



Trinity Team

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
10014 81 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T6E 1W8
Phone: (780) 433 1604
Email: office@trinity-lutheran.ab.ca
Website: www.trinity-lutheran.ab.ca

December 2021

On the Road

Pastor Erin Thomas

It's been a long journey, friends. Trinity has gone through a number of pastoral and leadership changes in the past few years, each with transitions and seasons of their own. And Covid...well, we aren't through the Covid woods just yet. We are getting there, but we are still on the twisting, winding road.

When there is a road, that is.

We know right now, especially in this pandemic time and times of climate change, that we sometimes have a well-marked path to follow. Filled with hair-pin turns, potholes, and icy patches, it's still familiar. We have been on such journeys before and we know a little bit of what to expect. The terrain is familiar.

On the other hand, we are discovering, along with thousands of other congregations, that we are often forced to make the path by walking. We are traversing uncharted territory!

Some of us "explorer-type folks" get really excited about such adventures! Others of us who prefer more known territory, experience greater levels of anxiety and exhaustion. Most of us fall somewhere in between the two. The Great Unknown, love it or hate, sets us on edge.

We argue about how to go back to normal or whether to go back to normal at all; we have differing perspectives on who we really are at our core; little matters blow up into big messes because we are all exhausted and simply cannot handle one more little thing.

Pause.

Stop for a few minutes with me here.

Look around.

Who do you see?

What do you see?

Have we taken time to explore this new path? This new country around us?

Those trees there...those flowering shrubs...these cliffs...that river...this meadow – we have never, ever been in this region before! Yes, it can be terrifying in the sense that we feel a bit lost. However, there is a good deal of beauty, wonder, and discovery to behold.

That smaller path off the trail there, what might happen if we walked down that way instead?

Dare we?

When we stop and take our time to explore our unknown territory, we begin to see some of what's been missing within ourselves. While I'm sure Mary and Joseph were feeling a good deal of anxiety travelling at such a late stage in Mary's pregnancy, they were also likely travelling with family and friends. There would have been magnificent desert landscapes to take in. Perhaps someone would have thought to bring an extra special dessert or drink to share round the fire one evening.

We are in a time of newness and growth, friends. There are many difficult and hard things that come with it. We will be asked not only to explore this new area, but to explore what we might need to heal or change or grow through as we journey forward.

However, we are not bereft of beauty or relationships. It's a wonderful gift to be able to pause and look around...to see one another's faces here...to smell the flowers growing along the road...to watch the deer and foxes make their homes in this place...to re-discover God in ways we have not been able to before.

This season, take your time. We are changing and transitioning, yes. But to do that in ways that are healthy invites us to explore the countries we are passing through. We do so respectfully and thoughtfully, we do so acknowledging

the life already growing and living here, we do so giving thanks for each step on this journey.

When we shift our perspective from a singular gaze on a singular destination, we are free then to find joy, strength, encouragement, and nourishment along the road.

Where might you be finding new life and wonder today?



Inside this issue:

• On the Road	1
• Bishop's Message	2
• Advent: Zeit der Vorbereitung	3
• What About the Donkey?	3
• In Those Days...	4
• God of the Living	4
• Worship Opportunities	5
• Sunday School Lesson	6
• Kids Page	7
• Meet Our Pastors	8
• Road to Bethlehem	9
• Christmas Thoughts	10
• Rise Up - Set Down	10
• Journeys of Mary & Joseph	10
• Council Christmas Message	11
• Waiting and Hoping	11
• Remembering	12

Bishop's Message

December 2021 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear friends and family in Christ--

In the reading from Luke for the first Sunday in Advent, we are confronted with a portion of Luke's apocalypse. It is a reading where Jesus offers up images that we associate with the end. Perhaps it is the end as it pertained to the Jerusalem temple. Or maybe Christ's words were meant in a more far-reaching sense, pointing to the end of all things. We have often read these words in such a way. It is hard not to. These words speak of the Son of Man coming upon a cloud and of creation itself showing signs of the coming of the end. We can get so caught up looking for what is coming, at watching for the signs of this final time, that we don't hear the good news.

And, yes, there is good news, even though it seems overshadowed by these visions of rapture that dance through our heads. There is good news, even as Jesus warns us to hold fast against what is coming. The good news is this. The kingdom of God is near or in some translations, at hand. Now, that could be read as part of the foreboding nature of this text. The Kingdom of God is near? Yikes, I better shape up. God will be here soon. But it is also good news. The kingdom of God is near. God will soon usher in God's kingdom and will make everything right.

But I will offer to you another thought on the word "near". The word in this context is the Greek *eggus*, which can mean nearby, both in time and in position. The Kingdom of God approaches and will soon be here. But another use of the word is to indicate nearness as a way of accessing God. The Jews, for example, were near to God. God was their God, and they were God's people. The nearness wasn't about God soon arriving. It was about having God close at hand, able to be accessed. Israel saw their relationship with God in such a way. God wasn't distant. God wouldn't show up one day. God was with them already.

This understanding situates itself well with the story of the Israelites all through their history. God was not a distant God to them. God was a warrior, who fought for them. God was the one who helped Moses split open a sea or gave David the power to overcome Goliath. God brought the people together as a nation and God, they believed, abided in the temple. That was where God was to be found. That was the centre of all things.

Now, we might not agree with their cosmology, or the idea of God being limited to the temple in any way, but there is something so intriguing and beautiful about God being near like that, as near as a family member or friend. One to reach out to and take comfort in and gain strength from. We might not think of God that way but consider that this was the same God who came down in the person of Christ, God incarnate, to walk amongst God's people. Jesus lived and ate and wept and laughed and healed and taught and slept and died right along with us. He was as near to his disciples as I am when I sit with my family at the end of the evening. He was near and he loved them, and they loved him.

The nearness of God does not stop there. Even after Je-

sus departed again from his disciples, he gifted the Holy Spirit to the disciples and to the world. That is the Spirit who sustains us and guides us and who knows us more than we know ourselves. That is the nearness of the Spirit. As near to us as our own flesh.

