

RADISSON-LANGHAM LUTHERAN PARISH

First Saskatchewan Lutheran Church
Langham, SK

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Radisson, SK

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
December 13, 2020

St. Paul, Radisson/First Saskatchewan, Langham
Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Ministers: Members of the Congregation
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Lighting of the Advent Candles:
We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ’s advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord’s coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness
Blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever.
Amen.

Let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.
Silence is kept for reflection.
Loving and forgiving God,
We confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news: by God’s endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free-free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you

be strengthened in God’s love, comforted by Christ’s peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of the Day:
Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WORD
First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Holy Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Reflection on today’s gospel:
Rev. Dr. Courtney Buggs is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Homiletics and Louisville Postdoctoral Fellow at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana. When considering today’s Gospel Readings, she writes that she was reminded of the power of testimony: “One of my earliest memories of attending church with my grandmother (affectionately known as Big Mama) is of testimony service. At Big Mama’s church there was singing and praying and preaching, and testimonies...adults and children would spontaneously stand up and witness to the goodness of God—which they called *testifyin’*. They seemed to *know* God, even as they *wanted* to *know* God more deeply.”

We hear the words “testify” and “testimony” a lot these days, particularly with reference to the court cases that seem to define the American electoral system. Rev. Dr. Buggs is, of course, referring specifically to testimony to God’s truth, and here she presents the facts of that case: “Present with God and in God from the creation and born to a girl named Mary—such is the Light of the world of whom John testifies.”

John the Baptist, then, was sent by God to testify as a witness to this miracle that is Jesus, the Word made flesh among us. John is the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and he may well have heard the testimonies of his mother

Elizabeth and Mary, the mother of Jesus, about how John leapt in Elizabeth’s womb at the voice of a pregnant Mary. And, in fact, it was God who revealed Jesus to John who, unlike the disciples, had not spent time travelling with Jesus and learning about who he was: ‘Even I didn’t recognize him,’ asserts John, ‘but the One who sent me told me how to recognize Him.’

When God speaks, that is a testimony we cannot ignore. When the Jews sent priests and Levites to grill John, asking *who are you*, John understands that they are really asking *are you the One?* Rev. Dr. Buggs clarifies what John says, declaring “that he *is not* the One—not the Messiah, not Elijah, not the Prophet. His testimony defers to the One who offers light and life: *I am not the One you seek; He is coming after me and already is among you.* John further distinguishes himself from Jesus as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, echoing the prophet Isaiah: God is the One who provides the way to salvation.”

The testimonies we hear and read in the news reports these days seem determined to remind us that truth in testimony is not necessarily truth in reality. But the testimonies that come from God through the reading of His Word are very real. The Rev. Dr. Buggs’ closing words are especially poignant in this month of December, 2020:

“John’s testimony of Jesus reverberates across time as we look forward in this Advent season. We are reminded to thoughtfully consider our testimonies of word and deed—do our lives witness to the light of God within? In the midst of darkness, disappointments, and dreary outlooks, God sent Light into the world. Trying times have the possibility to yield tremendous testimonies. May God’s people ever bear witness that the Light is come and is now here. Thanks be to God.” PGK

Prayers of Intercession:

God of power and might, shine your radiance and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A Brief Silence
God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and

talents to public worship. Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. We remember (*especially...*). Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love. Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Blessing: The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Saviour fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, now and forever. Amen.

Dismissal: Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Let us remember in our prayers: Andrew Nosterud, Harry Meister, Edwin Loessin, Lisa Hamp, Sonia Zacharias, Darren Wilkie, Carla Wilkie, Susan Wonko, Heather Penno, Inga Abrahamson, Genie Thompson, Linda Hartshorn, Logan Kane, Alma Krueger, Anthony Flath, Elsie Flath, Conrad Olson, Ethel Kuny, Mark Anderson, Roger Wilkie, also everyone affected by Covid 19, especially the Regional Psyc Centre and the Luther Special Care Home.

This has been a week of hope for our community - in fact for the whole world - with the news that Covid-defeating vaccines are being rolled out. Protection throughout our communities and our church is still a long way off, however, and we urge everyone to avoid gathering in groups larger than your household "bubble" over the Christmas season. Covid has found its way, and is circulating, in our area; please be careful!

