



Advent: A time for preparation and waiting...

Commune with the Saints

Author, poet, and priest Malcolm Guite said, *"I know two things about the saints: There are lots of them and they are all on our side."*

On any given day of the year, there are between ten and thirty saints whose feast day is celebrated. Think of it: there are literally thousands of people who have lived in self-sacrifice, charity, and devotion such that the church has officially recognized them as saints! Not only that, there are the people whom we have loved and lost who party with them and Jesus in the Kingdom of God fully realized.

But we have not been abandoned, as if this world is something dirty to be left behind as they move on to a life more glorious. Nope. The Kingdom of God is near. It is all around and even within us, as the Gospel of Thomas tells us. We who believe in Christ and look forward to his coming again live in an "in-between state," a "now-and-not-yet" world in which we mingle with the saints who have gone before us, influenced and upheld by their prayers and love. Those whom we have loved still love us; those famous saints of old still guide and uphold us. We are joined on our journey in this life by a multitude of saints who travel with us, whose lives and presence are a very real support and comfort, in times of both challenge and joy.

This Advent, we will explore the lives of just a few of this miraculous traveling companions and claim their strength and vision for Christian life, faith and community. Our church advent calendar features many more saints, all whose feast days are celebrated in December.

Perhaps you will be "hooked" by one and inspired to learn more, to pray together with that saint, to meet a new traveling companion along the way.

Chiefly, we'd like to introduce you again to St. Nicholas, the 4th century Bishop of Myra, Turkey, who gave his life and wealth away to better the lives of others. Santa Claus bears a very faint resemblance to him, but Nicholas cared not if you were naughty or nice; he didn't have a sleigh and eight tiny reindeer; he didn't deliver shiny wrapped gifts, or have a workshop at the North Pole. He lived in a temperate climate and lived his entire adult life making a difference for people who were impoverished or otherwise trapped by the economic and social conditions of his day. We will meet

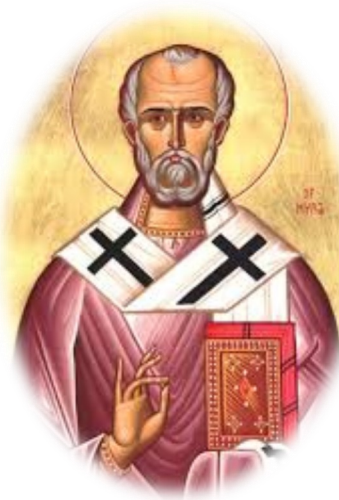
him in worship this month, and we encourage you to do some small anonymous act of kindness and generosity toward someone who could use your help, preferably on St. Nicholas' feast day, December 6.

To interact fully with the saints this Advent, think about the things that bless you. Each week, bring one of them to worship as indicated below:

- **December 2:** a personal icon. What we mean by this is: any object that powerfully connects you to another person or to their memory.
- **December 9:** the candle from the center of your Advent wreath.
- **December 16:** a cross. It can be a piece of jewelry you wear, a wall mounted cross, or any other cross that is prominent or important to you.
- **December 23:** An object that reminds you that God is with you, or something that represents the fulfillment of God's promises to you.

As you determine what to bring each week, think about the things that you would like to have "blessed" by the saints. Advent blessings as you prepare for Jesus' coming!

Pastor Laura



A glance at December Ministry Happenings....



Dec. 1 - Cantare Workshop - 9 am - 5 pm

Dec. 1 - Outside Rental - 6 - 10 pm

Dec. 2 - Conversation Café - following worship

Dec. 4 - Women's Joint Advent Program @ Southwood United Church - 7 pm

Dec. 5 - Sandwich Making - 7:30 am

Dec. 5 - Way of Christ Core Team Mtg. - 5 pm

Dec. 8 - Men's Breakfast - 8 am

Dec. 8 - Women's Advent Luncheon - 11 am - 1 pm

Dec. 10 - Listening Team Mtg. - 5 pm

Dec. 12 - Council Mtg. - 7 pm

Dec. 18 - Private Rental - 6 - 9 pm

Dec. 20 - Blue Christmas Service - 7 pm

Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve Worship - 4 pm & 6 pm

Dec. 25 - Christmas Day Worship - 10 am



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Mission

Gathered by God to worship and grow.
Empowered by Spirit to love and care for each other
Living Christ's love by witnessing to all.

Vision

To be a vibrant and growing congregation unified in sharing
the love of Christ through words and actions.



CHURCH OF THE CROSS

Cause of the month for December

Calgary Interfaith Food Bank

The Calgary Interfaith Food Bank is always in need of funds to buy perishables, ie. Meat, veggies and fruit - or you may donate non-perishables, ie. Canned goods, pasta, cereals, etc. **Cheques should be made out to ELCOC and grocery donations may be placed in box provided at the east entrance door.**

Stuff a pair of **SOCKS for the MUSTARD SEED**. There are socks available in the narthex or buy and stuff your own pair.

List of items needed: personal hygiene (ie. Soap, toothbrush and paste, deodorant, lip balm, skin cream, shampoo, comb, tissues), chocolate bars, candy treats, pen and writing pad, bus tickets, gift card (eg. Tim Hortons).

December 16th is the final day for collection.



"Butterflies are reminders than miracles happen every day"

~ Robyn Nola

The Listening Team invites you to claim the places and times you have seen God at work. Where have you witnessed God's healing, rescue or influence? What little (or big!) things sustain you, give you joy, or let you know life is worth living?

"Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see." - C. S. Lewis (C.S. Lewis was an author, essayist and Christian apologist. He is best known for his children's classic series - The Chronicles of Narnia)

LEAD ... love God with all your soul

For the Journey

Some Sustenance from the Steve Bell retreat

On Friday and Saturday (Nov. 16-17), we had the privilege of hosting a Retreat led by the Christian singer/songwriter Steve Bell. Steve began his journey in faith in the Baptist church here in Alberta. As he has continued his journey to discover and to live into the way of life Jesus invites us, he has moved beyond his Baptist roots and explored the truths and mysteries of other mainline denominations and the Eastern Orthodox church. He currently worships in an Anglican church in Winnipeg.

