

December 29, 2020

A typical end of the year brings reflection and remembrance. Many lists begin to dominate the newspapers, magazines, and the internet. Best movies of the year, greatest moments in sports, icons that we lost. 2020 has put its own unique twist on this as it has virtually everything else in society over the past twelve months. Well, to be fair, maybe the last ten months as both January and February were fairly normal as years go.

Numbers have dominated the news since mid-March. How many and how severe. The new cases, the rarely reported recovery rate and the ever-increasing number of deaths. Along the way unemployment claims, stimulus amounts and the race to 270 made it into the news cycle and then went away. Thankfully so have the political ads!

Here are some more numbers to digest, these about our church family here on the corner of Lansing and Sunnyview. We held 10 Sunday services between January 5th and March 8th and had an average attendance of 56.7, right about the same as 2019 and down a bit from the 63 average attendance of the first 10 weeks of 2018. Then society shut down and we all became homebound. Kids have been out of the school buildings since March 13th, nearly 300 days! We have not held a regular Sunday morning service in our Sanctuary in 41 weeks.

Now comes a silver lining in the cloud that has been with us throughout the year. While we have all missed "regular" church we have tried many different approaches to maintaining our church family and the spiritual renewal we seek. First, Pastor Patricia became an internet star, posting several items onto YouTube each and every week. Many of you have watched, commented, and liked the various videos and I personally cannot get enough of the children sermons and wondering where they will be recorded from and if Sassy will make an appearance.

In addition, we have held twenty in-person events including 8 drive up communions, 6 outdoor services in the courtyard, 4 socially distanced services in the gym and 2 special prayer devotionals in the Sanctuary for All Saints and Christmas Eve. In all 654 people have come to these events from May through last Sunday for an average of 32.7 or 57% of our regular weekly attendance.

Yes, I know that 57% is not 100%. But rather than risk the health of our church family members we have tried to do the prudent and safe thing. The many different methods for holding services allow each of us to self-exclude and social distance as circumstances and health conditions change.

Please join me in continuing to hope and pray that the day will come soon that we can all be together again in our sanctuary safely praising our Lord and sharing the Peace with one another.

Your servant in Christ, Bryan

Dec 29 –

The Week ahead at Holy Cross Lutheran Church

The Pastor is off this week, but we will have worship this coming Sunday.

*Our Bible Study, “What is God Saying Today” will resume next week on January 7th! We are hopeful we can **meet in person at 12 noon** (probably in the gym in order to accommodate our numbers with social distancing rules of 25% occupancy)*

Zoom Bible Study meets at 5 pm on Thursday, January 7th! Here is the link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84055018008?pwd=SIJHN0lkcWhlUVF3aWE4MkEzV1BRdz09> Our Bible Study will be covering the upcoming Gospel for the season of Epiphany – here are our topics:

Thursday, January 7 –Mark 1:4-11

Thursday, January 14 –John 1:43-51

Thursday, January 21 –Mark 1:14-20

Thursday, January 28 –Mark 1:21-28

Thursday, February 4 –Mark 1:29-39

Thursday, February 11 – Mark 9:2-9 (Transfiguration)

The Church Office will be Closed on Friday, January 1st for New Years.

We plan to worship in person on Sunday January 3rd (2nd Sunday of Christmas) in the gym, with masks, and social distancing. **RSVPs are required – 503 364-6041**

Coming up – We are invited to worship with the Bishop of the Oregon Synod for Epiphany, Wednesday, January 6th at 5 pm - through Facebook Live! Please check the Holy Cross Lutheran –Salem facebook page for more information!