To say that God's kingdom is near is to say that God is present in our lives. To say the kingdom is near is to say that even as we struggle with the realities of a harsh world, that seem only to get darker with the passing of time, God's kingdom is still near. We may wonder what can stand against such anger and hate, and yet the answer is as close as the Spirit. God can. God's kingdom, which we are called to serve, is that light which represents the very best that we can be, inspired and empowered to be such by the Spirit. The kingdom, which stands for mercy and hope, love and forgiveness, service and community, stands firmly opposed to the darkness all around us and it is near. As close to us as our own skin. It just has not been fully realized yet. But what a hope we have, knowing it is there. By knowing that, we can stand strong, because God is with us. We can persevere because the Spirit sustains us. The kingdom is near and so we can go on.

I can't think of a better way to start Advent. The Kingdom of God is near. God holds us fast. God, in Christ, came once to a manger in Bethlehem and the Holy was given flesh. The Christ will come again and then that which is near but not yet fully realized, will be in all its glory and the world, finally, will be made right.

During this Advent, may you know the nearness of God, now and throughout your days. May it give you hope.

Blessing and Peace in Christ,
Rev. Prema

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

1 John 3:1



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

ADVENT SERVICES

WEDNESDAYS
DECEMBER 01, 08, 15, 22
6:50-7:30PM

Advent: Zeit der Vorbereitung auf den Frieden

Wir nähern uns Weihnachten, der Geburt Jesu; es ist Advent, Zeit der Schwangerschaft und Erwartung, denn wenn wir auf einen lieben Menschen warten, ist es notwendig, vorsichtig, lieb und freudig zu warten.

Das neue liturgische Jahr beginnt mit ADVENT. Es ist eine schöne Zeit, da sie uns auf die Feier des Weihnachtsfestes des Herrn vorbereitet. Es ist die Schwangerschaftszeit Gottes in der Welt; es ist eine Zeit freudiger Vorfriede. Advent ist eine Zeit der Freude und Hoffnung, da wir eine Begegnung mit Gott haben. Er kommt uns entgegen!

Da der Besucher der kommt sehr wichtig ist, muss alles sehr gut vorbereitet werden, vor allem das Herz! Wie macht man das? Vielleicht ist es an der Zeit, der evangelischen Kreativität Raum zu geben. Baby Jesus kommt, um uns daran zu erinnern, dass wir Brüder sind, seine Familie. So muss sich sicherlich die ganze Familie vorbereiten, sich zusammenschließen, damit die Party noch schöner wird.

In dieser Adventszeit führen uns drei große biblische Gestalten in den vorgesehenen biblischen Texten zum Weihnachtsfest: Jesaja, der Prophet, Johannes der Täufer, der Vorläufer Jesu, und Maria, die Mutter Jesu.

Jesaja verkündet, wie der kommende Messias sein wird. Der Prophet erschüttert das Gewissen der Menschen, um in ihnen die Haltung des Wartens auf das Kommen des Herrn zu schaffen. Er fordert Reinheit des Herzens. Johannes der Täufer zeigt, wer der Messias ist, wer kam. Er ist Vorbild für Sparsamkeit und leidenschaftliches Warten. Maria ist die Schlüsselfigur des Advents. Darin findet sich der Höhepunkt des Wartens Israels. Sie nimmt das fleischgewordene Wort am treuesten an, da sie es in ihre eigene Brust und in ihr eigenes Herz aufnimmt und es voll und ganz hingibt, ihr Leben und Blut. Sie ermöglicht das erste Weihnachtsfest und ist Vorbild und Wegweiser für das Kommen Gottes zur Menschheit.

Erwartungen auf der Glaubensebene stimmen nicht immer mit unseren menschlichen Erwartungen überein. Die Konsumgesellschaft hypnotisiert uns mit faszinierenden Geschenkangeboten, verschiedenster Art, die unser Geld wollen. Viele Menschen erleben zu dieser Zeit des Jahresendes ein Drama, eine große Spannung zwischen der Wahl der Geschenke und der Kontrolle, nicht zu viel auszugeben.

Es ist jedoch wichtig, nicht zu vergessen, dass Weihnachten in unserem Glauben immer vom Thema des Friedens begleitet wird: „Friede auf Erden“, sangen die Engel. In diesem historischen Moment so vieler Kriege, Guerillas, Machtkämpfe, Gewalt aller Art versuchen wir alles, um in unserem Leben, in unseren Häusern, in unseren Vierteln und Städten die Bande der Liebe und des Friedens herzustellen. Frieden beginnt im Herzen und zu Hause. Und dieses Jahr „Frohe Weihnachten“ zu wünschen, wird auch zu einem Gebet und einer Verpflichtung für den Frieden!

P. Sigmar Reichel – Advent 2021



What About the Donkey?

Distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem: 80 miles.

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Bethlehem the town of David...” (Luke 2:4)

Going “up” to Bethlehem is an important clue about the terrain, meaning more Judean mountains. The range encompasses both Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Galilee is north of Jerusalem; Bethlehem is to the south. The shortest route, 70 miles more or less as the crow flies, is through Samaria. Given the antipathy between Jews and Samaritans, Joseph and Mary likely skirted the area and went around the longer way.

Assuming an average pace of 2.5 mph, 20 miles a day, would mean a trip of four 8-hour days. Some speculation puts it at seven days, or ten. I think four days is about right. Mary in her late teens, strong, healthy peasant stock; even pregnant and near delivery she could have managed walking it.

That is *if* they didn’t bother with a donkey. With a donkey, no question, it was a seven- to ten-day trip. Yes, all the images de-

pict Mary seated on a donkey. I suggest they are wrong.

I’ve hiked with pack burros; it is slower. A donkey will pretty much set its own pace and not usually the one you would like. You may be in front tugging a lead, but the donkey is in charge. You get to walk ahead and pretend you’re in command.

