



The Parish Visitor & 2020 Annual Report

A Publication of Bethlehem Lutheran Church • Askov, Minnesota

February 2021						
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Hello, Church!

It has been a wild few months, hasn't it? By God's grace we have survived the mayhem. As I watched the inauguration of our 46th President, Joe Biden, and Vice-President, Kamala Harris, I was impressed by a number of things. First and foremost, I was proud to call myself a citizen of a country that could survive an armed revolt just two weeks prior to what turned out to be a peaceful transfer of power. The most dramatic moment for me may have been listening to a brilliant young poet.

The election and transition of power in Washington, DC was not the only "attention grabber," however. We have watched another surge in COVID-19 infections, virus mutations, hospitalizations, and deaths. It is distressing to think that in one year this country has lost over 400,000 lives. Many of us have had family members and friends who have caught and been sickened by the virus. Members of my own family have been infected, some hospitalized. I pray daily for the vaccines to make their way into arms and prove to be effective for the long term. I pray daily for God's help in ending the horror of this deadly disease.

We have also been reminded in recent months that we have a ton of work yet to be done to bring justice, equity, and freedom to everyone in this country and in the world. Racial and economic disparities have continued to exist for the entire history of this great nation. We, as God's people, must wade into that muck and begin to change a deep-seated culture.

The prophet Micah asks, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6: 6-7, NRSV). God's reply? "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (vs. 8)

Today, I dare to ask what this country, what this world would look like if we could only honor those words. What would it look like if we all "did justice," "loved kindness," and then walked "humbly" with God? To be sure, that is a tall order. You and I will not solve the problems alone. However, that cannot deter us from working toward solutions and doing all that we are able to do to help the cause.

How do we start? I believe the best, in fact the only, answer is to look to, focus on, and reflect the work of the Word made flesh, the Word who chooses to live (dwell) with us even in our messes. Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent are coming soon (it feels like we just celebrated Christmas). This year we will journey together and learn together as we explore the "Seven Wonders of the Word." Each Wednesday from Ash Wednesday to and including Maundy Thursday we will examine the wonders of the Word who came to be with us. You won't want to miss a single week.

You might also want to expand your journey with a forty day journey with the Word. Look elsewhere in this newsletter for information about how you can get a copy of the book.

As we approach the season of Lent, may we all use the time for personal reflection, for real repentance, for prayer, and for learning that may lead to action. God bless us on our journey.

-Larry



In person worship services remain suspended until further notice.

Please check the website for information and updates:

www.blcaskov.com

Click or use the text below to watch our Sunday Worship Services on the BLC YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgmj02O9aqXlcchWMLaCRqg>

IN OUR
Thoughts and Prayers

Please include the following people in your daily prayers:

Millie Sorensen, Leroy Larsen, Jan Ecklund, Lois Sahlen, Ann Olson, Jo Jessen, Tony Ecklund, Shirley Lund, Joyce Schaumburg, Chase & Elizabeth Moon (*in the Philippines*) and their families.

If you would like to add someone to this weekly list, please email the church office at blcaskov@gmail.com

2021 Church Council Members



Marilyn Krogh
President



Chuck Moon
Vice Pres.



Cheryl Kohner
Secretary



Bill Jansen
Deacon



Andy May
Deacon



Heidi Moon
Deaconess



Position
Vacant



**January 13, 2021
Unapproved Minutes**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Jansen, Larry Anderson, Jo Foss, Chuck Moon, Heidi Moon, and Cheryl Kohner. Absent: Andy May.

CHECK-INS, DEVOTION AND OPENING PRAYER: Larry.

APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS TO FILL VACANCIES: Marilyn Krogh and Jo Foss have stated they were willing to continue on the council for another term (3 years). Motion by Cheryl to appoint Marilyn and Jo to another term on council, 2nd by Bill, carried.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Chuck nominated Marilyn for President, 2nd by Heidi, carried. Jo nominated Bill for President, 2nd by Cheryl, Bill declined the nomination. Jo then verbally resigned from council. Bill nominated Chuck for Vice President, 2nd by Heidi, carried. Chuck nominated Cheryl for Secretary, 2nd by Heidi, carried.

ACCEPT THE DECEMBER COUNCIL MINUTES: Motion by Bill to approve the minutes, 2nd by Heidi, carried.

TREASURERS REPORT: Not available yet due to year end.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Reviewed.

MINISTRY TEAMS:

- Property—Chuck reported the air exchanger has been installed in the basement.
- Family Ministry—Bill reported that Shawn had put together the Christmas program that was on BLC's YouTube channel. Bible study is still ongoing online.
- Music and Worship—Bill

reported the SMART Team is still meeting and updated the BLC Covid-19 protocols.

