

# The Weekly Tidings

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Come Together, Grow in Faith, Serve the LORD

## Reconciling in Christ celebration has been officially rescheduled for Sunday, April 3 at 9:30 AM.

The Sunday morning service will feature special liturgy and the dedication of an RIC pastoral stole. Stay following the service for a free concert by the New Hampshire Gay Men's Chorus. A special offering will be split between Seacoast Outright (supporting LGBTQ+ youth) and Ascentria Care Alliance's Afghan Evacuee Resettlement Program (helping to support the Afghan family we will be welcoming to our community).



## Ash Wednesday Services - March 2

Ash Wednesday worship services will be held on March 2. Services will be held in-person at 12:00 PM & 7:00 PM in the Sanctuary. The 12:00 PM service will be livestreamed and posted on [htelc.com](http://htelc.com).



## Pop-Up Pantry

Pop-Up Pantry is collecting Vegetable Oil for our "Item of the Month" for February. Please drop off any donations with the Church Office, or in the outside bins near our entrances after office hours. Thank you to everyone who has donated thus far.



## Graduating Seniors - Class of 2022!

Graduation Sunday will be celebrated in June. If you know someone from Holy Trinity who will graduate from High School, College, Grad School, or another school this year and would like to be recognized, please speak with the Church Office or Helen Goransson. Any graduating Seniors who wish to apply for our annual Faith and Service Award, please contact Helen Goransson at [heleng@Bondgarden.net](mailto:heleng@Bondgarden.net).



## Pastor Luther's Article: February 13

I love the psalms. I love them because the Psalter gives eloquent and honest voice to the full range of human experience of the divine--the joys, the sorrows, the hope, the despair, the laughter, the anger. All of it is in the psalms. It is for this reason that a selection from the Psalter has always been a cornerstone of Christian worship from its earliest days.

This Sunday we go back to the beginning of the Psalter and will hear Psalm 1.

"Happy are they who . . . take delight in the law of the Lord," the Psalmist writes.

"They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither."



Yet, what does it really mean to "take delight in the law of the Lord"? As good Lutherans, aren't we taught that the gospel of love displaces works of the law? Not quite. As Frederick Buechner explains with characteristic brevity and wit, the gospel of love doesn't supersede the law, but rather completes and fulfills it. In Buechner's words:

"There are basically two kinds of law: (1) law as the way things ought to be, and (2) law as the way things are. An example of the first is 'No Trespassing.' An example of the second is the law of gravity. God's law has traditionally been spelled out in terms of category no. 1, a compendium of do's and don'ts. These do's and don'ts are the work of moralists and, when obeyed, serve the useful purpose of keeping us from each other's throats. They can't make us human, but they can help keep us honest. God's law in itself, however, comes under category no. 2 and is the work of God. It has been stated in seven words: "Whoever does not love abides in death" (1 John 3:14). Like it or not, that's how it is. If you don't believe it, you can always put it to the test just the way if you don't believe the law of gravity, you can always step out a tenth-story window." [from *Wishful Thinking*]

Stated differently, to take delight in the law of the Lord is nothing more and nothing less than to abide in God's love.

### Livestreaming Upgrade for our Sunday Worship

Holy Trinity recently upgraded our Live Streaming equipment on Thursday, Feb 17.

We hope this will fix some of the issues we experienced in the past and make the Online Worship experience more enjoyable. You can watch our latest Worship Service on our website homepage: [htelc.com](http://htelc.com).



## Pastor Luther's Article: February 20, 2022

Dear friends in Christ,

Of the many sacrifices we have been required to make because of the pandemic, one of the most difficult has been a diminished liturgy. At first, of course, during the height of COVID, we were prevented from gathering in person at all, and were compelled to move our liturgical life to an online platform. As things improved somewhat last spring, we were able to resume in-person worship, outside at first when the weather was warm, and then eventually inside. As we moved inside, however, we had to endure significant restrictions necessary for our health and safety: mask wearing; social distancing; limitations on singing; a shortened service to minimize the amount of time people are gathered; restrictions on eucharistic practice; to name just a few.

Now that infection rates are beginning to decline, and public health officials are relaxing some of these restrictions, your Council, Worship Committee and Interim Pastor have met and concluded that we can gradually resume some important aspects of our worshipping life. Accordingly, while social distancing is required and masks continue to be recommended, beginning in Lent, in other respects you will begin to see a return to some familiar patterns of worship:



**Communion:** While the current "communion kits" will still be available for those who wish to use them, commencing with our Ash Wednesday services we will return to consecrating the bread and the wine on the altar and distributing it in our customary manner (with the important exception that we will of course not be using a "common cup," but individual, disposable cups for the wine). In addition, we will return to a somewhat more expanded communion liturgy (adding back in, for example, the sanctus and longer versions of eucharistic prayers). My hope is that a safe and cautious resumption of more "normal" patterns of communion will help to restore and renew us as a worshipping community.

**Music:** Likewise, you will begin to hear more music in the liturgy, including, for example, the return of a hymn for the day, a kyrie or canticle of praise before the lessons, and perhaps other additions. While masks will still be a necessary safeguard for singing, we can at least enjoy a more robust musical element to our worship life.

