

The Messenger

December 2020



**The Newsletter of Christ Lutheran Church
Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey
An ELCA Congregation**

**The Church
Proudly Proclaiming Christ since A.D. 33**



*Pastor's
Christmas
Message*

This edition of the *Messenger* is a bit different compared to the one you received last year. With the ongoing pandemic, we're now publishing these printed newsletters in the middle of the month. This creates an interesting dynamic where the information within the *Messenger* crosses the border from one month and into the next. But since this is the last *Messenger* of 2020, this edition will bring us into a brand new year. 2020 is a year unlike any other in living memory. We've all learned what it's like to

live through a pandemic—and how to mourn those who didn't. We're pros at using online tools like Zoom and now coordinate our facemasks with the rest of our outfit. I know that you are continuing God's call to love your neighbors by following the proper protocols to keep them safe. None of this has been easy—but I am hopeful that 2021 will be a different kind of year for us all.

As I look forward to Christmas and New Year's Day, I'm mindful of what has helped me find moments of peace during a time filled with uncertainty. I can't tell you how many times I've found myself troubleshooting one of my child's google meetings while helping the other listen to their teacher on Zoom as I also juggle my own online meeting and have a pastoral care concern coming through on my phone. It's then when, somehow, the Spirit often breaks through to me with a prayer to offer me peace. And so, in the spirit of spreading that kind of peace, I want to share a few prayers with you as we end this Advent season and move into Christmas, Epiphany and beyond.

From Brother David Steindl-Rast

May you grow still enough to hear the small noises earth makes in preparing for the long sleep of winter, so that you yourself may grow calm and grounded deep within.

May you grow still enough to hear the trickling of water seeping into the ground, so that your soul may be softened and healed, and guided in its flow.

May you grow still enough to hear the splintering of starlight in the winter sky and the roar at earth's fiery core.

May you grow still enough to hear the stir of a single snowflake in the air, so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.

From Traci Smith's *Faithful Families for Advent & Christmas*

A Prayer for Carrying Christmas with Us

The message of Christmas is for every day.

The message of Christmas is for every person.

God loves every person, every day.

This is the good news to remember, always.

A Prayer for New Year's Day

The year changes, but God's love stays the same.

We wonder what might happen this year.

No matter what this new year brings, one thing will be true.

God will be with us each and every day.

We start the new year with joy and hope.

And finally, after a year spending much of our time at home—or by doing a lot of hard, dangerous, and essential work for others to stay at home—consider blessing your home on Epiphany (January 6). Get some chalk, head to your front door, and offer this short blessing:



May peace be to this house and all who enter here. By wisdom a house is built and through understanding it is established through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures. (*Proverbs 24:3-4*)

Read John 1:1-4, 14,16:

With chalk, make this inscription above the door: 20+CMB+21 while speaking, **The magi of old, known as C Caspar, M Melchior, and B Balthasar followed the star of God's Son who came to dwell among us two thousand (20) and twenty one (21) years ago.**

Make the sign of the cross on the door and say: **✠ Christ bless this house, ✠ and remain with us throughout the year.**

Then say: **O God, you revealed your Son to all people by the shining of a star. We pray that you bless this home and all who live here with your gracious presence. May your love be our inspiration, your wisdom our guide, your truth our light, and your peace our benediction; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**



May you experience Christ's peace this Christmas. Stay safe and I'll see you online!
Pastor Marc



Kids and Adults: Education and More!

Sunday School

How do you make Sunday School fun during a pandemic? By partnering with Camp Cross Roads in New Jersey! Every two weeks, we meet for a 30-35 minute session with fun videos, a Bible story, and other activities. So far, we've spent time sharing how to care for other people even when it's hard, how to be patient when things feel uncertain, and how prayer is a conversation we have with God. We'll meet again on January 3rd at 9:00 am! Contact Pastor Marc if you have any questions.

Confirmation

Our partnership with Prince of Peace Lutheran Church continues! This year we're digging deeper into the *Small Catechism*. Luther wrote the *Small Catechism* as a tool to help parents sow seeds of faith in their children. We're covering the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, daily prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and more. Our next class will meet online on January 10th.

Are Lutherans Christians? Exploring "Luthera" as an Adjective

Starting in the New Year, Pastor Marc will be creating videos and opportunities for conversation centered around being Lutheran. This comes out of a conversation he recently had with his kids who were curious about how being Lutheran fits in the wider Christian conversation. This will exist in a Q&A style format. If you have a question about Jesus, faith, and being Lutheran - send it to Pastor Marc at pastormarc@clc4u.com. More details about these conversations will be shared in the New Year.





Let's Safely Celebrate Christmas Together!

Christmas Eve in 2020 will be unlike any other. During a season of transition and complete interruption, we're reminded Jesus came into the world in spite of everything that was going on. The gift of Christmas is that it comes even when we're not ready for it. This year, there are 3 ways you can celebrate with your CLC faith community.

A Family Christmas at 3 pm – on Zoom!

