



Looking Ahead

Dear People of God:

It might be because I spent more time outside this fall that I seemed to be more than usually aware of the days growing darker. On more than one occasion I found myself hiking a little faster to get back to the car before sunset when the parks close. Now that we've passed the longest night, I am looking forward to a little more light in my life.

We don't know for certain what time of year Jesus was born or when exactly the magi made their journey to Bethlehem. But it makes some sense that these events are celebrated around the winter solstice, when the world begins to move from darkness back into light and we prepare to live into a new year. Each day is almost imperceptibly brighter, but over time we see a drastic change. Although we often speak of Jesus' birth being the moment when the world changed, the kingdom is still not yet fully realized on earth, slowing entering into our world like light through the cracks of a wall that is not yet broken down.

Most of us are understandably eager to see the end of 2020, confident that next year will bring us a brighter future. Thankfully, some of my friends in healthcare have already received their first dose of vaccine, progress toward a safer and more open way of living than we've enjoyed for some time. But we will work toward that goal steadily, not necessarily speedily.

Fortunately, our God works well when we take small steps. God patiently attended the people of Israel as they wandered for forty years in the desert; God did not abandon them or require them to hurry up. The tradition of choosing a New Year's resolution encourages us to make sweeping changes all at once, but God is faithful to us as we take one step at a time, beginning each new day, as Martin Luther taught, with the sign of the cross to remember our rebirth in baptism—a daily new beginning.

If our hopes and dreams for 2021 take a little longer than we'd like, be assured that God is with us not only in the achievement of our goals but also in the waiting, the working, the daily longing for what lies ahead.

Pastor Traci

Worship

Sunday Live-stream 9:30 AM

Monday & Friday Hymn Devotions

Tuesday & Thursday Morning & Night Prayer 9 AM & 9 PM

Wednesday Holden Evening Prayer 7 PM

Study

Wednesday Bible Study by Zoom immediately following Holden Evening Prayer (approximately 7:30PM)

Kids' Devotions Tuesday-Friday

****Coming up in February--Book Discussion of the novel "Year of Wonders: A Novel of the Plague" by Geraldine Brooks****



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Precisely in our distress, in our dislocation, the Lord shows up. Emmanuel—God with us—makes his home in the very places we find foreign or isolating.

The room was spare and dimly lit. We sat on folding chairs in a circle—young Honduran women and some of us from the ELCA. We had come to Honduras to observe the work of AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities). This is the ELCA's strategy to help youth who have been forced to flee their home countries because of violence, abuse, extortion by gangs and extreme poverty. *Amparo* is the Spanish word for shelter or refuge.

In this case, AMMPARO partnered with the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonites to resettle returned migrants—those who had tried to seek asylum in the United States but had failed or had been denied and deported back to Honduras.

One by one they told us their stories of fear and desperation. Not a one undertook the long and dangerous trek north on a whim. They told us about the abuse they had suffered, about family members who had been killed by gangs, about the inability to make a living because of the extortion by organized crime. They talked about the bitter sadness of leaving home and family, and the uncertainty of the future.

I remember one young woman in particular. She was pregnant when she tried to migrate to the United States. She had the baby somewhere along the way. She was far from home, mostly alone and desperately wanted her mother to be with her. None of this is what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new and strange existence. She and her baby were now back in Honduras—but not at home. Home was too dangerous.

Remember last Christmas? Remember all of the preparations, the travel to be with family? Remember the holy beauty of the Christmas Eve liturgy and receiving Christ's grace and forgiveness at his table? The shopping and Christmas caroling? The in-person gatherings? All that has changed. The pandemic hasn't forced us from our homes but into our homes, sheltering in place, isolated. Not together, but physically distanced. Not gathered with family and friends but forced apart because of the threat of infection. Forced by circumstances beyond our control into this strange existence. Oh, there will be Christmas carols piped into grocery stores and other essential services, but they will be painful reminders of how life used to be.

We are reminded of the experience of the exiles in Babylon: "By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captives asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land" (Psalm 137)?

