

Bethany Free Lutheran Church Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2020

Thanksgiving Will Not be Canceled

Martin Rinkart was called to pastor the Lutheran church in Eilenberg, Germany in 1618, just as the 30 Years War was beginning. It was one of the bloodiest wars in history, but Rinkart kept faithfully serving his congregation for 32 years.

Eilenberg was a walled city, which resulted in it being an overcrowded refuge for people trying to escape the terror around them. Those who descended upon Eilenberg and the various armies that marched through it brought with them many diseases. The war also caused ruined crops and an extreme famine. At times 30 or 40 people fought in the streets over a dead cat or crow. A plague swept through Eilenberg in 1637 and claimed the lives of more than 8,000 people in the small town in that year alone.

The church superintendent left town for "a change of air" and never came back. The town's other clergy all died. During the worst of the plague, Rinkart was the only pastor left in town. He did mass funerals for 40 to 50 persons a day. He buried 4,480 people in 1637, including his first wife.

Just as the plague was beginning to hit his town, Rinkart wrote a hymn. A person might expect the song would be one that would fit in the blues category, moaning "Woe is me." But instead the hymn Rinkart wrote is in the Thanksgiving section of the hymnal. In the midst of all that was going on, God helped Rinkart to write the words, "Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices; who wondrous things hath done, in whom His world rejoices. Who from our mother's

arms hath blessed us on our way, with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today."

Rinkart knew that even though war and plague and death was all around him, God was still good. We have a virus to contend with, a world full of division and conflict and economic problems. But God is still good and we still have reason to give thanks.

A recent news article asked the question if Thanksgiving would be canceled. There might not be large gatherings like previous years, but more than ever we need to give thanks. We need to get our eyes off of a constant focus on the problems and concerns and pray for eyes to see how good God is and the good things He is doing. The Lord is still, as Rinkart wrote, "The one eternal God, Whom earth and heaven adore; for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore!"

The prophet Habakkuk also lived in difficult times. His country had wandered from the Lord and was about to be overtaken by the wicked Babylonians. And yet God inspired him to write: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Because of God's grace and goodness, thanksgiving is never canceled. No matter what is on the table or who is around the table, we rejoice and give thanks, because God is good, all the time.

—Pastor Craig

Worship With Us

Our 11:00 a.m. in building Worship Services continue. To comply with the state regulations regarding COVID-19, everybody is asked to wear a facial covering and observe social distancing by sitting six feet apart from other families while in the pews. Free masks are available on the entryway table.

We are also continuing to live stream our 11:00 a.m. Sunday worship services on Facebook Live. Devotional videos are also posted on our congregation's YouTube channel. Links to both of those sites can be found on our website: bethanyfree.com.

Sunday School

Sunday School has started again and meets each Sunday at 9:30 a.m. We have three classes: one for adults, one for youth and one for younger children. We also want to include students via the internet who need to stay at home. For more information contact the church office by calling 505-325-2925 or email us at bethanyfree.com.

Men's Breakfast Saturday

Nov. 7 at 8:00 a.m.

If you'd like to help prepare breakfast, please talk with Pastor Craig.



Youth Group Nov. 8 6:00 p.m.

Our youth group will meet at Pastor Craig's house to play some games, have some snacks and talk about giving thanks. All youth 6th grade and above are invited.



Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) Meeting Thursday Nov. 12 at 11:00 a.m. downstairs.

Everyone is asked to bring a sack lunch. All ladies are invited.

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes Due Nov. 15

Empty shoeboxes, labels and information about Operation Christmas Child are available in the back of the sanctuary. Just follow the directions on the information provided and bring your box to church by Nov. 15. The shoeboxes will then begin their journey to needy children around the world.

Multipurpose Building Project

Our congregation is considering building a multipurpose building in our overflow parking lot. The vision is to have a building with a small gym, kitchen, bathrooms, showers and some storage. It could be used for a variety of activities and a tool for outreach serving kids, youth and adults. Details and drawings of the proposed building are on our website: bethanyfree.com. We'll have a special meeting following the worship service on Sun. Nov. 15 to discuss the building and make a decision about moving forward. You're encouraged to be in prayer and to contact the church office if you have questions.



Nov. 22 6:00 p.m.

Join us for an animated movie based on the true story of George Muller. Living in England during the 1800s, Muller cared for 10,000 orphans by trusting in God to answer prayer.

Thanksgiving Day Service

Nov. 26 10:00 a.m.

Join us for a time to remember the many good things God has done, praise Him and give thanks for His many blessings.

Coming This Month...

November 7 Men's Breakfast

November 8 Youth Group

November 10 Deacons & Trustees Meeting

November 12 WMF

November 15 Special Congregation Meeting and Shoebox Collection

November 26 Thanksgiving Day Service