For at-home worship services/devotions you could check out the following:

- Seven Lutheran churches in Saskatoon have set up a website where you can easily view live-streamed or taped services each week: <https://saskatoonelcic.com/>. A full list of churches with streamed services across Canada can be found here: <https://elcic.ca/publichealth/livestreaming.cfm>
- You can catch Rev. Rick Chappell on YouTube at Trinity Lutheran Church, Westlock, AB where he has been serving there for the past 10 years
- Pastor Randy Fiege is live on Facebook, Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

Lutherans Connect is doing an Advent blog again this year at <https://lclongingforrenewal.blogspot.com/2020/11/>

You can find advent devotions from "On Eagle's Wings", an ecumenical missionary outreach to Canada's north, at this link: <https://www.oneeagleswingsnorth.com>

If you'd like to get a prayer by email each day during Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas, contact Pastor Bruce Ehlert at: pbprayer@telus.net

Notes from First Sask Council:

- The next Radisson Langham Parish meeting will be held virtually on January 20th at 7:00 pm.
- The next FSLC Council meeting will be held virtually on January 27th at 7:00 pm.
- The FSLC AGM will be held virtually on Sunday, February 7th at 10:00 am.
- Due to COVID-19 and the ongoing uncertainties, as well as the inabilities for us to meet as a congregation, both the Parish and FSLC Council basically plan to use the same budget in 2021 as was approved in 2020 (with a few minor tweaks). This will be discussed at the January meetings. Similarly, we also plan to keep FSLC Council positions in 2021 very similar to 2020.
- FSLC envelope giving is down a bit this year and December is usually a big month for the church - obviously that will not be happening this year. So, please, if you can, make a catch-up offering this month or an additional offering.
- Envelopes can be mailed to: Roxanne Elke, P.O. Box 272, Grandora, Sask. S0K 1V0
- We also now take eTransfers; just make sure you put your envelope number in the message portion as well as your intended disbursement of the funds. Send your eTransfers to: firstsasklutheranchurch@gmail.com

Christmas Goodwill at Radisson and area: Due to Covid 19, there will not be Christmas hampers delivered; instead there will be gift cards for food. If you wish to make a financial donation, you can leave it at Wenner Foods or at the Radisson Town Office if you wish an Income Tax receipt for any donation over \$20.00. If you have any questions or have someone whom you know may benefit, please contact Gertrude at 306-827-7408 or Leona at 1-306-202-6844.

First Sask - your quarterly statements are in your church mailbox.

Annual report time is quickly approaching. Please have your written reports to Doris by January 3. Financial reports should be in asap after having them reviewed.

An update on Sharon Kane (Schreiner): Sharon wrote: I have a new email address. It is schreiner0516@gmail.com. I am doing my internship in Estevan for 17 months. My supervisor is Pastor Lori James. Pastor Lori is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Estevan and Faith Lutheran Church in Lampman. I started here on November 2. Bill is here with me. We are living in a condo which has all amenities within walking distance. Our address is 303 - 306 Petterson Dr., Estevan, SK S4A 2A8. I am shadowing Pastor Lori for the duration of my internship. I also am taking 9 classes through the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon on my internship. The goal is that I will be knowledgeable in all pastoral areas by the end of my internship. Bill and I are doing well. Stay safe. Merry Christmas! Feel free to check in anytime. Peace and Blessings to all. Intern Pastor Sharon Kane.
- You can check out Trinity Lutheran Church Estevan FaceBook to hear Sharon's sermon last week.

First Sask & St. Paul - anyone wishing a donation receipt for 2020 income tax purposes, please have your contribution in by December 27. Receipts will be issued for \$20.00 and over.

St. Paul - your 2021 box of offering envelopes is in your church mailbox.

Donations to your church can still be given:
First Sask - You can mail your cheque to Roxanne Elke, P.O. Box 272, Grandora, SK S0K 1V0
St. Paul - You could send your cheque to Darlene Kindt, Box 97, Radisson or drop it off at the church.

Appeal for your Old DVDs/VIDEO CASSETTES:
NUTFLAKES is coming soon to Christ Church in Saskatoon, the first video movie rental store in Saskatoon in many years. Operated as a cooperative, the store will open to one customer a day to mitigate Covid risks; while rentals are 'free', customers are invited to make a donation to CHEP Saskatoon to fight hunger in Saskatoon. Right now they are building inventory and asking for donations of any DVDs, VHS &/or Beta tapes

you can share. For more info contact them at nutflakesyxe@gmail.com, or call 306-222-3844.
CHEP Good Food Inc.: <https://www.chep.org/about/>

Happy Birthday this week: Carson White, Beverly Desmarais, Susan Wonko, Claudia Zacharais, Jessica Carroll, Cory Brown

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-11

- 61 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
8 For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
9 Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,

and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

- 11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

SECOND READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise the words of prophets, 21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.

23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

GOSPEL: JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

23 He said,
"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, 27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." 28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.