- Circle of Faith—Bill reported that COF will be taking down the Christmas tree in the fellowship area. He also stated the community meal for this month will be from 4:30—6:30 pm. It is take-out only.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Parsonage sale—Ongoing; the closing date is set for January 28th, 2021. Discussion on assigning someone as Power of Attorney for the closing. Bill made a motion to give Chuck and Denny the option to consult an attorney to review the title paperwork in order to assign a Power of Attorney for closing, 2nd by Heidi, carried. Cheryl was asked to email the minutes from the Congregational meeting from September 2020 to check if the congregation gave Denny Birkholm authority to act as POA for the sale of the parsonage.
- 2019 Audit—Bill asked that Heidi circulate the report around to all council members.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Constitution—Heidi made a motion to adopt a continuing resolution to allow remote electronic meetings of the congregation as permitted by Minnesota State Statutes, 2nd by Bill, carried.
- 2020 Annual Reports—Heidi reported they will be going out to the congregation in the February newsletter.
- Annual Congregational Meeting—Bill made a motion to have our Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 28th, 2021 after services, in the church basement if possible (or virtually if not possible in person), 2nd by Heidi, carried.

- Call Process/Next steps—Bill stated he sent an email to both Grace and Emmanuel churches regarding becoming a 3 point parish. Emmanuel stated they would like to meet to discuss this. Grace was not ready to do anything at this time. Bill has also spoken with Brenda Tibbetts. Discussion is ongoing.
- Revising the Constitution—Larry discussed that we need to do a two-part process with the congregation in recommending changes to the Constitution. Changes need to be voted on by the congregation. If we put Bylaws in place, they need to be approved by the congregation. (Larry had met with Jo and Ron on Tuesday to go through the constitution and update it before it goes to the congregation at the annual meeting to be approved).
- New Council member—Chuck brought up that we need to look for a new council member to fill the vacant seat.
- New members—Larry brought up that we need to meet with those who wish to become members ASAP. We have two people that he will set up a meeting with about membership.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Cheryl will email the minutes from the September 2020 Congregational meeting to Chuck.
- Heidi will send out a letter to update the congregation on the sale of the parsonage.
- All council members to look for new council member candidates.
- All council members are to read over the changes to the constitution before we meet again.

Motion to adjourn by Bill, 2nd by Cheryl, carried. Adjourned with The Lord's Prayer. Next meeting will be Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 6:00 pm (in the church basement).

*Respectfully submitted,
-Cheryl Kohner*



DECEMBER 2020 APPROVED MINUTES

Circle of Faith met December 19, 2020 at 10:00 am via Zoom. The members in attendance were: Shawn Jansen, Tracy Zinter, Carolyn Steele, Elaine Smith, Jo Foss, Cookie Nielsen-Velsvaag, Cheryl Kohner, Marilyn Krogh and Mary Johnson.

Tracy called the meeting to order.

Secretary minutes from the November's meeting were read

JANUARY 2021 UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Circle of Faith met January 16, 2021 at 10:00 am via Zoom. The members in attendance were: Shawn Jansen, Tracy Zinter, Carolyn Steele, Elaine Smith, Jo Foss, Marilyn Krogh, Bev Oderkirk and Mary Johnson.

Tracy called the meeting to order.

Devotions: The Devotional program, presented by Jo, was a lesson which was the final installment on a yearlong cumulative self-exploration series. Members have gone on a journey of self-discovery to understand their own individual gifts, talents and the roles that God created in us and that were present on the day of our birth. We explored Nature vs. Nurture, have had exploration exercises and discussion sessions to raise awareness and understanding of our own Souls as GOD created them, contemplated the role of what we think of ourselves (our own assump-

by Mary. Motion by Marilyn, 2nd by Jo, approved. Treasurer's report read by Mary, \$128.25 in checking and \$786.08 in savings.

Old business: Luminary candle lights will be put out Christmas Eve. On Wednesday December 23rd Carolyn, Jo and Cookie will meet at church at 1:00 pm to assemble the bags and candles. On Christmas Eve volunteers will meet after the Christmas Eve service to put out the luminaries. There will also be Christmas Caroling arranged by Bill Jansen. Mary volunteered that she and Bob would pick up the luminaries later that evening.

New business: Jo will update the card mailing list in January. Families in need were discussed. Tracy will pick up hams from Chris's for the food bags that will be delivered. It was determined that 5 families will receive food. She will also check on banners.

tions, experiences and thought process), and created awareness of the information we have incorporated into the understanding of ourselves that have actually come from those outside ourselves as well as our individual interpretation of our life events that we have then incorporated into our assumption about ourselves. Prayer and self-evaluation suggestions were assigned for later individual contemplation and prayer. A graduation ceremony was held.

Secretary minutes from the December's meeting were read by Mary. Motion was made to approve by Carolyn, 2nd by Shawn, approved. Treasurer's report read by Mary, \$128.25 in checking and \$636.08 in savings.

Old business: Corrections to December 2020 meeting: it was reported that Tracy would check on flyers, it should have read Tracy will check on banners. Carolyn and Mary will meet at 1:00 today to take down the Christmas tree. Community meals this month

Thank you: Cookie and Tracy for delivering bags of food on Monday, Cookie for all the food delivering she does. Thank you to Marilyn for the cookies she made for the December distribution, and Shawn and Bill for the great work they are doing keeping the online services going.

Mary shared a Christmas card Circle of Faith received from Beth. Cookie read a thank you letter from a recipient family, for the meals and gift card. Election of officers will be in January.