**Your participation in leading worship:** Finally, but just as importantly, I hope that more of you will be able to participate as lectors, prayer leaders, and communion assistants. The liturgy does not belong to the pastor but is rather a shared ministry with the people, and it becomes more meaningful as

more of us lend our gifts to leading it. Mark Donahue will be accepting volunteers to serve in these roles and I invite you to contact him if you feel called to serve during Lent.

All of these changes may not happen at once, but we will move to introduce them as quickly as we safely can, always keeping our eye on the guidance we're receiving from health and safety officials and the synod. The season of Lent seems like an appropriate time to be enriching our worshipping life in these ways, and I hope this comes to you as good news. I'll be saying more about these matters in the coming Sundays.

Faithfully,  
Pastor Luther

### **Afghan Adjustment Act**

Team Seacoast's Afghan family have been in Portsmouth a full month, and, thanks to our area's generosity, are now beautifully settled. People often ask what they can do to help and what the family needs. What this family—and all other Afghan families—need now is **our advocacy**. About half of the 76,000 leaving Afghanistan bound for the US last summer entered our country as "Humanitarian Parolees." Different from other immigration statuses, this is quite frankly a deadend status. Our new Afghan neighbors in Portsmouth and their 36,000 compatriots can be here legally for two years. They are authorized to work and will receive some benefits, but they are not on a path toward permanent residency—or a green card. After two years, unless they can get asylum status (a difficult step, made even more difficult by a huge backlog) they will be subject to deportation.

Currently in Congress there is a push in Congress to bring an **Afghan Adjustment Act** which will provide a clear path for Humanitarian Parolees to become permanent residents and get green cards. If you'd like to help our new Afghan neighbors, you can do so with a simple letter or phone call to your New Hampshire congresspeople. It's important to act quickly. Please contact Senators Shaheen and Hassan and Representative Pappas and let them know how important this issue is to you. Their contact information:

**Senator Jeanne Shaheen**

506 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-2841 NH: (603) 750-3004

**Senator Maggie Hassan**

324 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3324 NH: (603) 433-4445

**Representative Chris Pappas**

319 Cannon HOB Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5456 NH: (603) 285-4300

Want to read more? A recent article in Religion News Service tells about the potential Act, who's presenting it, and a timeline. You can find it at [www.religionnews.com](http://www.religionnews.com): "HIAS pushes for bill to make Afghans eligible for permanent residency."

## Council President's Article

February is essentially the start of a new council year at Holy Trinity due to the idiosyncrasies of our annual meeting date and usual council meeting dates. On Tuesday, the 15th the council that was elected to office in January met for the first time. And due to the idiosyncrasies of term limits, 4 of the seven council members were new to their roles, 3 of them being new to council. Steve Bauer is now the Vice President, Pam Shaw is the council member for “coming together” which includes fellowship and worship, and Tom Bernth is the council member for “growing in faith” which includes faith formation, the library and stewardship. Paul Karl, council member for caring and social ministries is continuing on for another year, and Erlinde Beliveau is continuing as secretary, Kristin Crawford is continuing as financial secretary, and I have assumed the role of president. Pastor Luther, who joined us in January, continues to provide leadership and guidance as we move forward.

As we began this new year, it was fairly clear that there were a few areas that needed our attention. Perhaps the one foremost on our minds is how we can facilitate and support the process to bring a new full time pastor to lead our congregation. The Transition Team has made great strides as they began with the introduction of the Congregation Assessment Tool (known as the CAT). Soon we'll be progressing to the interpretation of those data. With the help of the NE Synod, the team will be learning how the results of the CAT and insight learned from other exploratory events will help us understand and describe the “personality” of our congregation. This information will be the foundation for the next step which is preparation of the Ministry Site Profile. The MSP is the document that is sent to the Synod to help identify appropriate candidates for our church. The council will soon be identifying people who can help prepare our Ministry Site Profile. And of course, council will be identifying individuals who are willing to serve on the Call Committee which is similar to a search committee in the academic or business world. There's a lot to be done, and we ask each of you to prayerfully consider how you might be able to help during this journey, and to pray for all those who are volunteering during this challenging time.



The council's second focus for the start of this year is trying to gradually and safely introduce some less restrictive practices in our worship experience as we see the threat from Covid receding. Certainly, the virus remains a threat to those who have yet been vaccinated, but as we see the virus seemingly becoming less prevalent, we want to enrich our current worship practices. During the next few months we will be introducing some changes that we believe you will welcome. We will, of course, remain vigilant about the “numbers” and be ready to make changes if necessary. We welcome your feedback as we move forward.

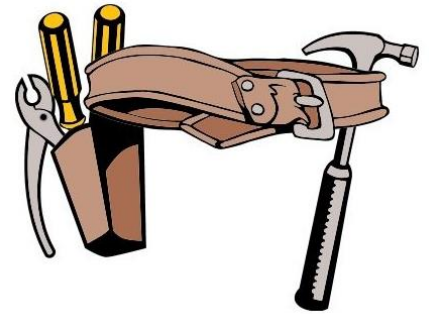
We ask you to pray about how you might be called to participate in the work of Holy Trinity, and to pray for the council and our pastor, and all the team leaders and members who are donating their time and talents during this time.