And I’ve ridden them. When donkey decides it’s had enough nonsense from you, it will simply stop, and there’s an end to everything until it decides otherwise. A donkey would have delayed them.

Even if they did have a donkey, I bet she walked. Donkeys aren’t fit for riding (again, yes, there are people who enjoy it over short distances; I’m not one of them at any distance). Eighty miles riding a donkey, picturesque as might be, still works out to, oh, let’s see, yes, 80 miles riding a donkey. Sensible people that they were, they walked.

Aleteia.org: Russell E. Saltzman

published on 01/24/17



In those days...

Luke 2:1a

Grace to you and peace from God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“On the road to Bethlehem.” I wonder where our minds go with this.

I’m guessing that most will immediately go to the familiar nativity story from Luke’s Gospel. “In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered” (or is that “taxed”?) “On the road to Bethlehem” can bring out good, cozy feelings about a small nuclear family in a warm, safe manger with beautiful angels singing and friendly shepherds visiting. Maybe there’s even a star and some Wise Men... but that’s a slightly different story.

We often like these kinds of images to help us to feel that there *is* goodness, safety, and beauty in this world. This helps us to keep on going and to feel some reprieve to the hectic, busy, cold world that we so often experience. There is something nice about hearing the story that God comes among us as a perfect, small baby and that everything will work out fine.

While that is very much something that we need, it is not the only *part* of the story and if we only get and project this limited snippet from our faith tradition, we will soon find that this *partial* “faith” is insufficient for our and others’ lives.

The road to Bethlehem *does* include Joseph and Mary and the angels and the shepherds but sometimes we may gloss over that the road would have been very dangerous for a young pregnant woman and her unborn child. Or that the angels would likely have been very frightening (likely not small, chubby cherubs but huge, terrifying soldiers from God). We also often miss that the shepherds who were called to be witnesses of “God-with-us” were more than likely to be dirty, rough, and certainly most unreliable witnesses in a court of law at the time. This speaks to the reality that God comes not just to the good parts of the world but to the whole of this world that is dangerous and scary and dirty and rough and unreliable. God comes into situations that are questionable (an unwed, though engaged, couple).

On the road to Bethlehem includes those from other faith traditions that see something that points to Jesus from their experience. Sometimes these “others” are more able to see what God is up to than we ourselves who feel we have been so closely connected to God for our whole lives.

On the road to Bethlehem includes the soldiers sent by Herod with orders to kill all the babies 2 years old and younger. There are terrifying forces at work that use power to keep power. Others, even innocents are harmed on the road. This may even happen *to* us. Hopefully *we* will not be the ones exercising this power to keep what we feel is ours.

On the road to Bethlehem includes Rachel of Genesis, Joseph the dreamer’s mother, who died on the road, in childbirth. She is buried but not forgotten. We too have losses along the way. The road we travel continues but our

memories of God’s good companions for us stay with us.

On the road to Bethlehem includes Naomi and Ruth who traveled out of necessity (for Naomi) and devotion (for Ruth). Mary and Joseph also travelled because of forces much larger than themselves. There are so many things more powerful than we are. We often are on a road out of necessity. God is working through us and others to make something good come from anything we experience.

On the road to Bethlehem includes Samuel, sent by God to anoint a new king for the chosen people. This road is dangerous because King Saul had become a problem and he knew his time was limited. What new direction are we being directed to go by God? There will very likely be dangers, but the new direction is necessary because what *is* now is ending.

These days, we are on the road to Bethlehem. God is with us. May we travel together through good and difficult times. May we see others’ needs and respond in love as God calls us to.

God’s peace be with you always.

Pastor Calvin

In community with one another, we are called to be the embodiment of God’s love in the world.

God of the Living

COVID 19 (and its variants) has led us all into a complex time of living and working. To me psalms and poems offered guidance and comfort. I was grateful to be able to encounter some poets anew and today I would like to introduce to you the writer Jan Richardson and her poem: “God of the Living.” Reading it, you might discover more about the relationship she makes between us and others, and between us and the sacred.

Pastor Ingrid

God of the Living

“Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”

- Luke 20:38

When the wall between the worlds is too firm, too close.

When it seems all solidity and sharp edges.

When every morning you wake as if flattened against it,
its forbidding presence fairly pressing the breath

from you all over again.

Then may you be given a glimpse of how weak the wall
and how strong what stirs on the other side,

breathing with you and blessing you still,

forever bound to you

but freeing you

into this living,

into this world

so much wider

than you ever knew.

From “The Cure for Sorrow”, Jan Richardson

Called into Worship

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

Advent / Christmas Worship Opportunities

- Sunday - Dec 5 - 9:30 AM German/11:00 AM English Advent 3 service (Andrea Wilhelm preaching)
- Wednesday - Dec 8 – Advent Devotion – 6:50 PM
- Sunday - Dec 12 - 1:00 – 4:00PM – Christmas Nativity Petting Zoo with/at Holy Trinity Anglican Church (10037 84 St)
- Wednesday - Dec 15 – Advent Devotion – 6:50 PM
- Sunday - Dec 19 - 9:30 AM German/11:00 AM English Advent 4 service
- Tuesday - Dec 21 – Blue Christmas – 7:00 PM
- Wednesday - Dec 22 – Advent Devotion – 6:50 PM
- Friday - Dec 24: Christmas Eve (RSVP requested)
 - ☆ 4:00 PM – Outdoor Family Style Christmas service (indoor if inclement weather)
 - ☆ 6:00 PM – German Christmas Eve Candlelight
 - ☆ 8:00 PM – English Christmas Eve Candlelight
- Saturday – Dec 25 – no Christmas Day services this year
- Sunday - Dec 26 - 9:30 AM German/11:00 AM English – first Sunday of Christmas
- Dec 31/Jan 1 – no New Years' services this year
- Sunday – Jan 2 - 9:30 AM German/11:00 AM English – second Sunday of Christmas – Pastor Orlow Lund, guest preacher

**** Please call to Reserve a Seat ****

- ☆ Please RSVP by calling the office (780 433 1604) if you plan to attend any of the Christmas Eve services. Covid restrictions limit us to 1/3 of fire code capacity. If we reach capacity in the sanctuary, overflow seating will be available in the Luther Centre with a live video feed (capacity restrictions would apply to the 4:00 PM outdoor service if we must move inside because of inclement weather, so please RSVP if you plan to attend the 4:00 PM service as well). Remember too that the 6:00 PM and 8:00 PM candlelight services will be livestreamed and can be watched on our YouTube channel either live or any time after the services. (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVSeA7TKMG_x632gIGnkgGQ/videos)



Sometimes the holidays wear us down and we feel unable to live up to expectations of joy or celebration at Christmas. If you are struggling in such a place, please be welcome to attend our **Blue Christmas 2021 service**. It will be a time of reflection, meditation, and making space for difficult feelings and circumstances.