Motion to adjourn was made by Jo, 2nd by Mary, carried. The meeting adjourned with The Lord's Prayer.

Our next meeting is Saturday, January 16, 2021, location to be determined.

*Respectfully submitted,
-Mary Johnson,
Secretary*

will be a takeout ham dinner, with squash. Marilyn will make the desserts.

New business: Circle of Faith 2020 Annual report was read by Mary. Motion made to approve was made by Carolyn 2nd by Jo, approved. Motion was made by Jo, 2nd by Marilyn to reimburse Mary for the purchase of the flowers sent to Carole Maloney.

Election of officers for 2021: Motion was made by Elaine, 2nd by Carolyn to keep the officers from 2020, motion passed. President, Tracy Zinter; Vice President, Jo Foss; Secretary/treasurer, Mary Johnson.

Motion to adjourn was made by Carolyn, 2nd by Shawn, carried. The meeting adjourned with a prayer by Jo, followed with The Lord's Prayer.

Our next meeting is Saturday, February 20, 2021 at 10:00 am at church.

*Respectfully submitted,
-Mary Johnson,
Secretary*

The BLC Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 28, 2021 in the church basement (or virtually, depending on the COVID-19 status) Check the church website for details: www.blcaskov.com



Mary Johnson & Brooke Qvam—3rd

Dave Rote & John Thinesen—5th

Ann Rote—10th

Arla Budd—12th

Jo Jessen—16th

Sandy Gutknecht—19th

Gerry Klocke—19th

Chuck Moon—21st

Jacob Jensen—25th

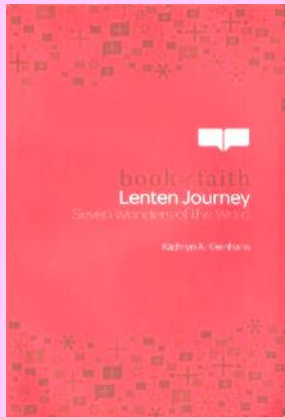
Joyce Tabor—26th



Gerry & Mona Knapp—February 23rd

During this time of COVID-19, we still need your help to make certain we continue to fulfill our mission and meet our budgetary needs!

Thank you for your continued support!



A LENTEN JOURNEY

The season of Lent is soon upon us! This year during our mid-week worship services from Ash Wednesday, February 17, through Maundy Thursday, April 1, we will focus on “The Seven Wonders of the Word.” We will examine how Jesus, the Word, creates, calls, commands, saves, sustains, shapes and sends us. We will share our Lenten journey with Hope Lutheran Church, Toivola, rotating between locations. As of now, the services will be online, but if conditions improve, that may change. Stay tuned for updates.

To help us in this journey, we have a wonderful resource available with daily devotions for the forty days of lent. Bethlehem is ordering copies of the book and they will be available to purchase for \$9.00 ea. Please watch the website and Facebook pages for further instructions on how to get your copy.

BLC Church Council - Annual Report for 2020

Council began meeting in January with the appointment of 2 new members to fill open seats: Heidi Moon and Bill Jansen. Officers for this year were Bill Jansen, President; Marilyn Krogh, Vice President; and Cheryl Kohner, Secretary.

The Covid pandemic and subsequent public safety restrictions brought about much change: we moved from regular meetings to socially distanced meetings to virtual meetings. Sadly, this also meant the cancellation of many worship services, the Labor Day Dinner (which had exceeded a 6-decade run!), and the Fall Congregational meeting.

Still there were a number of accomplishments this past year:

- Somehow, through the grace of God (and the blessing of Bishop Aitken) we were able to sign a contract with Larry Anderson in September to act as our minister, giving us solid leadership and buying time for the Call process to be further developed;
- The SMART team put together a safety plan, reviewed, and updated it several times in response to ever changing risk levels;
- The congregation voted to put the parsonage up for sale (which looks likely to be completed in January 2021); and,
- CARES Act grants supported both the basement air-exchange project and the continuation of the monthly community meals.

Thank you to all the Council members this year for your diligence and faithfulness.

-Bill Jansen 2020 Council President

The BLC Annual Congregational Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 28, 2021 at 11:30 am in the church basement—*masks are required to attend* (or virtually, depending on the COVID-19 status) Check the church website for details: www.blcaskov.com

Family Ministry Team Annual Report

Family ministry activities in 2020 included Faith Alive on Sunday mornings before worship from January through mid March. Faith Alive included lessons for young and old alike. When Covid struck we canceled in person Faith Alive and provided some at home lessons. Our confirmation students participated with our neighbors at Grace and Emmanuel in Sandstone in person and virtual through May. Throughout 2020, our children created, drew and colored pictures that were made into cards to accompany our community meals.

This summer in lieu of Vacation Bible School, wanting to be Covid cautious, the family ministry team organized a couple of outdoor events. We had an outdoor yard game night held at Village Park in Askov. Water and snacks were provided, the weather cooperated, and the competition was friendly. We also organized a bike ride on the Munger Trail. We began our ride at the Willow River City Park, biked to Memorial Park in Moose Lake where we enjoyed a picnic lunch and lastly enjoyed dessert at the Dairy Queen before riding back to Willow River.