I told the young Honduran woman about another young woman who was forced to leave home because of a government decree. She, too, was pregnant and made a long and difficult journey. She, too, was far from home and without her mother when the baby came. She had to find shelter wherever she could. This wasn't what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new existence. That young woman was Mary and the child was Jesus. Precisely in our distress, in our dislocation, the Lord shows up. Emmanuel—God with us—makes his home in the very places we find foreign or isolating. The young Honduran woman, and all of us, can find hope because of the birth of Mary's child. There is no God-forsaken place, and we are never alone—not in hospital rooms, or sheltering in place, or Zoom calls or on dangerous roads.

Many of us will not be physically home for Christmas, but we are truly home in Christ.

We are never alone

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Many thanks to you for the cards and prayers for Barry concerning his recent surgery. It has been a comfort to both of us to know that we were being lifted up in prayer. Barry is now home from the hospital and is doing well.

Barry & Carla Brumbaugh



Thank you to everyone for your thoughts, prayers, and cards. My back surgery was very successful-I am no longer suffering from the pain in my leg! I am continuing to heal and looking forward to more (pain free) mobility.

**Missing my church family,
Amy Haffling**



To the Congregation: All year long I have been thankful for your love and care for each other and for me, especially in our extraordinary circumstances. Thank you also for your kind and generous gift this Christmas.

Pastor Traci



With sincere gratitude to Council and the members of St. Matthew, thank you for the Christmas Gifts.

Lori Tremmel



Mitten Box Thank You!

Many thanks to all who contributed so generously to the "Mitten Box" by sharing colorful homemade, bought items, and or financial donations for needy school age children. Because of your kindness, these children will have a warmer winter!

Martinsburg Food Pantry

Volunteers from St. Matthew Lutheran will be assisting in the distribution of food on Thursdays, January 7 and January 21 from 9:00 until 11:00 a.m. If you would like to help, please let Elaine Buchart or Linda Smith know.

The January items most needed are: Fruit, Spaghetti, Tomato Sauce, Peanut Butter and Jelly.

We thank St. Matthew members for donations of food, paper, personal, cleaning supplies and monetary gifts!

We ask for your prayers and continued support all through this year!

Linda K. Smith



Transformational Ministry

Each month and on a daily basis, we ask you to join us in prayer. Our January special prayer request:

Dear God, *Thank you that you make all things new. Thank you for all that you've allowed into our lives this past year, the good along with the hard things, which have reminded us how much we need you and rely on your presence filling us every single day.*

We pray for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you guide our decisions and turn our hearts to deeply desire you above all else. We ask that you open doors needing to be opened and close the ones needing to be shut tight. We ask that you help us release our grip on the things to which you've said "no," "not yet," or "wait." We ask for help to pursue you first, above every dream and desire you've put within our hearts.

We ask for your wisdom, for your strength and power to be constantly present within us. We pray you would make us strong and courageous for the road ahead. Give us ability beyond what we feel able, let your gifts flow freely through us, so that you would be honored by our lives, and others would be drawn to you. We pray that you'd keep us far from the snares and traps of temptations. That you would whisper in our ear when we need to run and whisper in our heart when we need to stand our ground.

We pray for your protection over our families and friends. We ask for your hand to cover us and keep us distanced from the evil intent of the enemy; that you would be a barrier to surround us, that we'd be safe in your hands. We pray that you would give us discernment and insight beyond our years, to understand your will, hear your voice, and know your ways.

We choose to press in close to you today and keep you first in our hearts and lives. Without You, we would surely fail, but with you, there is great hope. Thank you for your healing power, thank you for bringing us into this new season up ahead. We look forward to all that You still have in store.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Congratulations and God's Blessings to

➤ Kaitlin Meck and Matthew Heintzelman who were united in marriage on September 26, 2020 at The Cathedral of St. Catherine of Siena in Allentown. Kaitlin is the daughter of Heather and Darin Meck and the granddaughter of Linda Smith. Kaitlin grew up and was confirmed at St. Matthew.



