

The AGAPE NEWS (#12)

A WEEKLY "BLOG-LIKE" NEWSLETTER FROM PASTOR ZEUCH

ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH - CALGARY AB – December 18, 2020

Hello dear SMLC Family and friends!

How are you doing?

The fourth Sunday in Advent is upon us. The Advent season is giving way to the Christmas time this upcoming week. The epistle lesson you are going to hear this Sunday is called a "doxology" penned by St. Paul, the apostle to the Christians in Rome.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word doxology as an expression of praise to God, usually liturgical. This word is comprised of the Greek words doxa and logos. In the Greek language, doxa means glory, splendor, or grandeur while the Greek word logos means word or speaking. The word itself goes back to the 4th century.

Doxologies are an expression of praise to God. In the Christian church, we often hear them sung or chanted. They are a tradition that has meaning and importance for all Christians. Since the early church, doxologies have been a way for Christians to express their love and thankfulness for what God has done in their lives.

A doxology will be heard at the end of canticles, psalms, and hymns. They are a short hymn of praise one will find in various Christian and Jewish worship services today. In our hymnal, the LSB, you may see a little triangle on the last verse of a hymn, meaning that this is a doxology and normally glorifies the Holy Trinity. Paul says in our epistle reading in Romans 16: 25-27 (his doxology) that the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, has been finally revealed in Him, Jesus Christ as he came as a baby in Bethlehem. "To Him be Glory" (typical words found in a doxology).

I apologize for the tardiness of this newsletter this week.

As we all know, the pandemic is still filling hospitals, isolating and separating families and harvesting human lives all around us. We may thank God that we can still gather in person for worship. Since the new AHS restrictions, we have decided to change the way we offer the Lord's Supper at church. You will read about it below. We also thank God that there is hope coming our way with the vaccines for next year.

We at SMLC continue to be cautious and follow all protocols to protect each other and mostly the most vulnerable among us. I ask you once more to trust God's promises that HE IS WITH US in every situation and a stronghold in every trouble. Please continue to pray for our church, our families and for the world.

We want to welcome the new recipients of our Agape News in our email list.

And now...

Happy reading!

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A SMALL DOSE OF GOD'S WORD FOR YOU TODAY:

(From the epistle reading for the fourth Sunday in Advent)

ROMANS 16: 25-27 (The doxology)

²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

IN GERMAN:

²⁵ Dem aber, der euch stärken kann laut meines Evangeliums und der Predigt von Jesu Christo, durch welche das Geheimnis offenbart ist, das von der Welt her verschwiegen gewesen ist,

²⁶ nun aber offenbart, auch kundgemacht durch der Propheten Schriften nach Befehl des ewigen Gottes, den Gehorsam des Glaubens aufzurichten unter allen Heiden:

²⁷ demselben Gott, der allein weise ist, sei Ehre durch Jesum Christum in Ewigkeit! Amen.

PREVIOUS BIBLE TRIVIA:

Last trivia question was:

John the Baptist was put in prison for declaring that Herod had broken what Law?

The answer is “adultery”. Thank you to those who sent me the answer.

I hope you enjoyed the trivia questions we have offered during this year. Since there has been a lack of response for this trivia, I decided to discontinue it for the time being. Thank you for those who participated, it was fun!

NEWS FROM SMLC.

We repeat some of them every week for those who haven't read it before.

1 – ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2020 - the Sunday services are at the regular times:

Dec 20 (Sun): Fourth Sunday in Advent services (with communion)

Dec 23 (Wed): German candlelight service @ 5 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 23 (Wed): English candlelight service @ 7 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 24 (Thurs): German candlelight service @ 5 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 24 (Thurs): English candlelight service @ 7 p.m. (please sign up)

Dec 27 (Sun): First Sunday After Christmas, regular services.

2 – ADVENT MIDWEEK SERVICE: If you were not able to come to our evening service last Wednesday, you may watch it on our website:

<http://www.stmatthewlutheranalgary.com>

3 – NEW COMMUNION PRACTICE: To increase the safety and protection towards each other in times of this plague, our boards have approved pastor’s suggestion for a change in our communion practice. Here is what we will be doing, starting this Sunday, December 20:

Pastor and assistant will still go to the pews and distribute the elements (bread and wine) to all communicant members. Members will not take communion at that time. They will hold on to their little cup and plate and wait until pastor and assistant go back to the altar. Then pastor speaks the words of the institution and invites all communicants to take bread at the same time. Then the wine, all together. When all have taken communion together, pastor will dismiss all with the blessing.

This procedure avoids the pastor and assistant stand near while the communicant member takes off his/her mask and takes the elements. It also gives us a fresh understanding and meaning of “fellowship” or “family” as we have the meal together. We could even say it also saves time since it’s a more dynamic process. Please only take communion if you are a confirmed member of our congregation or a member of any other church in fellowship with us.

We will continue to offer communion twice a month: on the first and third Sunday of the month, except on January 3rd.

4 – SOCIAL ISSUES: The president of Lutheran Church-Canada, Rev. Tim Teuscher has sent a letter to all congregations affiliated to LCC, about the latest decisions of the federal government regarding social issues that contradict the values that we, confessional Lutherans stand for. All members are invited to read the document. You may [click here to](#) read the letter. You may also find the synod’s position on those topics in the [LCC’s website](#).

5 – LCC’s SPECIAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS: If you are interested in what has been discussed at the synod’s first special convention on last October 17th, you may read it here, on the LCC website

- <https://www.lutheranchurchcanada.ca/eventscalendar/sc2020/>

6 – OFFERINGS VIA E-TRANSFERS: If you are so inclined to send your offering via e-transfer please use: smlccsecretary@shaw.ca to send your donation. E-transfers are automatically deposited into the bank account, thus no need to send a

password to the office. We appreciate your continuous support of our church. Thank you for your generosity.

7 - BIG THANK YOU! I want to thank those who use their talents, time and treasures to keep our congregation afloat. This week I thank the **USHERS** of our church: they have given their time and energy to make sure visitors are welcomed and that everything is working during worship service: seating, ushering, bell ringing, bulletin distributing, lighting up the candles, sanitizing after services etc. Currently we have Bernie Kubke and Leo Hartfelder in the German service – Ingrid Anderson helps out when needed. Then we have these ushers for the English service: Randy Haynes, Ernie Schultz, Russel Salter, Matthew Graumann, Jonah Graumann, Ethan Graumann, Thomas Weitz. There are also Peter Graumann and Warren Ohlhauser that help out if needed. We also thank those who served as usher in the past – so many, they wouldn't fit here!

Thank you all for your faithful service. "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy". Philippians 1: 3 & 4

8 – ADVENT WREATH & CHRISTMAS TREE: I would also shout a big thank you to all our volunteers who put up the Advent wreath and the beautiful Christmas tree in our sanctuary. Those things are called “adiaphora”: None of those things are “mandatory” in churches or even mentioned in scripture. They are based on human tradition brought to the Christian church from other cultures and practices. They certainly add to the meaning and joy of the season.

9 – NAME OF OUR CHURCH: A little Grammar reminder for today: Our congregation is called **St. Matthew Lutheran Church**, without an “S”. We are named after the first evangelist, St. Matthew. But the church doesn't belong to the apostle. It's Christ's church. I have seen several members referring to our church as “St. Matthew's”. I just wanted to correct them: just drop the “S”, unless you use the possessive apostrophe. For example: you may say: “St. Matthew's attendance has increased lately”. But we don't want to say: “I am a member at St. Matthew's” or “My children were baptized at St. Matthew's”. This is valid for the written form as well.

10 – BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS VIDEO MESSAGES:

Here is the link to LCC's Christmas Video Message, featuring Synod office staff and LCC's two seminaries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSVEjuC-HFY&feature=youtu.be>

Here is a link to A Christmas Message From LCC's West Regional Pastor, Rev. Rob Mohns: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cCCLwzm1hw&feature=youtu.be>

BIRTHDAYS OF THE WEEK

Dec 16 – Kevin Navis

Dec 16 – Ernie Schultz

Dec 20 – Agatha Felde

NEW BIRTH (BAPTISM) ANNIVERSARIES:

Dec 19 – Viola Ohlhauser

Dec 20 – Gustav Schwab

If any name is missing, please let me know. We pray for you! God bless you all!

FEASTS, FESTIVALS and COMMEMORATIONS IN THE CHURCH YEAR THIS WEEK:

December 17 – Daniel the Prophet and the Three Young Men

December 19 – Adam and Eve

December 20 – Katharina von Bora Luther

You may look them up on the internet to find out more about those faithful women and men!

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Please send us your prayer requests. We have a “prayer chain” where a group of people (the “prayer warriors”) pray for your needs. Your requests will be shared with Lorraine Duncan, from our board of evangelism, who will include them in the prayer chain. **Remember:** A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing.

DIE DEUTSCHE ECKE!

Pastor Robert Bugbee, former president of the Lutheran Church-Canada and now serving as pastor at First Lutheran Church in Windsor, ON has sent out a link to all German-speaking congregations. It's the children's Christmas story

It is an 8-9 minute "Playmobil" production for children in the German language, telling the story of Christmas in a simple way from the Gospel-books of St. Luke and St. Matthew. Go ahead and forward this to others you know who might find joy in it. It was produced by St. Mary's Evangelical Lutheran Church, a congregation of the SELK in Berlin-Zehlendorf. Click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ba4J4POPzII>

Also, I have recorded an Advent devotion in German. You may click here to watch it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHjqxv4qvNg&feature=youtu.be>

Also available on our website.

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AND NOW...AS ALWAYS, TO BRING SOME GIGGLE: THE "CLEAN JOKE": :-D

Who Makes the Coffee?? A married couple were arguing who is making the coffee. The wife said that in the Bible it says that men should make the coffee and the husband asked her where it said that. The wife opened the Bible and said: "Right here in HEBREWS!"

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Thank you for taking your time to read our newsletter. I hope I will be able to send you next week's newsletter soon, since it's Christmas week.

If you enjoy reading it, let me know!

And remember: You are never alone; Christ is the Emanuel: God with us!

God bless you all. Stay safe everybody, but MOST IMPORTANTLY: stay faithful to the Lord!

In His service,

Rev. M. Zeuch, on Dec 18, 2020 Anno Domini