This fall Faith Alive created some home Bible Study kits that were delivered to families. Bible study lessons are being shared out and completed in homes. Zoom bible study sessions are being held twice a month on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 pm for those that choose to participate virtually.

On Reformation Sunday, in October, Simon Ecklund, Lacy and Levi Jorgensen were confirmed. Thank you to Pastor Larry for officiating the service.

In December, a virtual Christmas program aired on the BLC's YouTube channel. A huge thanks to all the readers, musicians, the people who shared how their "Faith Formations" began, and the technicians who put it together.

Thank you to all who support and participate in the activities that are organized by our ministry team.

Respectfully,

The Ministry Team, Shawn Jansen, Missy Ecklund, and JoEllyn Foss

**Community Meal Year 2 Report
September 2019-December 2020**

Balance 1/1/2020	\$1,103.67	Meals Served
In-Kind Food/Supply Donations		Meatloaf
Maple Run Orchard		Fish
Kettle River Pizza		Hotdish
Chris' Food Center		Lenten soup dinner
Main Street Grocery		Ham or Turkey Sandwiches
Individual donors		Ham or Turkey Subs
Fundraisers		Chicken Salad
Chris' Food Stand	\$937.40	Italian Pasta Salad
Monetary Donations		Pulled Pork Sandwich
American Legion	\$1,500.00	Chicken Ranch Wrap
Partridge Township	\$199.00	Shepherd's Pie & Butternut
City of Askov	\$3,297.15	Squash Soup
Northern Pine Riders	\$1,500.00	
Individual donors	\$1,000.00	
Diners	\$229.00	
BLC Budget	\$600.00	
Subtotal	\$8,325.15	
Total income	\$10,366.22	We served:
Food expenses		1,000+ meals
Meals	\$1,350.55	100+ households
Groceries (Aug-Oct)	\$3,364.66	300 bags of groceries
Other expenses		200 \$20-gift certificates
Supplies	\$894.85	
Gift Certificates (Nov-Dec)	\$4,000.00	
Total expenses	\$9,610.06	

We had 33 volunteers helping in 2020, plus Kettle River Pizza staff who bagged pretzels and chips, and Askov Fire & Rescue helped distribute meals in October.

Because of the pandemic:

- We did not serve indoor meals beyond February.
- No meal was served in March.
- From April through October meals were served via takeout and delivery.
- Instead of meals, we distributed gift certificates in November and December for the safety of our volunteers as virus cases surged in our area.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE JOINED US!

BLC Worship and Music Report for 2020

Your Worship and Music Committee, Arla Budd, Linda Jensen, Ron Foss, and Bill Jansen continued to meet throughout this past year. We started the year selecting hymns and lining up pulpit supply. We are thankful for the pastors and lay leaders that filled our pulpit: Richard Martens, Rachel Wickstrom, Cindy Gray, Clara Edin, Ron Becklund, Mark Osthus, and finally Larry Anderson.

As we entered the Covid safety restrictions in the Spring we were pleased that Cindy Gray agreed to write a weekly devotion, which for many weeks sustained us while Sunday worship was not possible.

The committee's role changed and intensified as we began to realize that the pandemic would keep us from returning to a "normal" worship schedule for much longer than initially anticipated. Our efforts shifted to planning for outdoor and online services. With some guidance from Kim and Eric Sturtz (GEL Sandstone) who had already begun doing online services, we posted our first online service via the BLC Youtube channel in June. With much assistance from Larry Anderson (did you know that we used his personal sound system for the outdoor services) we were able to alternate outdoor and online services through the Fall.

With the (SAM) contract and appointment by Bishop Aitken in September we welcomed Larry Anderson's leadership and involvement in planning worship services for the remainder of 2020.

A special thanks to Cheryl Kohner for gathering many of the "Sharing of the Peace" videos for our online services this past year, Linda Jensen for lining up readers, and to Shawn Jansen for coordinating the Christmas program and providing Children's Chats.

And to all those who have helped by participating in the worship services this past year--readers, communion assistants, ushers, musicians and singers--a heartfelt thank you for giving of yourselves. Your participation carries special meaning to the "priesthood of all believers!" We could not do this without you!

And finally to all those in pews, on your computers, or on your living room sofas, keep making a joyful noise! We want to hear you...and if that's not enough, please join our committee in 2021!

Bill Jansen 2020 Worship and Music Committee member

2020 Treasurer's Report

Reconciled General Checking Account balance as of 12/31/20	\$89,915.84
<u>Less Dedicated Accounts as of 12/31/20</u>	<u>-30,308.80</u>
Total Non-dedicated General Checking balance as of 12/31/20	\$59,607.04
Good Samaritan Checking Account balance as of 12/31/20	\$ 222.31
2020 Annual Budget	\$ 82,117.00
<u>Total 2020 Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 66,970.54</u>
Amount under our 2020 Budget	\$ 15,146.46
Total Income in 2020	\$ 80,569.31
<u>Less Total Expenses in 2020</u>	<u>-66,970.54</u>
Amount ahead in Income versus Expenses in 2020	\$ 13,598.77

*Respectfully submitted,
-Heidi Moon, Treasurer*

Circle of Faith Annual Report 2020

Continuing Projects: Circle of Faith (COF) continued to be the core support team for Askov community meals, preparing meals and serving with the volunteers. 13 Welcome Gift Baskets were given to new community families. \$250.00 from Thrivent was used to supply \$50.00 bags of food to 5 families in need.

