

And the Light Was the Light of All People

My least favourite day of the year is June 21 (apologies to those for whom this is a birthday or special anniversary). Why June 21? Because June 21 is the summer solstice, which means that the daylight of every day following until nearly the end of the year grows shorter and shorter.

My favourite day of the year is December 21. Can you guess why? No, it's not my birthday, and it's not because Christmas is just around the corner. In fact, on December 21 I'm probably still scrambling with buying last minute Christmas presents, pulling liturgies together, and trying to come up with something profound to say in a sermon on Christmas Eve. December 21 is my favourite day of the year for a very similar reason that June 21 is my least favourite – because the daylight of every day that follows for the next six months grows longer and longer.

Our Christian traditions and holy days were established in the Northern Hemisphere of Europe. No one knows the historical birthday of Jesus, but it interests me that Christians in the first few centuries of the faith pegged December 25 as the day to mark Christ's birth, almost the shortest day of the year. Perhaps it was because Luke's gospel reports the angels coming to the shepherds "by night" to proclaim the good news of the Messiah's birth. It is thought that those early Christians co-opted the Roman festival of Saturnalia, which was a feast honouring the god Saturn from December 17 to 23. This may be from where Christmas traditions of overeating and gift-giving developed.

Another theory holds that Jesus died on the anniversary of his conception. In the third century, Passover was on March 25, which would make December 25 his birthday.

How ever it developed, I like that Christianity has come to mark the Nativity of Our Lord so close to the winter solstice – the longest night of the year – and that I live in the Northern Hemisphere where I can appreciate the connection. At no other time do we long more for light. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5)

Of course, it need not be the actual date of December 25 when night seems darkest and our yearning for light is most keenly felt. Any time God brings light to our darkness; joy to our despair; wholeness to our brokenness; peace to our troubled lives, regardless of the time of year, Christ is born again.

Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas,
Pastor Brian

The Giving Tree – December 15

Each year, before Faith's Christmas Tree is decorated for our Christmas celebrations, everyone is invited to create a "Giving Tree" by hanging envelopes with donations toward special causes on the bare tree. This year, church council has designated three special causes you may support – one local, one national, and one international. They are:

1. **Our Food Pantry at Faith**, which supplies a grocery bag of food for whom ever needs it on the second and fourth Wednesday morning of each month.
2. **Synod Benevolence**, which supports the ministry of the Lutheran Church carried out under four strategic goals: i. Providing Vision, Leadership, and Support to the Synod Community; ii. Developing

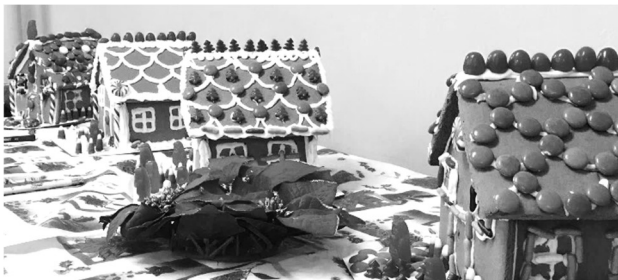
Capable Leaders; iii. Connecting the Synod Community with the Wider Church through Effective Partnerships; iv. Living as a Healthy Synod. For more information about the ministry of the Synod, see the new "Our Ministry Story" brochure for 2020 at the back of the church.

3. **Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR)**, which challenges the causes and responds to the consequences of human suffering and poverty on our behalf throughout the world.

Envelopes to decorate the Giving Tree will be available on December 8 with the hanging of the envelopes on the tree on December 15. Please carefully consider supporting one or all of these worthy causes.

Gingerbread Houses Auction – December 22

Each year in December, our youth gather for a day of gingerbread house making. Those ginger bread houses then go on the market for auction at a coffee hour following worship one Sunday. This year, the Ginger Bread House Auction will take place following worship on Sunday, December 22. Proceeds go to support our youth ministry, and especially this year to help cover the costs for CLAY, the Canadian Lutheran/Anglican Youth gathering that will take place in Calgary this summer.



