

The “AGAPE” #37

A “BLOG-LIKE” NEWSLETTER FROM PASTOR ZEUCH

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD/ LENT



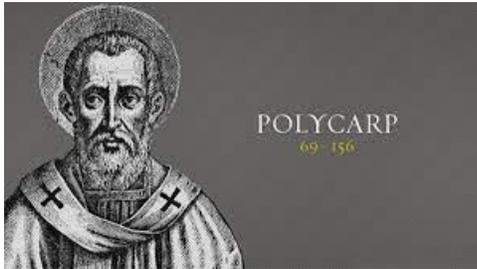
ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH, CALGARY AB

February 16, 2022 Anno Domini

Proclaiming the love of Jesus Christ in Bridgeland for 109 years!

On February 23rd we commemorate St. Polycarp of Smyrna, Pastor and Martyr, born in 69 A.D. and died in 155 A.D.

But wait, you may ask yourself: why do we, Lutherans, remember and commemorate the many “saints” of the past history of the Christian Church? isn’t it a Roman Catholic thing (in German, “etwas zu katholisch”)? Well, not really. I



will share with you an article from Christianity.com I found interesting. The title says: “Who was Polycarp?” written by Ken Curtis, PhD. Here it goes.

“Discover why Polycarp is remembered and celebrated by Christians today. Have you ever stood by while a loved one suffered from a terrible illness or incurable disease? You know how much it hurt you, how helpless you felt. Or how do you feel when one who has given you so much that you hold precious in life suffers needlessly - from the meanness and cruelty of others?

Imagine what it was like for the Christians in Smyrna as they watched their beloved and aged pastor, **Polycarp**, burn to death in public - just because he was a Christian.

Polycarp was a personal disciple of the Apostle John. As an old man, he was the bishop of the Church at Smyrna in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey).

Persecution against the Christians broke out there and believers were being fed to the wild beasts in the arena. The crowd began to call for the Christians' leader Polycarp. So, the authorities sent out a search party to bring him in. They tortured two slave boys to reveal where Polycarp was being hidden.

It was a Friday afternoon. Polycarp was resting upstairs in a country home. They came in fully armed as if they were arresting a dangerous criminal. Polycarp's friends wanted to sneak him out but he refused, saying, "God's will be done." (The Christians there taught that a believer was not to make oneself available for martyrdom and should not seek it out, but neither should he/she avoid it when there was no choice.)



In one of the most touching instances of Christian grace imaginable, Polycarp welcomed his captors as if they were friends, talked with them and ordered that food and drink be served to them. Then Polycarp made one request: one hour to pray before they took him away. The officers overhearing his prayers (that went on for two hours) began to have second thoughts. What were they doing arresting an old man like this?

Despite the cries of the crowd, the Roman authorities saw the senselessness of making this aged man a martyr. So, when Polycarp was brought into the arena, the proconsul pled with him: "Curse Christ and I will release you."

REPLY: "Eighty-six years I have served Him. He had never done me wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?"

"Then do this, old man, said the proconsul. Just swear by the genius of the emperor and that will be sufficient." (The "genius" was sort of the "spirit" of the emperor. To do this would be a recognition of the pagan gods and **religion**.)

REPLY: "If you imagine for a moment that I would do that, then I think you pretend that you don't know who I am. Hear it plainly. I am a Christian."

More entreaties. Polycarp stood firm.

The proconsul threatened him with the wild beasts.

REPLY: "Bring them forth. I would change my mind if it meant going from the worse to the better, but not to change from the right to the wrong."

The proconsul's patience was gone: "I will have you burned alive."

REPLY: "You threaten fire that burns for an hour and is over. But the judgment on the ungodly is forever."

The fire was prepared. Polycarp lifted his eyes to heaven and prayed: "Father, I bless you that you have deemed me worthy of this day and hour, that I might take a portion of the martyrs in the cup of Christ. . . Among these may I today be welcome before thy face as a rich and acceptable sacrifice."

As the fire engulfed him, the believers noted that it smelled not so much like flesh burning as a loaf baking. He was finished off with the stab of a dagger. His followers gathered his remains like precious jewels and buried them on February 23, a day they set aside to be remembered. The year was probably 155. In the strange way known to the eyes of faith, it was as much a day of triumph as it was a day of tragedy.

These paragraphs are condensed from the longer account that was compiled by the Christians at Smyrna and sent as a letter to believers throughout the region.

Christians today generally think of Christmas as the central birthday observance of the Christian church. But the early Christians had no Christmas celebration. We and they do not even know exactly when Jesus was born, but scholars agree that it was sometime between 7 and 4 BC December 25 as Christ's birth date was not introduced until the mid-300s. The celebration of Christmas was introduced late in the fourth century to adapt and replace Roman pagan festivals.

