



The Concordian

A Newsletter of Concordia Lutheran Church – ELCA

Superior, WI

December 2020

Vol 39 No. 12

“Called to Nurture and Live our Faith, Encourage our Service, and Actively Share the Gospel”

From Pastor Michelle

Where is God?

I sat in the sanctuary this morning without turning on the lights, photographing myself to try to give you a sense of what it's like in our worship space when no one is gathered. On Sundays, we have the opportunity for a limited number of households to worship in this space, but it's not really a gathering, because households are seated 25 feet apart from one another, and there is no coffee fellowship or real contact with others. It's not the same.

Christmas will not be the same, either. We long for a return to the way things seem to have always been here at Concordia, but we cannot do that yet, so I thought it might be helpful to share some information from Martin Luther, way back in the 16th century.

In August of 1527, Luther's city, Wittenberg, became victim to the plague. Many people fled to protect themselves. Luther's prince, Elector John Frederick, ordered Luther to leave because he did not want to see Luther die of the sickness. Luther, however, stayed. In his staying, though, he did not claim immunity to the disease that killed so many. Instead, he said he would ask God mercifully to protect, and then he would fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. He said he would avoid places and persons where his presence was not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, causing their death as a result of his own negligence. He expressed no fear of dying, and pledged to help his neighbors if they were to suffer from the illness.

In his writing (accessible in Luther's Works, Volume 43, Fortress Press © 1968, pages 130-132) he claims that to ignore the needs of the neighbor is to sin “on the left hand.”

Then, he also acknowledges the sin “on the right hand,” which he notes by describing those who behave rashly, and recklessly, tempting God and disregarding everything which might

counteract death and the plague, refusing to avoid congregating in ways that might spread infection, instead seeming to make sport of it, lightheartedly wishing to prove how independent they are.

The parallels to the pandemic today sober the spirit, as people argue about masks, about gathering socially, about whether or not they can see their children... Add to that the idea that the whole thing is a political hoax designed to effect the outcome of the presidential election in this country...

Where is God?

God is with us, especially as we do whatever we can to care for our neighbors. It might mean gathering only over the telephone, or through the Internet. It might mean ordering in rather than dining out. It might mean wearing a mask around others, just in case we have the virus, so that we are less likely to spread it. It might mean living differently this year, and delaying gatherings of family and friends for another time.

It might mean not being able to say goodbye to a loved one in person, and counting on God or others to relay our love until we meet again in the resurrection.

When Jesus was born, he came into a world rife with violence and political intrigue. As much as the world changes, it also stays the same. Still, political intrigue captures the conscience. Still, other gods vie for our allegiance...

But they are not God, Jesus is. Jesus is God with us, through everything. This we celebrate. Amen

Blessings! *Pastor Michelle*





Parish Nursing Notes.....

All of a sudden, we're in the middle of winter weather, the holiday season, and a pandemic. This is a season when we are usually planning for big family gatherings, and searching for the perfect gifts for all—but this year it is different! This year the most perfect gift we can give is not exposing anyone to the Covid-19 virus, and allowing for family gatherings for all to be possible in the future. And the best way to do that is to maintain social distancing, and wearing masks whenever outside of your residence.

For as long as I can remember, our family (the Dahl family) has celebrated Christmas together. It started out in my parent's home, and then moved to our home after we bought our first house. It always involved a lot of love, hugs, and sharing of many foods. And it always included going to the Christmas Eve service at Concordia. And as the time for the service changed starting times from midnight to gradual earlier times, we just changed our routines at home for the Christmas Eve feast, and the opening of presents. I remember always feeling tears running down my cheeks as we sang "Silent Night", and held our lit candles in the air. And the church was always packed with people—members, former members, family members, and people from our community who loved the beautiful services. And you could feel all the love in the air.

But this year things are different. The love is still there, it is just being expressed a little differently.

We are sharing our love by each staying in our own homes, and sharing it virtually. We hope to have many more Christmases to share if we don't share viruses now. And we can do that in our church as well. Pastor Michelle is considering recording the Christmas Eve service just like all the Sunday services --and doing it early enough so all can watch it on Facebook at the most convenient time for them. What better way to share love than by keeping those we love safe from illness or even death!



If you have been keeping up with the news, you know that the positive tests, hospitalizations, and even deaths have been going up in our area and state. We have even had several positive tests among our church members. We like to share gifts and blessings at Christmas—but NOT illness or even death. We can share with our family members through "Zoom" or mailing gifts. And we can share love in our community by offering to shovel snow, to run errands, or sharing home-made Christmas goodies. We can listen to the beautiful hymns and music of "Matt and Savannah Shaw" on Facebook. We can enjoy the Christmas Eve church service on Facebook without wearing a mask. And we can even sing along—as loud as we want!

