

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! 2020 has been a trying year for all of us! As we approach the first Sunday of Advent, which is the first Sunday of the Church's new year, we look back and we look forward at the same time. We look back on challenges and on things that have been hard, both in our personal lives and for the Church. But, in the midst of all the difficulties brought on by the pandemic, by the deep, emotional political and social divisions among us, by the trauma some of us have experienced, there have been good things, too. Kay and I have delighted in the continued growth of our grandchildren and in their sheer joy in being alive. Indeed, in the teeth of the pandemic, we welcomed a new little grandson, William. I am sure you can name things, too, for which you have been deeply thankful in the past year. And though there has been sadness and grief, we look forward to better things in the coming year. But Advent reminds us to look back and look ahead in a different way, too. Advent calls us to place our lives in a much bigger context; to think of what our lives mean and what we are about as part of a much bigger story than just our immediate happiness or pain.



Advent reminds us that we are part of God's story with the world. In one sense it reaches back to the reality and meaning of the creation of the world, and our creation. It reminds us that there has been a tragic and disastrous interruption in God's good creation: we have sinned and chosen rebellion against God and against God's good ways for us. We have willed to be God in God's place. We have sought other goals and other goods than those God wills for us. And Advent reminds us that God intervened in this ongoing tragedy and trauma. God took on our every flesh and shared our life, in every way like us, except that he was without sin. He came to do his Father's will in every respect. God came, "deep in the flesh" of Jesus of Nazareth, to take into his own body our sin and corruption; to let healing flow from his wounds, cleansing us with his own blood, being broken so that we might be healed and dying a horrifying and tormented death so that the power of death might be broken for us.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

He was raised in order to bring us along into his victory over sin, the devil and death; so that we might be translated from the darkness of our hearts and of the corrupted world shaped by the spirit of Cain, to his glorious and uncorrupted light. Advent is meant to recall all of this past for us and to make it present. With each detail about Jesus, we should always add, "For us."

But Advent calls us to look to the future, too. And not just the coming year, or the coming decade, but rather to be mindful of the far-flung future of God's consummation of the creation. Advent urges us to look forward to the final healing of the world, which is worn down by a pandemic far worse in both extent and effect than COVID-19. Advent reminds us that we who live by faith in Jesus Christ need not fear health restrictions, election outcomes, or even death! In Jesus Christ, in the end of all things, all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well! "He comes to make, his blessings flow...!" The dead in Christ shall be raised! If we have shared his suffering, and died a death like his, we believe we shall also live with him (see Romans 6). Death, you have no more power here! Sin, your damage is not eternal. God has begun in Christ to make an end of you! Devil, howl and rage as you will, we will not be afraid, because Jesus has made a mockery of you in his resurrection! (see Colossians 2) Advent reminds us to live in the present, even in the midst of challenges, even faced with griefs, even when we experience the assault of sin and evil and death, in the knowledge of the victory of God in Jesus Christ! We are to remember that he, Jesus, is the head of every power and authority, and he has the last Word on every feature of reality! Just as we received Jesus, then, as God's anointed, as the Christ, let us keep living a life deeply rooted in him, united with him, built up and confirmed in faith in him. (Colossians 2) We have died and our true life is hidden with Christ in God. When he appears, and he is our life, then we shall appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3).

That's what Advent is all about, Charlie Brown. Looking backward and forward at the big picture of God's story of creation, redemption and consummation and finding, seeing, our place in it.

A blessed Advent and a merry Christmas to each and every one of you!

Pastor Gary

**Know that you are in my prayers at all times, as I hope I am in yours.
Keep St. John's in your prayers and remember the Church
with your financial gifts and tithes.**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ, Amen.

Rejoice! We're finally done with 2020! On November 29th we will celebrate the beginning of Advent and the long-awaited New Year! Well Christian New Year that is, either way 2020 has been a year full of lessons.

Together we have journeyed into the five stages of grief. Everywhere you look you see denial, anger, and depression as we collectively and individually mourn the loss of daily routine and cultural norms. Some of you have lost jobs. Some of you have had to postpone vacation. Some have had to go without sports, and others, have had to put your lives on hold, postponing weddings, and funerals, and other family gatherings for the safety of your loved ones as we all eagerly await a return to normal that may never come.

The season of Advent is all about waiting and anticipation, two things we know all too well after the events of this year as we sit and wait for life after the pandemic. Likewise, during the season of Advent we also wait in agony for the birth of the savior, and the restoration of all things.

Waiting is difficult but it does teach us patience, and with patience comes appreciation for what we do have. Including things we used to take for granted like toilet paper, or family gatherings. Gatherings many of us will have to forego this year for the health and safety of our loved ones.

I know it's difficult now and that things might not get better anytime soon, but if we're patient, and learn from our mistakes we will see; not just the renewal of the life we had, but a new way of life for the good of all people. Advent too, is a time of waiting. Waiting that results in the birth of a child, and a new way of life for the good of all people.

God's peace this Advent season,

Pastor Jerod

Fall Stewardship Series

This is the time of year when we traditionally focus on stewardship within the Church. Over the next 3 weeks we will focus on various aspects of the essential role that stewardship plays in our spiritual development. This week we will focus on regular monthly giving to support the work being done at our Church.

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

This is my ask for all of you; Listen to your heart, is St. John's worthy of your gift?

Before you answer, consider the good work happening at St. John's. As many of you know St. John's is now the home for Loaves & Fishes. Nearly 300 meals are made and distributed from our kitchen. St. John's is the home for Shakopee Community Assistance, a program that collects clothing and other personal items and distributes them to those in need. St. John's is also the home to The Toy Corner where they collect toys to be distributed to families with young children. In sum, St. John's has become a vital hub for social services in our community.

