



PASTOR'S LETTER

Christmas is almost upon us and it's another 2020 holiday that we will not be able to celebrate as we usually do. There will be much grief for some, and others may find it will be a time of starting new meaningful traditions.

Within the church we are beginning the season of Advent. A time of preparation, waiting and hope. We prepare our hearts, minds and lives not only to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but also his coming again for which we are waiting and hoping. But it seems to me that this season of advent also speaks to our current situation with the pandemic.

As with Jesus' return, it feels like we have been living in masks and 6 feet away from people for so long. We can still remember what it was like before COVID, but it's also beginning to feel normal. We have to prepare ourselves every time we go out into public – get your mask, get your hand sanitizer. We are waiting for the time when this will all be over, but also realize that it will be years before it's 'the way it used to be'. But we are also hopeful. We may be close to actually having an effective vaccine. Hope that we can begin to return to some normalcy and not hide in our homes. Hope that we can breathe without a mask in the presence of another who doesn't live with us once again. Hope that no one else needs to die from this virus.

But once a vaccine is available, the waiting begins again. Waiting to receive it, waiting to see how others who receive it will respond. And then the preparation begins. Preparing our hearts, minds and lives for what life will look like beyond, because we live in a world that is forever changed no matter how much we can return to the 'way it was'.

Who knew how much a church season, usually unrecognized by contemporary society, could speak to a global crisis. Prepare, wait and hope not only for an end to the pandemic, but also for our Lord's return.

Blessings,

Pastor Sandra

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SAVE THE DATE
Virtual Town Hall with
Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton
 Jan. 19 at 11:30 a.m. Central time

INTERN CORNER

Seeing God in Others, by Lisa Diana

One of my favorite children's books is "Old Turtle" by Douglas Wood, not just because I like turtles but because it gives an important message about who God is and who we are as God's creation. At the beginning of the book the natural world begins to argue about who God is. The wind says, "God is like the wind." And the Ocean says, "God is like the ocean." The arguing continues, with each saying that God is like herself or himself. And when people come to the earth, they also begin to fight over who God is. People become divided, harming one another, themselves, and all of creation. Old Turtle is the wise voice that yells, "Stop!" And the world listens. God is not just in this person or that person, God is in everyone and everything. Until the people and the whole of creation are able to recognize this, there will not be peace, only war. Why is this story important for us today? Look around you, watch the news, there is division everywhere. If only we are able to see God and ourselves in one another, and appreciate our differences, loving one another as God loves us, then we will become the Creation that God intended us to be. Old Turtle will smile. And God will smile, too.



CHRISTMAS EVE AND DECEMBER WORSHIP

Due to the surge in COVID cases, the Church Council had a meeting on November 29, at which they decided to follow the Bishop's recommendation for the synod and keep worship virtual for the rest of this year. You will receive emails with links to the services, AND, the services will also be available on our church website!

Because of difficulties raised by the pandemic, we will not be using poinsettias in the Christmas service this year. We hope that all will be well enough to resume this tradition for Christmas 2021.

**DECEMBER
CELEBRATIONS**

Birthdays:

- Scott Dittloff, 12/12
- Lisa Garner, 12/16
- Bonnie Mathre, 12/17
- Kay Dabney, 12/18
- Dave Johnson, 12/23
- Kim Higginson, 12/25
- Elias Gonzales-Hemerly, 12/28

Anniversaries:

- Randy and Latta Stephenson, 12/20
- Hubert and Emmie Lou Schwarzer, 12/26
- Gilbert and Francis Laubach, 12/31

IT'S CHRISTMAS BASKETS TIME!

We are collecting funds for the annual Christmas Baskets.
(If you are giving online, you too can designate offerings as "Christmas Baskets").



CHRISTMAS COOKIES

If you would like to bake cookies for the Christmas baskets, please divide the batch into 8 sandwich bags and deliver them to the church office by December 8. **THANK YOU**

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Frieda Atkinson, DeWitt Atkinson, Bob French, Donald Leonard, Edna Hacker, Alice Little, Marion Schroeder, Karen French, Kathy Harlan, Faye Randow, Jolanda Wood, Francis Laubach, Anita Carroll, Janelle Kinsel, Marta Yanez, and Our Military, particularly Michael Foglio, Jordan Bielfeldt, and all of our veterans.



A MESSAGE FROM CHRISTIAN ASSISTANCE MINISTRIES

The CAM Emergency Christmas Store has many areas where you can volunteer, help decorate, or shop with the families in need. We're also VERY MUCH in need of new toys and gifts for children and teens ages 0-18.

CAM has developed an Amazon registry and a Target registry for your convenience. From the ease of your computer or phone, purchase toys and gifts for those in need and they'll be shipped directly to our Downtown CAM location! Join us in sharing the love of Christ by assisting families who don't have the ability to provide gifts for their children this Christmas. We would love for new toys to be delivered to our Downtown location, 110 McCullough Ave., on or before, Wednesday, December 9th, 2020

Questions? Contact Nora Oyler, at 210-223-4099 or noyler@cam-sa.org, or visit our website: www.cam-sa.org

A DROP-OFF BIN WILL BE IN THE HOP NARTHEX

Please drop gifts off by Monday, December 7 so that we can get the gifts to CAM by their deadline.

(CAM's usual donation for December will be ham, pie filling and canned vegetables. If you donate a frozen ham, please put it in the freezer in the kitchen and tell the office or Gloria Bielfeldt that it is there.)

The season of Advent begins on
Sunday, November 29.

