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Grace under pressure: Receiving angel food cake

When he was suffering from deep exhaustion and depression, the prophet Elijah asked the question: Why am I here and what purpose do I have? In a biblical reading from the Old Testament from 1 Kings 19 the prophet Elijah finds himself on a journey of his own - a demanding journey filled with peril and terror. Elijah has worked and fought hard against the pagan god Baal's prophets and worshippers - and then out of fear for his life, escaped into the wilderness.

He is at the end of his strength, literally asking God to kill him so that he won't have to face the hardships of another day: "It is enough, God, he begs. Please, take my life. It is enough."

Notice God's response: For me what follows is one of the most gentle and tender passages in the Old Testament. Elijah awakens to the soft touch of an angel, who says to him, "Get up and eat." When Elijah looks around, he sees that the angel has prepared "a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water," for him to eat and drink. Elijah, still exhausted, still completely beat, eats and drinks and falls asleep again.

The angel lets him sleep, but then touches Elijah again: "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you."

Do you hear how the angel strives to pull Elijah out of his depression? She softly wakes him up twice, communicating gentleness and empathy.

In no way are the difficulties of Elijah's journey and his deep exhaustion belittled or dismissed. Nobody says: "Get over it." - "Think positive" - "Work more or try harder." - "Believe stronger in God." - "Push through it - you'll do it!"

No. Instead we hear the angel saying: "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."

The journey is hard. It's *hard*. You won't ever make it on your own. But listen, you don't have to. Here's cake. Here's nourishment. Get up and eat it. Eat it because there *will* be dangers along the way. Eat it so you'll be strong enough to face the perils that lie ahead. You can't sidestep the journey; it belongs to you, but you can choose *how* you make it. Starving or fed. Strengthened or weak. Accompanied or alone. Which will you choose?

Will you choose vulnerability and tell people what knocked you out of the trails?

Will you choose kindness to yourself and inner compassion, without guilt - without judging yourself?

Elijah, so the story continues, ate and drank and walked 40 days until he finally reached Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. And there, in quietness and silence, he heard God's whispering voice.

Elijah was given the permission to rest, to be nourished, to rest again, to be nourished again. There is no timeline for healing. What is needed though is nourishment - here in form of cake - and a healing touch by someone. What kind of nourishment do you need?

As Elijah's story is unique, every story is unique. Our faith tells us that none
 ...see **Angel Food** - page 2



Elijah in the Desert by Dirck Bouts

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Dear friends, here is my celebration of December 2020

At the end of November my thoughts turned to December in this strange year of 2020. Normally there were bazaars and bake sales and all kinds of other activities before Christmas but not this year because of the Coronavirus.

Since gardening was over I had time to cook the jam from the harvested Rhubarb, Raspberries, Cherries and Apples.

It took four days to cook 24 250ml glasses of jam for giving away around Christmas. Beginning of Dec. I informed my family that this year I would not bake the usual Christmas Cake and Cookies, I would send them the recipes and they can try on their own.

Well, the answer came back, "There is no Christmas without YOUR Christmas Cake and Cookies, please."



Since there was enough time I started baking. First the Honey Christmas Cake (the recipe I had from Hanna Ritter's mother from 1954) 2 baking sheets and later

on I baked 2 more. The next week the Honey Cookies and the Gingerbread Man were made. Now I had the Jam and the Baking done so I packed the parcel for Ottawa to my son and family. (He sent me a box with German and English books in return at the same time.)

But there was still a lot left of the Jam and Baking so I included my gardeners and other friendly people who helped me from time to time. At the end I had 20 little parcels and had them distributed. People were surprised and grateful that I had thought of them at Christmas. Just the day before Christmas Eve, my next door neighbours phoned to bring me Christmas Eve and Christmas Day meals of Beef Roast. My gardeners and others brought different kinds of preserve they had made (which I never make) and home made soap and fresh Dates. It certainly was a different kind of Bazaar or Holiday shopping. We all were happy and grateful.

On the 24th of Dec. I watched the German Christmas Service and the English Candlelight Service from Trinity Ev. Church and enjoyed the tasty Beef Roast. On Christmas Day after a light breakfast I also watched the Christmas Service from Trinity Lutheran Church and after had another tasty meal from that Beef Roast.

I also had a frozen Turkey Dinner delivered from "Drive Happiness", which was good for two meals and also very tasty.

For New Year's Eve my neighbours (immigrants from Cuba) surprised me with a Cuban New Year's Eve Dinner (Rice and black Beans, Yuca, Porkroast spiced the Cuban way). Very delicious.

December, Christmas and New Year's Eve were different in 2020 but just as meaningful. The new technology with the computer made it all possible. Thanks to the pastoral staff and all the other people who worked hard during the year for the congregation.

Best wishes for the New Year 2021
Eva Osterwoldt

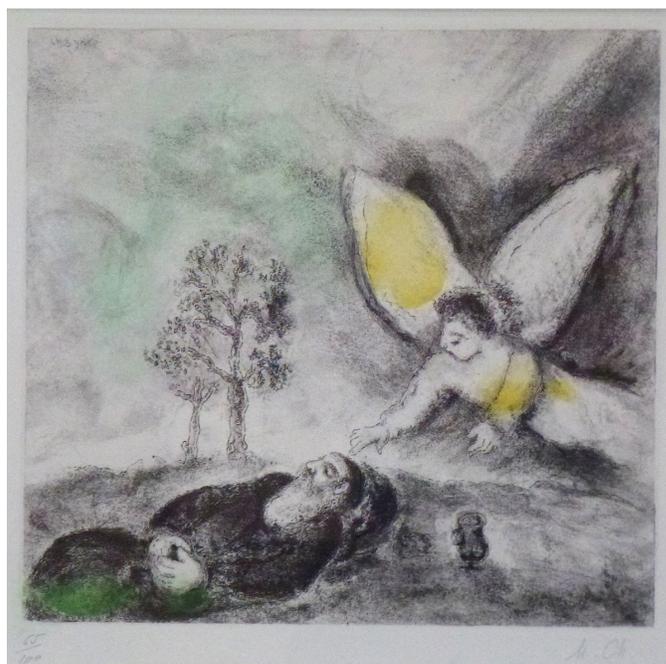
Angel Food from page 1

of us is defined or condemned by a diagnosis. Jesus looks at people others are turning away from, and sees people who are beloved children of God, worthy of love, worthy of healing. And he heals people and sends them back into the community, to again live in relationship.

