



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for January 22, 2023, celebrating the Third 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 29		Father Brian	Dena
February 5		Greg	
February 12	Communion	Pastor Jack	
February 19		Anne	
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".

Introduction

Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin, or evil. Light dawns for us as we gather around the

word, the font, and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be “caught” in the net of God’s grace and mercy.

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

Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia. Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom and cured every sickness among the people. *Alleluia.*

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali experienced the gloom of defeat by Assyrian military forces, but they are assured that their condition will be reversed when God makes a light-filled appearance. The joy they will experience will resemble celebrations of great harvests, because God will deliver them from everything that diminishes or oppresses them.

¹There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time [the LORD] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Psalm: 27:1, 4-9

The LORD is my light and my salvation.

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

⁴**One thing I ask of the LORD; one thing I seek;**

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life; to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek God in the temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter,

hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high upon a rock.

⁶**Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me.**

Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of rejoicing; I will sing and make music to the LORD.

⁷Hear my voice, O LORD, when I call; have mercy on me and answer me.

⁸**My heart speaks your message—"Seek my face." Your face, O LORD, I will seek.**

⁹Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your servant in anger.

Cast me not away—you have been my helper; forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Paul calls on the Corinthians to end their dissensions and share the unified outlook of the gospel. Discord arises when we forget that we belong not to human leaders or institutions but to Christ. Indeed, the unifying word of the cross of Christ is the center of the gospel and the power of God's salvation.

¹⁰Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹²What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

Jesus begins his public ministry shortly after John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod. He proclaims the nearness of God's reign and calls four fishermen to be his first disciples.

¹²Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,

on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,

and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

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

The Sermon: The Last Word on Life (read by Greg Peifer, written by Maz Lucado, from his book "3:16: The Numbers of Hope")

A friend from my West Texas hometown contacted me with some big news. "My father saw your mother's name in an unclaimed property column of the local newspaper."

I couldn't imagine what the proper might be. Dad died years ago. Mom lives near my sister in Arkansas. We sold her house. As far as I know, we owned nothing in the city. "Unclaimed property?"

"Sure, city hall is obliged to list the names of folks who own these goods."

"You don't say."

"I'll send you the contact information."

That was on Sunday. His e-mail arrived on Tuesday. That let me the better part of forty-eight hours to image what my folks, unbeknownst to their kids, has hoarded away. Initially, I was stumped. The Great Depression honed my parents into penny-pinchers. They did to dollars what boa constrictors do to rats – squeezed the life out of them.

Then again, Dad worked as an oil-field mechanic. Wildcatters roam such parts. Did one quietly invest a few bucks in a long-shot oil well? Did he keep it from Mom lest she erupt? And now, could it be that the well has oil? A petroleum gusher might mean millions, no, zillions of barrels of black gold flowing from the Devonian treasure. And who is listed among the investors but Jack Lucado. And who is listed among his heirs?

My imagination raced like a Formula One driver. This could be the big. By Sunday evening I'd funded my yet-to-be-born grandchildren's educations. On Monday I ended world hunger. Tuesday, as the e-mail came, I was solving the AIDS crisis. I dialed the courthouse number. The clerk remembered my mom and, with no small enthusiasm, affirmed, "I've been hoping you'd call." I heard papers shuffling, her voice mumbling, "Now where did I put that check?"

Check? Gulp. I pulled a calculator out of my desk and limbered my fingers. "Here it is!" she exclaimed, speaking back into the phone. "Looks like we owe your mom some money. Whoa, this has been here awhile."

I drummed my fingers on the desk.

“Let’s see, Mr. Lucado. Where should we send this check?”

I gave her an address and waited.

She continued. “Looks like we owe your mom three-fifty.”

Did she say th-th-three hundred and fifty million? I collected myself. She might mean thousand. Whichever, way to go Dad.

“Yes, sir, your mother overpaid her final water bill by three dollars and fifty cents. Shall I send that today?”

“Sure...thanks. Just put it in the mail.”

Some hopes fail to deliver. Some expectations sputter and flop like untied balloons. Remember the shining-armor boyfriend who became the heartbreaking two-timer? The fast-track promotion that landed you in the forgotten basement cubicle? The cross-country move you made to “find yourself”? You found yourself, all right. You found yourself with higher rent and fewer friends.

“If only” dreams lurk in each biography. “If only I could find a mate... a career... a brighter red, affordable ’65 Mustang”. The only barrier between you and bliss is an “if only.” Sometimes you cross it. You find the mate or the career or the Mustang and You count the three fifty and sigh.

