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Abundant Life Lutheran Church

Where ALL are welcome!

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B
Sunday, December 20, 2020

Abundant Life Lutheran Church
3486 Raleigh Street
East St. Paul, MB R2E 1B9

Office Phone: 204-255-5433
Pastor's Cell: 204-995-2350
www.abundantlifelutheran.ca/

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LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

L1: At every beginning there is a yearning
for the one who is coming.

O Emmanuel,

Prepare us for your coming.

L2: We gather together to get ready for what?
Only heaven knows.

O Emmanuel,

Prepare us for your coming.

L1: We wait for the day
when God will create a prevailing peace on the earth,
and natural-born enemies turn into newborn friends.

O Emmanuel,

Prepare us for your coming.

L2: We get ready for God to come close
by laying our lives open to Jesus,
asking him to sort through all our mixed motives.

O Emmanuel,

Prepare us for your coming.

L1: Jesus, we welcome your presence now
with the lighting of these candles,
whose flames bring warmth to winter
and fill this place with the glow of hope.

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God our loving Parent,
There is no miracle as amazing as birth. As we prepare for the coming of your son,
Jesus, create new life in us.

Transform us so that we may reflect the light of your son, and become beacons of
goodness, kindness, compassion, generosity, honesty, patience, and peace,

for the sake of the one whose name brings deliverance and life to all the world,
Jesus Christ the Messiah. **Amen.**

READINGS

Reading: Luke 1:29-45

Psalm: Psalm 113

SERMON

Grace and peace to you, from our coming Saviour, Jesus Christ, amen.

What are you expecting this Christmas?

The days before Christmas are always filled with expectation, aren't they? The
decorations are up, the presents are under the tree, the aroma of Christmas baking
is wafting through the house...

Perhaps this year, however, many of us are expecting a very different Christmas.
For many of us, Christmas means celebrating with family, gathering around a big
table for a Christmas meal, or gathering around the tree in our pajamas to open
presents. And this year, that will look very different for many of us. Perhaps we are
expecting a quiet Christmas, maybe a simpler Christmas. Maybe we're expecting
some video calls or phone calls this Christmas. Maybe some of us are expecting a
lonely Christmas.

So what are you expecting this Christmas?

Is anyone expecting a baby?

We can expect a lot of things... a package in the mail, or snow on Christmas, for
example. But expecting a baby is different, isn't it? It's a different kind of
expectation. When a woman or a couple is Expecting – capital “E” – it's a season
of life.

And part of Expecting is preparing for all the unexpected things – the unpredictable things, the surprises that may be waiting for you. What will the gender be? Will baby come early, or late? Will baby be healthy? How is our life about to change?

And in the midst of the expecting, in the midst of all the unknowns, there's a sense of hope for the future.

Mary and Elizabeth were both expecting – capital “E” Expecting. But neither of them were expecting to be expecting, were they? In fact, you could say that this season of expecting came upon both of them quite unexpectedly! Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah are “advanced in years” – we don't know how old they were, but certainly no one expected them to be expecting at their age! And Mary was young – perhaps barely a teenager – and she was engaged to Joseph, and certainly she wasn't expecting to be expecting either! But we know what's going on, because we've heard this story before, year after year, and ***we know*** that God is at work here. ***We know*** that God is up to something.

So Mary has a surprise visitor one night. Surprise! It's an angel! And surprise! You're going to have a baby boy! And surprise! God is the father! And surprise! His name is Jesus. Oh and one more surprise... Elizabeth is expecting a baby boy too! And so Mary wakes up, packs her bags, and take off for Elizabeth's house, on foot, a hundred miles down the road!

Now wait a minute! There's a few details missing here! Does she tell Joseph where she's going? We don't know! How does he feel about all of this? Did she tell him she's pregnant? I'm not sure! All we know is that Mary is off to Elizabeth's house, and she's in a hurry!