I believe that as God's people that is how we are called to see each other as well. And that means making room for each other, for the stories that each one of us brings – including the stories that are hard to talk about and hard to listen to. As people of faith, we don't need to pretend to feel well always, and not broken or down or exhausted or depressed. We don't need to listen to the easy answers. But to help share each other's pain, see each other's gifts, and acknowledge the image of God that each one of us bears.

We do need to listen, and pray for one another, and remind one another that we don't need to be healthy all around to be loved; I believe there is a transcending vision of who I am – of who we are... and nothing or nobody can take this away from me or us. Thanks be to God.

Yours, Pastor Ingrid



Elijah touched by an Angel by Marc Chagall

Navigating Ambivalence

It has been a difficult year of adaptations, losses, grief. We have lost people, struggled with bouts of isolation, and we have come through a Christmas season like no other. We are all living with competing needs within ourselves that clamor for attention. We all need to keep each other safe from Covid-19, and we all desperately need each other's company, touch, and love.

This ambivalence that is driving all of us right now is so difficult to deal with. We want to be together in person, we want community again, we want to be in church. Yet as soon as a traumatic event happens, our already stressed-out systems go into hyperdrive and that fear skyrockets. I spend a good deal of time on the phone and via email with many of you who feel so turned around right now, and the feedback is consistent: we are scared to be alone, and we are scared of the virus. What do we do?

There are no easy answers right now. Trying to manage the



Pastor Erin and Piper 2021

fear and stress and trauma from one perspective will ultimately lead to negative consequences from the other. The best we can do at

this point, with whatever decisions we make going forward, is to be prepared to deal with the outcomes whatever they might be.

It is vital that we continue to take each others' divided fears seriously. By *divided* I mean that split brain I've already spoken about: wanting both community and safety from the virus. You have verbalized to me about needing both to be with community, while also not being able to trust fellow Albertans to follow guidelines. It's these both/and stressors that are causing the greatest stress, rather than one-sided fear.

Furthermore, we all have our ways of responding to such stressors over the long term: working on hyperdrive trying to do all the things all of the time or, in contrast, not being able to work at all; losing patience over the smallest of matters with family, friends, and neighbours; dismissing other people's fears or perspectives out of hand, or conflating fears with conspiracy theories or false information; turning to food, alcohol, sex, drugs, or other things more than we normally do to cope; or perhaps scrolling through social media more than we normally would, keeping our brains stimulated to the point they can't unplug when unplugging is precisely what's required.

I say these things not out of condemnation, but rather understanding. These are normal responses to extraordinary circumstances. We need to continue to support one another in the midst of these circumstances, to keep the lines of communication open and flowing, to pitch in when and where we can, to be patient when someone we love acts out of character, and to take time to rest properly.

Ambivalence means that we'll want or need something one minute, and then the opposite the next; that our neighbours will want or need one thing one minute, and then the opposite thing the next. This doesn't mean we're flippant or changing our minds. It means our systems – individually and collectively both – need more than one thing at the same time. This means that whatever decisions we make as a church, we will be supporting one set of needs within ourselves and others, while causing fear and anxiety against another set of needs. Ambivalence can suck us dry more quickly than single-sided fear.

Take heart, my friends. We are not living in normal times. This time will pass. We will make it through. We are in the midst of processing trauma already passed, experiencing trauma in the present, and feeling our systems prepare for trauma yet to happen. This is a normal response to extraordinary times, I can't say that enough.

Let's continue to be gentle with ourselves. We have done a great job already. And I'm proud to be a part of Trinity's team.

*Your pastor
Erin Thomas*

GOOD NEWS Financial Update for 2020

2020 has been a challenging year. The congregation has not met in person for worship since the first week of March last year, save for the one outdoor service in September. With no in-person worship we were concerned about how the church would continue to function, to continue to minister, to support each other and our community and to operate without regularly collecting a Sunday offering. Covid restrictions also meant that almost all our rental groups would cancel their rentals. But God works in mysterious ways.

The federal government stepped up to provide payroll relief

to all organizations that saw major drops in revenue. The Alberta government helped provide funding to the Mustard Seed to operate a nighttime and daytime homeless shelter in south Edmonton and they rented the Luther Centre from July through October to make that happen. Helping Hands daycare, that rents our church basement, had to shutter their operations in March and April but were able to re-open in a limited way starting in May. The Daycare and the Synod rent remain our only regular monthly source of rental income.

...see *Finances* - page 4

Finances - from page 3

Our members too, stepped up and made sure their donations were received at church. We have about 25% of our regular weekly givers donating through PAR. Other members and guests have responded by donating on-line or through Interac from their personal banking app as well as mailing and dropping off their donations at the church.

So, to the Good News: We ended 2020 with an Operating surplus of \$51,000. This, along with about \$9,400 donated to the Property Appeal, has reduced our total deficit of \$89,700 to \$29,000.

