



**The Mustard Seed
Trinity Lutheran Church
Monthly Newsletter
To Know Christ, to Share Christ
December 1, 2021**

Matthew 17:20

“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible to you.”

Pastor's Message

We are entering into a time of year that many think of as festive and joyous. But it isn't that way for everyone. This can be a painful time for some. It may be the first Christmas without a beloved family who has recently died; it may be a time that has always been difficult. And we have had a painful and challenging time these past twenty months. We hear from so many places about the joy of the season, about getting together with family and friends and that can remind many of what they have lost or what they may never have. We have spent so many months in isolation, in fear, in mourning. Many are experiencing the anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation – all these can make us feel even more alone in the midst of what we are told is a time of celebration. We need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concern; we need to know that we are not alone. We need a place to express our grief and our pain as well as focus on hope.

Because of all of this, we are holding a special **Blue Christmas** service on Monday, December 21st at 4:00. This service is designed to provide space for prayer, reflection, and remembrance amidst the holiday hustle and bustle. In this pandemic season of life, our grief and loss may be magnified and something that I think all of us are experiencing. This is a service that we need now more than ever.

Come out and join with us in sharing and hearing prayers, scripture and music that acknowledge that God's presence is for those who mourn, for those who struggle – and that God's Word (Christ) comes to shine light into our darkness.

Everyone is welcome to come share in the hope that we find in the coming of the Christ Child in our midst.

I am excited to have this time with all of you and to share in our hope even as we mourn.

Pastor Jodi Golden-Lund

Bibles, Books, and Beyond

Advent Book Recommendations

What other time or season will the church ever have but the time of advent?

--Karl Barth

Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit.*

If you would like a fresh encounter with the Psalms, Walter Brueggemann's book may be a good choice for you. This short volume helps readers rediscover how these ancient prayers encourage us to be honest with God, and how memory of our individual and collective pasts can help ground and orient us in chaotic times.

Fleming Rutledge, *Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ*

If you like to read sermons, this collection of Advent sermons preached by Fleming Rutledge over a number of years using the common lectionary readings provides a rich spectrum of insight and inspiration in how to live in the advent season of *already—not yet*. Rutledge is an Episcopal priest, and acclaimed preacher known for her biblical expertise and her theological rigor. Hers is one of the books I have used in preparing Trinity's Advent Bible Study.

Austen Hartke, *Transforming: The Bible and the Lives of Transgender Christians*

I have not read this book, but it is on my advent reading list. Austen Hartke is the creator of the You-Tube series *Transgender and Christian*. He is a graduate of Luther Seminary's Master of Arts program in Old Testament/Hebrew Studies and winner of Luther's 2014 John Milton Prize in Old Testament Writing. The volume opens, and to some extent revolves, around the question Hartke asked himself before transitioning from female to male: "Do you think God made a mistake?" The book itself is Hartke's answer to this question, though it is augmented with other trans voices as well as a solid grounding in Scripture. Books like this do not merely increase our understanding and compassion, they open new insight into the process of transforming and being transformed—always an important Advent theme.



Advent Bible Study: “Christ Will Come Again”

This Advent, we prepare once again for the coming of Jesus Christ, recognizing that Christ has already come and will come again—a radical promise that grounds us in the present where we live “between times”—between the “already” and the “not yet.” The prophet Isaiah also lived between times, and spoke of a future nowhere in evidence around him. Today, when the way forward does not always seem clear, we are called, like Isaiah, to look to God and trust God’s ability to “make a way out of no way” (as the African American church describes its own history and hope). Join us in Advent 2021 as we prepare the way with Isaiah for the New Jerusalem yet to come. We meet at 9:45 in the Fellowship Hall. Drop-ins are always welcome.

December 5	Isaiah 40	“Prepare the Way”
December 12	Isaiah 61	“The Year of the Lord”
December 19	Rev. 22	“Behold, I Am Coming Soon”

Ann Marie Wagstaff

Announcements

December Church Calendar

December 1st - Advent 1 Midweek Service on YouTube and Facebook

December 5th - On Sunday, December 5th, Pastor Manda Truchinski, Assistant to the Bishop, will be with us and will preach that day. Please join us to welcome her.

December 6th - Zoom Bible Study

December 8th - Advent 2 Midweek Service on YouTube and Facebook

December 12th - Bible Study 9:45, Worship 11:00 am

December 13th Zoom Bible Study

December 15th - Advent 3 Midweek Service on YouTube and Facebook

December 19th - Bible Study 9:45, Worship 11:00 am

December 20th - Zoom Bible Study

December 20th - [Blue Christmas Service](#) - 4:00pm

December 24th - [Christmas Eve Service](#) - 5:00pm at TLC

December 26th - Bible Study 9:45, Worship 11:00 am

December 27th - No Zoom Bible Study



Giving Envelopes

There are giving envelopes available for next year. They are in sets of twelve. If you are giving cash, please put your number on them to assist with providing you information for your tax deduction. If you do not have a number, we can assign one. Thank you!