Greeting Cards: COF continued to send cards to those who are shut-ins or whose families have suffered loss or health problems.

New Projects: COF contributed \$750 to the floor fund towards new carpet to be installed in the basement. COF assisted a family at Christmas with a gift card.

Meetings: Because of Covid-19 COF did not meet from April through August. We met in-person then via zoom through the end of the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Johnson
Secretary

Circle of Faith 2020 Financial Report

Savings:

Beginning Balance.	\$740.42
Deposits.	45.00
Interest.	<u>.66</u>
	\$786.08

Less withdrawals. \$150.00

Ending Balance. \$636.08

Checking

Beginning Balance.	\$108.25
Deposits.	<u>70.00</u>
	\$178.25

Less expenses. \$ 50.00

Ending balance. \$128.25

**BLC Annual Meeting
Sunday, February 28, 2021
Agenda**

- CALL TO ORDER
- OPENING PRAYER
- APPROVE AGENDA (VOTE)
- APPROVE 2/9/2020 and 9/13/20 CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES (VOTE)
(No Quarterly meeting was held due to Covid-19 restrictions)
- 2020 TREASURER'S REPORT
- APPROVE PROPOSED 2021 BUDGET (VOTE)
- MINISTRY REPORTS (Vote to accept as written)
- ELECTION OF 2021 SYNOD ASSEMBLY DELEGATES (VOTE)
- APPOINT 2021 NOMINATING COMMITTEE (2) (VOTE)
- CALL COMMITTEE UPDATE
- CHRIS' FOOD STAND
- 2021 LABOR DAY DINNER
- PARSONAGE UPDATE
- OFFERTORY ENVELOPES
- UPDATES TO CHURCH CONSTITUTION (VOTE)
- ADJOURNMENT

Proposed Budget for 2021

Account Name	2021 Budget	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2019 Actual		2021 Budget	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2019 Actual
Envelope Offering Income			79,508.00	76,864.20	Admin Staff Payroll Taxes	1,400.00	1,100.00	1,689.95	1,080.14
Loose Offering			830.20	4,275.62	Secretary's Salary	16,120.00	15,340.00	16,930.44	13,085.55
Coffee Income			57.68	(3.64)	Treasurer's Salary	2,000.00	2,000.00	1,992.63	1,845.00
Misc. General Fund Income			100.00	57.38	Office Postage	500.00	100.00	295.65	107.88
Interest Income			73.43	85.99	Post Office Box Rent	120.00	120.00	120.00	120.00
			80,569.31	\$ 81,279.55	Parish Visitor Postage	225.00	200.00	281.95	207.00
NE MN Synod Support	1,500.00	1,320.00	1,320.00	1,320.00		49,063.25	47,572.00	38,765.49	40,422.55
Good Samaritan Support	300.00	300.00	-	300.00	Cleaning Service	1,800.00	1,800.00	1,495.00	1,780.00
	1,800.00	1,620.00	1,320.00	1,620.00	Insurance Package	9,200.00	8,000.00	9,139.34	7,896.00
Adult Education	400.00	50.00	-	-	Worker's Compensation	850.00	500.00	840.00	490.00
Confirmation	200.00	750.00	225.00	225.00	Church Electricity	2,500.00	3,000.00	2,270.13	2,586.96
Ministry Team - Family	200.00	200.00	-	10.82	Church Fuel - Dual Fuel	9,000.00	8,000.00	6,629.89	8,689.61
Synod Asy & Fall Confer	1,300.00	650.00	-	500.00	Church Water & Sewer	500.00	500.00	450.22	522.79
	2,100.00	1,650.00	225.00	735.82	Garbage Pickup	350.00	350.00	336.96	336.96
Gifts	250.00	250.00	250.00	250.00	Parsonage Electricity	500.00	500.00	291.71	517.82
Quilter's Fund	75.00	150.00	197.69	-	Parsonage Fuel	3,200.00	3,200.00	1,569.34	3,451.34
Website Maintenance	175.00	175.00	164.00	171.80	Parsonage Water & Sewer	425.00	500.00	393.67	735.79
Advertising	200.00	200.00	-	78.50	Telephone - Church	720.00	900.00	663.14	1,032.35
Community Outreach	600.00	600.00	600.00	600.00		29,045.00	27,250.00	24,079.40	28,039.62
	1,300.00	1,375.00	1,211.69	1,100.30	Communion Supplies	200.00	150.00	229.31	49.85
Accounting	250.00	250.00	250.00	250.00	Worship & Flower Expenses	1,800.00	2,500.00	1,139.65	1,783.50
Bank Charges	20.00	20.00	15.00	64.00		2,000.00	2,650.00	1,368.96	1,833.35
Office Equipment & Upkeep	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,281.08	814.50	Totals:	\$ 85,308.25	\$ 82,117.00	66,970.54	\$ 73,751.64
Internet Services	800.00	900.00	827.00	815.76		2021 Proposed	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2019 Actual
Office Supplies	1,000.00	900.00	916.15	867.75					
Stewardship	400.00	650.00	453.69	672.12					
Misc Expense (all COVID supplies)	500.00	50.00	38.52	-					
Pastor's Salary	20,500.00	15,540.00	6,586.68	12,220.00					
Pastor Payroll Taxes	1,568.25	1,182.00	503.88	934.83					
Mileage	1,500.00	1,200.00	808.87	991.38					
Cell Phone	-	-	-	260.00					
Pulpit Supply	900.00	7,020.00	5,555.00	3,375.00					
Misc Benefits or Pension	-	-	-	2,708.42					
Continuing Education	-	-	-	-					
Pastoral Publications	260.00	-	219.00	3.22					