Now, do you think that Elizabeth is expecting Mary? And is she expecting Mary to be expecting? Probably not. Mary couldn't just text her, or email her, or even call her on the phone. So in this season of expecting, all sorts of unexpected things are happening!

But finally, after perhaps several weeks on the road, with all sorts of questions in her head and a child in her womb, there's this magical moment where Mary finally arrives on the threshold of Elizabeth's house, and she steps inside and says, “Hello!” And before Mary can say another word, Elizabeth is filled with joy, and she's filled with the Holy Spirit, and she knows exactly why Mary is there, and the child in her womb – little John the Baptist – is leaping and dancing about inside her! It's this amazing moment in time when these two women embrace each other.

And it's amazing because these two women are literally carrying in their bellies God's Word and Promise, taking on flesh in *their* wombs and about to break forth into the world!

And in this moment they realize that this is so much bigger than each of them. Because God is about to do something really unexpected. God is about to flip this world on its head. God is about bring down the proud and mighty from their thrones, and lift up the oppressed. God is about to fill the tables of the hungry with good things, and send the rich away empty. And God is about to do all of this not with kings or armies or worldly power and wealth, but by entering this world as a helpless baby in the womb of a peasant girl from Galilee.

And so, as Mary and Elizabeth journey through this season of expectation, the whole *cosmos* is waiting in expectation with them. All of creation is holding its breath... waiting... in expectation... for the coming of *Immanuel*... God With Us.

So this brings us back to my first question: what are you expecting this Christmas?

Amen.

PRAYERS

Longing for Christ to come and heal our weary world, we pray for all those in need.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths: for Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, and other faith traditions. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. We pray for the work of Harvest Manitoba, the Urban, the Red Cross, and food banks and soup kitchens. Bless our efforts to make meals for the Urban, and collect donations for the Christmas Hamper, in the midst of these challenging times. Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

God of shalom and prince of peace, bring peace and healing to nations and regions afflicted by conflict and violence. We pray especially for Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. We pray for peace in the land of Israel, Gaza,

the West Bank, and their neighbours. And we pray for peace and reconciliation where there has been violence and threats of violence in the United States. Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

God of healing, we pray for our own province and country as we respond to this second pandemic wave. Give our leaders the wisdom to act decisively and respond to the needs of our communities. Protect and strengthen health care workers and their families. Be with care home workers and residents. Protect our seniors and elders, and those who are at-risk. Bring healing and aide to the communities of Shamattawa and Red Sucker Lake, and all First Nations communities who are experiencing outbreaks. Heal those who are sick, be with those who are separated from loved ones, comfort those who grieve, and embrace the dying in your loving arms. Give all of us the compassion and courage to care for one another, and to work together to get through this difficult time. Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

God of love, we pray for all in our faith family who are in need of your healing and protection, *especially Brett, Kurt, Irene, Steffie, Bill, Lorraine, Chris, Karen & Rolf, Becky, Jon, Michelle, Lynne, Ben, Amanda, Zarah, Pastor Donna Smalley, Jon and Melanie* and those we name in our hearts or out loud before you. *(A brief silence)*. Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW COVID UPDATE ON WORSHIP SERVICES

The Province of Manitoba moved to the Critical level (**RED**) on November 12. There will continue to be **no** in-person services until further notice.

Abundant Life will live-stream the service this Sunday, **December 20** at 11:00 am. For services on Dec 27 and Jan 3rd we will be using the YouTube services from the Synod (available on our website and Twitch livestream). The next livestream service will be Jan 10th from Prince of Peace.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 2020

ALL and POP will be recording a Christmas Eve Service for YouTube, which will be available starting Christmas Eve. You can view the service whenever you want to enjoy it over Christmas to experience the worship, celebrating the birth of the Christ child. The Christmas Eve YouTube service will be posted on both websites, and will also be available in an email to the congregation.

LUTHER VILLAGE GIVING CHALLENGE

The Luther Village Giving Challenge 2020 has now been launched with the goal of \$45,000 – which we can only reach with YOUR help! Yes, YOU!