Key contributors to our financial performance:

- Donation revenues of \$353,500 (only 10% below our budget)
- Rental Incomes of \$110,800 (only 5% below our budget)
- Government wage support of \$67,000 (the amount of government wage support varies by month based on the revenue earned by the organization in that month—the government subsidy is not recorded as revenue but as a reduction of wage costs)
- Operating Expenses of \$480,000 (5% below budget before considering wage subsidies)

The graph below shows our financial performance for the year at the end of each month in 2020, both planned and actual. Dots on the dark green and light green lines indicate the year to date planned (budgeted) amounts for donations and other revenues (respectively) while the same color bars show the actual total donations and rents received by the end of

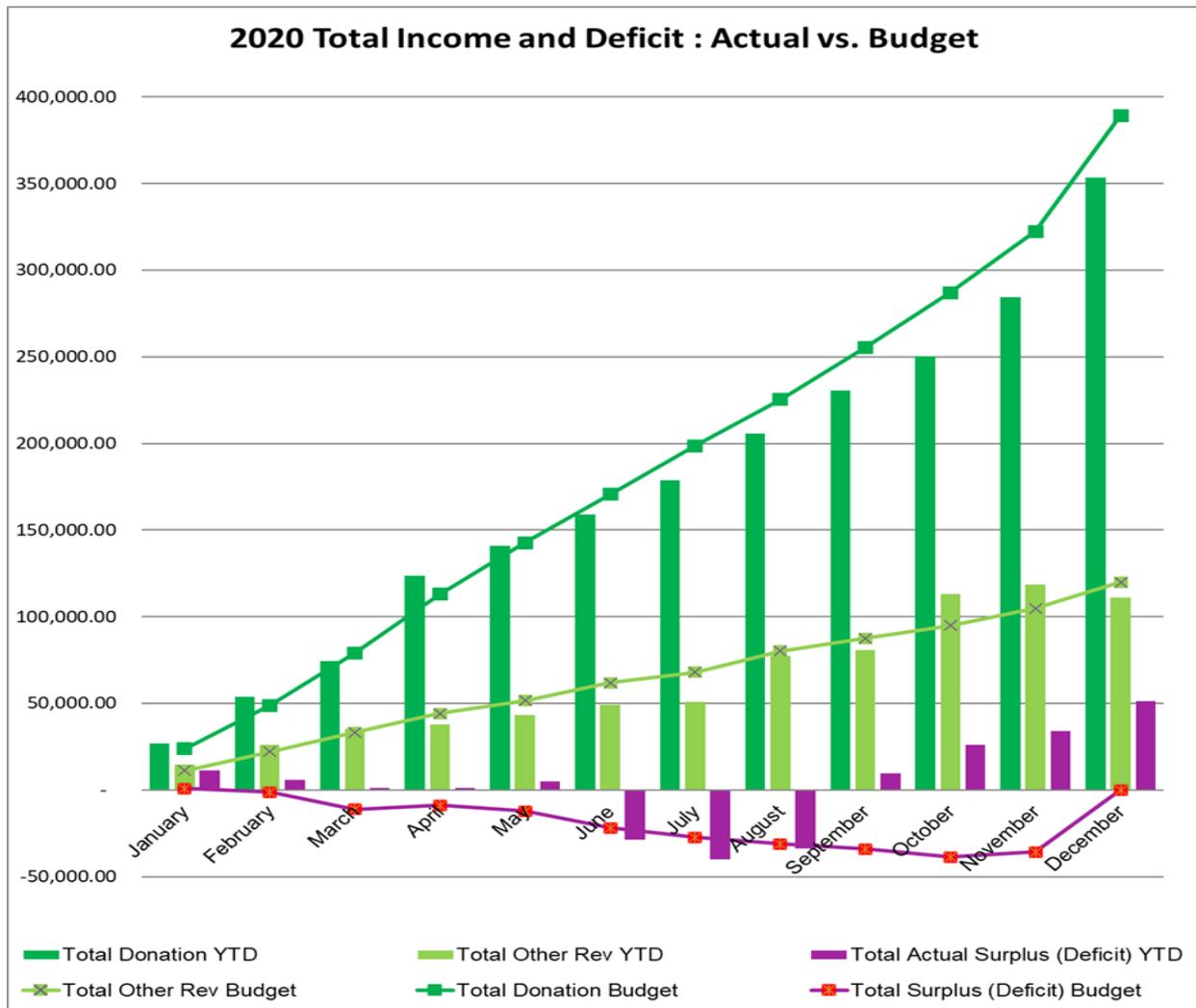
each month. The purple line shows the planned (budget) surplus or deficit while the purple bars show the actual total operating surplus or deficit at the end of each month.

Church Council has been following this graph every month to understand our monthly financial position. We have taken steps to manage our expenses wherever we could but have also spent money where needed to maintain our ministry and our buildings.

The Covid restrictions have required us to find new ways to minister, to support our members and our community. Thanks to all who have brought creative solutions to supporting our ongoing ministry. Thanks to the Pastors and to the church office for the extra effort to keep our ministry vibrant. Thanks to our musicians and everyone else who supports our new on-line worship. Thanks to Pastor Eileen Edwards and Pastor Mark Kalvaitis for supporting our ministry and allowing our pastors to take some time off. Thanks to Sylvia and Peggy for their inspired on-line Advent Calendar. Thanks to the readers, preachers and other musicians who have helped beautify our services. Thanks to all of you for your continued support through your prayers, your words of appreciation and your steadfast financial support.

And above all, thanks be to God for all the blessings bestowed on the ministry we call Trinity.

Frank Thede
Treasurer



Designed to Heal and Grow

We are beautifully made and created. The body itself has intelligence to create new cells and repair cuts. Every night when we go to sleep new brain cells are created. All of this is God's Grace in action. We are designed to continually heal.

God is constantly inviting us to partner into our own healing process. To me healing is a release, a clearing out of old hurts, blame, shame, etc., both known and unknown, that we no longer need. I think of it as forgiveness. You actually feel the release as an inner sense of peace, calm and strength. My experience is it happens in small bits, it is a constant practice, and subtle changes occur over time. Think of it as 'from seed to flower'.

Below is a prayer practice I use. May it bring you great healing, inner peace and strength.

1. Say YES to life. God sees us as worthy 100% of the time. Hold yourself likewise.
2. EXPLORE with openness and curiosity much like a young child does. There is no right or wrong way to healing. It is an experiment.
3. ASK that no harm come to you or anyone else.
4. TRUST with the deepest faith, despite how uncomfortable life can be at times, that God wants us to succeed in life, feel peace, live healthy, be strong, have courage, and be goodness in this world.
5. GROUND and connect to the earth. God made the earth and us in love. The earth has a healing energy itself. Feel



Barb Ritter—Designed to Heal and Grow

grounded, stable and safe.

6. From ABOVE. Invite the healing presence of Christ into your mind and body. And know with faith you have asked and it has come.

7. HUMBLE VISIONING.

Feel, sense, and envision yourself 100% healthy and

engaging in life with joy and courage. NOW let go of your healing expectations and your need to control outcomes. Hand this part over to God. God's intelligence is far greater than ours. Our practice is to keep our mind returning back to feeling and sensing.

8. IMAGINE by really feeling and sensing what it would be like to have your whole body filled with Grace and know that it is.
9. BREATHE in and out through the nose as much as possible. An alternative: in through the nose and blow out through pursed lips a 'who' or 'ha' sound. Exhale slightly longer than inhale. ALLOW your breathing to naturally (without force) become slightly more expansive into belly and ribs while also being light, gentle, soft, quiet, slower and rhythmic.
10. RELAX further into Grace. Invite your joints to relax through suggestion. "Toes, I invite you to relax. I feel my toes relaxed." Proceed with each major joint: ankles, hips, pelvis, entire spine, shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, neck, jaw. Then relax face and scalp. Conclude with feeling your whole body relaxed and held in Grace.
11. NOTICE what is happening in your mind and body right

- NOW without judgment of right or wrong. The practice is to notice. Notice subtle changes. Healing is not linear, nor logical, nor about thinking. It is about feeling and sensing.
12. GRATITUDE. Give thanks and praise to God. Amen.

And a few more things:

1. SMILE often as a daily practice. SMILE without a need, because it feels good.
2. HUM with mouth closed. Improves breathing and mood instantaneously.
3. HUG yourself or give yourself toe and hand massages.
4. MOVE. Your body loves to move. Dance, shake, wiggle, exercise, walk, jump.
5. TAKE a moment to be PRESENT with all your senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. Think, what does it really feel like to be in this moment?

*In Christ,
Barbara Ritter*

Weathering the Storm

As I began to research content for this article, I was amazed by the many definitions of **Grace** some of which include:

A divinely given talent or blessing

A short prayer of thanks said before or after a meal

Courteous goodwill

One definition of Grace in Christian belief is "the free and unmerited favour and love of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings by sending his son Jesus Christ to die for us." As people of faith, I believe this definition resonates with most of us.

So how does this tie in with the theme of **Grace under Pressure**?

Over the past year I'm sure we have repeatedly heard "We are all in the same boat." Recently I've heard a different interpretation: "We are all in the same Storm, just very different boats!" This really spoke to me as a realistic description of what we all have been experiencing because each of our boats are very different!

Some of us have had to face the loss of a loved one or have struggled with keeping a roof over our heads and food on the table. Some have had to deal with job loss or even finding new work when jobs are scarce. This is a very short list of what our "boats" may look like.

Personally, my boat has been rocked in so many ways, so many times this past year that I really thought I was going to sink! It was very difficult to know the Grace of God in those moments and yet, there it was, without fail all along! I recognized that I allowed the many pressures of the times to take my focus away from what truly is God's unfailing, unfaltering love, blessing and Grace. I did not need to look for it! God's Grace found me! One of my favorite Christian rock singers, Matt Reddman, beautifully expresses this in his song "Your Grace Finds Me." To know this truth, to trust and have faith in this belief carries me through each stormy day now.

The "storm" is subsiding. We have better days ahead secure in the knowledge that our God is with us -- always loving us, blessing us, and bestowing His Grace upon us even under pressure.

*Yours in Christ,
Monica Bishop*

Here is a YouTube link to Matt Reddman's song should you wish to check it out. Enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmFJkGEv3Lw>

Bishop's Message

Dear Beloved of God –

The Gospel according to Mark does not begin with angels, a prophetic dream, or a miraculous birth. Instead, the gospel writer hurls us, ready or not, into a lonely and barren wilderness – a desert – where everything either bites or burns or stings.

As Jesus emerges from the baptismal water, the heavens are ripped open, the Spirit descends like a dove and the voice of God proclaims, “You are my Son, the Beloved, in you I am well pleased.” And immediately, Jesus was driven out – hurled out – into the desert to be tormented by wild beasts and tempted by evil. (Mark 1:1-12)

It's not exactly what you would expect, is it? God was pleased, even well pleased with him. And yet, he was hurled from affirmation and love into a desert-like wilderness of sand and heat and wild beasts and temptation.

Experts say deserts are formed under unique climactic conditions. Maps show that they cover about 25% of the earth's surface. Globes indicate that they are found only between specific latitudes. That is what the experts say. But we know the truth about the wilderness, don't we?

The truth is that sometimes – no matter where we live or how far we travel – the wilderness is all we can see. Despite weather reports or average rainfall charts, we find ourselves in the wilderness: blinded, sunburned, dying of thirst.

This desert can feel so familiar that we name every shriveled plant, every venomous snake, every blistering ray, every irritating grain of sand. Sometimes, the wilderness feels a lot like home, a lot like now, and what we've experienced this past year.

The single mom, stretched so thin that she almost disappears, knows the desert of exhaustion and guilt. The rejected child, watching silently outside the playground, knows the desert called loneliness. The ill, newly aware of test results and consultations, know the desert of fear and uncertainty. The grieving, now alone, know the desert of unwanted solitude. Parishioners, reeling from scandal, know the desert of a trust betrayed.

The truth is, deserts are not found only in Africa, or in Nevada, or in the Sinai Peninsula. Some of the harshest wildernesses are not marked on any map. They lie just around the corner, or in your living room, in the very heart of your life.

But there is something more about the wilderness – something more that Mark wants us to hear: Jesus has been there first. Here is the Good News of Mark's opening scenes. No wilderness is so remote, barren, inhospitable, or filled with danger that Jesus has not walked there first.