When: Tuesday, December 21st at 7 PM
Where: Trinity Lutheran Church sanctuary



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

- Outdoor Family Sing-A-Long - 4:00pm
- German Service - 6:00pm
- English Service - 8:00pm

Please call the Church Office to register: 780-433-1604



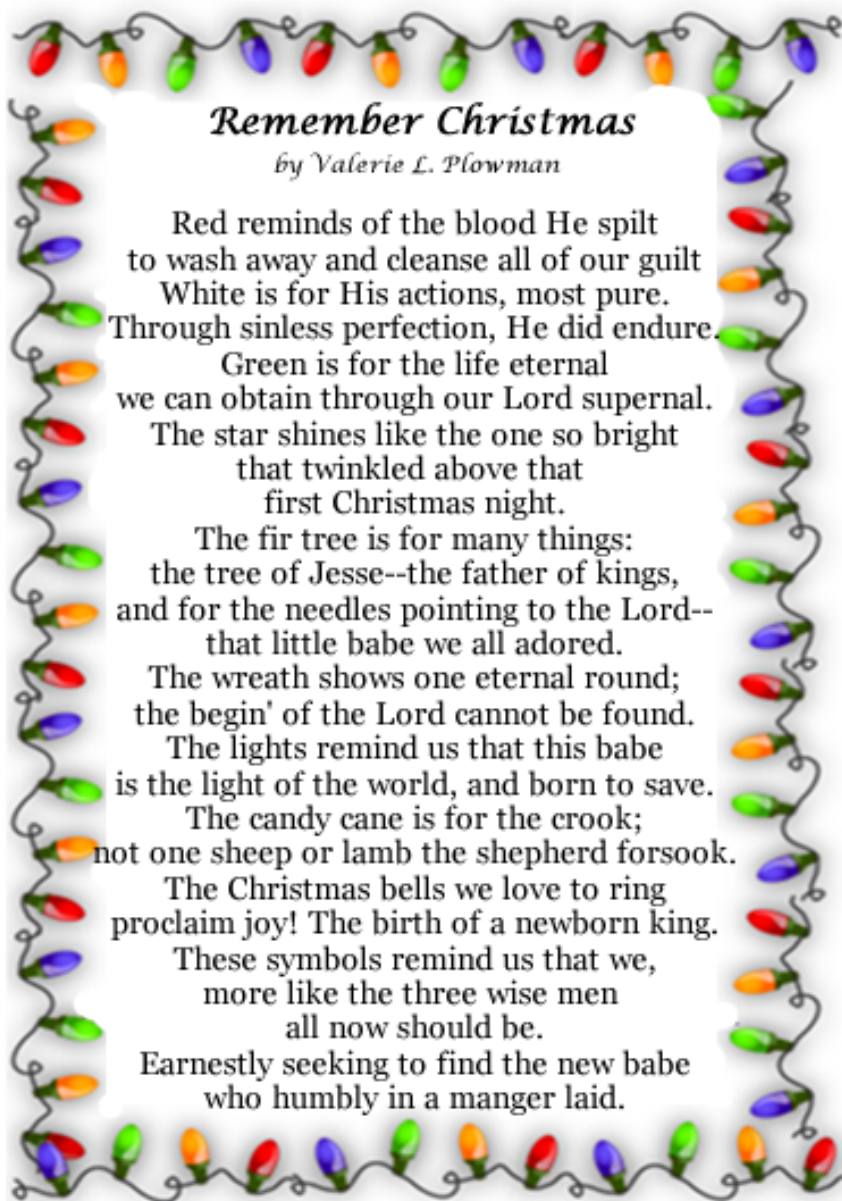

A Sunday School Lesson Remembered

shared by Connie Samycia

This poem is one of my favorite Christmas poems written by Valerie L. Plowman. I remember when I taught Sunday School that I based the lesson around the symbols of Christmas. To help the children really make a connection, we made goodie bags for each child to take home, so they could share the lesson with their family. Some of the treats I used were:

- * Red – Christmas M & M's
- * Green – Christmas M & M's
- * White – White Yogurt Mini Pretzels
- * Star - We cut stars out of paper and used Starburst Candy.
- * Fir Tree - I brought green paint sample cards and cut them in the shape of a triangle and glued the star on the top (Bottom right image).
- * Wreath – I made donut shaped cookies and put green royal icing on it with dark green decorating sprinkles.
- * Lights – The author had already put lights around the poem, but I brought a strand of lights and had them plugged in.
- * Candy Cane – I used candy canes. ☑
- * Bells – I put a little bell in each bag and had laced it with metallic pipe cleaner so they could wear it around their wrist or easy to hold to ring the bell.