Easter was the important time of celebration for the early church. But they also had their "birthday" celebrations. Not Christmas, but the dates of the martyrdoms of courageous believers who gave their lives for the faith. These were the birthdays they cared about--for them, the day of martyrdom was the "birthday" of the martyrs, the day they were "born" into the **presence of God**.

So, the dates when great leaders and witnesses like Polycarp died were set aside as times for celebration and remembering their testimony. From such celebrations, the believers drew strength and courage to face their own ordeals."

"Away with The Atheists!"

There was a humorous moment in Polycarp's appearance in the arena. The proconsul

commanded him to say "Away with atheists," referring to the Christians who were considered atheists because they didn't worship the Roman Gods. Polycarp pointed at the jeering mob and cried out as instructed: "Away with the atheists!"

I hope you enjoyed the reading as much as I have. May God bless you and your loved ones as we get prepared to enter the holy season of Lent!

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DATES TO HIGHLIGHT: SUNDAYS, CELEBRATIONS, FEASTS & FESTIVALS

FEB 17 (Thurs): Online PPC meeting @ 7 p.m.

FEB 18 (Fri): Martin Luther, Doctor and Confessor

FEB 20 (Sun): The Seventh Sunday after Epiphany. German worship service with Holy Communion @ 9:30 a.m. / English worship service with Holy Communion @ 11 a.m.

FEB 21 (Mon): Family Day. Office is closed.

FEB 22 (Tues): Youth online Bible Study @ 7:30 p.m.

Feb 23 (Wed): Polycarp of Smyrna, Pastor and Martyr

FEB 23 (Wed): Pastor leads a study for pastors at the Calgary Circuit Winkel in Torrington, AB

FEB 23 (Wed): Online Confirmation Class @ 4:30 p.m. Online Bible Study @ 7 p.m.

FEB 24 (Thurs): St. Matthias, Apostle

FEB 25 (Fri): Youth outdoor gathering with devotion, fire pit, hot dogs & games! @ 7 p.m. (weather permitting).

FEB 27 (Sun): The Transfiguration of Our Lord. German worship service @ 9:30 a.m. / English worship service @ 11 a.m.

FEB 27 (Sun): First online Bible Study in Portuguese.

MAR 1 (Tues): Youth online Bible Study @ 7:30 p.m.

MAR 2 (Wed): Online Confirmation Class @ 4:30 p.m.

| February 2022 | | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | | | | | |

| March 2022 | | | | | | |
|------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

DIE PASSIONSZEIT – THE LENTEN SEASON

MAR 2 (Wed): Ash Wednesday evening service with Holy Communion @ 7 p.m.



MAR 3 (Thurs): Board of Elders meeting @ 7 p.m.

MAR 6 (Sun): First Sunday in Lent (*Invocabit*): German worship service with Holy Communion @ 9:30 a.m. / English worship service with Holy Communion @ 11 a.m.

MAR 7 (Mon): Perpetua and Felicitas, Martyrs

MAR 8 (Tues): Pastor leads worship service at Bethany Senior Home

MAR 8 (Tues): Youth online Bible Study @ 7:30 p.m.

MAR 9 (Wed): Pastor leads worship service at Rocky Ridge Retirement Home

MAR 9 (Wed): Online Confirmation Class @ 4:30 p.m.

MAR 9 (Wed): Evening Lenten Service @ 7 p.m.

MAR 13 (Sun): Daylight Saving Time begins (“spring” forward one hour!). Time to wake up earlier to go to church!

MAR 13 (Sun): Second Sunday in Lent (*Reminiscere*). German worship service @ 9:30 a.m. / English worship service @ 11 a.m.

MISSION & MINISTRY

MIDWEEK EVENING SERVICES DURING LENT: After a few years not doing midweek services during Lent, we are doing it this year. After consulting with the board of elders. It’s confirmed! And we will have our brothers and sisters from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church joining us as well. Pastor Mark Rekken and myself are planning to alternate between us for those Wednesday evenings services. The service starts at 7 every Wednesday, starting March 2. The theme will be “*The seven I AM statements of Christ in the Gospel of John*”. Mark it on your calendar:

March 2: Ash Wednesday (Rekken) – with Holy Communion

March 9: “Light of the World” (Zeuch)

March 16- “Door of the Sheep” (Rekken)

March 23- “Good Shepherd” (Rekken)

March 30- “The Way, the Truth and the Life” (Zeuch)

April 6- “True Vine” (Rekken)

April 14 (Maundy Thursday) - “Bread of Life” (Zeuch) – with Holy Communion

BIBLE STUDY: We are studying the topic “Finding Christ in the Old Testament”. Please note that we will NOT have Bible Studies during Lent, since we have the midweek services planned. Our last Bible study before Lent is on February 23rd. We will resume after Easter, on April 27th.

ONLINE YOUTH BIBLE STUDY: Happens every Tuesday evening.

