

December 15, 2020

We are intentional people of God who seek to be used by God for God's purposes – to build up individuals, and communities, to praise God together, to foster goodwill and care for those who may be in need or want at this time. To be God's disciples – following Christ's example. Bless you – Pastor P+

We are almost to Christmas!! Even though our lives are different this year, please take some time to acknowledge the meaning of Christmas in your own life!

Have you watched the videos from the Stronger Together churches? I am excited for these 4 videos we are crafting for the 10 churches for the 4 weeks of Advent. You can find them and our usual worship recordings on our YouTube channel – Pastor Patricia Hughes, or Facebook – Holy Cross Lutheran –Salem or our website www.holycrosslutheran-salem.org

The Week ahead at Holy Cross - We're mailing out on Tuesday this week – Janet is recovering from her broken arm. Please pray for her continued healing.

Tuesday, December 15, 6:30 pm Council. (email me if you need the link!)

Thursday – December 17 at noon – cancelled in Person Bible Study – We will resume our Bible study in person on Thursday, January 7th.

Thursday – December 17 on Zoom at 5 pm. We'll cover these bible passages Here's the link for zoom Bible Study

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/78252959541?pwd=NVps> Micah 5:2-5a, Luke 1:26-38

Sunday, December 20th- Our IHN week begins. Even though we are not sharing our space this year, many of you are providing meals. Thank you. Won't you please participate by praying for our IHN families every day? Thank you.

Sunday, December 20th – Worship in Person in the Gym at 9:30 am This is a Mask Required, Social Distanced worship. At 25% occupancy, (which are the Covid regulations for our county) we are well below that in the gym which is where we are worshipping right now. Bring your bread and wine or juice for Communion.

Monday, December 21st – Join me on Zoom at 6:30pm for a special worship – **Longest Night** – Some folks call this a Blue Christmas. This worship will feature prayers, readings and song for the longest night of the year, a safe place to share your sadness, and touch God's healing.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89029137786?pwd=anRWeTRpY2wrY0Q0ZHY5UC9nL3J3UT09> **BRING A CANDLE TO LIGHT DURING WORSHIP!**

You are a blessing to me, and I am thankful for you. God bless you all Reverend Patricia Hughes+, Pastor

OUR CHRISTMAS WEEK SCHEDULE FOLLOWS:

WORSHIP FOR CHRISTMAS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS!

This is a year like no other. As much as we desire to be together as a church family, singing carols, hearing the good news of Christ's birth, sharing Holy Communion and lighting candles, we have had to make adjustments based on recommendations from the CDC and Oregon Health Authority. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/winter.html> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/winter.html>

All of these sources make this very clear – Wear masks, socially distance, and stay home if you are ill. Thank you. We have designed these worship opportunities with this in mind.

*Here is your invitation to **"LIGHTS, CAROL MUSIC AND JINGLE BELLS"** at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, at 3 pm on Thursday, December 24th*

This is a 'come and go' event from 3 pm to 4 pm at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 1998 Lansing Ave Ne, Salem, OR 97301. We will invite you to:

- Enter through the handicapped access (our usual door), then take a devotional, and enter the sanctuary.
- Sit apart from others, in prayer, enjoying the Carols played on the organ by Tim Bibelheimer (we will not be singing during these Covid 19 times)
- Light a candle, if you choose, at the Chancel, in memory, or in solidarity with those who have died during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Leave a post it note at your seat, in order that that others who enjoy the sanctuary will not sit in the same place.
- Then, stop in the atrium (where the glass ceiling looks out on the cherry tree), and enjoy recordings of our Holy Cross Bell Choir playing for your enjoyment.
- Finally, receive a jingle bell as you leave the sanctuary through the large doors in the atrium. Many people around the world are planning to ring bells for Christmas Eve at 4 pm PST. Won't you join them?
- Pastor Patricia will be praying in the sanctuary, during this event, but available for private prayer in the chapel, beginning at 4:05 pm.
- Details (and a foot traffic map) of this worship plan will be available at the church on Christmas Eve.

DECEMBER 25TH MERRY CHRISTMAS! Celebrate Christ's birth with the recordings we are posting beginning December 24th. Readings, Prayers, Music, Children's Sermon and Sermon will go up on our YouTube channel, Facebook Page and www.holycrosslutheran-salem.org the same as every Sunday. Enjoy with your family!

Then, Join us Sunday, December 27th, 2020 at 12 noon for a Christmas Drive Up Communion – Wear your Christmas Ugly Sweater or whatever Christmas fun you can find! Be prepared to take a selfie with the Pastor for the Holy Cross Scrapbook and Facebook Page! Bring your bread and wine or grape juice to share communion together!

WORSHIPPING AT HOME WITH HOLY CROSS
“Waiting Here For You” – an Advent Setting
Fourth Sunday in Advent
December 20, 2020

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
whose forgiveness is sure
and whose steadfast love endures forever. Amen.
Together let us honestly and humbly confess
that we have not lived as God desires.

