

The Weekly Tidings

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Come Together, Grow in Faith, Serve the LORD

Holy Trinity's Annual Meeting

Holy Trinity's Annual Meeting will take place on Sunday, January 29 following a short fellowship after the 9:30 service. The week prior to the Annual Meeting, we will hold a congregational budget meeting on Sunday, January 22 following the 9:30am service.



Altar Guild

As all of us at Holy Trinity look forward to the New Year full of hope and joy, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Altar Guild givers for their dedication and service to providing communion each and every Sunday to all our members. Many thanks to Joan Bauer, Bobbie Febbo, Yvonne Topping and Pam Shaw - you are all amazing. I would really like to say thank you to my husband John Moore for his support and willingness to come in and help me with everything that needs to be done. Peace and Blessings, *Julie Moore*



Stewardship

The stewardship drive for 2023 resulted in total pledges of about \$267,000. The Stewardship Team would like to thank all of those who so generously provided the means to keep Holy Trinity a viable church. It is particularly heartening when so many churches have suffered during the Covid Pandemic. The Church Council has not yet given the Congregation what we need to support a full-time pastor and the church, but in my estimation, we will still need a greater pledge base and additional pledges. We have always risen to the occasion and we will this time also. *David Arrington*



Stewardship

Pastor Luther's Article: December 15, 2022

Every Advent I spend a fair amount of time reflecting on Mary and her extraordinary experience as the mother of Jesus. While we Protestants may not accept everything our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters have to say about Mary, I am convinced we nevertheless have a lot to learn from her about who God is.

One reason Christians have long venerated Mary, I think, is because we know deep in our hearts that the relationship between a mother and a child may well be the closest thing most humans experience to the love that God has for us. Consider for a moment what our mothers have done for us: they suffered hours of painful labor to bring us into the world, they nursed us, bathed us, changed our diapers, put up with our tantrums, kissed our bruised knees, consoled us through the emotional ups and downs of our adolescence, wiped tears from our eyes when we were hurt. But more than that, mothers are always there, ready with their love when we most need it.



You remember, I'm sure, the story of the Runaway Bunny, the classic children's book by Margaret Wise Brown; the story in which a little baby bunny keeps trying to run away from his mother. "If you run away," says the mother, "I will run after you. For you are my little bunny." "I will become a bird," the little bunny says, "and fly away from you." "If you become a bird and fly away from me," says his mother, "I will be a tree that you come home to." Finally the little bunny says, "Shucks, I might just as well stay where I am and be your little bunny." "Have a carrot," says the mother bunny. Such is the mysterious simplicity of a mother's unconditional love.

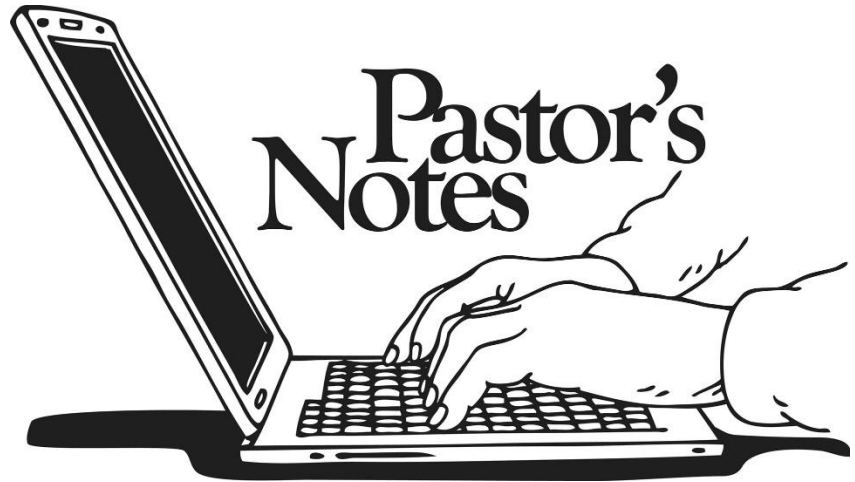
To say that a good mother loves unconditionally, however, is not to say that she loves uncritically. "You can be anything you want to be, even president of the United States," says the Good Mother. "Now stand up straight, don't slouch and clean up your room. I'm not your maid," she reminds us. The Good Mother knows that to make us the good people God created us to be, it's often necessary to push, cajole, chide, and, yes, sometimes even discipline.

It's been said of Jesus that He loves us just the way we are and that He loves us too much to leave us the way He found us; to which all Good Mothers would say "Amen," as they ask if we really are going to school dressed like that! I wonder if Mary ever had occasion to utter such words to her son as he made his way to temple? He was completely human after all.

Pastor Luther's Article: January 5, 2023

So, what are your New Year's resolutions going to be? That is a question that many of us start asking each other this time of year. According to one website I stumbled across, the top ten resolutions this year are:

1. Exercise more
2. Lose weight
3. Get organized
4. Learn a new hobby
5. Save more money
6. Spend less money
7. Drink less
8. Spend more time with family and friends
9. Travel more
10. Read more



Sound familiar? Most of us have been here before, resolving to improve ourselves in one way or another, but usually failing.

One of the more comprehensive scientific studies of New Year's resolutions was done by Professor Richard Wiseman of the University of Bristol in England in 2007, who checked in with 3000 English folk of different demographics in early January that year to get a list of their resolutions, and then he followed up with them twelve months later. The results? 88% of the participants failed to keep a majority of their resolutions.

For Christian theologians, this result is not surprising in the least. It falls under the rubric we call 'sin,' which in the Greek literally means to 'miss the mark.' The sad truth about human nature is just this: when it comes to doing what we should, we tend to miss the mark fairly consistently. The Christian conviction is that we are all broken people in one way or another, and that one of the first steps in the life of faith is humbly to admit as much. That is one reason we always confess our sins each Sunday before we come to the altar to receive the renewing gift of Christ's body and blood.

The trouble, though, is that our broader culture refuses to accept sin as a truth about human nature, insisting instead that "I'm okay, and you're okay," and that everything will be better if we all just try a little harder. The American civil religion is one of self-improvement, self-reliance, and a relentless can-do optimism that refuses to accept limits to what we can accomplish. And so we have a multi-billion dollar cosmetics industry that denies the reality of

aging; a multi-billion dollar digital entertainment industry that seeks to divert us from really meaningful human activity; and a multi-billion dollar drug and alcohol industry committed to medicating us when life's disappointments rear their ugly little heads.

Almost imperceptibly, we have moved from being a Puritan nation that was admittedly too preoccupied with human weakness and moral failure to a nation that has completely expunged 'sin' from its vocabulary, believing that human happiness is just one more pill, or one more facelift, or one more Porsche, away. When the quintessentially American entrepreneur David Rockefeller was once asked: "so how much money is enough?" he famously replied: "just a little more." We are a people obsessed with achieving, and ever confident we can create our own happiness, all results to the contrary notwithstanding.

Which is why the Incarnation we just celebrated is such good and welcome news. It turns out, you see, that our relationship with God is not about *achieving*; it is about *receiving*. I can't tell you what a hard lesson this is for type-A, self-reliant Yankees to learn, but it is the gospel truth. We become God's children by receiving the gift of the Christ child in faith, not by achieving anything on our own.

So, does this mean we can all kick back, get fat and be happy, because we are saved by faith and need do nothing on our own? By no means! If our faith is genuine, it will lead slowly but surely to transformation. When we really feel loved, we inevitably will want to be our best selves for our lover. The fancy theological word for this is sanctification. What the law cannot accomplish in us through our own sweat and toil, faith in God can. Such change certainly doesn't happen overnight, and it often occurs in fits and starts, but once Christ's love gets ahold of you, strange and remarkable things can happen.