This 30-35 minute gathering will involve the singing of carols, the reading of a Christmas story, and more. All families with kids Sunday School aged or younger are invited to attend. You'll need to register ahead of time and can do so by visiting www.clc4u.com/familychristmas or by calling the church office.

Christmas Eve Worship – Outdoors at 4 pm

Let's gather together before sunset to announce Jesus' coming birth! We'll meet in our main parking lot for a 30-35 minute session of socially distant singing and communion. We're also exploring a drive-in option so that you can sit in your car during worship. Attendance will be limited. Please register in advance at www.clc4u.com/outdoorchristmas or by calling the church office, (201) 391-4224.

Worship From Home at 7 pm

Our annual celebration will premiere on Facebook, www.facebook.com/clc4u at 7 pm. This will provide an opportunity for people to "call-in" and listen via conference call as well (dial 646-558-8656, meeting id: 840 0856 5086, # to skip participant id, passcode 195901). The service will also be available on YouTube (click here to head to YouTube) which allows you to watch whenever you want that evening (maybe at our traditional 5 pm time slot or 11 pm). Worship will consist of music, carols, and more.

The Love Tree 2.0



One of our amazing traditions sponsored by the Care Committee is the sharing of Christmas blessings to everyone in the congregation. During this time of the pandemic, we won't be able to hang heart shaped messages on a Christmas tree but we can still wish each other a Merry Christmas. If you would like to compose a short (15-30 second) video to be shared at our online Christmas Eve worship, please contact Pastor Marc at pastormarc@clc4u.com.

Stewardship Update

There's still time for you to get your pledge in to the church office. You can mail your commitments to the church, bring to outdoor Christmas Eve worship, or email to our stewardship coordinators.

Learn more at www.clc4u.com/stewardship.



Financial Pledges as of December 13

<u>Financial Pledge Amount</u>	<u>Number of Pledge</u>	<u>Total</u>
\$1-500	5	\$1,070
\$501-1000	1	\$600
\$1001-2000	12	\$16,092
\$2001-3000	7	\$17,580
\$3001-4000	3	\$10,620
\$4001-5000	2	\$8,960
\$5000+	10	\$103,600

News from the Finance Committee



At the end of November 2020, total expenses (\$18,834) outpaced - by a tiny bit - total income (\$18,738) resulting in a loss of \$96. Year to date, our loss is \$23,254 which is actually less than planned. Below is an updated chart of income and expenses through the year. December is typically our biggest fundraising month as we celebrate Christmas and prepare for the end of the calendar year. If you typically make an end-of-the-year gift, we encourage you to do so this year by either dropping it off during our outdoor Christmas Eve worship, mailing a check, or giving electronically. Over 96% of the budgeted receipts for CLC come from your financial gifts. You continue to be faithful to the spreading of the gospel through acts of generosity. Thank you for your commitment to Christ and His church!

Financial Income/Expenses Summary – As of November 30, 2020

<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Difference</u>
January	\$18,084	\$24,567	(\$6,483)
February	\$17,663	\$23,722	(\$6,059)
March	\$17,129	\$20,750	(\$3,621)
April	\$24,279	\$21,636	\$2,643
May	\$21,279	\$18,848	\$2,430
June	\$19,654	\$18,605	\$1,049
July	\$16,839	\$21,967	(\$5,128)
August	\$15,837	\$18,132	(\$2,295)
September	\$18,028	\$18,467	(\$440)
October	\$17,920	\$23,175	(\$5,254)
November	\$18,738	\$18,834	(\$96)
Year to Date:	\$205,450	\$228,703	(\$23,253)

Raise the Roof Update

In 2017, we made the commitment to repair and replace the roofs over our Sunday school classrooms, library, choir practice spaces, and fellowship hall. We did this by taking a loan from our financial investments and making a plan to repay ourselves. With your gifts and support from the Ricci Fund, we're very close to paying off our self-loan! We expect to make the final payment from our Special Gifts request if approved at our annual congregational meeting. Thank you for fulfilling your commitment to your faith community.

Restricted Funds Update

We regularly send updates about how much of our current 'restricted funds' are being used. This is in accordance with the congregational-approved motion on June 3, 2018. The change in available funds is related to our monthly spending (by taking income minus our expenses) and the market value of our investments at the end of each month.

Approved amount:	\$50,000.00
Previous Amount of Total Funds Used:	\$12,064.00
<u>Amount accessed from approved funds:</u>	
Amount given back in November 2020:	\$10,531.00
due to an increase in our investments	
Total amount of remaining available funds:	\$48,467.00

Stay Up-to-date with CLC Online!

Make sure you are up-to-date on the most recent information by following us on Instagram (www.instagram.com/clc4u), Facebook (www.facebook.com/clc4u), and sign-up for our weekly email newsletter at <http://eepurl.com/bFWdgb>.

Interested in Joining CLC as a Voting Member?