February 7, 2021

Luke 7:1-17

Sunday, February 7, 2021

Read: Luke 7:1-17

Main Idea: A Roman centurion surprised and amazed Jesus. What we do and say matters to Jesus.

Jesus had been teaching and healing for some time now. He had encountered hundreds of people. Many were in need, broken, and weary. Many came to him to ask things of him. Then he came to Capernaum and encountered someone he didn't expect.

A centurion, a Roman guard, had sent some Jewish elders to ask Jesus to come heal his slave. This would have been unusual for many reasons. First, it was unusual for a Roman to pay any attention to Jesus at this stage of his ministry, except perhaps as a nuisance. But this Roman had heard of Jesus' teachings and must have known that he would be willing to work outside the confines of the Jewish people. Second, it was slightly unusual that someone in power would care so deeply about one of his slaves, as to bother a famous traveling healer with it. Third, this centurion recognized his place in the hierarchy. His station as one under an authority figure gave him a perspective of gratitude and compassion for those under him. Fourth, he recognized that Jesus' time was valuable and requested that Jesus not spend time traveling to him, but instead simply to heal him from wherever he was at the time. It was a recognition that the Jew, Jesus, was as worthy of respect as the Roman centurion. (There are likely many other reasons this man's words and actions were unusual. Consider what those might be.)

This man's unusual ways amazed Jesus. It took Jesus by surprise. Sometimes it's easy to think that because Jesus was God, he knew everything. But clearly this man took Jesus by surprise and it delighted him. Consider what it might mean that Jesus (and God, too, perhaps) can be surprised and amazed by us. How might we move through our day considering that it's not already been determined what we will do or say? How might we make our decisions knowing that we surprise and delight (or disappoint) Jesus along the way?

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.
Holy God, you rewarded the faith of a Roman centurion who feared and trusted you. May we have the same unshakable faith in your mercy and ability to heal all that prevents us from serving you, for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

Read: Read the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. (Luke 7:14-15)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

Jesus was busy healing and teaching throughout the countryside. When a Roman centurion asked for Jesus' help, it took Jesus by surprise.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Who in your life might be considered an outsider? How do you support them? How does having them in your life make your life better?

How can your community of faith support you when you're grieving? Is it hard to reach out for help? Why or why not?

For the ladies: Who in your school or daycare is a little different? Celebrate your differences and your similarities!

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God heal your grief. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Reach out to someone in your community who is isolated or grieving. Bring them a meal. Invite them for coffee. Be a listening ear. You don't have to have any answers. Just be there for them.

Go Deeper: Visit clergybuff.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *Jesus Speaks in Parables*, Luke 8:4-21

Tuesday: *Jesus Calms a Storm and Heals the Gerasene Demoniac*, Luke 8:22-39

Wednesday: *Jesus' Plea and a Woman Restored*, Luke 8:40-56

Thursday: *Jesus Sends Out Disciples*, Luke 9:1-9

Friday: *Jesus Feeds the 5,000*, Luke 9:10-17

Saturday: *Peter's Confession*, Luke 9:18-27



Sunday, February 14, 2021

Read: Luke 9:28-45

Main Idea: Despite all they experienced, the disciples failed to understand that Jesus would soon be leaving his work to them.

The transfiguration of Jesus remains one of the Bible's most intriguing mysteries. Like a supernatural movie, the scene unfolds quickly and frighteningly. Jesus, who the disciples had become quite familiar with, suddenly changed in appearance. His face changed. His clothes shined. Two men (the long dead prophets of Israel) appeared by his side. A haunting cloud enveloped them, and a disembodied voice spoke to them. It's no wonder they remained silent about the events. What was there to say that anyone would believe?

Throughout the story, the disciples failed to make sense of what was happening. Peter's first reaction to the events on the mountain was to build a monument to commemorate the weird occasion. Then they were stunned into silence. On the next day, it was discovered that the disciples still could not carry on the work Jesus had laid out for them—they were unable to cast out a demon. Despite all they had seen and heard, they still did not understand. Jesus was not sent to do all the work. He was sent to train and equip the world to do God's work. In a moment of frustration, Jesus scolded the disciples for their inability to rise to the occasion. But still he cast out the demon. Even after Jesus explained that he would be betrayed and leave them (and would leave the work to them also), they did not understand and were too afraid to ask. They had a long way to go before they would be ready to take over Jesus' ministry. For now, the bulk of the work would be done by Jesus.

February 14, 2021

Luke 9:28-45

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.

Almighty God, your own followers did not always understand your words and deeds. Reveal yourself to us in the world, that we might reflect your glory and live as your beloved children. Amen.

Read: Read the key verse from Sunday's reading.

And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. (Luke 9:29)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

The Transfiguration of Jesus was one more event indicating that Jesus would be leaving the disciples soon (and leaving his work to them, too). Still they failed to understand.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Does your faith life give you more or cost you more, or both? Why?

Why do you think it was important for Jesus to be Transfigured before his disciples? How do you think it changed their attitudes and behaviors?

For the lites: Describe Jesus.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God transform your faith life for the better. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Add more light to your home. Light candles that you have only used for decoration. Use your fireplace. Put "fairy lights" in a mason jar. Hang a string of outdoor lights across your living room. Fall asleep with a soft, flickering LED candle in your bedroom. Enjoy the light in this season of darkness.

Go Deeper: Visit doyourself.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *Who Is Greatest*, Luke 9:46-48

Tuesday: *Whoever Is Not Against You Is For You*, Luke 9:49-50

Wednesday: *The Challenge of Following (Aub Wednesday)*, Luke 9:51-62

Thursday: *Mission of the Seventy*, Luke 10:1-12

Friday: *Was to Unrepentant Cities*, Luke 10:13-16

Saturday: *Seventy Return and Jesus Rejoices*, Luke 10:17-24



Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Read: Luke 9:51-62

Main Idea: Jesus was distracted by the terrifying events in Jerusalem, but still he resolved to continue his journey there.

By this point in Luke, Jesus was preparing for the end, which he knew would come when he entered Jerusalem. He still had work to do, but when he tried to make a trip to Samaria, "they did not receive him because his face was set toward Jerusalem."

Did they perhaps know he was distracted by the events to come? Or maybe they perceived Jesus was invested in the fate of Jerusalem and wondered whether he was still invested in Gentiles. Finally, the disciples were ready to pick up Jesus' mantle, but in a strange way. They desired to rain fire from heaven as punishment for Samaria's rejection of Jesus. But Jesus rebuked them. Maybe Jesus knew he had been rejected because he was distracted by the events to unfold in Jerusalem.

Jesus had certainly gathered quite a following by this time, and more desired to join him. But, like Jesus, they too were distracted by the many things they thought they needed to take care of. I wonder if the people's obvious distractedness held up a mirror to Jesus' own distractedness. With his harsh words, he may have been speaking to himself—talking himself into following through on the (terrifying) work God still had before him.

The path to Jerusalem (confrontation, torture, and death) was set. Jesus' footsteps toward Jerusalem were laid. There would be nothing left to distract him away from this final journey.

February 17, 2021

Luke 9:51-62

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.

Holy God, our humanity is ever present to us on this somber day. May we follow you closely in this walk towards Jerusalem and learn from the faithfulness of Jesus our savior. Amen.

Read: Read the key verses from Sunday's reading.

On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him, but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. (Luke 9:52b-53)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

Jesus was distracted by the coming events in Jerusalem. Soon he would be facing his own death.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Why do you think Jesus journeyed toward Jerusalem, even knowing it would likely lead to his death?

What are you avoiding doing out of fear? How might you walk toward the fear instead of running from it? Envision what it will look like to move through the object of your fear and come out the other side?

For the littles: What scares you? Who can you turn to for courage?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God grant you courage to face your fears. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Spend time in silence tonight. Leave the TV off. Put down your phone. Experience the stillness and silence.

Go Deeper: Visit deerstuff.com/daily-devotions.

Thursday: *Mission of the Seventy*, Luke 10:1-12

Friday: *Went to Unpopulated Cities*, Luke 10:13-16

Saturday: *Seventy Return and Jesus Rejoices*, Luke 10:17-24



February 21, 2021

Read: Luke 10:25-42

Main Idea: Right and wrong are subjective. Jesus challenged his audience to expand their perspectives and think differently about the things of the world.

The laws had become so complex, it was a full-time job to interpret, decree, and enforce them. As Jesus was clearly a learned man, religious leaders often came to him with questions concerning the laws and the mysterious things Jesus spoke about.

Here a lawyer sought to challenge Jesus for his words on eternal life. (Eternal life was a foreign concept, as Judaism taught the end of all things after death.) Jesus turned the challenge back on the lawyer with a question—what does the law say? The lawyer was able to recite the law, but tried again to challenge Jesus with a clarifying question—who is my neighbor?

At this point, Jesus presented an argument (in the form of a parable) that shook the lawyer's perspective. Until now, the answer to the question of neighbor was those who had earned a title worthy of respect—Pharisees, Levites, law-abiding Jews. But in Jesus' parable, it was none of these that proved neighborly. It was the outsider, a Samaritan, who demonstrated neighborly qualities. Jesus' hearers had to open their minds and hearts to this new perspective. No longer was the answer about obeying Jewish laws properly, but in behaving with mercy and compassion. Eternal life would be granted, not to the best Jews, but to the most loving people. It was a shift that would rock their egocentricity and open the door to a vastly different relationship with the outsider.