From his perspective, he thinks that many Christians (and congregations) have gotten “untethered” from the life-giving roots and traditions of the church. Beginning as a liturgical outsider, he has found great joy and depth in discovering the ancient rites, liturgical year and other practices which have sustained Christians and the Church for centuries. Much of his music (and commentary in between his songs during concerts!) is his attempt to invite Christians to discover the spiritual, theological and relational depth of these ancient practices. Toward this end, his retreat was structured around four subjects:

- Trinity: the Master Key
- Worship as Journey
- The Story that Forms Us
- Psalm, Saints & Ancient Prayers

I. Trinity – The Trinity is the divine mystery of God being God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit... and God being One! As such, it is mystery and defies logic and it helps us understand that at the heart of God is a divine, relational dance in which there are 3 persons whose identity and being are given by the others. In simpler terms, “God is love.” [1 John 4:8]. He quoted St. Augustine who said it this way, “God is lover, beloved and

love itself.” If God is love itself, then creation (and us) can be understood to be the “ecstatic overflow of God’s love.” To be a follower of Jesus is then to accept the invitation into this divine love dance with all of creation. Hmmmm...

II. Worship – “Worship is the process in which we are restored to intimate relationship with God, with each, and with creation.” Worship is about:

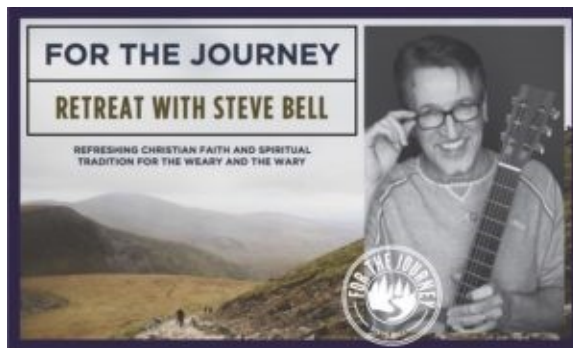
Re-ligion (i.e re-ligamenting) – Getting reconnected to God and the rest of Christ’s body

Re-orienting – Focusing and bringing to mind the source and foundation of everything

Re-membering – Bringing to mind and awareness who we are in relation to God and each other.

When we do this, it helps pull us out of some of the traps that we tend to fall into such as the myth that we are “self-sustaining”: We are sustained by the source and creator of all. Or the myth that we are alone: The God of the universe is welcoming and inviting us into and intimate relationship with God. Following Jesus and gathering in worship is accepting Jesus’ invitation to the party!

III. The Christian Story – After the death and resurrection of Christ around 33 C.E., the Christian religion grew at a rate comparable to the rate at which other “new” religions grew. Around 150 C.E., however, the growth rate went exponential! The sociologist Rodney Stark got curious about this phenomena and began investigating what was happening around this time. What he discovered was that around 150 C.E., plagues started hitting the coastal cities around the Mediterranean. Those that had the means, fled the cities and escaped to the hills. Instead of fleeing for the hills, the Christians lived out the story of Christianity: We are called to love those whom God loves. The Christians stayed behind to care for the victims of the plague. It was this love in action that gave non-believers a witness to the God that loves them that had conversion rates skyrocket. Steve sees this core narrative as the needed antidote to the toxic narratives that are sweeping through our society.



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The Church Year provides a structure for telling this core narrative over and over. The three major “continents” of the church year are: Christmastide, Eastertide and Ordinarytide.

Christmastide (Advent, Christmas & Epiphany) – This is the time we prepare for the divine-becoming-human miracle of the birth of Jesus, embrace the humility, notice the pushback, and then ponder the Trinity revealed.

Eastertide (Lent, Holy Week, Easter) – A story of God’s love for the world. During Lent, we ponder the covenant faithfulness of God and the devastation wrought by our infidelities and inordinate attachments that draw our affections from our Lord. During Holy Week, we walk alongside Jesus to the cross where he assumes and redeems those devastations, revealing the suffering love of God. During Easter, we reflect on the miracle of resurrection and the eternally evergreen life on offer through Christ’s victory over death.

Ordinarytide – We come to realize the astonishing holiness of our daily lives as a consequence of all we have previously considered. And we begin to understand with joy that the daily is impregnated with divine!

IV. Psalm, Saints & Ancient Prayers – These are gifts which God and the Church have given us.

Psalms - Becoming friends with the Psalms helps us find prayers that give expression to our thanks, praise, hopes and laments.

Saints - According to the Malcolm Guite, “There are two things that you need to know about the saints: there’s lots of them and they are all on our side!” Finding and claiming a saint that maps onto one’s life allows their experience, faith, prayers and personhood to encourage and strengthen us.

Ancient Prayers – Claiming, remembering and praying the ancient prayers of the church (e.g. “Jesus Christ, Son of God... Have mercy on me a sinner” and “Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.”) joins our voices and prayers and to the voices and prayers of believers over millennia.

Thank you Steve for the gift of your song, your journey and your faith!

Pastor Phil



Thanks to the generosity of Corliss Holmes, we now have a complete library of Steve Bell CD’s that are available for loan in the office. If you would like to borrow one of these CD’s, please come see Dianne. There is a ‘sign-out’ sheet that you will need to fill out.



Also, a big thank you to all who volunteered at the Steve Bell Retreat: Hilary Gray, June Kvicala, Pastor Laura, Paul Holck, Max Thomson, Gates Fortier, some men from Men’s Breakfast, and Dianne

Fortier. It was an amazing weekend.



... love God with all your **soul**

Are you sad, grieving, or dreading Christmas?