Judy Evans, Council President

## Property Team

How's it going and what's up? As is often said ... Not much. How about you?

Well, as many of you know from reading Cristina's recent posting in Tidings, the announcement of my replacement(s) was premature. I am reminded of the famous, though often misquoted, remark by Mark Twain when a newspaper writer in London wrote to him to inquire about his health and reported death. The great humorist replied, in part, "The report of my death was an exaggeration." Perhaps he might have said, as I just did, that it was premature. These things happen and we move on.



At this point, I have been thanked and gifted, but am still in charge of the Property Team. I am hopeful, that my replacement will be found soon. Until then, you will have to make do with me for a while longer.

I am reminded of a story which I will amend to suit our locale and to make a point. As the story goes, two folks were walking the beach in Rye on a gorgeous evening featuring a very large and bright full moon. One says to the other, "Isn't that a wonderful moon? I feel I could just reach out and touch it!" The other says, "True .. and I wonder ... which do you suppose is closer ... the moon or Boston?" The other says, "The moon, of course!", to which the other says, "How can you possibly say that?". The other replies, "I can't see Boston." As you probably have surmised, the "moon" in this story is a proxy for any of the various people who could lead the Property Team just as well as I, and "Boston" is a proxy for my actual replacement. You see, the moon just might be closer than Boston, but I surely hope that is not the case. This is the time of year when the obvious, readily achievable, short-term grounds tasks are unavailable to the Property Team and we move inside. The winter days inside present us with tasks that are often, perhaps mostly, more of a challenge. Yes, we have routine inside work that gets done weekly, but some tasks such as painting of walls and selected repairs take more time and resources than is typically available on a Thursday morning, so the work has to be spread out over time. We have to work around known building use and sometimes leave some

tasks partly completed and, perhaps, unsightly. That is the nature of doing property work with volunteers. We do what we can.

The new highway sign has been released for manufacturing in Alabama and is scheduled to be completed and shipped to our installer in New Hampshire by April 7. I am hopeful we will have the new sign in place by Easter. We engaged another sign company (Portsmouth Sign Company) to upgrade the lighting for the informational sign near the chapel. This work has been completed. I have not yet seen the results, but I have heard from a couple of folks who tell me the sign is now well lighted. Hopefully, this upgrade will help inform passers-by and people entering our property, especially in these dark days of winter. As most of you already know, there is no electricity available to illuminate the wooden church sign at Fox Run Road. We have to rely on the headlights of passing vehicles to illuminate that one. I would like to find a more robust solar-powered lighting system for this sign. If anyone has ideas on this, please advise me or someone on the Property Team.

David Mercer

## **An Update on our Portsmouth Afghan Family**

Team Seacoast's Afghan family of six—mother, father, and four children--has been here on the Seacoast now for almost two months. In that time, a lot has been accomplished, and much, much more lies ahead. We on the Team are learning as much as our family. As the saying goes, "It takes a village!" Our immediate village—the official Team Seacoast—is forty strong, but dozens of generous folks around the area are also working to make this family welcome. When it comes to generosity, the family demonstrates that to us on a daily basis. When we visit, whatever the reason might be, whether a quick errand or a donation or help with figuring out an American custom, we can't leave without tea and treats and often an entire meal.



Now, a bit about the family. The father worked for the American military in Afghanistan for six years before our troops pulled out last August. Prior to that he was a high school Pashto teacher. So far, he's the only one in the family who speaks English. His future goals, once the family is settled, include going back to college. Last week he began work at a local grocery store located within walking distance of their home. The mother speaks only Pashto and is home with the two smaller children. She's been provided with a sewing machine, threads, fabric, and accessories so that she can continue

a former activity. The two older children are in school, one in fourth grade, one in second, and their teachers report they are both doing well, with their biggest complaint being about the American food!

Our Education, Public Transportation, Cultural Orientation, and Finance committees are all working with the family on a regular basis. ESOL lessons are offered to both the children and adults several times a week, during the day with the adults and after school with the children. All four children are picking up English at an astonishing rate. Public Transportation has taken members of the family on the Coast bus a couple of times--first into Portsmouth, then to Fox Run Mall. They've also been to visit the ocean and nearby parks. Cultural Orientation has introduced them to some of our Seacoast area history. And Finance has helped the adults set up a bank account and introduced them to the ATM.

Our Ride Coordinator sets up drivers for twice weekly grocery trips. Ascentria Care Alliance zooms with the family weekly, offering information, counseling, and attention from their individually assigned social worker.

In addition, our Fundraising committee is doing an amazing job. Living in the Seacoast is wonderful and exciting, and it's also very expensive. An entry-level grocery store job is a good beginning, but it won't provide enough for the family to be self-supporting. It'll take time for our family to learn American culture and language to a level of self-sufficiency, so Team Seacoast is dedicated to helping out financially for a year. If you'd like to contribute, log into Team Seacoast's "Givelively" site. It'll give you an immediate update on how much is needed and how much has already been raised. Any contribution is greatly appreciated.