And Jesus' presence here reminds us something else: despite all appearances to the contrary, the wilderness is filled with life. A handful soil swirling in the hot wind can be filled with hundreds of seeds, waiting for a chance to bloom. That withered plant still has living roots deep underground. That landscape, empty in the harsh light of day, comes to life in the moonlight with reptiles and insects.

Even at its most desolate, the wilderness is ready to bloom at the first sign of life-giving water. Maybe that is

why the scriptures speak of the wilderness as a place for discovery and transformation.

And there is more: the angels waited on him. Jesus is not alone. He is cared for in the wilderness, receiving sustenance and nourishment.

And this is our experience too – for in the wilderness of our 40-day Lenten journey, and over this past year – we have also been given sustenance: the Word, the Eucharist, community, family, opportunities for service and action.

This Lent finds many of us traveling through the wilderness, wrestling with demons and tempted by evil. We may feel like we have been thrown out into the wilderness. Some people might look upon this journey and despair.

But we know the truth about the wilderness, don't we?

In Christ Jesus –

Shalom,

+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

“The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)



Bishop Larry - Advent Greeting

Update on Trinity's Visioning Process

*In community with one another, we are called to be the embodiment of God's love in the world.
(Trinity's Mission)*

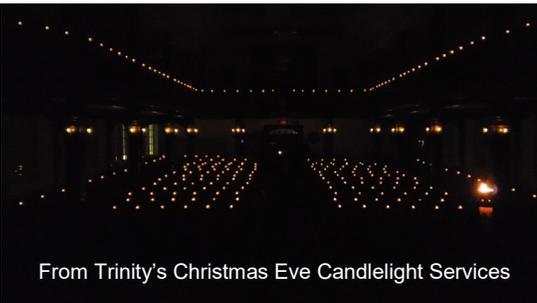
In the fall we received input from many of you about how you would like Trinity's mission to be implemented in the next 3–5 years. We had asked you what you envisioned community, embodiment, and God's love to look like at Trinity. A small group of council members has assembled and analyzed your feedback and ideas and come up with some draft priorities to form that vision. Church council will hold a retreat early in March to work on these priorities some more and come up with an implementation plan. We will keep you posted! If you'd like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Jeff Gusdal (jgusdal@shaw.ca) &
Andrea Wilhelm (wilhelm@uvic.ca)

Appreciation

What is your favourite part of Christmas? For me, it is Christmas eve, sitting in the choir loft in darkness and watching the light spread from the Christ candle to everyone who awaits the lighting of their candle. In this glow, we sing together “Silent Night”. An emotion filled moment where we hear the words that **“the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5)**

Even though we did not gather in person, this message is especially meaningful this year. The nights are long in the northern hemisphere. There is a global pandemic that fills us with anxiety, physical and emotional hardships, and loss. A world continuing to face



From Trinity's Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

wars, inequity, injustice. Racial tension. Creation groans. And yet, light shines in the darkness. Light is being manifest in so many ways – perseverance, creativity, focus on positive values and relationships, acts of kindness, recognition of sacrifice, gratitude, faith, hope and love.

I am especially grateful for our church being a light shining into the darkness. Gratitude for church council who are working diligently to support ministry and envision our future. Volunteers and staff who continue to care for our building and the needs in our community. For being a shelter in the harsh world. For the faithfulness of those giving time and money for ministry. To our wonderful musicians and volunteers that nurture our spiritual life through the weekly on-line services. For our pastors, front line workers in caring for the spiritual and emotional needs of so many. During these times of limited personal contact, finding ways to minister to the dying and grieving, the isolated, the overworked. Honouring lament and bringing the assurance of God's eternal love and presence.

When things look dire, it can be tough to muster up gratitude. And yet, gratitude can change how we see and experience any situation. Expressing appreciation is a gift to the receiver and the giver. As God loves us, may we show and express our love and gratitude to others.

Written with a grateful heart.
Rosanne Thede

Remember to take care of yourself

“An empty Lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly!” (Author unknown)

Here are some simple self-care suggestions that we have gleaned from all over. See if there's something here you'd like to try.

Love,
your Communication Committee

- Take an entire day off. Allow yourself to do nothing for a whole day. Be good to yourself and do things you enjoy. Perhaps watching a movie in bed? You know what you like. Give yourself a sabbath rest.
- If you sit at a computer a lot (or phone, tablet or other device), take the time once to do an internet search for short videos of “desk exercises” or “office exercises” and bookmark or copy the URLs to a document you keep handy. Set an alarm for once every hour and when it rings, pick one of the URLs to follow a short series of stretches etc. before continuing back online.
- Or, do like some of our elderly seniors do and walk up and down your hallway, or your basement for a full half hour every day. This for many is how they keep their joints limber – a great time to thank God for any and all blessings including the gift of movement!
- Hydrate!!! Feelings of hunger and tiredness could be indicators that we are dehydrated. At times, getting our recommended “8 glasses“ of water each day can be daunting. It can help to create new habits to bring hydration into our awareness. Strategically place water glasses in places where you are bound to notice them, by your toothbrush, next to the coffeemaker (for coffee drinkers) etc. This allows you, for example to have a refreshing drink of water while you do your everyday activities like waiting for your coffee to brew.
- SLEEP! Inadequate sleep affects our metabolism, cognition, mood, and general well-being. Creating consistent sleep habits gives ourselves a strong foundation from which to function. Going to bed at or around the same time nightly establishes consistency allowing us to reap the benefits of a good night's sleep in a short period of time. Half an hour before going to bed, consider turning off all electronics including TV. Give yourself that time to unwind your mind, meditate, pray, read or just relax.
- Follow the *Four S's every day: "Showers, Stretching, Sunlight, something Specific."* by Angie Elliott, interviewed on CBC's "The Current" on January 15. (You can still listen to the interview on their website.)
- Move! Above in the Four S's, number 2 is Stretch. Moving this way first thing in the morning loosens our muscles and allows blood to freely flow throughout our bodies. ANY movement each day whether a short walk, a stretch, squats or whatever works for you builds our strength and resilience to face the day. The key here is to find something you love to do and to not overdo it.
- What is the well from which you draw your strength? Taking the time to read a biblical, devotional or hymn text each day can help us connect with God's love and shape a direction for or reflection on our day. One well-loved writer was Oswald Chambers whose devotionals can be found here: <https://utmost.org>. For those who enjoyed the paper copies of “Our Daily Bread,” here is the link to their online version: <https://ourdailybread.org/author/our-daily-bread/>
- And finally, be kind to yourself if you ended up not doing what you had intended. Sometimes, perhaps often right now, we have a bad day. God loves you, we love you. Forgive yourself and start over, perhaps with just one thing you love to do to take care of yourself. And remember that in the end, all our attempts and failures at self-care are surpassed by God's unfathomable care for us.

