing over \$900 in gift cards. Here is a letter from the school:

1215 Parent Ave. Windsor, On N8X 4J1 519.977.7787 trinitywlutheran@gmail.com

To the Congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church,

Please accept our sincere thank you for your generous donation of grocery gift cards. We were able to support more than a dozen families this season who were so grateful to receive his support.

You will see the gratitude of some of our students and staff in the photos on the front of this card. It is only because of generous community partners like you that we are able to make this happen.

Merci beaucoup!

James L Dunn staff & students

Introduction

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing.

Confession and Forgiveness

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

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, who makes all things new, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin. Holy One, source of our renewal, **we confess that we are wrapped up in sin, and cannot free ourselves. We have not practiced your righteousness. Our hearts have turned away from you. For the sake of the world you so love, forgive us, that we may be reconciled to one another for the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

Thus says our God:

"The former things have come to pass and new things I now declare." God's mercy makes us new. We are forgiven in the name of ✝ Christ our Savior. **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

O God our Father, at the baptism of Jesus you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized into Christ faithful to their calling to be your daughters and sons, and empower us all with your Spirit, 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. A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." *Alleluia*

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

God's servant is endowed with God's spirit in order to bring justice to the nations. The servant will not exercise authority boisterously or with violence, nor will weariness ever prevent the fulfilling of the servant's task. God's old promises have been fulfilled; the servant's new assignment is to bring light to the nations.

¹Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

²He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;

³a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

⁵Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;

I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,

⁷to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

⁸I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols.

⁹See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

Psalm: Psalm 29

The voice of the LORD is upon the waters.

¹Ascribe to the LORD, you gods, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

²**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name;
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**

³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

⁴**The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice;
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.**

⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

⁶**the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.**

⁷The voice of the LORD bursts forth in lightning flashes.

⁸**The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

⁹The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.
And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, "Glory!"

¹⁰**The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore.**

¹¹O LORD, give strength to your people; give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Peter crosses the sharp religious boundary separating Jews from Gentiles and proclaims the good news of God's inclusive forgiveness in Jesus' name to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As a result of Peter's preaching, Cornelius and his family become the first Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

³⁴Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with

him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Before Jesus begins his ministry, he is baptized by John, touched by the Spirit, and identified publicly as God’s child.

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

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

The Sermon: Here is My Servant (preached by Pastor Jack Dressler at Trinity on January 8, 2023)

You may remember a number of years ago that wonderful book, *Children’s Letters to God*. One of the letters was by a little girl named Norma, and she wrote, “Dear God, did you mean for giraffes to look that way, or was that an accident?”

One of my retired theology professors once said, “When I get to heaven, if I get to heaven, I’m going to stand before the throne of God with a cancer cell in my hand and say, ‘Why, why?’”

You see when we really get down to it, most of us, in our heart of hearts, have a quarrel with God, which is one of the reasons that a theologian, Neal Plantinga said, “We keep producing revised standard versions of God.”

In other words, dissatisfied with the way God really is, we project unto God the way we wish that God was, which is, usually a version of ourselves. So, for example, if we are athletic, God becomes a kind of cosmic football player. If we’re sympathetic to the workers, God becomes a union organizer. If we are political conservatives, God becomes the patron of down-home family values. If we are an ardent capitalist, God becomes a chamber of commerce advocate.

What do I mean when I say in our heart of hearts we have a quarrel with God? Well, I don't mean to imply that we are angry with God, although most of us from time to time do become angry with God. Like, why God, are you not doing something about what's happening in the Ukraine and other parts of our world. What I really mean is that we are puzzled and perplexed by the way God is in the world, by what God chooses to do and how God chooses to do it or not do it. Or another way to put it is this: if we were God, if we had God's power, if we had God's majestic and comprehensive presence in the world, things would be different. We would be God in a different way than the God of the Scriptures.

Theologian and preacher, Thomas Long recalls a scene in August Wilson's play, *Ma Rainey*. Wilson is a great modern African American playwright. *Ma Rainey* is about African American jazz musicians who are rehearsing in a Chicago recording studio. At one point they take a break from their rehearsal and they begin to tell stories. One of them tells the story about a cousin of his, a minister whose sister in Atlanta was desperately ill and so he took a train to Atlanta to visit her. The train stopped in a little South Georgia town to take on water, and the minister got off the train to use the bathroom. He went into the station and was told "coloured people" can't use the bathroom in here; you have to use the outhouse.

So he went to the outhouse and while he was there the train left the station. There's the minister standing on a South Georgia railroad platform – no train, no friends. Across the tracks there's a group of hostile-looking young white men, and not wanting trouble, the minister simply starts walking up the railroad track. The group of men follows him. They surround him. They demand to know who he is and what he's doing. He tells them, "I am a minister." He shows them his Bible, he shows them his cross, he tells them his sister in Atlanta is sick, and he's been left by the train. No matter – dance for us they say – dance – why don't you dance for us? Someone pulls out a pistol and begins to fire at the ground and they make him dance. "Can you imagine that....can you believe they did that to a man of God." One of the other musicians says, "What I can't believe is that if he were a man of God, why did God let them do it to him? If he was God's own man why didn't God bring fire down from heaven and destroy those crackers? That's what I want to know." All we want is for God to be God the way we would be God if we were God.