You will find on the piano in the narthex some Advent Calendars and various devotion books to use during the season. Just come and pick one up in the narthex, or call the office and we can have one waiting for you.



This has been a special year—and this year's Christmas program will be special too..

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM, DECEMBER 13

In the spirit of The Little Drummer Boy, we are asking you to think about what gifts of your talent you can offer the Christ Child.

Can you sing a Christmas song?
Play a hymn? Read a prayer or a poem?

We are asking anyone who would like to participate to please send us a recording of your performance gift for Baby Jesus, and we will play it during the Christmas service.

Please record your 3-5 minute performance and send it to Pastor Sandra by the second week of December. Email it to PastorLeifeste@gmail.com, or text it to her at 210-248-7837.

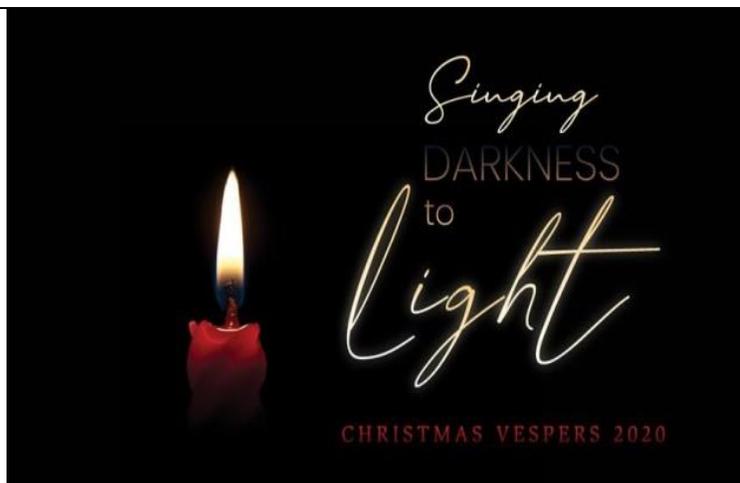


Our Assistant Deacon Lisa Diana will be starting a Zoom Bible Hour at 11 a.m. on Sundays. Keep an eye out for more details this month!



The Christmas season is not just a time for glitter and tinsel, joyous gatherings of family and friends, or “tidings of comfort and joy” for all. There are those who are alone... those who grieve... those who have lost hope... those who need to give voice to the discomfort of their souls... those who need a guided time of quiet and reflection on the life-giving word of God. The Christmas season of 2020 will surely be such a time for many.

“The Longest Night” is a pre-recorded worship service produced by the Southwestern Texas Synod for those with such spiritual need. **We will be making this available on December 21**, the longest night of the year (solstice). It is a time of worship focusing on the hope and promise of God that came to us in the manger... and lives among us still... amidst the reality of life in this time of COVID, chaos, challenge, and change in the church and society.



Singing Darkness To Light:
TLU Christmas Vespers: Friday, December 4

Join us for a special virtual performance marking the 80th anniversary of this sacred service of music and word by the TLU choirs and musicians. While we know a recording can never take the place of a live performance, we hope it will bring a bit of peace and light into your world. The event will be available on TLU's YouTube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/user/TXLutheran>
starting December 4.

FELLOWSHIP: VIRTUAL HAPPY HOUR

A few of us members have been gathering on Zoom and just catching up with each other. We would love to see you. If you are not sure how to join, Dick Thackston is willing to come and help you get set up.

Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 6:30 pm, and, Thursday, December 17 at 6:30 pm
The Zoom link will be sent out via email in advance.



DECEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
Worship: At 6 a.m., a link will be sent to the virtual service.				Fellowship Happy Hour Via Zoom 6:30 p.m.		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Worship: At 6 a.m., a link will be sent to the virtual service.						
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Worship: At 6 a.m., a link will be sent to the virtual service.				Fellowship Happy Hour Via Zoom 6:30 p.m.		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Worship: At 6 a.m., a link will be sent to the virtual service.				Virtual Christmas Eve Service (The link will be sent by email.)	MERRY CHRISTMAS OFFICE CLOSED	Pastor on vacation
27	28	29	30	31		
Worship: At 6 a.m., a link will be sent to the virtual service.	Pastor on vacation	Pastor on vacation	Pastor on vacation	Pastor on vacation NEW YEAR'S EVE	Pastor on vacation NEW YEAR'S DAY: OFFICE CLOSED	



HOUSE OF PRAYER houseofprayerlutheranchurch@gmail.com
<https://www.facebook.com/hoplcsa/>
www.hoplcsa.org
(210) 696-1194

Worship depends on quarantine restrictions
and can be viewed online at our website.
Office hours: Tuesday through Friday, from 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.;
for emergencies, please call Pastor Sandra at 210-248-7837.

Reverend Sandra Leifeste
Dick Thackston, Congregation President
Randy Stephenson, Vice President
Jenifer Larson, Treasurer
Paige Vetter, Member @ Large
Dave Johnson, Personnel
Julie Rowe, Worship
Kirsten Mangin, Ministry-Mission
Eva Poblano, Fellowship
Roberta Hanes, Stewardship
Bob French, Property
Jennifer Alaniz, CIELO Ministries

WELCOME NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

Starting on January 1, 2021, our
new and our new Vice-President
will be Marcus Trejo, and our
new Member-at-Large will be
Shirley Vasquez.

Election of Nominating
Committee for 2021:
Gloria Bielfeldt, Linda Johnson,
Roberta Hanes Dick Thackston

HOUSE OF PRAYER LUTHERAN CHURCH
10226 IRONSIDE
SAN ANTONIO TX 78230

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY