

# *The Epistle*

January 2022

Vol. 49, No. 1

*...a letter from Pastor*

"Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning!" (ELW 242)

Ah, January. Winter edges deeper and deeper and we turn over the calendar to the new year. Suddenly everywhere you go is filled with ideas of newness: new diet plans, new fitness routines, new goals to set, new dreams to dream. It's the opposite of the end-of-year retrospectives that clutter our societal consciousness in the waning days of December. "No more looking back," the ads tell us, "time to look forward!"

Looking forward at a whole year can be a daunting task. Who knows what 2022 will bring! With omicron cases on the rise as I write this, I wonder what the next year will bring in the pandemic. Will there be more dangerous variants and with them the need for more cautious behaviors? Will variants become more prevalent but less dangerous and perhaps opportunities for true post-pandemic behavior development? How many more will die before we get to the hoped-for "post" part of the pandemic?

I wonder, too, about our collaboration. The next steps for the collaboration team, after its experience of listening in the congregations, is to listen in our community and neighborhoods. What will 2022 bring for our three congregations? What kinds of holy experiments will we take on, and will any of them take root? What fears do we have about collaboration and how can God's grace and adventurous Spirit help us face them? What joyful moments will pop up as we continue to work together to serve God and the world here in Huntington?

And I wonder what God is going to be up to this year. What wonders of community are in store? What moments of surprising grace and holy laughter will be coming? What creative endeavors of redemption and forgiveness will 2022 hold? I can't wait to see.

What do you wonder?

In Christ's new light,  
Pastor Amanda

## ***Joseph's Storehouse—Food Pantry @ Gloria Dei***

*“Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.” (Ruth 1:16)*

This scripture has been one of my favorites for a long time. It is so beautiful in so many ways. To me it is an example of the literary beauty of the Bible. It is a true poetic masterpiece as well as being so full of rich, life-giving content! As we enter a new year, this verse draws me into the book of Ruth to ponder: what is the Lord trying to say to us in these scriptures?

Let's not sugar coat it, these last two years have been traumatic. There is chaos, conflict and discontent everywhere, not just in our country, but around the world! And the weather stinks, too! We are all weary of the ongoing pandemic, it seems like the whole world is 'going to hell in a hand basket!' I believe that it is high time that we, as Christians, get on top of it. We are called to be the head and not the tail! “The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.” (Deuteronomy 28)

We are called to be a blessing to others. When God blesses us, He expects us to pass it along. When we open the book of Ruth, we see that, among other things, it is a book of blessings. When Naomi tells her daughters-in-law to go back to their own people, she does it with a prayer of blessing. It is very proper for us to part ways with prayers and blessings. This is an example we should learn from. We can follow this through the entire book. When Boaz enters the scene, he greets his workers with a blessing and they respond with a blessing of their own. When Boaz first meets Ruth, he blesses her. When Naomi hears of Boaz's kindness to Ruth, she blesses him. Then, when Boaz takes Ruth to be his wife, the whole community blesses them!

We are not to be beaten down by world, we are to be examples of God's goodness. We are to be the ones who have mercy on the downtrodden, who perform random acts of kindness, who love those who are unloved. We are to be the salt of the earth, making it a little more palatable to those we encounter. When Jesus walked the earth, He was the light of the world. When He returned to heaven, He left that job to us. When others look at us, they should want what we have - Jesus!

I believe that now, more than ever, we need to not only be a blessing to each other, but to speak prayers of blessing over each other. Ruth, Naomi and Boaz lived in a culture that obviously lived by this principle. And look at the results! Just look at the blessings that God poured out on them. First, he gave Naomi and Ruth each other so that they would not have to walk through these trials alone.

Continued →

Then He gave them favor with a stranger who looked out for them and helped them. Then the Lord completely redeemed them with wealth and a new family! Ruth, for her love and loyalty to Naomi, was rewarded by being in the bloodline of the Savior! She was King David's great grandmother. God blessed them again and again and again. He wants to do the same for you so that you can do the same for others.

As we begin a new year, I pray this blessing for the church and for you...

I thank God for His great love and blessings over our lives. I thank Him that His favor has no end. I ask the Lord to guide you so that you might walk fully in His blessing and goodness this year. May His love continue to grow in your hearts as you grow closer and closer to Him. May His favor be upon you, your family and the church. May you prosper in every way. May God give you a heart of wisdom to hear His voice. May you be strengthened with all power, according to God's glorious might. May He lift you up above the chaos that surrounds us so that you may be the blessing that those around you need. May He cover you with His grace, grant you His peace and fill you with joy! In Jesus' Name, amen.

Happy New Year!