In a similar move, Jesus praised Mary for her willingness to learn while Martha criticized her for her unwillingness to help. Jesus did not say that Martha's chores were wrong or unnecessary. But he did challenge what she believed was the "right" way to behave. Like in the parable of the Samaritan, Jesus challenged Martha to open her mind and heart to a different perspective about how to be a good host.

In both of these stories, Jesus challenged his audience to shift their perspective, to consider looking at their situations from a different point of view. If people can learn to open themselves first to the possibility that their perspective may not be the only "right" perspective, and second to learning a new way, then our world might be better served through empathy, compassion, discovery, and acceptance.

February 21, 2021

Luke 10:25-42

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer.

God of wisdom, you challenge us to expand our minds to your inclusive view of the world. Teach us to welcome the stranger whoever they may be, and to open ourselves to having our minds changed and our hearts transformed, for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Read: Read the key verses from Sunday's reading.

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:36-37)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

Through the parable of the Samaritan and his words to Martha, Jesus challenged his hearers to think differently, to open themselves to the possibility that their ideas of right and wrong might be off just a bit.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

Are you set in your ways? What ideologies might you challenge in yourself? What might you be wrong about?

What is hospitality? In what ways are you hospitable? Who is easy to host? Who is difficult? Why?

For the titles: What's your favorite way to help?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God shake your beliefs about right and wrong. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Talk to someone of a different faith tradition about their faith. How does it shape them?

What is different about your traditions? What is similar?

Go Deeper: Visit clergystuff.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *The Lamb's Prayer and Persistence in Prayer*, Luke 11:1-26

Tuesday: *Jesus Criticizes Pharisees and Lawyers*, Luke 11:27-54

Wednesday: *Parable of the Raisin Food*, Luke 12:1-21

Thursday: *Do Not Worry*, Luke 12:22-34

Friday: *Be Alert*, Luke 12:35-48

Saturday: *Jesus the Cause of Division*, Luke 12:49-59



February 28, 2021

Luke 13:1-9, 31-35

February 28, 2021

Read: Luke 13:1-9, 31-35

Main Idea: Jesus desired for people to repent, not so that they would be saved from tragedies, but so that they might bear fruit.

Terrible things were happening to the Jews. In one instance, Pilate had defiled Jewish blood by mingling it with sacrifices. In another instance, a tower fell, killing 18 Jews. There was an implication that these tragedies could have been avoided if the victims had repented of their sin. Jesus responded with a parable.

A fig tree remained without fruit for three years. When the landowner wanted to cut it down, the gardener pleaded for one more year of working the soil to give the tree one final chance to produce fruit. Similarly, many prophets had come before Jesus, and still Israel seemed unable to obey God. But Jesus' presence and ministry were themselves a plea to give Israel one more chance to hear Jesus' words, repent, and obey. In the parable, we never learn what became of the tree—the story remains open-ended. It is possible that the fate of Israel (indeed, the course of the whole world) is still unending. It may be that the story is still unfinished, and that the watch to determine whether or not humanity will bear fruit is still underway.

As the gardener cared for the tree, and as a mother hen cares for her chicks, Jesus made it clear he was not sent to entrap humanity into suffering for their sin. Jesus wanted people to change, to repent, to obey, to treat each other with kindness, mercy, justice, and compassion. Jesus was on humanity's side, and it pained him to see people refusing the help and guidance he offered. Jesus lamented that his powerful words of repentance and forgiveness would not be heard, and that Jerusalem sought to kill him. Fortunately, he never closed that book, and the course of our own lives remains to be written.

Pray: Light a candle. Open your devotion with prayer. Merciful God, you long for your people to bear the fruits of mercy and repentance. Tend and guide our growth into a faithful nation who serves you and the people you love, for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

Read: Read the key verse from Sunday's reading.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34)

Reflect: Reflect on the scripture summary.

Many terrible tragedies fell upon the Jews. While some believed it was their own fault for their lack of repentance, Jesus had a different message. Repent, not to escape tragedy, but that they might bear good fruit.

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household.

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point? What do you need to repent for that still lingers? What might happen to your relationships or your attitude if you repent?

Does good behavior produce positive things to happen in your life? Why or why not? What is good about doing good?

For the littles: Is it hard or easy to say, "I'm sorry?" Why?

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God stir your heart to repentance. Amen.

Do: By acting on what we learn, we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Make a timeline of your life. Is there evidence that good behavior produces good things, or that bad behaviors cause tragedies? Where is God in the high and low points in your life?

Go Deeper: Visit deerstuff.com/daily-devotions.

Monday: *Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman*, Luke 13:10-17

Tuesday: *Parables*, Luke 13:18-30

Wednesday: *Jesus Heals a Man with Dropsy*, Luke 14:1-6

Thursday: *Parable of a Wedding Banquet*, Luke 14:7-14

Friday: *Parable of a Great Dinner*, Luke 14:15-24

Saturday: *The Cost of Discipleship*, Luke 14:25-35