Source: [9 Symbols to Help You To Remember the Meaning of Christmas - Babywise Mom](#)



Kids Christmas Page



The Christmas Story

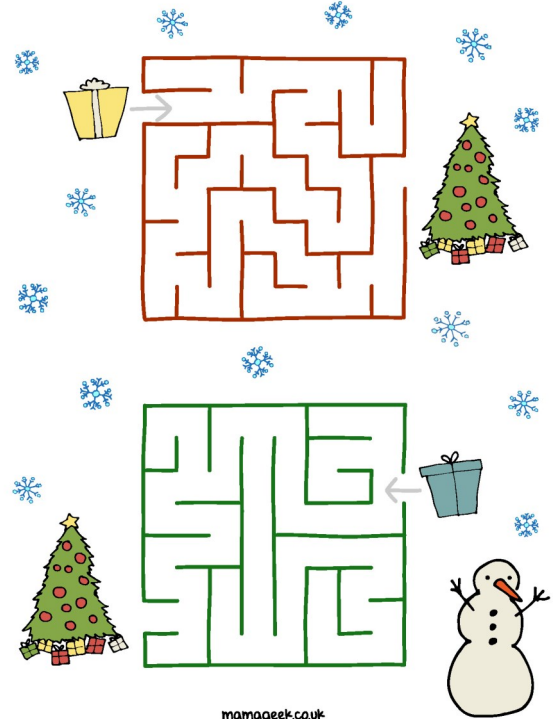
X D S W I S E M E N M Y R R H
 Y W Y L O N A N G E L K P M E
 D V Y K E K U C Q M R E E D I
 L E U N A M M E G A S B O E E
 S W Y X X P A Y M N E N H A H
 H T G O L D R C E G K A S P I
 K I A T I C Y C A E B T E E S
 B Z V R A K N A Y R I S O J M
 V D W T C I Z N P S O H G E E
 B E T H L E H E M J A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

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| ANGEL | GIFTS | MANGER |
| BETHLEHEM | GOLD | MARY |
| CAMELS | HOLY SPIRIT | MYRRH |
| CATTLE | INCENSE | SHEPHERDS |
| DONKEY | JESUS | STAR |
| EAST | JOSEPH | WISEMEN |
| EMMANUEL | MAGI | |

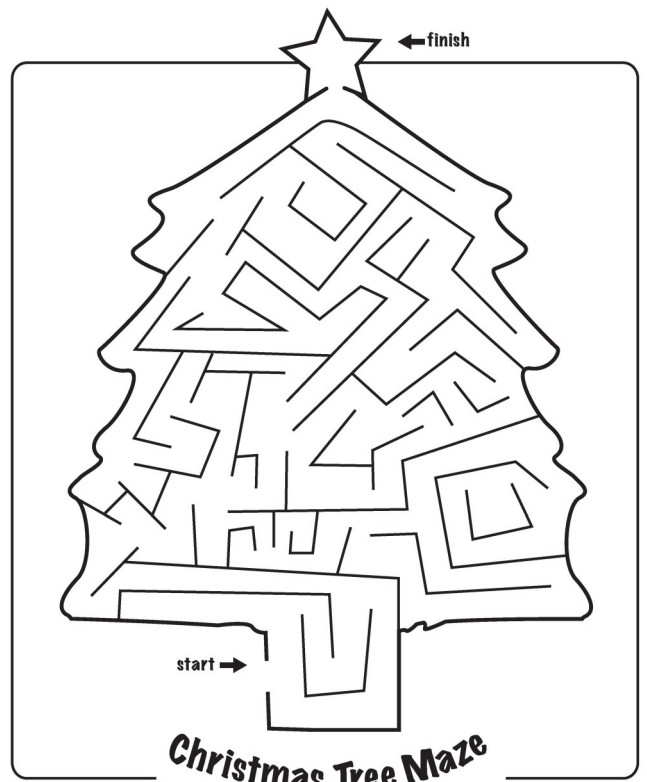
©http://www.activitiesforkids.com

Christmas Mazes

Can you help to deliver the presents to the Christmas tree?



mamageek.co.uk





CHRISTMAS ANIMALS:
AN OUTDOOR PETTING ZOO
EVENT!

Come and learn about the Nativity with live animals provided by Thistle Hill Farms

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12TH
1-4PM
HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH
10037 84TH AVE
ADMISSION: FREE, HOWEVER A FREWILL OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN

Hosted by Holy Trinity Anglican Church and Trinity Lutheran Church

[Click here for a printable image of this page](#)

Meet Our Pastors

My name is Calvin Skriver and I am one of your new interim pastors here at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church. I have been asked to help with leading some services, some visiting and simply being some “fresh eyes” in this transitional period (both grieving Pastor Ingrid’s leaving and coming into a new “covid endemic” life).

A little bit about me: I was born in Calgary in July of 1964. My dad has Danish roots, and my mother has German roots (from the Volga area in Russia). My first degree is a BCom. from the U of Calgary and my M.Div. is from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon. I am married to Lori who is a dialysis nurse in Wetaskiwin and together we raised 4 children. Our family has grown to include 4 in-laws and 13 grandchildren who all live in the North-central Alberta area.

Lori and I live on an acreage near Camrose with two dogs, numerous cats, two alpacas, four laying hens and more than a few sheep. (Is anyone interested in Shetland Sheep wool?) We spend more than our share of time renovating a 100-year-old house and maintaining the acreage. If you are interested in some animal time, come for a visit.

I have been a pastor since 1999. My ordained ministry began in Bawlf (11 years), then moved to Lac La Biche (6 years), then to Camrose (5 years) and now here to Trinity. I have been involved in many boards and volunteer positions over the years – I know how important volunteers are to the operation of so many organizations. Before going to seminary, I worked for Alpha Milk Company and the Red Deer Advocate on each company’s business computer systems.

I look forward to ministry with you here at Trinity while you discern which direction God is calling you into. May we together in community find ways to embody God’s love in this community. You are invited to call for a chat sometime. I am only ½ time but I’m sure we can make space for a conversation.

God’s peace be with you always.
Pastor Calvin

Today I wish to take the opportunity to greet you all and, at the same time, introduce myself. I am pastor Sigmar Reichel and since October 27, 2021, I officially work at Trinity Lutheran Church as interim pastor for the German congregation. This was a very special birthday present to me! Some of you already know me, because I had previously officiated some German worship services at Trinity and some of you might know me because I worked for 12 years at St. John's Lutheran Church here in Edmonton.