Blue Christmas Worship

The Advent and Christmas seasons are seasons of hope, joy, and excitement. They are often marked by merriment and happiness as the church celebrates the promise of the coming Christ child. But what about the pain and hurt people may be experiencing because of what's going on in the world or in their individual lives? What about people who are grieving, in pain, or simply not feeling "the Christmas spirit"?

On Thursday December 20, Church of the Cross will host a "Blue Christmas" service. On the evening of the winter solstice (the longest night of the year), we will gather with our concerns, worries, pain, and grief, acknowledge our struggles before God, share the sacraments and a time of healing, and look to the coming Christ child for our hope.

Amid the hustle and bustle of the season, this is tremendous witness to those who are struggling in our community. This service is a witness to everyone that the Christ child comes as a sign of hope in the face of despair. And it's a witness that we are intentional about upholding members of our community in whatever season of life they may find themselves. This service is part of the ministry of Church of the Cross Prayer and Care.

The Longest Night of the Year Service: Thursday, December 20, 7 pm

Hors d'oeuvres will be served following the service.





... love God with all your **soul**



December 24th - Christmas Eve - 4 pm & 6 pm - communion at both services

December 25th - Christmas Day - 10 am - Communion.

December 30th - 10 am - Service of Lessons & Carols



THIS IS US



Celebrating Life Together • Sharing Great Food • Charting a Course
SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR AGM: Sunday, January 27 following worship

Weaving Workshop Postponed

The weaving workshop originally scheduled for December 15 is being postponed until February. If you are willing to help with the setup & preparation, please let Pastor Laura know. Thanks! And sorry for the delay....



The Real 12 Days of Christmas

Celebrating Christ's birth with saints of the faith during the actual Christmas season.

EDWIN AND JENNIFER WOODRUFF TAIT | POSTED AUGUST 8, 2008

©

Christianity Today

Sometime in November, as things now stand, the "Christmas season" begins. The streets are hung with lights, the stores are decorated with red and green, and you can't turn on the radio without hearing songs about the spirit of the season and the glories of Santa Claus. The excitement builds to a climax on the morning of December 25, and then it stops, abruptly. Christmas is over, the New Year begins, and people go back to their normal lives.

The traditional Christian celebration of Christmas is exactly the opposite. The season of Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, and for nearly a month Christians await the coming of Christ in a spirit of expectation, singing hymns of longing. Then, on December 25, Christmas Day itself ushers in 12 days of celebration, ending only on January 6 with the feast of the Epiphany.

Exhortations to follow this calendar rather than the secular one have become routine at this time of year. But often the focus falls on giving Advent its due, with the 12 days of Christmas relegated to the words of a cryptic traditional carol. Most people are simply too tired after Christmas Day to do much celebrating.

The "real" 12 days of Christmas are important not just as a way of thumbing our noses at secular ideas of the "Christmas season." They are important because they give us a way of reflecting on what the Incarnation means in our lives. Christmas commemorates the most momentous

event in human history—the entry of God into the world he made, in the form of a baby.

The Logos through whom the worlds were made took up his dwelling among us in a tabernacle of flesh. One of the prayers for Christmas Day in the Catholic liturgy encapsulates what Christmas means for all believers:

O God, who marvelously created and yet more marvelously restored the dignity of human nature, grant that we may share the divinity of him who humbled himself to share our humanity.

In Christ, our human nature was united to God, and when Christ enters our hearts, he brings us into that union.



The three traditional feasts (dating back to the late fifth century) that follow Christmas reflect different ways in which the mystery of the Incarnation works itself out in the body of Christ. December 26 is the feast of St. Stephen—a traditional day for giving leftovers to the

poor (as described in the carol "Good King Wenceslas"). As one of the first deacons, Stephen was the forerunner of all those who show forth the love of Christ by their generosity to the needy. But more than this, he was the first martyr of the New Covenant, witnessing to Christ by the ultimate gift of his own life. St. John the Evangelist, commemorated on December 27, is traditionally the only one of the twelve disciples who did not die a martyr. Rather, John witnessed to the Incarnation through his words, turning Greek philosophy on its head with his affirmation, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, KJV).

On December 28, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Innocents, the children murdered by Herod. These were not martyrs like Stephen, who died heroically in a vision of the glorified Christ. They were not inspired like John to speak the Word of life and understand the mysteries of God. They died unjustly before they had a chance to know or to will—but they died for Christ nonetheless. In them we see the long agony of those who suffer and die through human injustice, never knowing that they have been redeemed. If Christ did not come for them too, then surely

LEAD ... love God with all your mind

Christ came in vain. In celebrating the Holy Innocents, we remember the victims of abortion, of war, of abuse. We renew our faith that the coming of Christ brings hope to the most hopeless. And, in the most radical way possible, we confess that like the murdered children we are saved by the sheer mercy of Christ, not by our own doing or knowing.

In the Middle Ages, these three feasts were each dedicated to a different part of the clergy. Stephen, fittingly, was the patron of deacons. The feast of John the Evangelist was dedicated to the priests, and the feast of the Holy Innocents was dedicated to young men training for the clergy and serving the altar. The subdeacons (one of the "minor orders" that developed in the early church) objected that they had no feast of their own. So it became their custom to celebrate the "Feast of Fools" around January 1, often in conjunction with the feast of Christ's circumcision on that day (which was also one of the earliest feasts of the Virgin Mary, and is today celebrated as such by Roman Catholics).

The twelve days of Christmas saw similar celebrations of the topsy-turvy and the unruly. A "Lord of Misrule" was often elected at Christmas and ruled the festivities until Epiphany. A schoolboy was traditionally chosen as bishop on December 6 (the Feast of St. Nicholas) and filled all the functions of bishop until Holy Innocents' Day. The Christmas season also sometimes saw the "Feast of the Ass," commemorating the donkey traditionally present at the manger. On this day, people were supposed to bray like a donkey at the points in the Mass where one would normally say "Amen."