Visitation

If you would like to participate in visitation to church members who are unable to attend services, please let us know. We are receiving many requests for visitation and would love to provide this to those who need it. Please call or email the office if you are able to help out.

The sign-up sheets for December and January are on the Bulletin Board to the left of the women's restroom. We need volunteers for December and January! Please sign up for any position. Thank you to those who continue to assist.

Volunteers Needed

We are in need of additional volunteers to help run the iPad and multimedia during our live streaming services! Without help it is difficult to continue to provide the live stream of worship. Please call the office or let Jan G. know if you are able to help. Thank you!

December Birthdays

Marga Schaefer 5th, Jay Warnke 13th, Ryan Gibson 14th Barbara Morris 15th, Jan Gibson 27th, Carolyn Sharp 30th

December Anniversaries

No December Anniversaries

Prayer Requests

New Prayer Concerns

For peace and hope in the resurrection for family and friends of Sally Hillman, who passed away on November 27th. (Marvin and Carolyn Sharp)

For Julie Elston - that she feels love and support as she struggles emotionally and physically (Muriel Josten)

For Pam Bradley who is healing from wrist surgery and during physical therapy (Muriel Josten)

For peace and hope in the resurrection for friends and family of Jackie, who passed away on November 29th, (wife of Don) and sister-in-law of Gloria Miller.

Continuing Prayer Concerns

For John Horn, who is grieving the loss of his wife, Barbara. Prayers in hope for resurrection. (June Mowles)

For her friend, Loretta S. who is very ill with breathing problems and is on hospice care. (June Mowles)

For the family and friends of Cindy (Susan Firestone)

Prayers for a hip replacement soon (Juanita Baldwin)

For Marvin Sharp, who had his second cataract surgery. Prayers for absence of pain and healing.

For Carol Bentz who has been diagnosed with cancer. She will be having surgery.

For successful cardiac surgery for Ed (Susan Firestone)

For Ernie Rodriguez whose surgery has been postponed until December 22nd and is recuperating at home from his recent injury.

Peggy Holt - for healing and comfort due to health problems and continued healing after surgery

Marga Schaefer is home! We pray for a good transition, for increased healing and for peace of mind for her family during this challenging time.

Muriel Josten - for continued healing after knee replacement

Brian Nelson (Scott Nelson) - for continuing health concerns

La Vida Nueva UMC - for God to prosper our partnership in the gospel

The Sierra-Pacific Synod - for wisdom and a spirit of true fellowship in our shared ministries

Foothill Presbyterian - for God's blessing on our partnership with their community

Those unable to worship with us

June Mowles - Sierra Hills

Phyllis Rengstorf - Kaweah Manor, Visalia

Rose Johnson - Sierra Hills

Marga Schaefer

Notes from Trinity's Council

What happens at a Trinity Council meeting?

- Council receives reports from the pastor, from the financial officers, and from ministry team leaders. The council answers questions raised by these reports and sometimes makes decisions in response to requests.
- Council sometimes participates in planning events—particularly in the area of Stewardship as that ministry team chair position is currently vacant.
- Council works with Pastor Jodi to complete the council's role in preparing for the transition to a new pastor.
- Council holds a joint quarterly meeting with Foothill Presbyterian's Session. (This is part of our Covenant with Foothill.)

What the Council is working on currently:

- Updating Trinity's Constitution and Bylaws. Both of these documents require the approval of the congregation, so you will be seeing the revised and updated documents at some point in the future.
- Evaluating Trinity's physical facility and considering what projects are timely and affordable.
- Reviewing roles and responsibilities of the pastor, congregational leadership positions, and staff positions. This review is for greater clarity and to improve communication and collaboration.

What is Trinity's leadership celebrating?

This question is part of the format for the council report form. In recent months, we have celebrated:

- Pr. Jodi, Julie, Ray, Andy, Alice, and Dave for assisting in worship.
- Karin and Linn Wiseman for faithfully setting up communion.
- Successful bazaar with both congregations working together so well. David and Helen for leadership and work on the bazaar.
- Andy for helping Trinity to develop a comprehensive understanding of our physical buildings and property.
- Ron for making our buildings shine—and for making Sunday mornings much easier for Bible Study and those who prepare for worship.
- Trinity Bible Study for fully embracing the task of praying the Psalms.