This Christmas, remember the true ***SPIRIT*** of Christmas. Share your love with others without endangering their health and well-being. And remember, "*Every good and perfect gift is from God. It comes down from the Father.*" (James 1:17)

"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul." (III John: 2)

.....Jean

Christmas Eve Worship

This year, our Christmas Eve Worship service will be prerecorded and available online at 4:00 on December 24 (our regular worship time) and thereafter.

We have something very different planned, something that would not be possible if we were all to be gathered within the worship space.

We will also do our best to provide traditional hymns and songs and the opportunity for you to join in singing them from whatever space you choose.

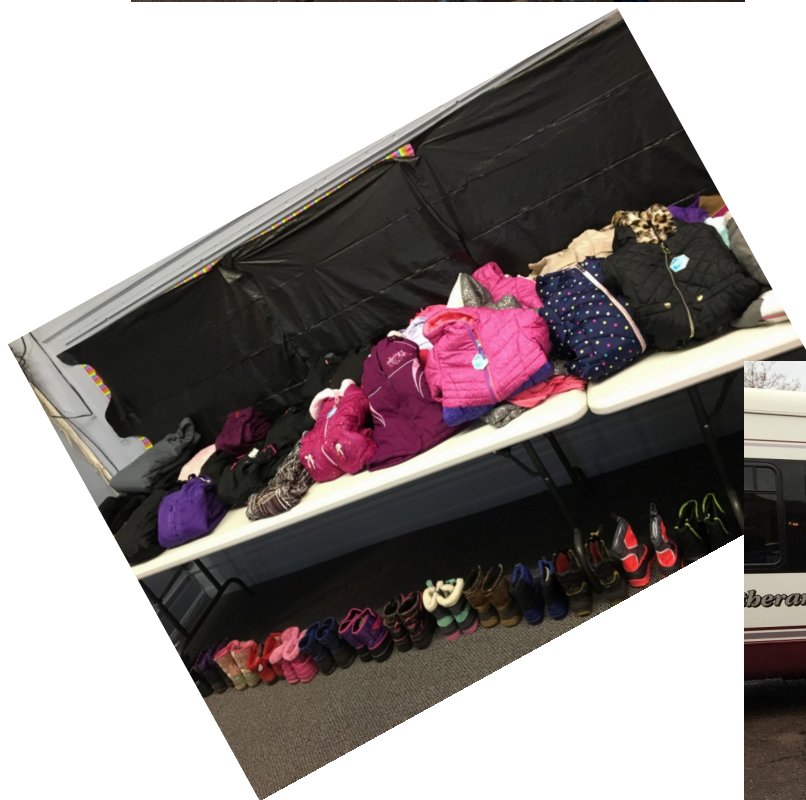
Since the worship service will be prerecorded, we can arrange to deliver a copy to those who do not have Internet access.


We can bring a DVD to local residents who make the **request by December 20**. We can also copy the service to a VHS tape, but ***you will need to provide the tape*** by December 20 to us.





Thanks to the generous donations of children's winter outerwear and the adult face masks for Head Start! The donations were very much appreciated by both staff and families!



~ December 2020 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Office closed except by Appointment 9a-9:30a Staff Meeting	2 Office closed except by Appointment 1p-2p Concordia Confirmation Class by ZOOM	3 Office closed except by Appointment	4 Office closed except by Appointment	5
6 10a-11a Worship 11:15 Council by ZOOM	7 Office closed except by Appointment	8 Office closed except by Appointment 9a-9:30a Staff Meeting	9 Office closed except by Appointment 1p-2p Concordia Confirmation Class by ZOOM	10 Office closed except by Appointment	11 Office closed except by Appointment	12
13 10a-11a Worship	14 Office closed except by Appointment	15 Office closed except by Appointment 9a-9:30a Staff Meeting	16 Office closed except by Appointment 1p-2p Concordia Confirmation Class by ZOOM	17 Office closed except by Appointment 9:30a-12p Lake Superior Conference Pastors (TBD)	18 Office closed except by Appointment	19
20 10a-11a Worship 11:15 Council by ZOOM (Budget)	21 Winter Solstice Office closed except by Appointment 6p-7p Worship and Music Committee	22 Office closed except by Appointment 9a-9:30a Staff Meeting	23 Office closed except by Appointment (No Confirmation Class)	24 Christmas Eve Worship online at 4:00	25 Christmas 	26
27 10a-11a Worship (provided by Northwest Synod of Wisconsin)	28 Office closed except by Appointment	29 Office closed except by Appointment 9a-9:30a Staff Meeting	30 Office closed except by Appointment (No Confirmation Class)	31 Office closed except by Appointment	Notes:	

Annual Meeting



Our Annual Meetings for **Concordia Lutheran Church** and
for **Riverside Cemetery** are scheduled for
Sunday, January 24, at 11:30 a.m.