It is easy to dismiss all these customs as pagan survivals (which many of them are), or at best as irrelevant and harmless follies. Indeed, the medieval church frowned on most of these practices, and the Reformers of the 16th century finished the job of suppressing them. But perhaps there's a message here worth pondering—that in the words of the horrified pagans of Thessalonica, the message of Christ turns the whole world upside down. In the birth of Jesus, God has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. Nothing will ever be safe or normal again. In the words of Michael Card, we are called to "follow God's own fool."

And yet, paradoxically, this greatest of revolutionaries was not a rebel. The one who revealed the surprising meaning of God's Law and turned the tables on human traditions nonetheless submitted to be circumcised according to the teaching of Moses.

Finally, on Epiphany (January 6), the celebration of Christmas comes to an end. "Twelfth Night" (as all lovers of Shakespeare know) is the ultimate celebration of Christmas madness (Shakespeare's play features one of his many "wise fools" who understand the real meaning of life better than those who think they are sane). Epiphany commemorates the beginning of the proclamation of the gospel—Christ's manifestation to the nations, as shown in three different events: the visit of the Magi, the baptism of Jesus, and the turning of water into wine. In the Western tradition, the Magi predominate. But in the Eastern churches, Jesus' baptism tends to be the primary theme. In the Bucharest subway, children leading lambs walk through the trains in commemoration of the Lamb of God to whom John pointed. Orthodox Christians traditionally have their homes blessed with holy water on or around this day. Nowhere is Epiphany celebrated more joyously than in Ethiopia. Pilgrims from all over the country converge on the ancient city of Aksum, where they bathe in a great reservoir whose waters have been blessed by a priest.

Epiphany is often a forgotten festival (although, by the accident of Edwin's mother's birthday falling on January 5, his very un-liturgical family preserved the ancient tradition of keeping the Christmas decorations up until Epiphany). As the true end-point of the Christmas season, however, Epiphany sends us into the world to live out the Incarnation, to witness to the light of Christ in the darkness. Following Jesus, we have been baptized into his death and resurrection. Whether we are called to martyrdom, or to prophetic witness, or simply to faithful living in the joys and sorrows of our daily lives, we live all of our days in the knowledge of our dignity, redeemed through Christ and united to God.

We are part of the strange society of people whose world has been turned upside down, and we go out to witness to this topsy-turvy truth: *"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: and we beheld his glory... and of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace"* (John 1:14, 16).



... love God with all your **mind**

MARY & MARTHA GROUP BIBLE STUDY

All are Welcome!

Women's
Ministry

You are invited to a gathering of the women of
Lutheran Church of the Cross & Southwood United Church
on

Tuesday, December 4th from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at

Southwood United Church

for the 46th annual **Advent Celebration**



Please join us on this very special evening where Southwood will lead the Advent meditation and some of our women will take part in a skit afterwards, ending with food and fellowship time for all.

(Church of the Cross women please bring Christmas baking/dessert to share)

Don't miss it! Take this opportunity to pause and focus on the meaning of the Advent season. See you there!

Luke's Story about Jesus

Wednesday Morning Bible Study

Starting Wed., Dec. 5th from 9:30-11:30am



This year in worship, most of our gospel readings will be coming from the Gospel of Luke. This makes it a great time to delve into the particular perspective which this gospel writer has on whom Jesus is and whom we are called to be as his followers! Pastor Phil will be drawing on the theological and exegetical insights of Father Richard Rohr in his book, *The Good News According to Luke: Spiritual Reflections*.

Some of the characteristics we will be exploring are:

Missionary	Universal	Forgiveness
Mercy & Universal Salvation	Women	The "Long Haul"
Holy Spirit	The Kingdom Now	A Bias Toward the Bottom
New Social Relationships	Nonviolence	Danger of Power
	The Absoluteness of God's Reign	

Lutheran Church of the Cross has an Automated External Defibrillator (AED)



A big **THANK YOU** to the Men's Breakfast group for providing the \$\$ for this in memory of **Ronald Spielman**.

Ronald Spielman, March 4, 1932 – April 29, 2018 was a founding/charter member of Lutheran Church of the Cross, and over the 50+ years that he

was a member, he served in many different capacities and positions.

Ron served as a member of the Calgary Fire Department for 40 years retiring in 1992 as Division Chief and received the Governor General's award for long service from Governor General Jeanne Sauve in Ottawa.

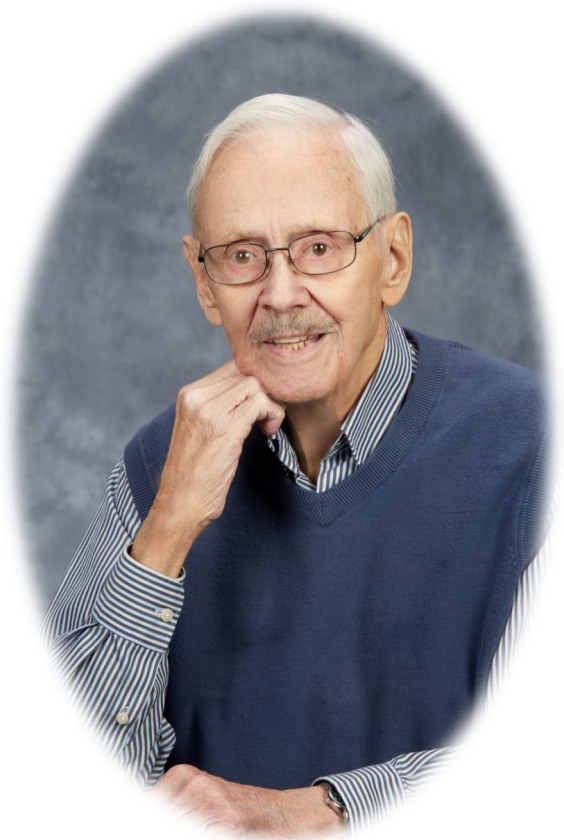
Up to 40,000 sudden cardiac arrests occur in Canada annually - that's one about every 12 minutes. Most cardiac arrests occur in the home and public places. Cardiac arrests happen without warning, and there are often no symptoms, it can even kill healthy children and teens.

Performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and using an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) before emergency medical services arrive, can increase the chance of survival by 75%. Time is critical without immediate treatment, the victim will suffer brain damage within 3 minutes and will rarely survive past 12 minutes. (Reference Heart and Stroke Foundation).

AED's are electronic devices used to restart a person's heart that has stopped beating. They are safe and easy to use and can be operated effectively by the public. Performing CPR alone has a 5% survival rate, but that can reach up to 75% when CPR is coupled with an AED in the first few minutes.

The following video explains the AED we have. There is also commentary from a responder at All Saints Lutheran Church who used this AED. Please note the statistics in the video are from USA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=uoGjdNs60KI

Submitted by Hilary Gray



LEAD ... love God with all your **strength**

Conversation Café Dec 2



The North Meeting Room will be transformed into a **Coffee Cafe on December 2**, open and serving free barista coffee drinks as we view a GREAT 9-minute film clip and engage conversation around "*Radical Generosity*." All are welcome.

This experiment brought to you by the Conversation Circles Team of your church council!



Advent Luncheon

*Ladies
Advent
Luncheon*

"The Journey is the Gift"
Saturday, December 8th
11 am – 1 pm
In the *fellowship hall* of Church of the Cross
10620 Elbow Drive SW

Women of all ages are welcome. There will be time for tea, Christmas baking, fancy sandwiches, entertainment and conversation to enjoy as we make the Advent and Christmas season purposefully sacred.

There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex—please sign up so we know the number of ladies to expect.

Guest Artist:
Catherine Glaser-Climie

**Offering to CLWR "We
Care" Kits**



LEAD ... love God with all your strength

AFFIRMING MINISTRY TEAM

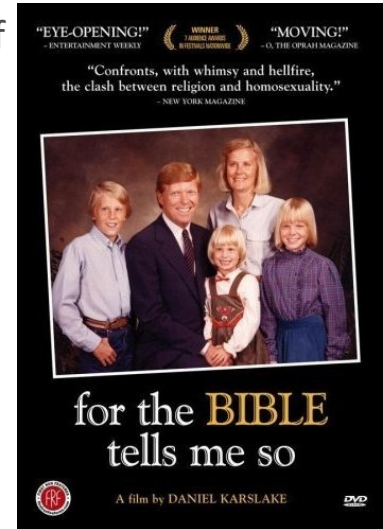
Team Members: Pastor Laura, Pastor Phil, Intern Kate (on leave), Betty Jane Hegerat, Marilyn Jonasson, Dianne Fortier and Judy Shore-Isford

Thank you to those who attended the recent showings of the movie *"For the Bible Tells me So"*. You may borrow a copy from Dianne, if you would like to view it at home.

On the *"Faith Foundations"* Bulletin Board by the kitchen our team is now posting articles that are relevant to LGBTQ2S+ issues. There are photocopies available to take and read at your leisure. Also, any workshops and events in the city are posted. Please take a moment to look at the Bulletin Board and maybe take an article or two that interests you.

We continue to strive to put action and words together, as an affirming Church in Calgary. Please contact an Affirming Team Member with any queries, concerns or suggestions, as we journey together at LCOC.

BE CAREFUL WHO YOU HATE, IT COULD BE SOMEONE YOU LOVE



LEAD ... love God with all your **strength**



On the last night of Christmas, come to church and celebrate with frivolity. As we remind ourselves once again that we are called to follow "God's fool," Jesus the revolutionary presence of God in weakness, humility, and self-sacrifice, we "act the fool" too. The night is about experiencing power topsy-turvy, worshipping the God who "levels the playing field," and celebrating the wonder and joy of life together in the kingdom of God, where all things have been made new by the God who came as a little baby to lie in a pile of straw. Some of the activities of Twelfth Night:

- **Mega-sized mini-golf (snow permitting)**
- **Annual Crokinole Tournament, complete with prizes for the losers**
- **Ice luminarias**
- **Outdoor fire**
- **Hotdog roasts & smores**
- **Photo booth where you can be Herod, Pilate, Caesar, or another sort of "king"**
- **Conversations about crazy things that cause community and creative ways of self-sacrifice**
- **Festive Twelfth Night food and drink, including King's Cake**



Come in costume, if you like. Twelfth Night is the traditional night to dress as your alter-ego, or to reverse roles with someone who has either more or less social or political power than you. The crazier and more satirical the better! If you'd like to dress up when you arrive, the costumes in ACTS 2 will be available.

The Twelfth Night party is sponsored by the Outdoor Group.

LEAD ... love God with all your **strength**

Send a card to someone who's homeless this Christmas

MakeItMerry, a non-profit organization, is about spreading the joy of Christmas to every homeless person in Calgary. We do this by providing each individual with a personal Christmas card. The purpose behind the project is to acknowledge that the homeless are real people, are valued and cared about by others.

You can send a card to a homeless person here in Calgary:

Christmas Card Requirements

- Approximately 6.25" x 2.5" and no smaller than 4.5" x 5.5"
- To be store bought or made on **card stock paper** of any colour. Include a simple **handwritten** Christmas message, inspirational thought or note to let the receiver know they are cared for. *To respect all faith backgrounds and walks of life we ask that you refrain from proselytizing.*
- It is essential that every card be signed (*first name minimum*). Place in the "**Canada Post**" mailbox in the narthex by **Sunday, December 9**. We will hand-deliver them to a local drop-off location on December 10.

For more information see the information in the narthex or visit makeitmerry.ca

Thanks, Janzen family for the wonderful idea!