Birthdays for January

- 01 Anna Weaver
- 02 Stacy Kuster
Margie J. Smith
- 04 Jenna Metzler
- 05 Peggy Freyer
- 06 Laurie S. Smith
- 07 Dr. Murray S. Smith
- 09 B. Ann Baker
- 10 Catherine Corcoran
- 11 E. Kaye Burket
- 13 Janelle R. Dennis
- 15 Michele M. Smith
- 16 Thomas Beyer
Gavin Kuster
- 18 Jeffrey Hicks
- 20 Jean L. Stonerook
- 21 Ginny A. Sell
- 22 Bill Brown
- 24 Doris L. Waddick
- 26 Rev. Carl Alexy
Dottie Daniel
- 28 Ryan Frederick
Jackie Lightner
Kim Oswalt
Michele L. Smith
- 29 Dwight Kensinger
Donald Smith

Anniversaries for January

- 06 Michael B. & Kathryn A. Panek
- 28 Paul L. & Rosie Johnson

Goal Setting
All committees should hold a meeting in January to set their "Goals" for 2021. Please inform the church office of the date and time of your meeting.

NEW ADDRESS

SPC Smith, Nathan
 B Company, 169th Engineer Battalion, 1st
 Engineer Brigade
 6221 Iowa Avenue
 Forth Leonard Wood, MO 65473

B I B L E

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Upset	John 14
Weak	Psalm 18:1-29
Lonely	Psalm 23
Sinned	Psalm 51
Worried	Matthew 8:19-31
Anxious	Philippians 4:4-9
Unhappy	Colossians 3:12-17
In danger	Psalm 91
Depressed	Psalm 27
Lack of Faith	Exodus 14
Need Courage	Joshua 1
Need Direction	Psalm 73:21-26
Seeking peace	Matthew 11:25-30
Leaving on a trip	Psalm 121
Struggling with loss	Luke 15
Struggling Financially	Psalm 37
Discouraged with work	Psalm 126

AVAILABLE 24/7 | PHONE SERVICE NOT REQUIRED
 DIRECT PETITIONS HEAVENWARD



“The People who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined” (Isaiah 9:2)

700 years before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus, the prophet Isaiah spoke these words to comfort God’s people. Isaiah spoke to a people who were under the shadow of invasion from Babylon and who would see Jerusalem destroyed. It was a dark time for the children of Israel.

In those dark days, God’s Word proclaimed that hope and salvation are coming. Isaiah is saying that the darkness cannot stop the light of our God. No matter how dark the day, God is bringing light and his salvation into the world.

There have been some days that seemed pretty dark in 2020. We have lived in the shadow of the pandemic. We have seen natural disasters, civil unrest, and political strife. It has left us feeling out of control and that the ground is shifting under our feet.

The Word of God that offered hope to God’s people thousands of years ago, has the same message for us today. No matter what darkness or shadow we find ourselves in, God is with us. God will never leave us alone. Our Lord Jesus promises us that he will be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20) and that when he comes again, he will take us to himself (John 14:3). Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39).

Life can be hard. But we know that the brokenness, the sin, and the darkness of this world does not have the last word. The end of all things is the victory of God in Christ Jesus. The end of all things is the God who is going to cast out the darkness and heal our hearts and mend our souls.

That God is with us now. We celebrate at Christmas that our Lord loved us so much that God would not sit by and watch us suffering. But the Creator of all things became flesh and lived among us. The God who brought all things into being, would not leave us to our suffering. But became flesh and to walk with us so that we might know we are never alone. As we contemplate the baby in the manger, we see the one who is Emmanuel. God with us.

God is with us and that makes all the difference. Christmas celebrates that God would not leave us to our suffering. But he stepped into our existence and our lives to show us a better way. In Jesus we see the way of love. We see the God who would stop and nothing to save us from sin, death and the devil. But also, God goes to any and all lengths to make us his own. We matter to the God who made heaven and earth.

As we look at the brokenness and darkness of this world, let us hear the Word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” The light of God, Jesus Christ has come into this world. As we look to the manger, and later look to the cross, we remember that Christ Jesus is the light of the world and there is no darkness that can overcome him.