A prescription from ancient Israel: Psalm praying and writing

Dear friends:

Pressure? I definitely feel it, yes. For me, it's the pressure of frustration and anger, and of the grief that's underneath that. While Covid has grabbed the headlines in 2020, I have been acutely aware of the ongoing destruction we humans afflict on creation. Catastrophic climate change, mass extinctions down to the insect realm, and right here in Alberta the planned mountaintop-removal coal mining in the southern foothills. What do I do with this stuff that is super distressing? And what do I do with it as a Christian, someone who believes in God? I have signed petitions, written letters to politicians, spread the word, and will continue to do that. But the heartsickness remains. And God, what has God done? My prayers to protect the mountains, the atmosphere, life in its manifold manifestations seem to have gone nowhere. But now a class on the psalms that I took in November has started to change that. The prayers (and writers) of the psalms brought *all* their concerns to God, and pretty unfiltered. Whether it was thanks and praise or lament, *complaints* and *anger*. The huge lesson for me is that God listens to all of me, to my whole heart. I can even call God to account and demand that God act. Wow. What a God we have, so much bigger than I thought! Below is a psalm of lament that I wrote at the end of 2020. I am now also reading/praying a psalm every day. (For example, as I write this, it's January 17, so I will read Psalm 17. On Feb 17, I would read Ps. 47, on March 17 Ps. 77, and so on. It takes you through the psalms in five months.) I recommend this practice to you as faithful action in situations of pressure, an action that lets God's grace back in.

Andrea Wilhelm

P.S. Quick tip for your own psalm writing: Laments usually include an address of God (getting God's attention), the actual lament or complaint, an expression of trust and/or a motivation for God to act (e.g., reference to



Me (Andrea) with Covid hair but the parcel from Germany made our day

God's promises, or a vow by the psalm writer). They can also contain petitions. Psalms of praise and thanksgiving obviously contain praise or/and thanksgiving. They also contain narrations of God's actions or descriptions of God's character (= the reasons for thanksgiving and praise). They often begin or end with a call to praise.

Psalm 2020

A psalm of Andrea

- ¹ God, I need to tell you:
I am turning into stone.
- ² You have given me eyes, but what do I see?
Earth torn up by strip mines, hundreds of ducks dead in a tailings pond,
- ³ bleaching coral reefs, a sea turtle strangled in plastic,
an uncomprehending orangutan clinging to the last tree being felled.
- ⁴ You have given me ears, but what do I hear?
"Catastrophic warming, ocean acidification, mass extinction."
- ⁵ "We love oil and gas, Alberta is open for business,
we must grow the economy, extremist environmental agenda."
- ⁶ You have given me a heart, but what do I feel?
The creatures' suffering wrenches my gut, God,
- ⁷ the foolishness and the lies of the powerful make my blood boil;
I hate them! And I despair from powerlessness.
- ⁸ God, this unrelenting assault is too much!
I can take it no longer; I am turning into stone.
- ⁹ Is this what you wanted?
Why you gave me eyes and ears and a heart?
- ¹⁰ Was I not intended to sense beauty, to rejoice, and to praise you?
Instead I shut myself off, I have become hard, I have fallen silent.
- ¹¹ You made and blessed the land and the water,
the ducks, the corals, sea turtles and orangutans.
- ¹² You made a covenant with Noah and every living creature,
you intended them all to flourish, to your glory.
- ¹³ Remember your covenant, God, and your promises!
Remember your plan for creation!
- ¹⁴ Rise up like a giant, like a mountain, and set things right!
Defend your animals, heal the land and the water!
- ¹⁵ Destroy the wreckers of destruction,
and undo their evil works!
- ¹⁶ Put in power those who want to heal the land,
and enlighten them with your wisdom.
- ¹⁷ Then I will see and hear and feel again,
and praise your name forever.



Detail of 16th century Russian icon - David writing Ps 44

Wells, Wellness and Our Well-spring

*Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."
John 4:13-14*

"Zum Wohl" the well-wishers say in German as they raise their glasses in a toast to someone's well-being, at a birthday or anniversary celebration for example. "O wie wohl ist mir am Abend, wenn zur Ruh die Glocken läuten..." is a traditional German evening round-song that expresses a feeling of calm contentedness upon hearing the peal of church bells in the evening hours. This word

1. F
1. O wie wohl ist mir am A - bend,
2. F
mir am A - bend, wenn zur Ruh' die
Glo - cken läu - ten, Glo - cken läu - ten.
3. F
Bim, bam, bim, bam, bim, bam.

http://www.lieder-archiv.de/o_wie_wohl_ist_mir_am_abend-notenblatt_100157.html

"wohl" connects the idea of water bubbling up, welling out of the ground, with the well-spring of life, the generous force that not only provides us sustenance for survival but that also, in its abundance, can lead to "Wohlstand" (a state of richness or wealth). Our "first world" society (*Wohlstandsgesellschaft*) has recently been on a quest for "wellness" among the stresses of our daily lives.