"When Gratitude becomes an essential foundation in our lives, miracles start to appear everywhere."
- Anonymous

Samples of greetings:

- ♦ *May the magic of Christmas gladden your heart with the joys of the season. May the spirit of Christmas bless you with greater strength. May the promise of Christmas bring you endless blessings. Please know that many people care about you and wish you much happiness and I am one of them.*
- ♦ *My dear friend, I'm wishing you all the blessings of a wonderful Christmastime and I hope this card will bring you some joy knowing that there are people who care about you.*
- ♦ *Let this card remind you that you are worth so much and there are many people who care about you. Please know there is always hope and that God can always sustain you. Have a lovely day.*

Have we heard from you? Listening Team Update by Pastor Phil

As of the end of November, the Listening team has listened to over 70 members of the congregation as we try to listen to God through you! Thanks to all who have allowed us to spend some time with you in the various groups and teams in which you participate. Your thoughtful and honest responses to the questions below are what we need to help us discern what God has been up to and wants to be up to here at Church of the Cross:

- *Share a story that illustrates what you love about your church.*
- *When you think about Church of the Cross, what do you hope for its future?*
- *How do you hope your church will connect to the surrounding neighbourhood?*
- *Based on this conversation, what do you hear God saying about who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do?*

If you have not had the opportunity to be in on one of these conversations and would like, please contact Hilary Gray, anyone on the Listening Team, the pastors or the office!

In January, we will begin our listening to the surrounding neighbourhoods and community to listen to God through those voices!



THIS IS US



Celebrating Life Together • Sharing Great Food • Charting a Course
SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR AGM: Sunday, January 27 following worship

LEAD ... love God with all your strength



It has been an exciting couple of months for the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good.

We are winning on issues!

We have a commitment from the city that they will move forward with a home supports strategy for seniors. This will make it possible for seniors to stay in their homes and in their neighbourhoods longer.

The letter campaign we participated in last year on increasing income supports has produced results! The province has announced that it will increase income supports and index them to inflation.

Around 200 members attended our first action assembly. During the assembly we were able to secure commitments around supporting Seniors to Stay In their Homes and Communities and Reconciliation Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous peoples.

We are Developing Leaders

38 leaders participated in our latest Foundations for Community Organizing Training at the beginning of November.

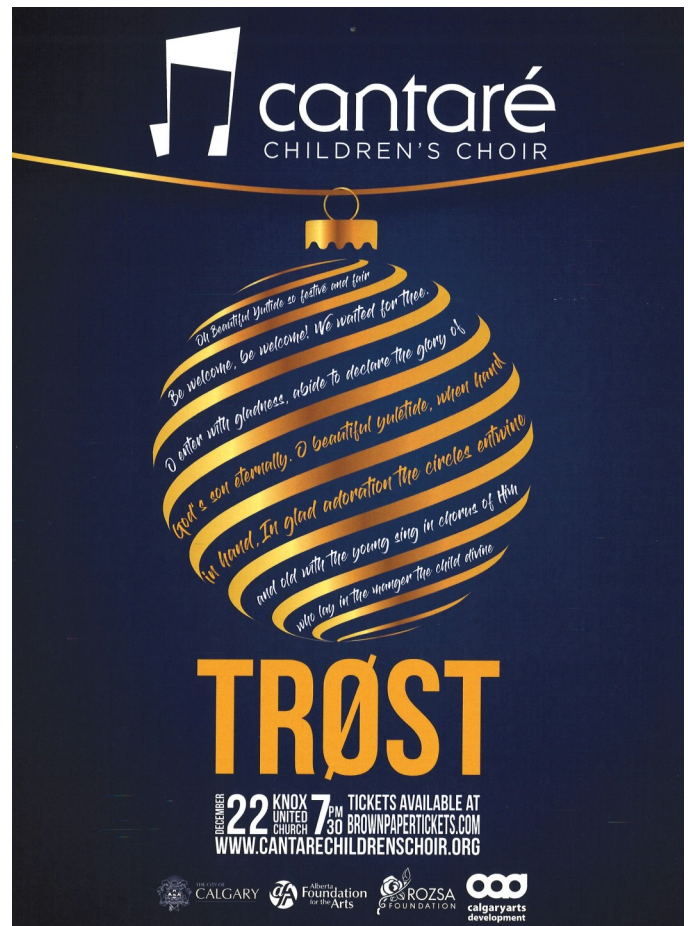
We have been offering quarterly Core Team trainings to help our members use community organizing skills to strengthen their organizations and engage their communities in the work of the Alliance.

We are Growing as An Alliance

We now have 24 member organizations that represent 30,246 people.

What is Next?

We are launching our next listening campaign to identify which issues we have the leaders and energy to tackle in the coming years. We will launch this campaign on January 17th at 7:00 at Lutheran Church of Our Saviour (8831 Fairmount Drive SE).



Tickets for Cantare Concerts are available at
brownpapertickets.com

Welcome

LEAD ... love God with all your **strength**

卡城華人聖樂團20週年聖誕音樂會
CALGARY CHINESE ORATORIO SOCIETY
20th Year Anniversary

 The *Christmas* Concert
KING OF KINGS
by John W Petersen
and highlights from works of Haydn, Bach and Handel

DEC 8, 2018 7:00PM
St Matthew Lutheran Church
66 - 7 Street NE Calgary, AB
403-266-1458

Conductors:
Simon Chu | Belinda Lam

Guest Soloist:
Elizabeth Schieman


Pianists and Organists:
Wesley Chu | Sharon Chu
Jackie Law

Free Admission | Free Will Offering
Parking available at the back of the church

**AN ADVENT SERVICE
OF
LESSONS AND CAROLS**

**December 9, 2018
7:30 pm**

St. Luke's Church Choir
Advent Lutheran Worship Choir
Amicus Singers
Hope Lutheran Church Choir
New Beginnings Choir
Highwood Lutheran Church Choir



Highwood Lutheran Church
419 Northmount Drive NW


The Best
CHRISTMAS
PAGEANT EVER
BY BARBARA ROBINSON

**December 7, 8 & 9
First Alliance Church**

PERFORMANCES:

Friday, Dec. 7 @ 7:00 pm | Sat-
urday, Dec. 8 @ 2:00 pm | Sun-
day, Dec. 9 @ 2:00 pm

TICKETS: Adults: \$10 | Children
(12 and under): \$5

LEAD ... love God with all your heart

Listening

Recently I made a trip to Regina to be with a friend who had just lost her husband.