In order to limit the possible transmission of the virus, reports will be made available by January 10 and distributed to all who request them, by mail or email, so the meetings themselves can be of short duration, accepting reports, ratifying our constitution, council member elections, and adopting the budget (which primarily mirror's last year's).

Seating will be distanced by 10 feet. Everyone in the building must be masked for the entire meeting. No coffee, no refreshments. ZOOM attendance possible.

With this short duration, we believe we can safely seat 50 people in the sanctuary. Our quorum is 25. If more than 50 are present, we will seat additional people in another room with A/V connection.

Please call the office and let us know if you can be there, and specify whether you will be there in person or by ZOOM.

Committee Chairs are asked to submit their reports by **December 20**, so that booklets can be created and distributed.



Flowers

The Altar guild appreciates everyone's donations to the flower fund throughout the year, whether you contribute to lilies, poinsettias or the weekly Altar flowers in honor or memoriam (or whatever other reason!).

Given by:

December 6, Carol Lindstrom & Family

December 13, Shirley Brandser &
Patsy Luder

December 20, Ann Novack

December 27, Tom, Nancy, Keegan &
Kali O'Neill

In memory of:

William Lindstrom

Fred & Carrie Jackson
William & Donna Hansen

Ralph & Shirley Nelson

Lorraine Peterson



Hardcopies of the Sermons Available
call for information 715-394-3762

**Worship continues over
Facebook Live at:**

www.facebook.com/ConcordiaSuperior/
call for assistance in accessing the video

**Reservations Required
for In-Person Worship
(when offered)
until further notice.
715-394-3762**

*At our recent Parish Nurse retreat, we received this
Recipe for Resilience that I'd like to share with all of you.*

Jean



Recipe: ^{for} Resilience

Ingredients:
7 + hours SLEEP
20 minutes PRAYER
30 minutes EXERCISE
1 heartfelt LOVE
2 feet grounded in FAITH
2 handfuls GRATITUDE
1 cupful JOY
1 large dollop KINDNESS
pinch of HUMILITY*
dash of FORGIVENESS*

Directions
Blend all ingredients until
desired consistency is reached.
Adjust quantities as needed.
*add an extra pinch or dash frequently

For Best Results:
**Take daily along with healthy meals
and meaningful connections
and conversations
with friends and loved ones.**

Concordia Lutheran Council and Committee Relationships

President	Kris Hanson 715-977-1260	Education	Blake Hanson
Vice President	Shawn Quist 218-343-6795	Evangelism	Matt Ketola 715-363-2567
Secretary	John Gronski 218-340-1813	Concordia Cares	Jan Lippitt 218-390-6917
Treasurer	Doug Score 218-260-0657	Worship & Music	Ken Harmer 218-390-8218
Audit	Mark Thompson 715-392-3166	Youth & Family	Mike Olson 715-398-0343
		Property & Management Stewardship	Shawn & Mark John Gronski

From Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Northwestern Synod of Wisconsin

***Jesus 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. Matthew 4:23***

Dear Pastors, Deacons, SAMs, and Council Presidents,

This is difficult. I'll cut to the chase. Research indicates that three of the most dangerous places to be during a pandemic are inside a building filled with people who don't live in your house like: 1. Bars and restaurants 2. Gyms and work out facilities 3. CHURCHES!

This is a crisis. The hospitals are filling up. Medical workers are overworked and getting sick themselves. University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire, River Falls, and Stout will be entirely online after Thanksgiving. Elementary and High schools are making tough decisions to go online after so many teachers and students have tested positive. Pastors have started to report to me that members of their churches have died from COVID-19. At least three pastors in our synod have tested positive for COVID. My 27 year old daughter who works in health care tested positive last week. This is real.

Here is the strongly worded recommendation from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. *November 11, 2020 Update : Given the current state of COVID spread in Wisconsin and Governor Evers' Executive Order 94, we recommend that churches abstain from gathering in physical spaces, indoors OR outdoors, at this time. We know this will impact community celebrations and holiday services in the weeks to come, and offer this recommendation in the firm belief that it will help protect the life and health of congregants and community.*

I will echo this recommendation. I recommend that you plan all online virtual worship services for the season of Advent and Christmas. I know this will be difficult. Many will grieve not being able to gather on Christmas Eve for candlelight worship. As spiritual leaders you need to do everything you can to keep people safe and keep yourself safe. You do not want your church to be known as a super spreader site. You do not want to do funerals for your vulnerable members who got sick because they came to worship. I do not want you to get sick. Encourage your members to stay home, wear a mask, sanitize, and be careful.