With "Grace under Pressure" as the focus of this issue of our *Trinity Team* and as we seek to establish a sense of wellness and well-being amid stressful times, it might be wise to consider the importance of water and wells to well-being and the parallels between physical and spiritual thirst. Water is essential to our survival, as anyone who has neglected a houseplant for a few weeks has observed! Water may bubble out of the ground by means of a spring, but more often people dig a well to access the underground aquifers (layers of rock that allow for the flow and extraction of underground water). Knowing where to dig a well is an important survival skill. When the well is dug and the layers of hard rock breached, water is released from the pressures below, allowing it to flow freely. Likewise, holding fast to our friendship with the Source of Eternal Life in the person of Jesus can be essential to our spiritual well-

being. As we hear about wellness practices such as breathing, stretching, meditating, keeping hydrated, etc., let us give thought to Whom we may meditate on, in Whose direction we may stretch our spirits, Whose blessings we may breathe in.



[Well in the Wilderness \(Internet\)](#)

Jesus comes to us like a best friend knocking at the door. Are we opening the door to Him, letting Him in, having Him stay awhile? Are we putting aside our internet "flicks" and online pastimes to listen to His jokes, to read His words, to thank Him that He took our place in the line when it came to relieving us of any guilts and past regrets we may be carrying around? Are we looking Him in the eye with joyous relief and gratitude for that evidence of His endless love that was His death and resurrection? Do we carry Him with us in our heads and hearts as we go about our lives, mentally sharing with him our hopes and dreams and daily frustrations? One place to start, if you have a church songbook at home, could be to look more deeply at the texts of older Christmas and Easter hymns in

which Jesus' arrival, death and resurrection are praised in detail. The Gothic word "wulan" from which well, well-spring, well-being are all derived implies an abundance of boiling, bubbling, gushing over of life-sustaining force. To say Jesus is generous would be an understatement. To focus on His abundant love and willing friendship can most certainly be a path to our well-being. "Zum Wohl!"



Hannah with flowers she was looking after during the summer

Hannah Noerenberg

Called into Worship

*Come, praise the Lord -
Psalm 134:1-2*

Worship During Covid

Did you know:

- Since the Covid restrictions on in-person worship were announced, Trinity has provided an on-line worship service every single Sunday since March 22
- We regularly get 100+ people viewing our Sunday worship services
- During Advent and Christmas we posted both German and English worship services with an average of 104 views of the English and 84 views of the German
- We had over 500 viewers for our 3 Christmas Eve Services
- We get feedback from our viewers (from around Edmonton, across Canada, and as far afield as Australia and Europe). If you enjoy the service, please provide your feedback, it helps us improve our services going forward.

Going Forward:

Unfortunately we do not anticipate starting regular in-person worship anytime soon. We continue to look for creative ways that we can worship together while still being safe and supporting the Alberta Health guidelines. Watch our website and our weekly newsletter for upcoming details of special worship on Ash Wednesday.

On-line Worship:

Trinity continues to be a worshipping community, even though we cannot meet in person.

One of the most common comments we get is that it's so nice to be able to enjoy our Sunday worship anytime you want: Services are generally available by 7AM on the Sunday morning and can be viewed at any time after that.

- Check for the worship announcement on our website (trinity-lutheran.ab.ca) or our [facebook page](#)
- Join our [YouTube channel](#) (Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church)
- Check out past services on the Worship menu on our website (trinity-lutheran.ab.ca/worship/)

From the Chair's Chair

(an adapted version of what was posted to Trinity's website in December)
Dear People of Trinity,

The last time I posted a video message to you was in May, to bring you greetings from your Church Council. I certainly didn't expect then that, in December (and now January), we still wouldn't be gathering in person to Worship together.

I said then and I'll say it again: I miss you. I miss Trinity. I miss singing. I miss the inspiration from sermons. I miss visiting after Sunday Services. I miss our children. I miss seeing you face to face.

Experts talk about Covid fatigue and I think many of us are there or coming close. How about you? Are you struggling? Yearning for connection? How are you doing? Are you finding ways to cope? What did Christmas hold for you this year? How are you living out *Grace under Pressure*? I'm looking forward to this edition of the TEAM where stories of your experiences are shared.

Thinking back to the Christmas season at Trinity, there are so many examples of grace under pressure. I can only imagine the work, the time and the heart it took to put together the many on-line Advent and Christmas Services (German and English), to decorate the atrium and sanctuary, to practice and record all that wonderful music, and to perform for and to organize the Virtual Advent calendar. All of these efforts helped me to experience some comfort, familiarity, joy and community, at a time when I missed our in-person services more than ever.

In addition to the many volunteers, Council is abundantly grateful for our pastors, Ingrid, Erin and Eileen (who was with us for December) and their important work in this challenging time where everything is different and the emotional toll is great. Gratitude is in our hearts as well for our staff – for Sorin, Cherie, Jordan, Agnes, Heinz, Paul and Kathy. Please pray for all who work at Trinity.

As we move forward, Trinity is continuing to make sense of this challenging time, as are each of you, and trying to bring moments of hope and joy into our lives. Our ministry is continuing and we need your ongoing support for this work that we all share in:

- Planning weekly on-line services, music and special projects
- Walking beside our elderly members, our grieving families, our neighbours
- Continuing with our German ministry
- Supporting the Food Bank with our ongoing depot and its many volunteers and the Neighbour Centre and The Mustard Seed in their efforts to end homelessness
- Carrying on with our church visioning process by setting priorities that will help us realize our mission
- Supporting our youth and children as they navigate this time
- Expressing solidarity within the ecumenical community and our Synod
- And in community with you, as the body of Christ, being the heart, hands, feet and voice of Jesus in our world

Thank you for everything you are doing to continue engaging with Trinity and this ministry. Council asks for your continued support: for your prayers, your participation, your talents and your financial gifts. Please keep Trinity in your hearts in this New Year season.

Bishop Larry concluded one of his latest letters to congregations in this way:

“Beloved of God, as people of faith, continue to be humble and gentle with one another. Honour each other. Make space for lament. Welcome moments of joy. Help each other live into hope. Learn from this journey in the coronavirus wilderness and let the learning move us forward. Trust that God is at work in this time and look for the new things God is doing even now.”

