

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
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WWW.FAITHVALPO.ORG

*Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing
within and throughout our community*



2020 Hindsight

Psalm 77: 1-20 *I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me.*

² *In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted.* ³ *When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah* ⁴ *You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* ⁵ *I consider the days of old,*

the years long ago. ⁶ *I said, "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart." Then my spirit made a diligent search:* ⁷ *"Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?"* ⁸ *Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time?"* ⁹ *Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?" Selah* ¹⁰ *Then I said, "I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High."* ¹¹ *I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.* ¹² *I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.* ¹³ *Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?"* ¹⁴ *You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.* ¹⁵ *You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah* ¹⁶ *When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled.* ¹⁷ *The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side.* ¹⁸ *The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook.* ¹⁹ *Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.* ²⁰ *You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

Scripture spends a lot of time encouraging us by looking ahead to the hope that is to come and focusing on Jesus. At the same time, God also encourages us to live and serve Him in the moment. While the troubles of today and tomorrow may sometimes be a source of worry, God promises us that full restoration is indeed coming and that God truly is at work among us today in wonderful ways. So then where does the past fit in in relation to our present and future?

You have probably heard it said that hindsight is twenty-twenty. Given how this year has gone, I know plenty of people who say they would prefer to leave 2020 in the review mirror and never look back. This does not mean however, that many of us won't be tempted to fixate on all the struggles, sins, failures, missed opportunities, and other negatives of the past. At the same time, some may also look back on certain time periods as golden eras (probably not 2020) and spend a great deal of time wishing things could return to that remembered "normal." Unfortunately, both of these approaches tend to leave us stuck. We can't change the past and we can't bring it forward into the present either. Today will always be different from yesterday. However, God still has a use for the past in our lives.

Notice in Psalm 77 that in the midst of his present troubles, the Psalm's writer is able to look back and be reminded of all the ways God has been faithful. Even though in some ways God's "footprints were unseen," there was still no question that the forces of nature were at his command. There was also no question that He lead and cared for his children. He did this either directly or through the hands of some of those same children. These events of the past now shape and inform the present. Through the lens of faith, the past becomes something that each of us is able to meditate on, learn from, and give thanks for. In those time when our spirit faints and we are most filled with questions, God is able to use the past to point us, not to try to relive the past, but to God. Hopefully, this Psalm and things like studying *The Story* this past year, have reminded us of this. God will continue to be present and work among His children, and God's love will remain, no matter how much the passage of time may bring about new joys, normals,

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Speaking of questions, you may remember when we were still right in the middle of 2020, I gave you several questions to ponder. As we look back on this strange season, that in many ways we are still in, I encourage you to take time to ponder and to discern some of the lessons and blessings God has offered to us this past year. So again I ask you:

- How are you doing?
- Where have you seen God this last year?
- What has God been teaching you this last year?
- How has this time affected your relationships and the way you approach them?
- What about your routine or change in routine has pointed out a need for change in the long run?
- Are there areas you have started to see the need for growth or perhaps have begun working on them?
- Are there things that were helpful to you during this time or things that were not?
- Are there other questions that you have learned you need to be asking?
- How do questions like these help you to look to God?
- How do questions like these help you live and serve God in the present, and look with hope toward the future?
- How can we go about supporting each other in leaning into questions like these?

As we enter 2021, I would love for you to share with me your responses to some of these questions (I encourage you to do so either by phone, letter, or by email). Even if we have not arrived at answers yet, or are struggling with the questions, I think we could gain a great deal from having conversations around these questions and each other's experiences. Growth and life together is after all an ongoing process. Finally, I once again encourage you to share how I, our prayer team, or others in the church could pray for and support you, as redeemed in Christ and growing in grace we continue to care for one another. May God continue to bless and make His presence known to you.

In Christ,

Pastor Eric Schreck



SEWING SEEDS OF LOVE

The ladies have been busy making colorful pillowcases! They will be given to the Sunday School children and the children of the VCA for Christmas. Our group is small but mighty! If you are interested in joining, the ladies meet the second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 9:00am. Needed are sewers, and people who like to iron. They will resume in January. Also, any donations of fabric are welcomed. Blessed Christmas to all!



THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

“We are the Temple of God.” 2 Corinthians 6:16

What do you think of when you read the word ‘temple’? Temple Mount in Jerusalem; Solomon’s temple; Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom; Temple University; Hindu Temple. Most of us probably think of a place of worship. We may even envision one of the large cathedrals in Europe. But I doubt that we think of ourselves as a temple, and even more than that, a temple of God. Hard to imagine that God would dwell within us. Even harder to imagine that God chose and continues to choose to live in us.

We may quiver and panic at the knowledge that the almighty, everlasting, wondrous, glorious, eternal, exists before time began, creator of the universe, would live within us. We see ourselves as frail human beings with many failings. There are skeletons in our closets that not even those closest to us know about. We may even hope that God doesn’t know. As the catechism teaches, we constantly miss the mark. Yes, we know that salvation through Jesus Christ made us saints, but the sinner side comes to the surface more often. Yet, in spite of all of that, God chooses us as the temple wherein God wants to live.

Think about it. If you feel just a bit honored and maybe proud (in the not selfish way), that is fine with God. We are a holy place, inhabited by God. As I reminded you and myself many, many months ago, God delights in us. When anyone delights in us, they want to spend as much time with us as possible. God delights in us and wants to not only spend time with us, God wants to dwell within us.

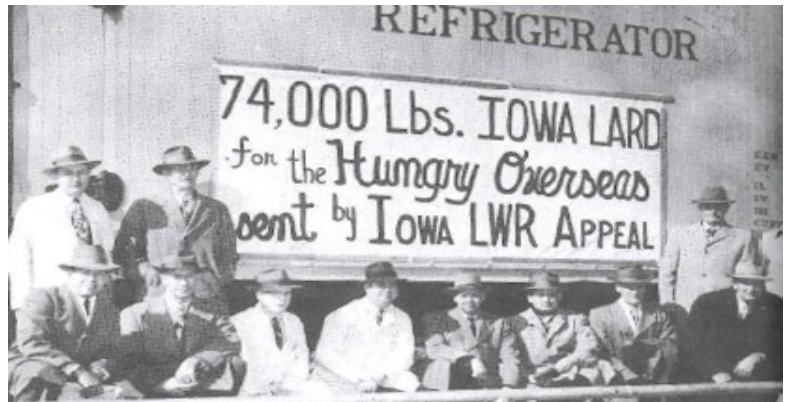
We are a holy place, inhabited by God. Bask in that Inhabitant.

“For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” 2 Corinthians 6:16b



Karen Martinsen	January 3
Jon Dunlap	January 13
Shirley Knutson	January 13
Ken Kehe	January 13

If we have left out your birthday please call the office (219) 462-7684 or email office@faithmemorial.net.



In 1945, World War II left an estimated one-fifth of the world’s Lutherans homeless. Here in the United States, Lutheran churches in at least 20 states mobilized to help in Europe through a new agency called Lutheran World Relief.

Much has changed in nearly 75 years. But in thousands of congregations in millions of offerings and in uncounted prayers, U.S. Lutherans continue to support Lutheran World Relief’s work.

Lutheran World Relief was there in the late 1940’s when 8,000,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes by the creation of the state of Israel... in the early 1950’s when Hong Kong, Korea and Bangladesh and much of Asia was mired in strife...during the 1970’s and ‘80s, when civil wars and drought plagued Africa.

Today Lutheran World Relief operates in East and West Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, helping some of the world’s poorest communities build the resilience they need to thrive.

From: www.lwr.org

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Know someone who needs care?

Caring for others may look different these days, but it certainly hasn't stopped, nor has the need.

- If you know someone in need of pastoral care, including yourself, let pastor know.
- Continue to contact the prayer chain and ask for prayers from the church prayer team.
- Get creative....

1. Look for ways to help neighbors
2. Support families dealing with school challenges
3. Get a few people to sing outside a shut-in's window or
4. Visit them from a distance on a front or back porch while the weather is good.



FAITH WORSHIP SCHEDULE

During the current covid 19 crisis, all services are held both in the church and in the parking lot. For parking lot services tune your radio to FM99.1. Wednesday Advent Services will be streamed on December 2, 9 and 16.

The Second Sunday after Christmas, January 3, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Baptism of Our Lord, January 10, 9:00am Morning Prayer

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany, January 17, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany, January 24, 9:00am Morning Prayer

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, January 31, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 7, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Transfiguration of our Lord, February 14, 9:00am Morning Prayer

The above services are subject to change if covid 19 virus regulations change again. For questions please call the office at (219) 462-7684.

Services will also be streamed on our website at www.faitervalpo.org.