CLWR Gifts From the Heart



Christmas is, of course, a time for giving, but many of us have plenty of material things already and we don't need more stuff in our lives. CLWR Gifts

From the Heart is one way we can give while at the same time empowering others throughout the world to live in justice, peace, and dignity.

CLWR Gifts From the Heart can share hope in crisis, the gift of food, clean water, opportunity, the gift of health, give women the opportunity to thrive, and share the gift of education.

Gifts from the Heart catalogues can be picked up from the church, or you can give safely and securely online at www.clwr.org/GFTH, or call toll free: 1-800-661-2597.

Reformation/Lutherfest

Thanks to everyone who helped make the Reformation Service and Lutherfest Dinner such a great success. \$893 was raised for our youth ministry and many people had a wonderful time greeting old friends and reconnecting with Bishop Pryse. Here are a few photos from the day.



Reformation Mass Choir



Reformation Service Worship Leaders



Faith Youth and Bishop Pryse

Area Youth Gathering Hosted By Faith

In October, Lutheran and Anglican Youth from as far away as London, Hanover, and Toronto descended on Faith for another ALSOC gathering. (ALSOC stands for Anglican/Lutheran Stewards of Creation, which was the name of a gathering held a number of years ago but has just stuck.) They gathered for food, fun, worship, and relationship building. They gathered at the Hilgendag farm Friday night for a wonderful camp fire, complete with lots of great campfire songs. They returned again to the farm on Saturday for a tour of the farm and a wonderful hay wagon ride. The guest speaker at the event was Rev. Rosalyn Elm (you may remember her as our guest preacher a year ago for Reformation Sunday). Rev.

Elm, who is chaplain of the Mohawk Chapel, shared some realities of life on the Six Nations reserve, and answered questions about how the ways indigenous communities govern themselves, and how they are sometimes similar but also very different from our western ways of governance.

All in all, it was a great weekend, even if very few of us got much sleep! Thanks to the volunteer efforts of parents as drivers, chaperones, and cooks, and a special thanks to the Hilgendags for their generous hospitality.



Bottled Water at Faith Events

When regular bottled water (as opposed to sparkling or flavoured waters) first hit the store shelves about 25 years ago, most of us laughed at the idea of paying for something of equal quality that could be had by turning on a tap in just about any home in Canada. And yet, in that short time the consumption of water in bottles purchased at the store has sky-rocketed leaving a trail of empty bottles and microplastics in its wake that is destroying our lands and our oceans.

Even if you don't accept the science, think of the economic costs. Depending on how large a bottle or jug of water you are buying, you are paying anywhere from 600 times to 3000 times the price you pay for drinking it from the tap!

How did the water companies manage to convince us of such foolishness?!

Last June, Faith's Parish Council adopted a recommendation from the Worship Committee that reads: *Faith will not provide nor accept donations of bottled water for use at Faith events. This would not prohibit individuals from bringing a bottle of water for their personal use if they so desire.*

For the sake of our planet, and for the sake of our wallets, please respect the policy adopted by council and avoid bringing purchased water in plastic containers for church events.

Faith's Environmental Impact

Eliminating plastic water bottles and jugs from our garbage and recycling box is just one way that we can reduce the impact we have as a faith community on the environment. Dorothy Emmerson is inviting anyone who wants to think about and act on other ways we might reduce our impact on the environment to form a small group in the congregation. These might include impacts from how we do potluck dinners and coffee hours to worship materials to saving on heating and cooling costs. Please speak with Dorothy if this is something you would like to explore with her.

Mid-Week Advent Services

Wednesdays in December, 12:15 Noon

One of the themes of the Advent season is waiting. Waiting patiently. Waiting quietly. Waiting hopefully. In this way, the church acts counter-culturally. While the rest of society is getting caught up in the busy-ness and crazy-ness of the season, our tradition calls us to pause, slow down, and simply wait.

And given the obligations of the season, that is a very hard thing to do.