The pressure to hold in person worship during Christmas is immense. I read about a church that is planning to do all online virtual worship for Christmas, but it will decorate the sanctuary, and from 1-4 p.m. for a few days before and after Christmas they plan to open the sanctuary for one household at a time. Families or individuals may come into the building (wearing masks, of course) to listen to recorded music and pray. They will provide printed prayers and Bible readings. There are important logistics with this plan, like scheduling and instructing families to wipe down everything they touch before they leave, but it sounded like it might be a safe way to meet the spiritual needs of some of your members.

My point is simply this: You can do this. You can adapt and change and discover new ways for your community to worship and celebrate the Nativity of our Lord Jesus without being crowded in the same building at the same time. You can do this. You can keep the members of your church and community safe.

Dear friends, this Christmas will be celebrated in the middle of a crisis. We need Immanuel, God with us, to get through this. *Remember, Jesus is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome!* I am hopeful that soon there will be a vaccine and we will all be able to gather again safely. I know you are tired, even exhausted. Let us know how we can support you.

The synod ministers are recording a complete worship service for you to use the Sunday after Christmas. I hope it will be helpful and give you the break you need.

I am grateful for all you are doing! I pray for you all every day.

Together in Christ,

~Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA

Worship Aids for the Coming Weeks

Sunday, December 6 ,2020 Second Sunday of Advent, Year B

John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming. The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

Prayer of the Day: Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings

Isaiah 40:1-11, *Good news of God's coming to a people in exile*

Psalms 85:1-2,8-13, *Righteousness shall prepare a pathway for God.*

2 Peter 3:8-15a, *Waiting for and hastening the day of God*

Mark 1:1-8 *John appears from the wilderness*

Sunday, December 13., 2020 Third Sunday of Advent, Year B

Rejoice always," begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God's party.

Prayer of the Day: Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 *Righteousness and praise flourish like a garden*

Psalms 126, *The Lord has done great things for us. (Ps. 126:3)*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, *Kept in faith until the coming of Christ*

John 1:6-8, 19-28, *A witness to the light*

Sunday, December 20, 2020 Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B

God keeps the promise made to David to give him an everlasting throne. The angel tells Mary that God will give David's throne to her son Jesus. She is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and by the news of her coming pregnancy, but she is able still to say, "Count me in." We who know that Jesus is called king only as he is executed still find it a mystery hard to fathom, but with Mary today we hear the news of what God is up to and say, "Count us in."

Prayer of the Day: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 *The LORD's promise to David*

Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26 *Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing. (Ps. 89:1)*

Romans 16:25-27 *The mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ*

Luke 1:26-38 *The angel appears to Mary*

Worship Aids for the Coming Weeks Continued

Thursday, December 24, 2020 Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Eve

(online only, prerecorded, available at 4:00 p.m.)

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

Prayer of the Day Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Readings Isaiah 9:2-7 *Light shines: a child is born for us*
Psalm 96 Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad (Ps. 96:11)
Titus 2:11-14 *The grace of God has appeared*
Luke 2:1-20 *God with us*

Friday, December 25, 2020 Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day

(No worship service planned for this day, offered for personal devotions)

As on the first day of creation, on this Christmas Day the Word illumines the world, shining forth to bring all things into being. Today we celebrate the incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now. Emboldened by the good news of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and all witnesses to the light of Christ, we declare to the world that we have indeed seen and been transformed by the arrival of "the salvation of our God." O come, let us adore!

Prayer of the Day Almighty God, you gave us your only Son to take on our human nature and to illumine the world with your light. By your grace adopt us as your children and enlighten us with your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Readings Isaiah 52:7-10 *Heralds announce God's salvation*
Psalm 98 *All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God* (Ps. 98:3)
Hebrews 1:1-12 *God has spoken by a Son*
John 1:1-14 *The Word became flesh*

Sunday, December 27, 2020 First Sunday of Christmas, Year B

The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.

Prayer of the Day: Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings Isaiah 61:10--62:3 , *Clothed in garments of salvation*
Psalm 148 The splendor of the *Lord* is over earth and heaven. (Ps. 148:13)
Galatians 4:4-7 , *Children and heirs of God*
Luke 2:22-40 , *The presentation of the child*

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The Concordian

December

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Superior, Wisconsin
715.394.3762
www.concordiasuperior.org

Sunday Worship Schedule

10:00 am Worship

Online at: facebook.com/ConcordiaSuperior

Limited in-person worship by reservation

Mission Statement

As members of the body of Christ at Concordia,
we are called to be God's forgiven, gifted, diversified
and unified people. By the power of the Holy Spirit,
we **nurture and live our faith** in Jesus Christ,
encourage our service in His church,
and **actively share the Gospel**
in our community and the world.

NOTICE

If you are receiving this newsletter and do not wish to, please contact
the church office. If you know someone who should receive it or
wishes to be added, please have them contact our office.