May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bless you and yours this Christmas,
The Allegheny Synod Office Staff
Bishop Michael Rhyne, Pastor Becca Ehrlich, Mrs. Michelle Bossler

Video Technician Position

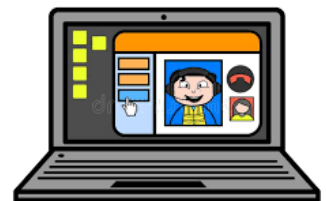
St. Matthew Lutheran Church is looking to hire an individual to fill the position of Video Technician effective January 1, 2021. The Video Technician will be responsible to video graph and livestream worship services on three Sundays per month with four Sundays and on four Sundays per month with five Sundays.

Applicants must be technically skillful and proficient with live streaming and video graphing, is capable of trouble shooting any technical problems, and is knowledgeable on appropriate and up-to-date equipment. Applicants must be compliant with all background/criminal clearances as required by law.

The video technician will be paid \$25 per service. The successful candidate will be trained on the existing equipment. A procedures manual is available for training and operational use.

Interested persons should submit a letter of introduction and resume of qualifications and applicable experience to the church office as soon as possible. Application forms are available from the church office if desired.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, contact Pastor Traci or Jane Fagans.



2021 COUNCIL DIRECTORY AND MINISTRY STAFF

Pastor	Rev. Traci Bowman	935-9267	Property	Ed Kreider	793-4302
Admin. Assist.	Lori Tremmel	696-3802	Christian Ed.	Jean Sinal	793-9507
Assist. Admin. Assist.	Laura Orczeck	224-1208	Evangelism	Need Candidate	
President	Melissa Fetzer	793-2735	Stewardship	Greg Haffling	793-9827
Vice President	Peggy Steinfurth	515-6205	Finance	Jim Barley	793-4623
Secretary	Elaine Smith (434)	981-0560	Social Ministry	Peggy Freyer	614-4552
Treasurer	Beth Garner	793-3966	Worship & Music	Jane Fagans	793-4401
Financial Secretary	Anna Klepser	793-2094	Staff Support	Kaye Burket	224-5224

HIGHLIGHTS BY COUNCIL IN DECEMBER

1. Council voted on having our Annual Congregational Meeting via Zoom on Sunday, December 13, 2020.
2. Council voted on Staff Christmas Gifts.
3. Council voted on the AV Tech. description/evaluation for the Personnel Manual.
4. Social Ministry recommended that the following be disbursed from 1st Qtr. Local Needs Ventures in Faith:

Disbursements from Local Needs:

1. Martinsburg Volunteer Fire Company (membership & gift)	\$400.00
2. Morrisons Cove Memorial Park	\$50.00
3. Martinsburg Ministerium (PIN Fund)	\$1,000.00
4. Roaring Spring Friendship Fire Company	\$200.00
5. Hollidaysburg/Martinsburg EMS (membership & gift)	\$300.00
6. Martinsburg Salvation Army (LOCAL Kettle Donation)	\$200.00
7. Martinsburg Food Pantry	\$100.00
8. American Red Cross	\$100.00
9. Family & Children Services	\$50.00
10. Blair County Chapter Habitat for Humanity	\$50.00
11. Cove Christmas Love (Martinsburg Ministerium)	\$200.00
12. Martinsburg Community Library	\$250.00
13. Martinsburg Area Community Fund	\$100.00
14. Pastor's Discretionary Fund (to help those in need locally)	<u>\$487.44</u>
TOTAL	\$3,487.44

Giving

2020 November		Year to Date as of 11/30/2020	
Current	\$12,726.08	Current	\$158,969.58
Benevolence (Synod)	\$1,403.00	Benevolence (Synod)	\$18,937.50
United Lutheran Seminary	\$858.64	United Lutheran Seminary	\$1,969.64

2019 November		Year to Date as of 11/30/19	
Current	\$14,749.65	Current	\$172,077.11
Benevolence (Synod)	\$1,654.50	Benevolence (Synod)	\$17,884.55
United Lutheran Seminary	\$852.50	United Lutheran Seminary	\$2,138.00

2020 Income vs Expenses		
Current	November	Year to Date as of 11/30/2020
Actual	\$(2,272.38)	(\$13,528.67)
Per Budget	(\$5,905.00)	(\$45,972.34)
<u>Benevolence</u>		
Per Commitment to Synod	(\$763.67)	(\$4,895.83)