Christmas Eve Sermon - Angels and Shepherds. I have several nativity sets in my home. There's the one that was mine as a child growing up – the stable is falling over, and the sheep has only 3 legs. I have the one my sister made me in a pottery class! It's lovely, but it's just Jesus Mary and Joseph – I think the simplicity is very nice. This year when I put the two nativities up, I realized that the one with just the Holy Family felt like it was missing something to me. Sure, the baby is the most important thing, and his parents are likely exhausted, overwhelmed and amazed by this miraculous birth of the Son of God. But it's the Angels and Shepherds I really look for in the Nativity. For me, and maybe for you, their presence at the Holy birth is what draws me in. ³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” ¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

The Angels and the Shepherds are the part of this story, where I can join. Here's why – the Angels, ok of course I'm not a heavenly being and neither are you, but the Angels appear in the night sky above Bethlehem with a Job to do. Their job – get the word out- let those shepherds, everyday people like you and me – know about the miracle in their midst – the one given by God to end our burdensome connection to sin and death. Only one angel appears at first, I think to get the word out before freaking out the shepherds. He says - “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. The Savior – that great word in Greek – Soter – it can mean savior, it can mean deliverer, it can mean healer. Healer is a word I need to hear in these times, don't you? Our lives in 2020 are filled with illness – the Covid-19 pandemic – with loss – of health, of jobs, of a way of life. The angel announces that the healer is born – already here – Glory to God for this great thing. And the shepherds – well, they take it to the next step – let us go and see this thing which has taken place. Then they tell everyone what the angels said, and then, one more thing - The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

In these days when the world is struggling with loss upon loss, can we be like the angels and shepherds? Can we tell about the glory of God? Can we glorify and praise God for the healer born for us?

What will that look like in our Post Christmas life, do you think? Can we offer a hand of friendship to those who are feeling loss? Can we offer practical help like shelter and food, jobs and connection? I think we in the church will find a new calling in these days as we climb out of the trough that a pandemic has created. A new way of being Christ, the healer, to others. I'm not sure what that will look like, I only know its going to take all of us, and that we are likely to act a lot like the shepherds while we're doing it = glorifying and praising God for all we have heard and seen.

I am praying for all of us these days friends, for God's mercy, for God's healing, and for God's sending out of us all like the angels and shepherds, amazed and changed by this healer, Jesus, born in a manger this night. Amen. – Pastor Patricia Hughes+

Praying together at Holy Cross –

January 3, 2021- 2nd Sunday of Christmas

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. Redeeming God, you gather together your people from the farthest parts of the earth. Protect your church from stumbling. Let it not be overcome by sorrow, division, or despair. Make us radiant with goodness, that we might live always to the praise of your glory.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You bring together heaven and earth. All creation testifies to your splendor. Hold the ecosystems of this earth in delicate balance, from coastlands to farmlands, forests to wetlands, deserts to rainforests. Show us new ways to live in harmony with the world around us.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You overflow with grace upon grace. Expand the imaginations of those who serve in positions of authority. Open their hearts to the needs of their nations and communities. Protect all those in harm's way and those risking danger for the sake of others, especially medical professionals and first responders.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You bring consolation to those who weep. Embrace those who feel far-off, excluded, or defeated. Accompany those living with chronic and invisible illness. Sustain the weak and weary. Refresh those who labor under the weight of pain or sickness, and be with us all in the vaccination program for Covid 19.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You come to us in the beauty of darkness and of light. Bring justice and reconciliation to communities divided by oppressions and misuse of power. Guide us to speak holy words of advocacy and truth. Help us to honor your image in one another.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You turn our mourning into joy. We give thanks for those who have died in faith. With all the saints, give us our inheritance in Christ. In the fullness of time, gather us all together in your mercy. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus.

Amen.



WORSHIPPING AT HOME WITH HOLY CROSS
Second Sunday of Christmas
January 3, 2021

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 296 “What Child is This?”

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!

- 2 Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
the cross be borne for me, for you;
hail, hail the Word made flesh,
the babe, the son of Mary!
- 3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!

Prayer of the Day: Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, 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

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Joy at the gathering of God's scattered flock

Psalm 147:12-20

Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. (Ps. 147:12)

Ephesians 1:3-14

The will of God made known in Christ

John 1:[1-9] 10-18

God with us: the incarnation of the Word

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.

2021

Hopes, Dreams, Goals
and Intentions