And finally, from all of us at Trinity: May each of you experience a blessed New Year full of hope, love, healing, grace and peace.

*Sylvia Becker
Council Chair*

Grace Under Pressure

(Wordsearch)

F G R W C F P P P E G C H N A
 A X W O U E R E C Y L O L O C
 I N S F I O L A A O E V T I C
 T M O U M V R E R C C E Y N E
 H Q T I R G A D B O E N M U P
 C Z S K T R T S N R A A K M T
 Y E V O L C E N Z V A N N M A
 F O R G I V E N E S S T H O N
 U N I O N C B L D K T B I C C
 U N V S T G E U F E D R G O E
 J Y T I N I R T V E R E N Z N
 V C O M M U N I T Y R Y D T E
 A N F P X J P H O O F A X O Z
 S J B D S G X F Y J H R R N G
 N O I T A T I D E M L P C S E

ACCEPTANCE
 CELEBRATION
 COMMUNION
 COMMUNITY
 CONNECTION
 COVENANT
 FAITH
 FORGIVENESS
 GOD
 GRACE
 JOY
 LORD
 LOVE
 MEDITATION
 PEACE
 PRAYER
 PROMISE
 REFLECTION
 SAVIOR
 SURRENDER
 TRINITY
 UNION

[Click here to print the WordSearch](#)

Are You Near, Do You Hear Me?

I live in a world where speed is the norm
 I have this need for quick solutions
 Already the promises made in the 2021 resolutions
 Have escaped from my memory
 Perhaps you can relate to this too!

So with Jesus, responses do not necessarily come quickly
 I cry, I pray, and I speak aloud and say, are you listening?
 This world is my boat and it feels more like a sinking ship
 You seem to sleep when you are most needed
 This storm seems of little concern as I shiver in fear
 Are you near, do you hear me?

Do you not notice my tears or feel my loss
 I know I am demanding and never seem to get enough of
 you
 I look for some tangible signs of you as this longing is
 insatiable
 I am spoiled for you have graced me with these special
 moments
 When I recognize you in a smile or the feeling I get when
 a stranger passes me by
 Are you near, do you hear me?

There are days when it is challenging just to rise from
 sleep

But courage finds an opening within and beauty and grati-
 tude play
 The sun bursts forth in an array of glory and all I can say
 is thank you Lord
 I regret my doubts but I know you have seen and heard
 this song before
 I am human and so were you, who better to grasp these
 words
 Are you near, do you hear me?
 Beverly



**Trinity Evangelical
 Lutheran Church**
 Edmonton, Alberta
 2019

At Last

Trinity's updated photo direc-
 tory is back from the printers.
 If you and your family had
 your picture taken you are
 entitled to a free copy of the
 directory. You can drop by to
 pick it up Monday to Friday
 during office hours. Copies
 are also available for purchase
 at \$12.50 + GST for those
 who would like to have a
 church directory but did not
 participate in this project.

Comings, Goings and Celebrations

November 24, 2019 to January 17, 2021

Baptisms

Carter

Phillip

Alexander

Weddings

Kennedy & Emanuel -- July 4, 2020

Silvia & Martin -- August 15, 2020

Christihne & Daniel -- September 19, 2020

Deaths

Ida Kerker - November 29, 2019

Ursula Carl - December 6, 2019

Rainer Karge - December 17, 2019

Irma Seutter - January 21, 2020

Gary Formanski - January 29, 2020

Erna Marks - February 3, 2020

Walter Kunkel - February 24, 2020

Merle Prinsen - March 15, 2020

Sigmund Kerker - May 8, 2020

Olga Lukat - June 18, 2020

Martha Fester - June 27, 2020

Mathilde Kaiser - July 3, 2020

Hendrika Reintjes - July 10, 2020



Patricia Ewasko - July 24, 2020

Fred Elgert - September 4, 2020

Karen Sklarchuk - October 11, 2020

Melida Kunz - October 16, 2020

Johannes Meyer - October 17, 2020

Eugenia Strekies - November 1, 2020

Fred Whiting - November 6, 2020

Brian Francis - November 9, 2020

Elaire Berube - November 10, 2020

Hildegard Buzenus - November 27, 2020

Ernie Lotz - December 8, 2020

Ida Jager - January 9, 2021

Phyllis Rinas - January 10, 2021

Update on the Annual Meeting

At the December council meeting Church Council decided to:

1. Proceed with compiling a bulletin of reports for 2020, to be distributed by the end of February 2021, to include at least:
 - a. Report from Church Council
 - b. Reports from the Pastors
 - c. Music Director's report
 - d. Financial Report for 2020
 - e. Interim Budget for 2021
2. Defer holding our annual meeting until such time as we can safely meet in person to do so
3. Hold a vote on an interim budget for 2021 using electronic and mail voting by the end of February (details still to be determined and communicated)
 - a. Electronic and telephone forum(s) will be set up in advance of the voting to permit members to get clarification of any issues they may have with the proposed interim budget
4. Hold our annual meeting within 60 days of when we are allowed to meet in-person (i.e. when we are allowed to meet in-person with up to 100 people)
5. We will issue an update to the information in the annual report in advance of this meeting that would cover information from 2020 and for 2021 during Covid restrictions
6. Elections are being deferred until such time as we can meet in person, people are being asked to continue in their current capacity until new elections are held, council will appoint people to fill any vacancies in the interim

The Trinity Team is a publication of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Edmonton, Alberta. The Team is published 3-4 times a year - in August, in December, and in April under the auspices of the Communications Committee.

Next publication date:
March 2021.

The Team is intended to serve the members of Trinity Lutheran Church as a comprehensive communications tool. The editors welcome your comments or questions. Please submit all Team articles, information, comments or questions to:

Trinity Office
(office@trinity-lutheran.ab.ca)

or drop them off at the church office - Attn: Trinity Team

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