

The AGAPE NEWS (#13)

CHRISTMAS 2020 EDITION



A WEEKLY "BLOG-LIKE" NEWSLETTER FROM PASTOR ZEUCH

ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH - CALGARY AB – December 22, 2020

Hello dear SMLC Family and friends! For unto us a child is born, Alleluia!!!

I hope you are in good health and good spirits!

We are wrapping up the Advent season as I write this and starting the Christmas season on Christmas Eve. Technically, tomorrow, December 23 is still advent and many churches still hold midweek advent services. By now you must have called our office to sign up for the Christmas services. If you haven't yet, please do. Someone pointed out that I left the Christmas Day out of our special Christmas program on my last Agape News – thanks Siegrid! I apologize and don't even understand how this came to happen. Obviously, it is a big omission! At least I know that some of you do read the newsletter!

The Old Testament reading for this Christmas Eve is Isaiah 7: 14 where we find out that one of Jesus' names is Immanuel: "God with us". This year, many people will feel lonely, separated from their loved ones, isolating from the world. I also think of those of us who lost a dear one in this totally challenging year. Talk about a quiet Christmas, a very silent night!

But to those of you who feel this way, I want to say: you are NOT alone. Remember: The Lord Almighty didn't abandon Adam and Eve after they chose to

sin. He was with Noah during the flood, he was with Abraham and protected him in his journeys, he protected little Moses during a deadly persecution, then guided the people of Israel through the desert and led them to a promised land, as he was present with Daniel in the lion's den, he was with the three men in the midst of a fiery furnace...He protected David from his enemies.

Then in the New Testament, he protected Mary and Joseph in the dangerous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. God guided baby Jesus and his family to Egypt and back to Nazareth during Herod's deadly persecution. Jesus was on the boat with his followers, in the middle of a storm. The Lord protected his Son from Satan's attacks, even though He did not spare him to suffer and die for us. Later on, The Almighty protected Paul from snake bite and a shipwreck...He was with Paul in the dark prison as he was isolated from the world. God preserved his church during bad times in history: wars, famine, pestilence. And finally, God is WITH YOU during a viral pandemic, even if you have nobody else to celebrate Christmas with this year. Allow Jesus Christ to fill your void, wipe out your tears and give you joy.

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As we all know, the pandemic is still a harsh reality and it's filling hospitals, isolating and separating families and harvesting human lives all around us. We may thank God that we can still gather in person for worship.

We at SMLC continue to be cautious and follow all protocols to protect each other and mostly the most vulnerable among us. I ask you once more to trust God's promises that HE IS WITH US in every situation and a stronghold in every trouble. Please continue to pray for our church, our families and for the world.

And now...

Go on, keep on reading!

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A SMALL DOSE OF GOD'S WORD FOR YOU TODAY:

(From the Old Testament reading for Christmas Eve)

ISAIAH 7: 14

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

IN GERMAN:

¹⁴ Darum so wird euch der HERR selbst ein Zeichen geben: Siehe, eine Jungfrau ist schwanger und wird einen Sohn gebären, den wird sie heißen Immanuel.

NEWS FROM SMLC.

1 – CHRISTMAS 2020 (Now with Dec 25th included!)

Dec 23 (Wed): German candlelight service @ 5 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 23 (Wed): English candlelight service @ 7 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 24 (Thurs): German candlelight service @ 5 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 24 (Thurs): English candlelight service @ 7 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 25 (Fri): German Christmas Day service @ 9:30 a.m. (please sign up)

Dec 25 (Fri): English Christmas Day service @ 11 a.m. (please sign up)

Dec 27 (Sun): First Sunday After Christmas, regular services. (please sign up)

Call (403) 266-2458 and register with Andrea if you plan to come any time to church!

2 – PASTOR'S CHRISTMAS DEVOTION IN GERMAN. I have recorded a devotion in German and another video with a German Christmas hymn. Please show it to our German-speaking members and friends. Click here on the YouTube links:

WEIHNACHTSANDACHT: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD1BAIqdZho&feature=youtu.be>

[v=hD1BAIqdZho&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD1BAIqdZho&feature=youtu.be)

WEIHNACHTSLIED: O DU FROEHLICHE:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RZ_4dBXROc&feature=youtu.be

3 – BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS VIDEO MESSAGES:

Here is the link to LCC's Christmas Video Message, featuring Synod office staff and LCC's two seminaries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSVEjuC-HFY&feature=youtu.be>

Here is a link to A Christmas Message From LCC's West Regional Pastor, Rev. Rob Mohns: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cCCLwzm1hw&feature=youtu.be>

4 - BIG THANK YOU! I want to thank those who worked hard to plan all the Advent & Christmas services, especially today we thank our musicians: Johnson as our organist/pianist and also our group of soloists who are working very hard so that we can still listen to the beautiful Christmas music, even though we cannot sing along this year. Our gratitude goes to Dana Salter, our cantor, Elizabeth Schieman, Walter Wagner, Anneliese Dalmoro, Gabriel Dalmoro, the Robak family, Thais Zeuch and Melissa Zeuch.

Thank you all for your faithful service. "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy". Philippians 1: 3 & 4

5 – OFFERINGS VIA E-TRANSFERS: If you are so inclined to send your offering via e-transfer please use: smlccsecretary@shaw.ca to send your donation. E-transfers are automatically deposited into the bank account, thus no need to send a password to the office. We appreciate your continuous support of our church. Thank you for your generosity.

BIRTHDAYS OF THE WEEK

Dec 21 – Connie Walker

Dec 26 – Erwin Mantei

NEW BIRTH (BAPTISM) ANNIVERSARIES:

Dec 22 – Meghan Smallwood

Dec 25 – Ingrid Morela

Dec 27 – Irene Bissell

Dec 27 – Agatha Felde

Dec 27 – Irene Pritchard

If any name is missing, please let me know. We pray for you! God bless you all!

FEASTS, FESTIVALS and COMMEMORATIONS IN THE CHURCH YEAR THIS WEEK:

December 21 – St. Thomas, Apostle

December 26 – St. Stephen, Martyr

December 27 – St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

You may look them up either in the bible or on the internet to find out more about those faithful women and men!

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Send us your prayer requests. We have a “prayer chain” where a group of people (the “prayer warriors”) pray for your needs. Your requests will be shared with Lorraine Duncan, from our board of evangelism, who will include them in the prayer chain. **Remember:** A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing.

DIE DEUTSCHE ECKE!

Pastor Robert Bugbee, former president of the Lutheran Church-Canada and now serving as pastor at First Lutheran Church in Windsor, ON has sent out a link to all German-speaking congregations. It’s the children’s Christmas story. It is an 8-9 minute “Playmobil” production for children in the German language, telling the story of Christmas in a simple way from the Gospel-books of St. Luke and St. Matthew. Go ahead and forward this to others you know who might find joy in it. It was produced by St. Mary’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, a congregation of the SELK in Berlin-Zehlendorf. Click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ba4J4POPzII>

Also, I have recorded an Advent devotion in German. You may click here to watch it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHjqxv4qvNg&feature=youtu.be>
Also available on our website.

AND SINCE IT IS CHRISTMAS WEEK, I HAVE DECIDED THAT THERE IS NO “CLEAN JOKE” FOR THIS EDITION.

Thank you for taking your time to read our newsletter. If you enjoy reading it, let me know!

And remember: You are never alone; Christ is the Emanuel: God with us!

And so, to quote “tiny Tim” in Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” (1843):

“A Merry Christmas to us all; God bless us, everyone!”

In His service,

Rev. M. Zeuch, on Dec 22, 2020 Anno Domini