Interested in joining CLC as a voting member? We're a blessed community of faith filled with amazing people. We could not be who God wants us to be without you being a part of it. As a federal non-profit, our decision-making process is governed by people who decide to be "voting members" of this congregation. As we look towards 2021, make your voice known by becoming a voting member. Speak to Pastor Marc (pastormarc@clc4u.com) if you're interested in becoming a voting member.



News from our Partners in Ministry

Summer Employment Opportunities at Camp Cross Roads

Camp CrossRoads, an outdoor ministry camp run by the NJ Synod and the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, are making plans for the future. No matter what exactly next summer will look like, they will need trustworthy and creative young adults to help serve our Cross Roads community. Applications to work on Summer Staff 2021 are now OPEN! Learn more and apply on the Cross Roads website at <https://www.crossroadsretreat.com/>.

News from the NJ Synod

Bishop Rev. Tracie Bartholomew recently shared an Advent letter. We're reprinting some of the news she shared. You can read the entire letter by visiting <https://www.njsynod.org/officeofthebishop>.

Prayers for Those Affected with COVID19

We have several rostered ministers who have tested positive for COVID19. Some of them want to be identified in the weekly prayer list in Jersey Jottings. Others do not want their situation public. In addition to these deacons and pastors, we know there are many in our congregations who are sick, recovering, or have died from this virus. While our policy is to list rostered ministers and synod leaders in the public prayer listing, we do pray for all who find themselves in need of healing.

COVID19 Loans to Congregations

To date, we have approved loans for 17 congregations totaling more than \$100,000. This is but a fraction of the funds designated by synod council for this purpose. Because the pandemic has lasted longer than we first imagined, the deadline to receive applications has been extended through April 2021. The reports we received on how these funds have been used tell a story of creativity and mission outreach that is laudable.

Ministry Partners

We continue to support our ministry partners, including Cross Roads Camp and Seafarers and International House (SIH). We have sent additional funds to both of these partners as they face drastic decreases to their revenue streams. Cross Roads has continued to provide programming online including women's retreats, youth retreats, and weekly Sunday school for congregations across the synod, and SIH port chaplains are still making visits and serving seafarers.

Anti-racism Work

We continue to place an emphasis on eradicating racism in all its forms and living into our core values of diversity and respect. As part of that work, the synod council has authorized a bishop's challenge to begin at our May 2021 online synod assembly. The challenge will be two-pronged: proactive education on reparations and systemic injustice and fundraising for the next generation of leaders of color. Be prepared to join this effort when it is launched at our assembly.

ELCA Partnership

Since March, we have received several grants totaling \$50,000 from the ELCA COVID19 Relief Fund and Lutheran Disaster Response for strengthening ministry in congregations working in vulnerable communities. These grants have helped with feeding ministries, outreach programs, and evangelism efforts across our synod. *[Note: CLC received one of these grants to support the Tri-Boro Food Pantry!]* Our interdependence allows us to be church together for the sake of the world, and we are grateful.

2021 Synod Assembly

Our assembly is scheduled for May 7-8, 2021 and will be held online. Dan Egan, who has been producing our assembly for years, is already onboard and working with the staff to prepare for a meaningful assembly. Gathering under the theme "Springing Forth", we will celebrate the ministries of our synod while tending to the business before us.

Synod Office Re-opening

We have made the decision to keep the synod office closed through at least April 2021. Staff will continue to work primarily from home, though individuals may come into the office to work occasionally.

Please know how grateful I am to you and your leaders for faithful ministry. You are in my prayers, and I ask that you include me and your synod staff in yours. May God richly bless you in these remaining days of Advent,
Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew.



Camp Koinonia Update

We're sharing some news from Camp Koinonia based in Highland Lake, New York. CLC is a member of the corporation that owns/runs the camp, and several of our members are working hard to help the camp reopen.



The Transition Board (put in place at the last meeting of the corporation) hired Dr. Kathleen K. Ruen to work part time as the Interim Executive Director. The interim status is meant to continue no longer than June 30, 2021. Kathleen began December 1st.



Painting of the Conference Center is nearly complete. Painting the interior of the Caritas House is next. We have contracted with a local professional painter to do all of this work for \$20,000.



Kathleen and Bob Bliefernich did a "walk through" of the buildings on Thursday, December 10, with a local building inspector and phone company. Unless there are major issues, this will be the final step toward opening.



The local Fire Chief has said he does not need to do a walk through, since he knows the property and everything is fine. He has offered to do fire drill training when we are ready.



The Asdahl House is ready for occupancy. Two Family and Lakeside are ready. The quarters for staff housing are ready.



Opening Status: We are ready to take reservations on a limited basis, meaning, as Covid guidelines permit. Small (less than 10) family groups will be the norm.



The ANNUAL MEETING of the Martin Lutheran Camp Corporation, aka Koinonia, is scheduled for February 28, 2021 at 3:00 PM and will be virtual.

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32 Pascack Road
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Who Knit or Crochet***

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helping share warmth
by making scarves and/or hats!



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