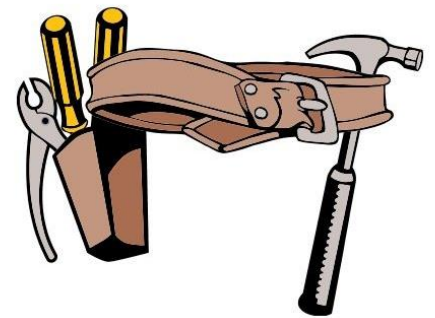
So, what does this mean, then, about our New Year's resolutions? Well, if you want to bet that you'll be among the 12% of the population who are lucky enough to keep your own resolutions this year, then by all means, make them and take your chances. But here is another strategy you might consider. Instead of resolving to *achieve* this or that goal to improve your self – like losing weight or exercising more or spending less – you might resolve to give up on your *self* altogether and instead merely receive something: something, say, like God's love in the holy child Jesus. Because my conviction is that if we all stop believing in our *selves* quite so much, and instead believe in what God can do *in and through and with us*, it is much more likely that Christ's love will lead us into healthier and more fulfilling patterns of living. We may or may not lose those few extra pounds, but we are very likely to leave the world a better place and, by doing so, find ourselves an eternal home.

Property Team

It has been a challenging fall season for the Property Team. Our numbers on any given week have been limited for various reasons, yet we have managed to take care of most of the basic tasks on our plate. The normal, inside routine of tidying up things here and there has continued. A few burned out light bulbs remain to be changed as time permits. Nearly all of our bulb replacements involve a ladder of some sort, and sometimes, a reach rod. The ceiling fan in the sanctuary is currently out of service, most likely because of a communication problem between the remote control unit and the signal receiver unit in the fan. We are working on a solution. The problem and troubleshooting are aggravated by distance since the fan unit and remote are at about the maximum recommended distance apart. If any of you readers have experience resetting fan control receivers and/or remote controls, please contact me. I suppose the good news is the fan light is now out! The added bad news is that the very dirty fan blades are now visible for all to see and we are also trapping nice warm air at the top of the sanctuary.

The lawn equipment has been winterized and stored, and the snow removal contract has been signed. The snow-blower has been test started and we have stabilized fuel ready to use. We should be ready for the inevitable snow. Some outside grounds work did not get done before winter this year and will have to wait for spring. I can't recall that happening before. We do what we can reasonably do, given our numbers.

You may have noticed two new, decorative pear trees recently planted near the lighted information sign and the prayer garden. These trees have replaced two older and larger decorative fruit trees that had become diseased and were progressively failing. The replacements were generously provided by Byrl Short and installed by Byrl's son, David, who operates Stratham Circle Nursery.



We have been gradually putting up seasonal decorations as the Advent season has progressed. To date this has included garlands, bows, door wreaths, and the Chrismon Tree.

A portion of the exterior lighting unit above the main entry doors failed requiring replacement of the entire unit. We also replaced two interior emergency light units, both of which were functional, but damaged. The test button for one unit had failed and the Fire Department could not verify that the light worked properly. A portion of the second unit was held together by duct tape, which is not a violation, but did attract Fire Department attention. We also have a quote to replace the two exterior lighting units

for illuminating the steeple. These lights have been out of service for a long time and were probably damaged in the lightning strike we experienced in 2020. The problem went unnoticed at the time because they were on the same circuit as the parking lot lights which were not impacted.

Dave Mercer, Property Team Leader (pro tempore)

Council President's Article

But we have a hope that's stronger than any of this, stronger even than death. The hope of God comes in the form of a tiny baby, a helpless child; nevertheless, who grew to a man and in his fragile strength was willing to die on the cross and was raised again.



I hope today, just a few days before we celebrate the birth of Jesus, you have completed your preparations for Christmas Day. I imagine your preparations might have included some baking and cooking, present buying, connecting with friends both near and far through visits, calls, and written notes, emailed, texted, or mailed. And perhaps through the years your family has developed some traditions that help you remember this celebration of hope and love in a special way. We at Holy Trinity have developed some traditions that help to fill us with peace, hope, joy and love. Our Advent wreath at the front of the church now has 4 candles lit, and we will light the central candle, the Christ candle, on Christmas Eve. As I write this, the property team is decorating the church with white banners, green, and poinsettias. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we will join together in celebratory worship, to listen to the account of that day long ago when Jesus born, to sing those wonderful old and new Christmas carols, and to greet one another. These traditions help to remind us that because of God's love for us, we have hope stronger than anything we can comprehend. This Christmas season "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." Romans 15:13

End 68 Hours of Hunger

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church has a team that packs food for the program 'End 68 Hours of Hunger' for the Portsmouth schools. This program provides food for children in need that sustains them for the weekend when school is not in session. Kathy McKenna and Lauren Gianino are the Team Coordinators for our church. Our team is responsible for packing food bags for children on 6 Thursdays and 1 Wednesday throughout the school year.