Life has letdowns. And how do you know Christ won’t be one of them? Honestly. Dare you believe that he gives what he promises to give? Life. External life. “Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have external life” (John 3:16). We’re pulling into the final station. Having worked our way through the 3:16 itinerary, we need to ponder one more word: life.

Beer companies offer you life in their hops. Perfume makers promise new life for your romance. But don’t confuse costume jewelry with God’s sapphire.

Jesus offers *zoe*, the Greek word of “life as God has it.” Whereas *bios*, its sibling term, is life extensive, *zoe* is life intensive. Jesus talks less about life’s duration and more about its quality, vitality, energy, and fulfillment. What the new mate, sports car, or unexpected check could never do, Christ says, “I can.” You’ll love how he achieves it. He reconnects your soul with God.

What God gave Adam and Eve, he entrusted to you and me. A soul. “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).

You, a chemical fluke? Atomic surprise? By no means. You bear the very breath of God. He exhaled himself into you, making you a “living being”.

The Hebrew word translated here as “being” is *nephesh*, which appears more than 750 times in the Bible. It sometimes refers to the life force present in all creatures. In the context of a person, however, *nephesh* refers to our souls.

Your soul distinguishes you from zoo dwellers. God gifted the camel with a hump and the giraffe with a flagpole neck, but he reserved his breath, or a soul, for you. You bear his stamp. You do things God does. Think. Question. Reflect. You blueprint buildings, chart sea crossings, and swallow throat lumps when your kids say their alphabet. You, like Adam have a soul.

And, like Adam, you’ve used your soul to disobey God. God’s command to the charter couple includes the Bible’s first reference to death. “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die”.

My daughter Andrea, when elementary-school age, asked a grown-up question. “Dad, if God didn’t want them to eat from the tree, why did he put it there?” The answer, best I can tell, is to remind us who created whom. When we attempt to swap roles with God and tell him we can eat (think, say, do, control, own, hurt, inhale, ingest, demand) anything we want, we die two deaths. Adam and Eve did. They died physically, eventually, and spiritually, instantly.

Reread God’s warning: “when you eat of it you will surely die”. Sin resulted in Adam’s and Eve’s immediate deaths. But death of what? Their bodies? No, they continued to breathe. Brain waves flowed. Eyelids blinked. Their bodies functioned, but their hearts hardened. They stopped trusting God. Their friendship with their maker died.

We understand how this happened. If you loan me your car and I wreck it, will I want to see you again? No. I will dread our next encounter. Adam and Eve experienced the same.

Prior to this act, they followed God like sheep follow their shepherd. He spoke; they listened. He gave assignments; they fulfilled them. They were naked but unashamed, transparent and unafraid. Yet as one drop of ink clouds a glass of water, the stubborn deed darkened their souls. Everything changed. God’s presence stirred panic, not peace. Adam ran like a kid caught raiding the pantry. “I was afraid” (Genesis 3:10). Intimacy with God ceased; separation from God began. We’ll always wonder why Adam didn’t ask for forgiveness. But he didn’t, and the guilty pair was “banished ... from the Garden of Eden” (Genesis 3:23).

We’ve loitered outside the gates ever since.

Deep within we've known (haven't we known?) something is awry – we feel disconnected. What we hope will bring life brings limited amounts ... three fifty worth. We connect with a career; find meaning in family, yet long for something more.

We feel the frustration I felt on Christmas morning, 1964. I assembled a nine-year-old's dream gift: a genuine Santa Fe Railroad miniature train set, complete with battery-powered engine and flashing crossing lights. I placed the locomotive on the tracks and watched in sheer glee as three pounds of pure steel wound its way across my bedroom floor. Around and around and around and ... around ... and around ... After some time I picked it up and turned it the other direction. It went around and around and around.

“Mom, what else did you get me for Christmas?”

Similarly, our lives chug in long ovals, one lap after another. First job. Promotion. Wedding day. Nursery beds. Kids. Grandkids. Around and around ... Is there anything else?

Our dissatisfaction mates with disappointment and gives birth to some unruly children: drunkenness, power plays, eighty-hour workweeks, nosedives into sexual perversions – all nothing more than poorly disguised longings for Eden. We long to restore what Adam lost. As someone once said, “The man who knocks on the door of a brothel is seeking God.”

Where and when the brothel fails, Jesus steps forth with a reconnection invitation. Though we be “dead in (our) transgressions and sins and separated from the life of God, whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan – this rebirth comes from God.”