I flew in on a Sunday morning and quickly caught a cab to attend worship with her. The cab pulled up to the address that I had given him and I was shocked to see a new name. You see Faith Lutheran had been my church home for 20 years. My sons were confirmed there and my husband's funeral service was held there. I was shocked and saddened.

Instead of Faith Lutheran the words NEW HOPE were boldly displayed!

Being late I quietly went in and was met by people helpfully pointing me toward my friend. The place was packed. The singing was joyous. Hope was evident in the message. It felt warm and friendly.

The place was alive with NEW HOPE.

Later over lunch my friend explained it had been a difficult process. Faith was the bigger congregation and wanted the name to stay the same. Hope Lutheran was an older congregation and their numbers were dwindling but many were charter members and loved their church.

Finally it was clear that everyone needed to share all points of view. They gathered for Bible Study. They met in small groups. They shared their joys and sorrows and hopes and dreams. THEY LISTENED.

They listened and they learned from each other. They prayed and they studied together and they LISTENED some more. No one gave up. They understood that the congregation would be different. But deep down they all wanted the same thing.

A place to worship and to serve their community.

With great joy they agreed on a name and NEW HOPE was born.

We too can listen to each other, our new members, our seniors, our youth, our children. We can all share.

But above all remember to LISTEN and together we can find our own new hope.

Peace,

Wendy McCulloch

When you know someone is struggling during the holidays, here are some simple ways you can make a big difference:

- **Offer to help in specific ways.** Try to anticipate needs and ways you can help. For example, you might ask, "Can I help you prepare Thanksgiving dinner?" or "Can I help put out the Christmas lights?" Remember, however, to follow the person's lead and not just impose your help.
- **Help people pace themselves.** The holidays are busy, and those who are hurting may need help or permission to slow down or do less than they ordinarily would. Let people know it's okay to conserve energy, take breaks, and pick which activities and traditions to take part in.
- **Ask people how they're really doing.** During the busyness of the holidays, it can be easy to just interact with people on a surface level. Finding a good time to ask hurting people how they're *really* doing—and then listening—is a powerful way to care.
- **Validate feelings.** When people do open up and share, listen and then show that you believe them and accept their feelings. Letting people know it's okay to feel whatever they're feeling can provide a lot of comfort.

By relating in these ways, you can help hurting people find comfort and hope in a difficult time.

LEAD ... love God with all your heart

The Communion of Saints

An Advent Meditation by Fr. Richard Rohr

During this Advent season, we will be connecting with some of the saints whose feast days are during December in order to allow their lives and insights to inform our preparation for the celebration of God-becoming flesh. In this meditation from Dec. 14, 2016 gives a little different and challenging twist to The Communion of the Saints. – Pastor Phil

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, "Father, . . . I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one. I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."
—John 17:1, 20-26 [1]

This beautiful prayer for union is from Jesus' Last Supper address to his disciples. It might be the highest level of mystical teaching in the entire New Testament. Here Jesus connects everything: he in his Father, the Father in you, you in God, God in him, God in the world, and you in the world. It's all one.

I think this is the core realization of every saint. Saints see things in their connectedness and wholeness. They don't see things as separate. It's all one, and yet like the Trinity, it is also different. What you do to the other, you do to yourself; how you love yourself is how you love your neighbor; how you love God is how you love yourself; how you love yourself is how you love God. How you do any-

thing is how you do everything.

Faith is not simply seeing things at their visible, surface level, but recognizing their deepest meaning. To be a person of faith means you see things—people, animals, plants, the earth—as inherently connected to God, connected to you, and therefore, most worthy of love and dignity. That's what Jesus is praying for: that you could see things in their unity, in their connectedness.

I will go so far as to say that the more you can connect, the more of a saint you are. The less you can connect, the less transformed you are. If you can't connect with people of other religions, classes, or races, with your "enemies" or with those who are suffering, with people who are disabled, with LGBTQ folks, or with anyone who is not like you—well, to put it very bluntly, you're not very converted. You're still in the kindergarten of faith. We have a lot of Christians who are still in kindergarten, walking around the world with their old politics and economics. They have not allowed the Risen Christ to fully transform their lives. Truly transformed individuals are capable of a universal recognition. They see that everything is one.

You don't go to heaven; you learn how to live in heaven now. And no one lives in heaven alone. Either you learn how to live in communion with the human race and with all that God has created, or, quite simply, you're not ready for heaven. If you want to live an isolated life, trying to prove that you're better than everybody else or believing you're worse than everybody else, you are already in hell. You have been invited—even now, even today, even this moment—to live in the Communion of Saints, in the Presence, in the Body, in the Life of the eternal and eternally Risen Christ.

Gateway to Silence: We are already in union with God.

References:

[1] John 17:1, 20-26, New American Standard Bible.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, "Seeing Is Not Always Recognizing," homily, May 8, 2016, <https://cac.org/seeing-not-always-recognizing/>.

We need your help!

- Do you have an interest in working with children or our educational programs?
- Do you like visiting with people, caring for people, or helping people stay connected to the community?

Our adult, youth, and children education programs and our Prayer and Care Team could use your help!

Contact the church office to find out how you can be involved!



Upcoming programs - Details at <https://kuriakos.ab.ca/programs>

- SHIFT Retreat (age 18-35) - Nov 30-Dec 2
- Lutheran Student Movement - January 25-27
- Confirmation Retreat I - February 8-10
- Family Day Getaway - February 15-18
- Confirmation Retreat II - March 1-3
- RENEW Women's Retreat - April 5-7
- Kuriakos Gathers Together - April 27
- The Way of Christ (lay equipping retreat) - April 25-28

KURIAKOS

Youth Fundraiser for CLAY – Flowers for Spring 2019

Flower sales at church on January 6, 13 and 20, 2019.