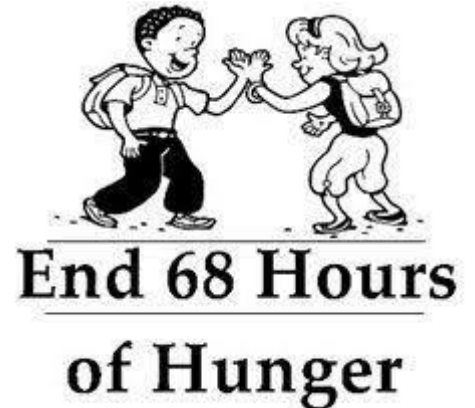
Our next packing date is Thursday, January 26th. We pack at the First United Methodist Church, 129 Miller Ave. Portsmouth and we meet at 6pm. Depending on the number of volunteers, it takes around 45 minutes to pack 50-60 bags.

End 68 HOH Scheduled Packing Dates for HTELC 2023

- Jan. 26
- Mar. 9
- Apr. 13
- June 1

We welcome all volunteers! If you are interested in joining our team please email us. Let us know if you have any questions.

Kathy McKenna & Lauren Gianino



Prayer Concerns

Health Issues: Franklyn Vosburg, Jerry Schock, Pastor Linn Opderbecke, Alice Peterson, George Parseghian, Sarah Meier, Bob & Judy Hollister, Don Gindlesperger, Steve Bush, Joyce Rivoire, Richard Anderson, Yvonne Topping, Dave Smith, Larry Sanders, Hazel Larson, Leo Larson, Linda Swiatocha, Jean Klein, Joe Lugalla, Geri Seig, Rani Marcus. **Homebound:** Carol Saufley, Edith Rowan, Barbara Werdelin, Ron Evers, Dave & Joyce Rivoire, Anita Lindstrom. **Military:** Josh Bretz, Matthew Hanrahan, Brendan Podszus, Jacob Schankis, Jessica Chabot.

Friends: Katy and Sherry (Shirley Jackson's daughter and sister), Linda Smith and Bill Hutchins (Jill Larson's friends), Geri Sieg (former member of Holy Trinity), Casey Lavoie (Stephanie Goupil's friend), Monica Amundson (Julie Moore's friend), Danielle Elwanger & family (Bobbie Febbo's granddaughter) Linda Aten (Rich Wilcox's sister), Lynn Geraci (Jill & Jerry Schock's friend), Robert Gjellstad (Jerry Schock's cousin)

Prayers will be listed for 6 weeks unless told otherwise. If you would like a prayer concern listed in the bulletin, please fill out a Prayer Request at the Usher's table or contact the Church Office at office@htelc.com.

Monthly Attendance & Offering

Sunday, December 4:	100 (<i>In-Person</i>) + 16 (<i>Online</i>) = 116	Offering:	\$5,992.40
Sunday, December 11:	85 (<i>In-Person</i>) + 28 (<i>Online</i>) = 113	Offering:	\$2,446.45
Sunday, December 18:	85 (<i>In-Person</i>) + 27 (<i>Online</i>) = 112	Offering:	\$9,084.06
Saturday, December 24:	72 (<i>4PM</i>) + 117 (<i>8PM</i>) + 58 (<i>Online</i>) = 247		
Sunday, December 25:	15 (<i>In-Person</i>) + no online = 15	Offering:	\$4,548.45

Offering for Dec. 24 was combined with Dec. 25's service.

Calendar at-a-glance

- Sun. January 22:** Budget Congregational Meeting (*after Worship*)
Sun. January 29: Annual Meeting (*after Worship*). *Snow date: 2/5.*
Wed. February 22: Ash Wednesday (*worship times TBD*)

Sunday Worship, Sundays at 9:30 AM

Confirmation Class, Sundays after Worship.

Wednesday Bible Study, Wednesdays at 9:30 AM

Property Team, Thursdays at 8:00 AM until noon.