To help us pause and wait, if even for a few moments in the week, we are offering a mid-week

Advent service in the middle of the day. On Wednesdays in December, from 12:15 to 12:45 you are invited to Faith to pause, to pray, to listen to scripture and poetry, to sing, and to reflect on questions like: *What can I let go of to be more present with Christ this Advent? How can I be fed by wonder amid this busy season? How can I hold on to hope in the midst of the world's troubles?*

- December 4 – “Do Less”
- December 11 – “Experience Wonder”
- December 18 – “Hold On To Hope”

Home Communion Available

Is it difficult for you or someone you love to be able to come to church to receive Holy Communion? Receiving the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of Holy Communion is a tangible reminder of God's grace and love for us. Unfortunately, some people are bound to their homes and unable to share in the Lord's supper.

To ensure that no one is denied the sacrament because they are homebound, a few of our members have been trained in taking the bread and wine of Holy Communion to people's homes. Pastor Brian will, of course, bring Holy Communion to you, if you wish. But to ensure that you receive the sacrament regularly, members are ready to bring it to you. This not only serves to share the sacrament, but also retain community among our people.

To receive Holy Communion at home, simply call the office so that arrangements can be made: 519-753-3833.



**Celebrate with Katie:
Album Launch and Christmas Concert**



Sunday, December 8 at Faith Lutheran Church
Doors open at 6:30 PM
Concert begins at 7:00 PM
Tickets: \$20 at the door

For more info about Katie's music, go to:
<http://katieditschun.com/>

Merry Christmas!

Advent / Christmas Schedule

Sunday, Dec. 1, 10:00 AM – Advent I

Wednesday, Dec. 4, 12:15 PM – Mid-Week Service

Sunday, Dec. 8, 10:00 AM – Advent II

Sunday, Dec. 8, 7:00 PM – Christmas Concert with
Katie Ditschun (\$20 at the door)

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 12:15 PM – Mid-Week Service

Sunday, Dec. 15, 10:00 AM – Advent III and Giving
Tree

Wednesday, Dec. 18, 12:15 PM – Mid-Week Service

Sunday, Dec. 22, 10:00 AM – Advent IV
- Christmas Tree Decorating, Coffee
Hour, and Gingerbread Houses
Auction

Tuesday, Dec. 24, 7:00 PM – Early Christmas Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 24, 10:00 PM – Late Christmas Eve
(please note time change from last year)

Wednesday, Dec. 25, 10:00 AM – Christmas Day

Sunday, Dec. 29, 10:00 AM – Lessons and Carols

Tuesday, Dec. 31, 4:00 PM – New Year's Eve
Service

Friends and Neighbours of 'Save the Evidence' Final Lecture

-Tanya Talaga

- Tuesday, March 24, 7:00 PM

- Sanderson Centre

Investigative journalist Tanya Talaga's acclaimed book, Seven Fallen Feathers, focuses on the lives of Indigenous students over a quarter century in Thunder Bay. Indigenous students were sent to Thunder Bay from all over Northern Ontario for high school. Talaga delves into the history of the community that has come to represent Canada's long struggle with human rights violations against Indigenous communities.

Tickets to this event are free, but you do need to have a ticket to enter. The best way is to go here:

<https://tickets.sandersoncentre.ca/TheatreManager/1/tmEvent/tmEvent1115.html>

From this link, you will be invited to choose your seat and print your own ticket.



Flower Fund

Have you ever wondered how the flowers in the chancel arrive there for worship? It's not magical! Jeanne Boulé is our Flower Co-ordinator and there is a flower chart across from the church office where anyone can sign up.

Additionally, Faith has a flower fund to which anyone can contribute so that the beauty of live flowers is always able to enhance our worship experience. Would you consider contributing to this fund?

You could contribute:

- To mark a special anniversary
- To remember a loved one
- Your baptismal anniversary
- A special birthday
- To celebrate and give thanks for some great thing that happened in yours or a loved one's life
- Just because flowers are beautiful in worship

If you want to contribute to mark a special day or event, we are happy to announce that in the bulletin, just be sure to let us know. And to provide flowers for any Sunday, please sign the flower chart and speak to Jeanne or Judy in the office to make arrangements.

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve

Poinsettias are a wonderful way to help decorate the chancel space for Christmas Eve. If you have one or two plants that you would be willing to bring to church to help decorate the chancel for Christmas Eve, please bring them to church on December 22. You can then take them home with you following worship on Christmas Eve.