Now you might be curious to find out a little bit about me. I was born on October 27, 1950 in the south of Brazil, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. I completed my theology studies in Sao Leopoldo /RS -Brazil. Immediately afterwards I finished an additional degree in clinical pastoral training (CPT) in Germany. I was very interested in this course as it improved my knowledge of counseling for people in hospitals or bedridden people who still live at home. When I went back to Brazil, I took over a very poor church district in the south of Brazil. There I had to look after five different congregations. After three years in this church district, I started working with impoverished children and young people in Brazil. This work was supported by a German organization, Kindemothilfe. After 22 years working at this child and youth organization, I took on congregational work again. I was in the Lutheran Church of Guarulhos, in the metropolitan area of Sao Paulo for four years. After these four years I was called to the St. John's Church in Edmonton. Here at the St. John's Church I also had to look after two congregations (German and English). So I had two worship services every Sunday, the seniors' group, confirmation classes and many visits to families and to the sick.

During my entire working time in the various parishes in Brazil, in the work with children and youth, and in the St. John's Church in Edmonton, my wife Gertrud has always accompanied, helped and totally supported me. I've been married to her since 1975. We have three daughters, all of whom are married and live with their families here in Edmonton.

I see the pastoral work in my life as a blessing and a great privilege. Through my work in the different congregations, and also through the social work, I was able to get to know many people with differentiated gifts, ideas and ways of thinking. It is very rewarding when you can exchange thoughts and feelings and learn about good and sad events in the lives of so many people. This is a very strong feeling, especially during a conversation, in prayer, or while blessing a sick person. I feel that in these moments I can help and support people a little bit.

I thank you and feel it as a blessing that Trinity Lutheran Church has called me and now opened the doors for me to work with the German congregation. I am looking forward to working with you. Please call me if I can be of any help! May God richly bless you all.

-Pastor Sigmar Reichel -October 31, 2021.



A Long, Cold Road to Bethlehem

A newly betrothed couple is forced to register for a census in a town far away. The woman is nine months pregnant. When they finally reach their destination after an arduous journey, there is no place to stay. The woman gives birth in a stable.

Scholars and clergy differ on whether the Nativity stories in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew are historical accounts or symbolic narratives of Christianity's beginnings.

But one thing is certain: The world of Mary and Joseph was a difficult and dangerous place, one whose harsh conditions were not fully chronicled in the Gospel accounts of their travails. Writers of the gospels of Matthew and Luke "are so laconic about the [Nativity] event because they assume the reader would know what it was like," said James F. Strange, a New Testament and biblical archeology professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Today, he added, "we have no idea how difficult it was."

Joseph and Mary's hardships would have begun more than a week before the birth of their son, when the couple had to leave their home in Nazareth, in the northern highlands of Galilee, to register for a Roman census.

"It was a fairly grueling trip," said Strange, who annually leads an excavation team at the ancient city of Sepphoris, near Nazareth. "In antiquity, the most we find people traveling is 20 miles a day. And this trip was very much uphill and downhill. It was not simple."

Strange estimates that Joseph and Mary likely would have traveled only 10 miles a day because of Mary's impending delivery.

And the trip through the Judean desert would have taken place during the winter, when "it's in the 30s during the day [and] rains like heck," said Strange. "It's nasty, miserable. And at night it would be freezing."

To protect themselves during inclement weather, Mary and Joseph would likely have worn heavy woolen cloaks, constructed to shed rain and snow. Under their cloaks, the ancient residents wore long robes, belted at the waist. Tube-like socks and enclosed shoes protected the feet, Strange said.

And the unpaved, hilly trails and harsh weather were not the only hazards Joseph and Mary would have faced on their journey south. One of the most terrifying dangers in ancient Palestine was the heavily forested valley of the Jordan River, Strange said. Lions and bears lived in the woods, and travelers had to fend off wild boars. Archeologists have unearthed documents warning travelers of the forest's dangers, he said.

And "bandits, pirates of the desert and robbers" were also common hazards along the major trade routes like the one Joseph and Mary would have traveled, said the Rev. Peter Vasko, a Catholic priest and director of the Holy Land Foundation, an organization that works to retain a Christian presence in Israel and promotes the restoration of sacred Christian sites there. The threat of outlaws often forced solitary travelers to join trade caravans for protection.

Mary and Joseph had to bring their own provisions. "In wineskins, they carried water," said Vasko. "And they carried a lot of bread. . . . Breakfast would be dried bread, lunch would be oil with bread, and herbs with oil and bread in the evening."

The hardships did not end when Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem. Under normal circumstances, he said, the pair would have expected to stay in the spare bedroom of a relative or another Jewish family. However, an overcrowded Bethlehem would have forced Joseph and Mary to seek lodging at a primitive inn.

It is widely agreed that Jesus was born in a cave used for housing animals. But how realistic are the Renaissance images of Joseph,

Mary and the newborn Jesus surrounded by a menagerie of camels, oxen, cows, chickens, pheasants and peacocks?

Not very, according to Strange. Since the stable was part of the inn, the only animals likely to be found there would have been donkeys used for travel--and perhaps a few sheep, he said. And both Strange and Vasko believe overcrowded conditions in Bethlehem on the night of Jesus' birth would have resulted in others being close at hand during Mary's delivery.

"There were others present at the birth of Jesus," Vasko said. "It's human nature to help somebody."

"There's another account of the Nativity . . . where it says that when it was time to have the baby, Joseph went out looking for a midwife," Strange said, referring to a non-canonical gospel written either by James, considered the brother of Jesus, or James the apostle.

Even though Mary could have had help and the cave may have provided some protection from the elements, the "noisy and dirty" conditions under which Jesus was born would have made the event anything but "warm and wonderful and sweet and comfortable," Strange said.

[\(L.A. Times Archive – Dec 23, 1995\)](#)



Christmas Thoughts

A maritime Christmas carol - Hannah Noerenberg

One of my mother-in-law's favorite Christmas carols is set at sea. The German "Es kommt ein Schiff geladen" shows God's son arriving in a ship, with the mast being the Holy Spirit and the main sail being Charity. This song reminds us that Jesus's journey took him from Bethlehem to Golgatha and that we are invited to join him on this path as well. This song is pretty much unknown in English, but the German version is both poetic and powerful. Enjoy!