Loving and forgiving God, **we confess that we are held captive by sin.**
In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray.
We have not welcomed the stranger;
we have not loved our neighbor;
we have not been Christ to one another.
Restore us, O God.
Wake us up and turn us from our sin.
Remind us that you are Waiting for each of us,
To renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news:
by God’s endless grace
your sins are forgiven, and you are free—
free from all that holds you back
and free to live ever in the presence of God’s love
through times of waiting, and times of fear.
May you be strengthened in God’s love,
† comforted by Christ’s peace,
and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Gathering Hymn – ELW 264 “Prepare the Royal Highway”

1 Prepare the royal highway;
the King of kings is near!
Let ev’ry hill and valley
a level road appear!
Then greet the King of glory,
foretold in sacred story:

Refrain

Hosanna to the Lord,
for he fulfills God's word!

2 God's people, see him coming:
your own eternal king!
Palm branches strew before him!
Spread garments! Shout and sing!
God's promise will not fail you!
No more shall doubt assail you! *Refrain*

3 Then fling the gates wide open
to greet your promised king!
Your king, yet ev'ry nation
its tribute too may bring.
All lands will bow before him;
their voices join your singing: *Refrain*

4 His is no earthly kingdom;
it comes from heav'n above.
His rule is peace and freedom
and justice, truth, and love.
So let your praise be sounding
for kindness so abounding: *Refrain*

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 and Psalm

Micah 5:2-5a

Psalm 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

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. **Amen**

The Prayers of Intercession (see attached prayers)

Offering Prayer

Generous God,
you have created all that is,
and you provide for us in every season.
Bless all that we offer,
that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing.
In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

When our congregation gathered for the celebration of Holy Communion, we heard again the story of God's mighty acts and of the love shown us in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With thanksgiving we remembered that "in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

The people of our congregation were given assurance of our Lord's presence through the gift of his Holy Spirit. Now we bring to you this same bread of life and this same cup of blessing, that you may be strengthened through your participation in the body of Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall never hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

At this time, you may remember the gift of holy communion with your own bread and cup.

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace. **Amen**

Communion Blessing

Gracious and abundant God,
you have done great things for us, and we rejoice.
In this bread and cup you give us life forever.
In your boundless mercy, strengthen us
and open our hearts to the world's needs,
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,

your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen.

Blessing

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting,
the long-expected Savior fill you with love,
the unexpected Spirit guide your journey,
✠ now and forever.

A little Joy – this isn't a sermon (our Advent sermons are coming through the Stronger Together churches in NE Salem – I was on the week 2 video, for Peace) but something else. Maybe it's a blog, maybe its just some thoughts. I prepared for our weekly bible study this week at Holy Cross which we call "What is God Saying Today?". And the texts were all about Joy. And I recorded a kids' sermon about Joy, and it seems I still have somethings left to say. Joy is hard this year. But it is not absent. You just have to look a little harder for it.

My sister gave me 3 Goldfinch ornaments this year for my tree. The Goldfinch finally came to visit my feeder this spring when I learned to put out thistle just for them. And then the wildfires in our area drove them away. They came back about a month ago, but just for a few days. I look for them when I wash the dishes at my kitchen sink, which looks out on my feeders. I pray they are safe, and that I just don't know enough about goldfinch behavior to understand why they are so scarce right now.

I've been thinking about Zephaniah, Old testament prophet, who lived in a time when the people of Israel were trying to claw their way back from a time of great fear, and a bunch of bad decisions. And he talked about Joy. From the Message - Your God is present among you, a strong Warrior there to save you. Happy to have you back, he'll calm you with his love and delight you with his songs.

Does this speak to us today? Happy to have you back – in many ways I think folks are returning to God, listening to that voice, and finding peace in small moments.

He'll calm you with his love – well, calm is important right now, when we are all running to our thermometers when we have a small cough or a tickle in our throats. Just breathe, God is offering calm to you now – taking walks down streets and paths where few people are so we don't have to worry about perfect mask etiquette – God is there, calming, holding our hand.

Delight you with his songs – I really miss congregational singing. My favorite church memories of my youth are of my father and I sitting together, sharing a hymnal – he would take the bass line, and I would take the alto, and we would enjoy offering our 'flavoring' to the sounds of others singing all around our pew. Can you find God's song in new ways right now? One of my walks takes me alongside Silver Creek, and its been very full lately – the sound of the water cascading over rocks is so sweet. God's song might be in the sound of the wind blowing through the trees near my house. Can you find God's song in nature, in the steady breathing of a small child or a small corgi in your house?

Joy for me, will always be connected to the singing of "Joy to the World" as the congregation leaves church on Christmas Eve, as the candles are blown out following singing "Silent Night" and the whole church emerges into the world of the Incarnation- the birth. But, this year we will be unable to gather for that moment indoors with 100 of our closest friends. I am thankful for scientists and government officials who have advised us to avoid large gatherings in order to slow the spread of Covid-19.

Instead, I will cling to Zephaniah 3:17's opening words – Your God is Present among you, a strong Warrior there to save you. I am praying for you all these days, that you stay safe, and do not contract this illness that will threaten your lives. Our lives are different now, but Joy remains – in new ways, in quieter ways, in more personal ways. Praying for your Joy this week, and always – Pastor Patricia Hughes

Praying together at Holy Cross – December 13, 2020

God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and make us STRONGER TOGETHER in love and service to our community. God of abundant grace,



Open your healing hands.

Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. We are grateful today for the vaccine for Covid 19 beginning to be distributed. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbors in need. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence, especially those impacted by Covid-19. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We give thanks for the bold leadership of female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness. God of abundant grace,

Open your healing hands.

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.