BIBLE STUDY IN PORTUGUESE: We are starting a group for Bible studies in Portuguese language once a month. These gathering also happen online for now. Please pray that the Lord will bless this new initiative!

ST. MATTHEW LOCAL MISSIONS: During 2022 please continue to support our following local missions: St. Matthew Food Cupboard, Bridgeland Women’s Centre and Calgary Kerby Centre for Seniors. Boxes for donations will be in the narthex! Thank You!

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CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

PPC SECRETARY: The PPC is looking for a secretary. The position is approximately 3-6 hours per month. Previous experience not necessary, but the ability to take notes and type is an asset. Meetings are done via Zoom and are held 9 months/year. If you want to become involved and share your talents, this is a minimal time commitment position that has huge support from the PPC team. Please contact Peter Graumann for more information.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: Mark it on your calendar. If you are a communicant and voting member of St. Matthew Lutheran Church (SMLC), you are invited to be present at our spring session of the (online) Congregational Meeting (some call it “voter’s Assembly”). It will take place on **March 20 (Sunday) at 2 p.m.** over *Zoom* platform. Important decisions and communications happen on these meeting, you don’t want to miss out!

OUR WEBSITE: We have had some additions to our website. It’s always a work in progress. If you click on SMLC STAFF you will find my biography (click on “meet our pastor”), as well as Johnson, our organist’s biography. There is also a link to the “multicultural Ministry” we are trying to use at SMLC. You may check it out by visiting our website. <http://stmatthewlutherancalgary.com/>

Big thank you to Warren, who always takes care of the page and the uploading of weekly bulletins and services!

LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA’S SYNODICAL CONVENTION 2022

The Twelfth Regular Convention of Lutheran Church–Canada will meet from June 10-13, 2022. It will be held at the Delta Hotels Edmonton South Conference Centre in Edmonton, Alberta.

Some important dates for congregations:

March 10, 2022 Deadline for congregations to return to the Synod office the Nomination Form for Circuit Counsellor

March 12, 2022 Deadline for congregations to return to the Synod office the Appointment Form for Pastor and Lay Delegates from the congregation.

READING: CHURCH TERMINOLOGY- What does it mean?

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FROM THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA'S WEBSITE: lutheranchurchcanada.ca

Are you new to Lutheranism? Or maybe you're looking to brush up on your church terminology? This page will walk you through some of the "Lutheran Buzzwords" you may encounter from your first steps through the door and into a typical Divine Service at your local Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) congregation. If you are coming from a different denominational background, or even if you have never stepped foot in a church before, you may find that you are already familiar with many of these terms. It is helpful to keep in mind that this glossary of church terminology approaches these words from a confessional Lutheran context. As you enter the church...you see



The Nave

This is the large area of the sanctuary where the congregation sits in pews. It is between the narthex and chancel. A **pew** is a bench used for sitting in the church. Some churches have **kneelers**: long, narrow padded bars at the base of a pew on which worshippers may kneel in comfort. We don't have those in our church building.

There's more to come in our next Agape!

DIE DEUTSCHE ECKE: AUS UNSERE WEBSEITE

Unsere Gemeinde ist seit ihrer Gründung vor fast 110 Jahren traditionell zweisprachig. Englisch und Deutsch werden immer noch jeden Sonntag im Gottesdienst verwendet.

Wir möchten Sie darüber informieren, dass wir bei St. Matthäus neben Englisch und Deutsch, Seelsorge auch in anderen Sprachen wie Portugiesisch und Spanisch anbieten können. Wenn Sie eine dieser Sprachen sprechen und Hilfe benötigen oder Gottes Wort in Ihrer Muttersprache hören möchten, lassen Sie es uns bitte wissen.

Die Sprache ist nur ein Werkzeug, um das Evangelium Jesu Christi in die Herzen zu tragen, denn „der Glaube kommt vom Hören des Wortes Gottes“. Vielleicht beten wir auch in diesen Sprachen für Sie und Ihre Familie oder bieten hingebungsvolle Ressourcen an. Manchmal ist die Muttersprache diejenige, die „zum Herzen spricht“.

Das Beste daran ist, dass unser lieber Gott jede Sprache versteht und er wünscht, die ganze Menschheit „von jeder Nation, jedem Stamm und jeder Sprache“ durch den Tod und die Auferstehung seines Sohnes Jesus Christus zu retten. Möge der Herr Sie und Ihre Familie segnen, egal welche Sprache Sie verwenden!

EIN LIED FÜR SIE.

Wenn Sie die Internet haben, koennen Sie hier unten klicken.
Ich hoffe Sie geniessen es!



Zünde an dein Feuer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31oojDe5YT0&list=RD31oojDe5YT0&start_radio=1

Thank you for taking your time to read my newsletter. May God's peace fill your days ahead, especially as we enter the Lenten season.

In His service,

Rev. Markus Zeuch

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Visit our website: www.stmatthewlutheranlucanary.com

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