Es kommt ein Schiff geladen

Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen
Bis an sein' höchsten Bord
Trägt Gottes Sohn voll Gnaden
Des Vaters ewigs Wort

Das Schiff geht still im Triebe
Es trägt ein' teure Last
Das Segel ist die Liebe
Der Heilig' Geist der Mast

Der Anker haft' auf Erden
Da ist das Schiff an Land
Das Wort will Fleisch uns werden
Der Sohn ist uns gesandt

Zu Bethlehem geboren
Im Stall ein Kindelein
Gibt sich für uns verloren
Gelobet muss es sein

Und wer dies Kind mit Freuden
Umfangen, küssen will
Muss vorher mit ihm leiden
Groß Pein und Marter viel

Danach mit ihm auch sterben
Und geistlich auferstehn
Das ewig Leben erben
Wie an ihm ist geschehn

A Ship Is Coming Laden

A ship is coming laden
And rich indeed her hoard
The Son of God the Father
And His eternal Word

The ship sails soft, her burden
Of price all measure past
Her mainsail, it is charity
The Holy Ghost her mast

The ship has dropped her anchor
Is safely come to land
Th' eternal Word in likeness
Of man on earth doth stand

In Bethlehem of Judah
A child to us is born
Sing praises ever unto Him
Who saves a world forlorn

Whoever would embrace Him
With joy and holy kiss
Must share with Him the Passion
Through which he comes to bliss

Be with Him in His dying
His resurrection know
Eternal life inherit
That he comes to bestow

Journeys of Mary and Joseph



Nazareth is the hometown of Mary and Joseph. In 5 B.C., just before the birth of Christ, the Romans require them to travel to their ancestral home (they were both of the lineage of King David) of Bethlehem. The couple travels the roughly 130 kilometers (about 80 miles) to the city, where Christ will be ultimately born in a stable and laid in a manger (Luke 2:1 - 20).

Jesus' birth, which occurs on or around the Feast of Trumpets (September 2 in 5 B.C.) fulfills the prophecy found in Micah 5:2. Joseph, on the eighth day after Mary gives birth, takes the family to Jerusalem so that the Lord can be circumcised

according to the law of God (Luke 2:21).

Forty days after Jesus is born, fulfilling the purification requirement of Leviticus 12, Mary and Joseph travel to Jerusalem's temple to pre-

...see Journeys on page 12

Rise Up – Set Down

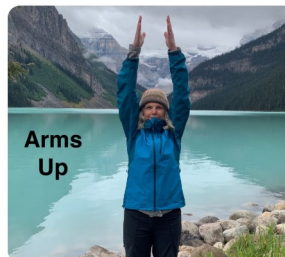
Christmas is about moving our hearts. One easy way to do this is by lifting our arms up and down. Below are pictures guiding you through lifting up the rising sun and then setting the sun down. Coordinate the movement with your breath. Inhale while lifting arms; exhale while bringing arms down. Repeat anywhere from 5 to 20 times.

There is no need to lift your arms super high or in an ideal way. Instead move your arms up and down to what works best for you. Feel into the flow of your arms and relax into the movement up and down. Words in the pictures are a guide only; feel free to replace them.

Lifting your arms up and down will raise your heart rate. Again go at a speed and up to a height that works best for you. This practice also benefits digestion and helps move lymph in your body. There is also something very cleansing that happens when we lift our arms up and down repeatedly. Do daily if you can ☺

Enjoy and Blessings to you this Christmas,

Barbara Ritter



Forgot the words to your favorite Christmas carol?

If that happens to someone looking for German carols, help is on its way! The *Büro für Vergessene Weihnachtslieder* (Bureau of Forgotten Christmas Songs) in Graz, Austria has been providing this service for the past 15 years. People can hum whatever fragments of melodies they can recall over the phone and the intrepid staff at on the other end of the line will retrieve almost any Christmas carol and will mail the relevant song sheets from their collection of 12,000 carols. This year so far, they report already having provided the missing song texts in response to 2,500 requests. <https://www.dw.com/de/b%3C3%BCro-f%C3%BCr-vergessene-weihnachtslieder/a->

Christmas Message from Church Council

I'm looking forward to this edition of Trinity's TEAM! Who doesn't want to read about people's favourite Christmas memories, poems, songs, prayers, and traditions? I hope you find joy in these submissions. I hope you find joy, during this season, in moments when God's love shines through the darkness of your life and the troubles of our world. I hope you are able to see the gifts in spite of the fear. I hope you are reminded of the words of the angel: "Do not be afraid. For see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people."

Church Council recognizes and feels the fear, the grief, the uncertainty. It's possible to feel and live all of these emotions and, simultaneously, feel joy and the gratitude. What a gift that is. We are thankful for all of you, for your support, your prayers, your service, for your love. We give gratitude for our new interim pastors, Pastors Reichel and Skriver, for Pastor Erin, for Pastor Ingrid's time with us, for Sorin, Cherie, Jordan, Agnes, Heinz and Kathy. We give thanks that we are able to meet in person again, as well as continue to offer a virtual opportunity. Our choirs are singing once again, some of our groups are safely gathering, more people are offering to help out in our services, and three Christmas Eve services are scheduled. Thanks be to God!

From all of Church Council, wishing you all, beloved friends, a blessed Christmas. May Christ's joy and peace be with you always.

Sylvia Becker

Waiting and Hoping

One refugee family has been longing and waiting for a safe home and a new life for over 7 years. In 2019, Trinity's Social Justice Committee became aware of the plight of the Salloum family through their family members who live in Edmonton. Alaa, wife Nada and son Ghassan lived in Homs, Syria. They are Orthodox Christian. In 2014, Alaa was kidnapped, imprisoned, and tortured by Jihadi terrorists because of his beliefs. His friend Ali and his wife's uncle were killed. Alaa's family managed to pay a ransom and he was released. Three months later, Alaa fled to Lebanon while his wife and son have stayed in hiding in Syria. Life continues to be very difficult for all of them. In Lebanon, Alaa has no status, very limited ability to find work and has received further threats from ISIS.