In 2020, due to COVID-19, Luther Village had no other option but to cancel a significant portion of our programming. Not only was this a loss for those who couldn't attend camp, but an impact on our financial state. Generosity in giving is integral for this community to continue for future generations.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we will not be phoning this year but you can head to our website to donate online through CanadaHelps today at www.luthervillage.ca! Also, watch your mail for a special delivery from Luther Village with a reflection on the challenges and opportunities of 2020. Be sure to follow us on social media to see the progress of this year's challenge!

COMMUNION IN ADVENT

We will continue celebrating communion throughout the season of Advent on Zoom. Why over Zoom? While it isn't quite the same as sharing communion in person, celebrating communion over Zoom allows us to see and hear one another, and participate in this sacrament together as a community. **You are invited to join us on Sunday Dec. 20 at 1:30 pm!** Please arrange to have some bread (or gluten free alternative) and wine (or grape juice) to participate. Zoom link will be sent out.

CANADIAN LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF – GIFT CATALOGUE

Gifts from the Heart is now available for Christmas! Their online Gifts from the Heart catalogue is full of thoughtful and creative gifts that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who need it most. Bring joy to your loved ones and change the lives of people around the world this Christmas! Also certain gifts purchased will be matched thanks to Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Government of Canada! Visit their website to see what is new this year, learn more about their programs, COVID-19 fighting efforts and see the variety of different donation gift options! <https://clwr.donorshops.com/> CLWR thanks everyone who participates in their efforts in giving a gift that makes a meaningful difference.

OFFERING

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a financially stressful time for many people. At the same time, in order to continue the ministry of our church, we are relying on our members to continue to give regularly. Please consider how you are able to continue to support our church during this time. There are many ways to give to our church, even if we aren't meeting in person:

- Consider signing up for PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance)

- to sign up for PAR, please email office@abundantlifelutheran.ca for more information
- Donating online through the “Online offering” button on our website
- Sending weekly or monthly cheques in the mail to:
Abundant Life Lutheran Church
3486 Raleigh Street
East St. Paul, MB R2E 1B9

We are thankful for your continued support!

ALL Contact Information:

Jeremy Langner, Pastor - jeremy@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Kim Scherger, Core Leadership Chair - chair@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Lisa van Dijk, Director of Youth Ministries - splc-youth@live.ca

Rylee Innes, Administrative Secretary - office@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Lori Templeton, Financial Secretary - office@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Rick Scherger, Communications Coordinator -
rickscherger@fatecommunications.ca

❖ *See below listing for quick access to all our social media sites:*

- ALL Facebook: www.facebook.com/abundantlifelutheran/
- ALL Website: www.abundantlifelutheran.ca/
- ALL Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/abundantlifelutheran/>
- ALL Youtube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCdo5H74gx3c0sFXghrdXdxQ
- Grades 3-6 Youth Facebook & Instagram:
www.facebook.com/slwg.youth.jr & www.instagram.com/slwg.youth.jr/
- Grades 7-12 SLAW Youth Instagram: www.instagram.com/slwg.youth/

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Jeremy's Hours – Tuesday 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM / Wednesday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Administrative Secretary Hours - Tuesday & Thursday Evenings

REACHING OUT

Are you in distress? Here are a few numbers that you may find helpful.

911 Emergency - Dial 911

Winnipeg Police Service Non-Emergency Line

1-204-986-6222

Health Links (Info Sante)

204-788-8200 or toll-free 1-888-315-9257.

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba

24-7 support line for anyone experiencing anxiety: 204-925-0600

Klinic Crisis Line

204-786-8686 or 1-888-322-3019 / TTY 204-784-4097

Manitoba Suicide Line "Reason to Live"

1-877-435-7170 (1-877-HELP170)

Kids Help Phone (national line available to Manitoba Youth)

1-800-668-6868

Klinic Sexual Assault Crisis Line

204-786-8631 or 1-888-292-7565 / TTY 204-784-4097