Cash or Cheques (made out to Lutheran Church of the Cross)

Contact Carolyn Larsen for further information.

Thank you for supporting our youth!



Dear Beloved of God –

We are taught by the morning newspaper headlines and by the evening news broadcasts to know names like: Donald Trump, Theresa May, Emmanuel Macron, Kim Jong-un, Vladimir Putin, Emperor Augustus, Quirinius - governor of Syria. Important people. Politicians, some of whom use power, who keep records - who announce that the world should be registered - and the entire world moves at their command - even the poor and the pregnant!

Rome reaches out its long arms to the little towns of Nazareth and Bethlehem and tightens its grip on its subjects through taxation and military might and population control – the empire-building business! But the name Augustus meant more than just an inconvenient government decree for an imperial document carved forever in marble heralded the birth-day of Augustus as the birthday of a god! Set in stone, this declaration announced the birth of Augustus as good news to the world! As emperor he was called soter, which means, “savior.” He was: “god on earth in human form, protector of the state, cause of peace and of blessing in the inhabited world!” His laws were presented in official propaganda as, “good tidings of great joy.” The official party-line proclaimed that if you want to see deity at work look to the Emperor, savior, god, the rising star, the bringer of peace, the one who brings “good tidings of great joy!” And yet, what the record tells is of organized violence, militarism and exploitation of the poor. Of an emperor - a savior - who killed three of his sons and one of his wives, and a number of close advisors because he feared their disloyalty. This is how the Christmas gospel begins - with a word of power - a decree - with powerful, important people in the powerhouse cities of Rome and Jerusalem. But the gospel writer doesn't stop there instead the writer tells of a bunch of politically powerful nobodies - like Joseph and Mary from the backward town of Nazareth - in a stable, in a dot-on-the-map-town called Bethlehem, surrounded by a group of scraggy low-life shepherds who lived in the fields and who, likely as not, smelled to high heaven! The gospel writer invites us to listen carefully and to look closely as the stone-cut declaration about Emperor Augustus is countered with another word - this one delivered by heavenly messenger rather than Roman decree.

This gospel writer, you see, is busy re-arranging and contrasting our ideas about power, about history, about good news of great joy - in this child lying in a manger - heard against the backdrop of empire builders, power brokers and census takers.

To people suffering under unbelievable oppression, under the thumb of imperial Rome - Luke proclaims that they will hear and see truly good news not in imperial decrees, but in a manger

in this “good news of great joy for all the people” - in a birth announcement which calls forth worship and adoration, amazement and awe, wide-eyed wonder and running feet - and hope. If we are not stunned by this declaration, perhaps it is because we fail to see what God is up to for when God chooses to challenge the empire and the idolatry of imperial power God comes as a helpless infant; when God chooses to bring hope God comes not as a declaration cut into marble but as a babe wrapped in strips of cloth; and when God chooses to embrace us and all of humanity with the gift of love God comes not as a decree but in flesh. This gospel writer invites us to ask the very real questions. The very real questions during the candle lighting and the gathering with family and friends, with strangers and friends; in the midst of our very real grief, and our very real concerns for our family and friends and for this world: who saves and who gives peace? And who claims our ultimate loyalty? And who is it that brings good news of great joy? Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.

In Christ Jesus – Shalom, +Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

“The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)



Synod of Alberta and the Territories
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

DECEMBER 2018

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div>Cause of the Month Food Bank</div>						1 Cantare Workshop - 9 am - 5 pm Outside Rental - 6 - 10 pm
2 Meditation - 8:30 am Adult Study - 9 am Worship—10 am BLAST—following worship Conversation Café - 11:30 SWCG—1—3 pm	3 Kodaly - 9:15 am Staff Mtg.—1 pm Cantare Children's Choir - 5 - 9 pm	4 Coffee @ Tim Hortons' - 10 am Women's Advent Gathering @ Southwood UC - 7 pm Confirmation - 7 pm	5 Sandwich Making - 7:30 am Bible Study - 9:30 am AHS Caregivers - 1 pm Cantare Children's Choir - 6 - 9 pm Way of Christ Core Team Mtg. - 5 - 7 pm SWCG—7 pm	6 Kodaly - 9:15 am E.A.—7 pm Choir - 7:15 pm	7 Office Closed Set up for Luncheon - 4:30 SWCG—7 pm	8 Men's Breakfast - 8 am Advent Luncheon - 11 am - 1 pm
9 Meditation - 8:30 am Adult Study - 9 am Worship—10 am BLAST - following worship	10 Kodaly - 9:15 am Staff Mtg.—10:15 am Cantare Children's Choir - 5 - 9 pm Listening Team - 5 pm	11 Coffee @ Tim Hortons' - 10 am Confirmation - 7 pm	12 Bible Study - 9:30 am Cantare Children's Choir - 6 - 9 pm Council Mtg. - 7 pm SWCG—7 pm	13 Kodaly - 9:15 am E.A.—7 pm Choir - 7:15 pm	14 Office Closed SWCG—7 pm	15
16 Meditation - 8:30 am Adult Study - 9 Worship—10 am BLAST - following worship	17 Kodaly - 9:15 am Staff Mtg.—10:15 am	18 Coffee @ Tim Hortons' - 10 am Private Rental - 6 - 9 pm	19 Bible Study - 9:30 am SWCG—7 pm	20 Blue Christmas - 7 pm E.A.—7 pm	21 Office Closed SWCG—7 pm	22 Cantare Concert at Knox United church - 7:30 pm
23 Meditation - 8:30 am. Worship—10 am SWCG—1—3 pm	24 Christmas Eve Worship - 4 pm & 6 pm	25 Office Closed Christmas Day Worship - 10 am	26 Office Closed SWCG—7 pm	27 Office Closed E.A.—7 pm	28 Office Closed SWCG—7 pm	29
30 Worship—10 am SWCG—1—4 pm	31					