So we produce revised standard versions of the way we wish God really was. This is, of course, idolatrous and one of the reasons that the Bible keeps coming to us to refresh our faithful memory, to knock down the false images of God that we create and project

upon God, and to irrigate the fields of our religious imagination with the truth of the way God really is in the world. That's the purpose of this passage we just heard from Isaiah this morning – to renew our understanding of the way God really is in the world – and we may not like it.

What Isaiah says first of all is that whatever agenda we wish God would have, the main intention of God in the world is to establish justice in the earth. Justice, in the vocabulary of the Old Testament, is another way of saying that God's primary will is to repair the creation, to make humanity and all creation the way God intended it to be at the beginning.

This sounds like a good thing of course, until we realize how much we have invested in the way things are now instead of the way God intended things to be, in creation. That is why King Herod and all of Jerusalem shook when they heard that the Christ child had been born, because if that baby is king, then he can't be king, WE can't be king. God isn't the "king" I thought God was going to be.

So, God is going to establish justice. Great! Why doesn't God get to it? But the prophets say, "He comes not as a military conqueror but as a gentle gardener and a lamp lighter. A bruised reed...he will not break. A dimly burning wick...he will not extinguish. Why? I don't know. God's thoughts are not my thoughts; God's ways are not my ways. I do know this though: when we call down God's justice on the world, we assume that it is justice for others and punishment for others. But the truth of the matter is, we, too, all of us, are bruised reeds and dimly burning wicks and God chooses not to rain down wrath on us.

But what does God do, God climbs up on a cross and takes wrath upon himself. Because a bruised reed...he will not break, and a dimly burning wick, God will not quench.

Another story by Tom Long, sticks in my mind as an illustration of this truth about God's ways with us. Late one spring a former student came by Tom's office for a cup of coffee. They chatted about this and that and then she said, "I have a secret to tell you." "What is it," Tom asked. "I'm pregnant," she said.

He was overjoyed. She and her husband had a seven-year-old daughter, and they had been trying since their daughter had been born to have another child, but had been unsuccessful and had finally given up. Now she was pregnant. "That's wonderful news," Tom said.

"We just got the test results and we know two things about our child," she said. "Our child will be a boy, and will have Down's syndrome." Tom said that at that moment he

knew in his mind she must be a bruised reed and a dimly burning wick. “I don’t know how we are going to handle it,” she said, “but we are trusting in God to help us.”

Quite some time later, Tom received their Christmas letter and in it she wrote, “After nine long months of unmitigated discomfort, at four in the morning on August 18, I knew the magic moment had come. At last at 10:55 a.m. Timothy Andrew took his first breath and let out a hearty yell, he was whisked off to neo-natal intensive care where he spent the next three days before coming home. He’s strong, alert, beautiful. He has the sweetest disposition. He shatters daily our images of mentally challenged and special needs. He may need special help, but already he is no slouch in giving special love. We are blessed. Kate (his 8 year-old sister) is Tim’s champion. And hearing about our concerns of how well Tim might be accepted by other kids, Kate informed the kids on our block, ‘my brother has Down’s syndrome and everybody’s going to play with him or else!’ One evening we overheard her talking to Tim. “I’m so glad you’re here, Timothy, I will always love you, I’ll never leave you, I’ll always be nearby.”

You see Christ came to identify with us especially those most in need. We all know miraculous blessings. We’ve experienced them first hand.

Today’s scripture from Isaiah speaks of the coming Messiah as the one who is the servant of God to work justice, to set things right. But he “sets things right,” works justice, not the way we do it – with faceless violence from the skies – but with suffering service, with vulnerable love.

How different are God’s ways from our ways, thank God for that. For a bruised reed – God will not break, and a dimly burning wick – God will not extinguish. **AMEN.**

Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

The Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Calling God, you speak with power to your church. Open our hearts and minds to the new things you are declaring. Strengthen bishops, pastors, deacons, lay leaders, and teachers of the faith. Equip the baptized for your reconciling and redeeming work. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Renewing God, you provide the waters of the earth and in Jesus’ baptism you reveal the waters of life. Cleanse and protect oceans, rivers, and watersheds. Bring relief to parched lands and to communities without access to safe water. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Righteous God, you never weary of establishing justice. Increase cooperation and constructive dialogue between nations. Guide local, national, and international authorities to govern with equity, vision, and integrity. We pray for those in military service, for peacemakers, and for our enemies. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Abiding God, your mercy is steadfast. Give sanctuary to people who flee from oppression, war, poverty, and famine. Sustain health care workers, caregivers, first responders, counselors, and all who help and heal. Comfort those who are grieving or experiencing crisis. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Blessing God, in Christ you gather the beloved community. Kindle the gifts of your Spirit in your people. Accompany the newly baptized, those recently ordained, and any beginning a new ministry. Inspire synodical leaders and congregational councils to serve with imagination and wisdom. Merciful God, **receive 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; Donna; Sharon B; Jeffrey; Art; Joan; Olga; Jack Stark

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

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

And all those we name in our hearts...

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Promising God, your faithfulness endures throughout all generations. We give thanks for those who have died in Christ, trusting that we will be united with them and all the saints in Christ's resurrection life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified. **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

The God who faithfully brings forth justice and breaks the oppressor's rod
⊕ bless, strengthen, and uphold you, today and always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Follow the way of Jesus. **Thanks be to God.**