Dennis Hood, Director



**Sunday, January 23, 2022**

**following 10:30 am service.**

**Please try to attend this crucial  
budget & planning congregational  
meeting!!**



## ***Church Council News***

Council meeting highlights from Dec 20, 2021 meeting:



1. 2022 budget has been worked on and approved to submit to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting on January 23.
2. The office door is expected to be replaced before the end of this year.
3. The boiler in Olson Hall needs replacing. Property Management is getting 3 quotes for the job. (Note: A GoFundMe page has been set up for donations for the boiler repair)
4. Voted to approve Girl Scout Troop planting of a community garden in old nursery playground area
5. Next Council Meeting January 19, 2022—7pm via Zoom



## ***Scriptures for January 2022***

### **Sunday Jan 2—2 Christmas—Lessons & Carols**

Jeremiah 31:7-14      Psalm 147:12-20      Ephesians 1:3-14      John 1:10-18

### **Sunday Jan 9—Baptism of Our Lord**

Isaiah 43:1-7      Psalm 29      Acts 8:14-17      Luke 3:15-17,21-22

### **Sunday Jan 16—2 Epiphany**

Isaiah 62:1-5      Psalm 36:5-10      1 Corinthians 12:1-11      John 2:1-11

### **Sunday Jan 23—3 Epiphany**

Neh 8:1-3,5-6,8-10      Psalm 19      1 Corinthians 12:12-31a      Luke 4:14-21

### **Sunday Jan 30—4 Epiphany**

Jeremiah 1:4-10      Psalm 71:1-6      1 Corinthians 13:1-13      Luke 4:21-30

# ***Lutheran Counseling Center—Update for January***

## **PUTTING AWAY THE WINTER BLUES**

Rev. Forrest Parkinson, LMSW, LP, LCC Pastoral Psychotherapist

Matthew 2:11: They went into the house and when they saw the child with his mother, Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and presented them to him.

Last year a friend taught me a wonderful Christmas lesson over three cups of coffee. I'll condense it here: *"I'm really trying to let Christmas "soak in" this year. Every year's such a let-down. Just as I'm seeing the Christmas trees put out to the curb, I feel like the "Christmas Spirit" is gone. Everything is back to grind, back to the gray and coping with winter slush and taxes. But I'm not giving in this year. I've got to bring the Christmas Spirit into the New Year.*

*"I'm fighting off the winter blues by focusing on two things: giving and gratitude. Joe does most of the cooking, you know, I'm just not the cook. But on Wednesdays he's always late so I have to get something together, and you know, it's the minimum. And usually I've got an attitude. So last Wednesday I decided to make an effort and give everyone their favorite dinner. They appreciated it, but more importantly, I just felt great about myself and it brought us closer together, too. If the Three Kings can cross the desert to bring a gift, I want to do that for my family."*

The "winter blues" can sap us. The energy of our faith can, and should, inspire us to bring a new spirit into the new year. My friend was inspired by the effort of the Magi and I was inspired by her. Seeking the Holy in everyday life takes effort, but the time is well invested. God is with us.

While the energy of the holiday fades, it is up to us to bring the spirit of "God-With-Us" into our new year. The Gospel imperative is the dual impulse to embrace the divine in our hearts and engage the sacred in our neighbor. The Magi did that and so can we.

The energetic activity of the Christmas season can fade away or we can let it train our attitude, transforming gray moments with bright generosity. Imagine ordinary tasks transformed by treating them as gifts not only to delight others, but to honor the Holy? There is no room for poisonous resentment in acts of generous giving. Following Jesus entails a shift to devoting ourselves to serving others.

In our moments of prayer, we can resolve to ask for God's help to apply the lessons of Christmas. Our prayers can be light in the darkness of our struggles and discontent. Imagine contemplating our cares and worries with the firm purpose to seek God and to trust we will find God in the life we live daily? Seeking the Holy as we live and pray brings the light of Christmas and the promise of Jesus into the new year.

*Pastor Parkinson counsels teens, adults and couples. In addition to being a Licensed Psychoanalyst and MSW, he has a MS in Special Education & Emotional Disabilities. He is pastor of the Community Church in Syosset, NY and is a certified Spiritual Director in the Ignatian tradition. Please visit our website at: [www.lccny.org](http://www.lccny.org) for more information. For a counseling appointment, call LCC at 1-800-317-1173. All sessions are virtual at this time.*



Nancy Ambrose	1/1
Robert Fagan	1/2
Evelyn Thomas	1/2
Katlyn Lemke	1/3
Amanda Smuss	1/3
Jena Christenson	1/4
Joseph Accordino	1/11
Jackie Scappaticci	1/11
Kathleen Jost	1/17
Danielle Ruege DeMuro	1/25
Gloria Sauer	1/28
YiMei Potzinger	1/29
Joseph Campise	1/31
Amy Sobina	1/31

## STAYING CONNECTED

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**Joseph's Storehouse Food Pantry, Olson Hall**  
**Dennis Hood, Director**  
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*The church office is open Tuesday,  
 Thursday and Friday  
 from 9am to 1:30pm.*



**Gloria Dei Evangelical  
Lutheran Church**

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