With funds remaining in Trinity's Refugee Sponsorship Fund and with additional donations from Holy Trinity Anglican, Holy Spirit Lutheran, and Glory Lutheran, the basic amount needed for sponsorship was secured. Partnering with Canadian Lutheran World Relief and Alaa's Edmonton family the sponsorship process was initiated. The process has been further hindered by the global Covid Pandemic.

In the midst of these challenging circumstances, the family has been hoping and praying to be reunited in Edmonton. This fall, they had an interview with the Canadian embassy, and have been granted refugee status based on grounds of persecution and fear for their lives. They have all passed their medicals and received their vaccinations. Hopefully, they will soon be able to come to Edmonton to start a new life. Once they arrive, there will be further opportunities to support this family financially, with donated items and friendship.

And the angel proclaims again and again, "Fear not. I bring you tidings of great joy."

Please hold this family and all refugees in your thoughts and prayers.

God's Timing - Ted Loder

God of all seasons and senses,
grant us the sense of your timing
to submit gracefully and rejoice quietly in the turn
of the seasons.

In this season of short days and long nights, of
grey and white and cold,
teach us the lessons of endings;
children growing, friends leaving, loved ones dy-
ing, grieving over,
grudges over, blaming over, excuses over.

O God, grant us a sense of your timing.
In this season of short days and long nights, of
grey and white and cold,

teach us the lessons of beginnings;
that such waitings and endings may be the
starting place,
a planting of seeds which bring to birth what is
ready to be born -
something right and just and different, a new
song,
a deeper relationship, a fuller love -
in the fullness of your time.

O God, grant us the sense of your timing.

Comings, Goings and Celebrations

November 28, 2020 to November 27, 2021

Baptisms

Tonowski - April 25, 2021

Semeniuk - August 22, 2021

Weddings

Ashley Spurgeon & Aaron Machado - February 27, 2021

Hillary Kelly & Josh Kruger - July 24, 2021

Alexandra Scivoletto & Daniel Hughes - August 28, 2021

Danae Strelau & Jeremy Cheng - September 25, 2021

Raelynn Barber & Jesse Kane - November 27, 2021

Deaths

Hildegard Buzenus - November 27, 2020

Ernst (Ernie) Lotz - December 8, 2020

Ida Jager - January 9, 2021

Phyllis Rinas - January 10, 2021

Klaus Hemmerling - January 23, 2021

Shirley Georg - January 29, 2021

Erwin Seutter - February 3, 2021

Rosamunde Fercho - February 12, 2021

Erika Schmidt - March 6, 2021



Thea Hildebrandt - April 29, 2021

Frieda Renz - July 5, 2021

Olga Janke - July 15, 2021

Mike Lewicki - July 18, 2021

Michael Reuscher - August 17, 2021

Gunter Franz - August 28, 2021

Bertha Schaepsmeier - September 1, 2021

Alfred Schmidt - November 8, 2021

Robert Rabeeh - November 14, 2021

Ernst Friedenberg - November 24, 2021

Journeys - from page 10

sent him before God. The trip is only 10 kilometers (6 miles) long. His parents make an offering to the temple of two young birds. It is during their visit that a priest named Simeon prophesied about Jesus' mission in life and blessed his parents (Luke 2:22 - 35).

Before Mary and Joseph leave the temple to return home a woman named Anna, a widowed prophetess who lived in the house of God, blesses them as well (Luke 2:36 - 38). The family then makes the short trip back to Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem, Jesus' family is living in a home and not a stable (Matthew 2:11). The wise men (Magi) from the East, guided by a star (an angel), arrive to worship the King of Kings with Mary in attendance (verse 11). After the wise men leave, Joseph is told (in a dream) to flee to Egypt (verse 13). He is informed of this because Herod the Great will soon issue a command that all male children two years old and younger, in and around Bethlehem, are to be put to death (Matthew 2:16). Herod's cruel actions fulfill a prophecy regarding the slaughter of innocent children (Jeremiah 31:15).

Their journey from Bethlehem to what is Egyptian-controlled territory (which was outside the jurisdiction of Herod) was at least 65 kilometers (40 miles).

After Herod dies in early 4 B.C., [Joseph has a dream](#) where an angel tells him it is safe to return to Israel. Mary and the family's

trip to and from Egypt is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy (Hosea 11:1). They soon begin their travel back to Judea and Bethlehem. However, as Mary and Joseph approach Judea, it is discovered that Herod Archelaus, the eldest surviving son of Herod the Great, is the new ruler of the area (Matthew 2:22). Like his father, Archelaus rules with tyranny and cruelty. John Gills' Exposition of the Bible states that one time he sent his entire army into Jerusalem's temple, at Passover, in order to kill 3,000 men suspected of sedition.

Joseph's fears about living within Judea are confirmed when God sends him a warning in a dream. The family continues their travels northward to their hometown of Nazareth (Matthew 2:22 - 23). The city is part of Galilee, which is ruled by another son of Herod the Great named Herod Antipas. This son had a slightly less violent disposition than Archelaus.

The travels of Mary and Joseph from [Egyptian territory](#) all the way north to Nazareth is a journey of at least 170 kilometers (106 miles, see Luke 2:39 - 40)! Jesus spends his childhood and young adult years living in Nazareth (which fulfills the prophecy stated in Matthew 2:23).

After the death of his step-father sometime between his 12th and 30th birthday, Jesus continues to live in [Nazareth](#) until he journeys to [Capernaum](#) to begin his public ministry.

From <https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/the-journeys-of-mary-and-joseph.html>

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 2022.

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

© Trinity Lutheran Church, 2021

Source should be acknowledged if material reproduce in whole or in part.