I am proud of the work being done at St. John's and want to see this good work continue and even grow. For that to happen, we decided to increase our monthly giving. It is easy to do. Simply set up or change your electronic giving on the church website or call the church office for more traditional ways to give (952) 445-5666.

My heart told me to give, what does your heart say?

Thank you,

Paul Youngs

Cross of Peace Parking Lot Service

We had a great gathering for worship in our cars on Sunday, November 22nd. I hope you were able to be with us. It was almost impossible to see any faces beyond the first row of cars!

Well, now St. John's has purchased an FM radio transmitter. We have to figure out how to use this piece of technology most effectively. Organizing our own service will require advanced planning regarding set up and logistics, in addition to planning the service itself. We will hold a service in the Cross of Peace parking lot as soon as these details can be worked out. More details coming soon.



Christmas Eve, we will have an online service. It will be a full Christmas Eve service with music, lessons, etc. Please plan to watch it together with your family on Christmas Eve! And think of ways you might help make it available for those who do not have a computer or internet access.

Interested in a Bible Study or Book Study?

Bible study continues on Zoom. Every Thursday evening at 7:00 PM a small group gather with me via their computer for Bible study and discussion. ***All are welcome!*** All I need is to get an email from you. Then I can send you the zoom link that will connect you to the study.

I would also be happy to do a book study with a small group, if there is a book that has captured your interest and helped you with faith. Please let me know what book and when you are available!



Pick up your 2021 Calendar courtesy of McNearney-Schmidt Funeral Home

Calendars are available in the church vestibule. Church office hours are Mon-Thurs 8:00am-1:00pm.

A moment of introspection on our role at SCA. There are the wonderfully chaotic days of food and winter wear distribution that we love to share with volunteers and guests. There is a continual effort to provide resources for our guests, lovingly thank all of those that have contributed their time and financially; and continue to work at growing a mutually supportive partnership with St. John's Lutheran.

There are also the quiet days when an individual comes thru the doors accidentally (although we know it wasn't accidental) who heard about us from a friend, social worker, maybe saw a flyer that we had somewhere. These are the times that God has brought that person with physical or emotional needs to a place of love and caring. These are the special moments that you have time to just listen, maybe develop a deeper understanding and relationship.

Every day is truly a blessing with the opportunities that God has opened for us and continues to support. In these times of uncertainty with everything we don't need to fear. God has a plan for SCA. He has a plan for all of us and we should rejoice every day that we have that opportunity to be a part of this miraculous venture. We need to double down on our dreams and ideas and follow where God leads.

Blessings, Peace, Hope, Faith & Love Always

We often hear stories from our clients that we need to share occasionally. Below are three texts we received in the last week:

I know I still feel so blessed to have meet you all as well. I've told my whole family across the whole country about you guys and the work you all do and you all will stay in all of my families prayers and if there is anything I could do to help give back to the community I'd be honored to help.

The Lord has blessed me with incredible people to cross paths with. It was actually a wonder that I was able to accomplish what I did the other day. I had asked Amy if I could go inside. I needed a place to rest. But she was on her way to get your dog from the groomer and said we had to wait outside. I asked the girl who was in front of me if she minded moving so I could use the planter to rest on. It really had proven to be more activity than I had energy for. I was just going to go back to my car and leave when Keith opened the door and said come in. I know if Amy would have known my circumstances, she would have allowed me in. But God has his timing. Thank you, Jesus! Rilee is my sweet, sweet love. I would do anything for him. I asked him what he would like to eat. He gave me a kiss. I said Rilee, that isn't going to fill your tummy. He said no mama, but it filled my heart. He is the proudest little boy with his new coat and boots. I appreciate everything you have done for us. That gesture of kindness is immeasurable. I am honored that you and Amy would like to bless Rilee for Christmas. It fills my heart. He loves to build things. Legos, Construx, K'nex. Thank you again for showing your love. Pam

This is Brittney, who just left with all the girls. I feel so blessed to have stumbled upon your group. Thank you so much, this means so much to my family and I look forward to my next visit. God bless.

Keith Chelsen / Operations Director

612-708-1668 scashakopec@gmail.com

Amy Tasto / APS, Donations & Seasonal Director

www.sca-mn.org

facebook.com/shakopeccommunityassistance/



Jesus compels us to work together to serve those in need around us.
Here are ways that St. John's is involved in our community and for ways you can help!
Visit the church website for more information and sign up to volunteer.

PLEASE remember: Pastor Jerod and I are always available for you!

If you would like to have a conversation with either of us, please contact the office so that we can set up a zoom link. Then, at the appointed time, we can have a zoom conversation!

Pastor Gary will not be visiting except for emergency and crisis situations. If an emergency arises, please call Pastor Gary's cell phone (515-537-4412) or the church office (952-445-5666). Again, visiting will be done by request only.

Rev. Gary Kinkel, Senior Pastor
Rev. Jerod Freeberg, Associate Pastor
Sean Vander Veen, Worship Music Accompanist
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Office hours: 8:00am – 1:00pm Monday – Thursday, closed on Friday



St. John's Lutheran Core Values

We listen to Jesus.

We worship God in and through Jesus.

We live, love and spread the Word as Jesus did.

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The Eagle is a publication of St. John's Lutheran Church. It is published monthly and mailed to its members.

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All addressing changes and mailing inquiries should be directed to the church office at 952-445-5666 or info@stjohns-shakopee.com.

The Mission of St. John's
Called as children of God
Comforted and **Challenged** by the Holy Spirit
Committed to serve **Christ** in the world