Don't miss the invisible, inwards miracle triggered by belief. God reinstates us to garden-of-Eden status. What Adam and Eve did, we now do! The flagship family walked with God; we can too. They heard his voice; so can we. They were naked and unashamed; we can be transparent and unafraid. No more running or hiding.

He breathes life into flat lined lives. He does for our hearts what we do for dead car batteries. I had one recently. I turned my ignition – no noise. So I did what anyone would do: I doused my car with a high-powered energy drink, confident that the bottled get-up-and-go would stir some life. Nothing happened. I rolled a television in front of the grill and flipped on the game. A good contest perks up the deadest cell, right? Not this time. So I towed my car past the latest line of pristine, fully loaded luxury vehicles – all the rage in the showrooms everywhere. No response. The battery had the punch of a shoebox.

And you think I have the IQ of a screwdriver. Who turns to booze, screens, or bodies for renewal? Too many. Far too many.

But Jesus' offer still stands. "Because Jess was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven – and the future starts now!" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

Others offer life, but no one offers to do what Jesus does – to reconnect us to his power. But how can we know? How do we know that Jesus knows what he's talking about? The ultimate answer according to his flagship followers, is the vacate tomb. Did you note the words you just read? "Because Jesus was *raised from the dead*, we've been given a brand-new life." In the final sum, it was the disrupted grave that convinced the first Christians to cast their lots with Christ. "He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, Jesus was seen by more than five hundred of the believers at the same time (1 Cor. 15:5-6).

Can Jesus actually replace death with life? He did a convincing job with his own. We can trust him because he has been there.

On a trip to China, I rode past Tiananmen Square in a bus full of Westerners. We tried to recollect the causes and consequences of the revolt. Our knowledge of history was embarrassing. Some gave one date; another gave a different one. One person remembered a certain death toll; someone else disagreed. All this time our translator remained silent.

Finally one of us asked her, "Do you remember anything about the Tiananmen Square revolt?"

Her answer was solemn. "Yes, I was part of it."

We quickly grew quiet as she gave firsthand recollections of the bloodshed and oppression. We listened, because she'd been there.

We who follow Chris do so for the same reason. He's been there

He's been to Bethlehem, wearing barn rags and hearing sheep crunch. Suckling milk and shivering against the cold. All of divinity content to cocoon itself in an eight-pound body and to sleep on a cow's supper. Millions who face the chill of empty pockets or the fears of sudden change turn to Christ. Why?

Because he's been there.

He's been to Nazareth, where he made deadlines and paid bills; to Galilee, where he recruited direct reports and separated fighters; to Jerusalem, where he stared down critics and stood up against cynics.

We have our Nazareths as well – demands and due dates. Jesus wasn't the last to build a team; accusers didn't disappear with Jerusalem's temple. Why seek Jesus' help with your challenges? Because he's been there. To Nazareth, to Galilee, to Jerusalem.

But most of all, he's been to the grave. Not as a visitor, but as a corpse. Buried amidst the cadavers. Numbers among the dead. Heart silent and lungs vacant. Body wrapped and grave sealed. The cemetery. He's been buried there.

You haven't yet. But you will be. And since you will, don't you need someone who knows the way out?

God Has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...He destroyed death, and through the Good News he showed us the way to have life that cannot be destroyed. (1 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:10).

Remember that check from my hometown? I'm still waiting on it. Not counting on it for much. The three fifty promises to bring little. But the 3:16 promises? I've long since deposited that check. It bears interest every day and will forever.

You will too.

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.

Make your church one in purpose, proclaiming the message of the cross. Help us to work together across differences. Energize ecumenical partnerships, including the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.** We rejoice at the bounty of your creation. Fill the land and sea with your abundance. Bless harvests in the southern hemisphere and fallow fields in the northern hemisphere. Equip farmers to till and keep the earth sustainably. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.** In Christ your reign comes near and calls all to repentance. Break the rod of the oppressor in every nation. Dispel the shadow of death in places of war and persecution. Grant us leaders who lift the yokes that burden those in need. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Be a stronghold for those in trouble and a rock for all who are afraid. Rouse communities to care for neighbors who need shelter, are facing maltreatment, or are isolated and lonely. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Sustain the ministries of this congregation and all churches in this community. Nurture each congregation's unique witness to your presence; foster mutual respect; inspire our cooperation in loving our neighbors. 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; Mary; Anna; Jean; Randy

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

And all those we name in our hearts...

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We praise you for the faithful who have gone ahead of us, both famous and unknown. Help us to leave our nets and follow, and bring us with them to the fullness of your promise of eternal 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.**