

Bethany Free Lutheran Church Newsletter

DECEMBER 2020

God's Surprises

This past year has been full of things that were unexpected when the year began: the pandemic, riots, wildfires. Much of what happened this year were unwelcome surprises. In my personal life, however, I have had a very pleasant surprise. I have fallen in love with Cathe Erhardt and we are planning to get married in the spring.

Having the privilege of marrying someone like Cathe and getting to be part of a family like hers is a gift I had given up hoping God would bring into my life. But God is gracious beyond what we deserve or expect.

Cathe is an active member of the AFLC congregation in Lake Stevens, Washington. She helps lead worship music there and directs the congregation's preschool. Her late husband, Tim, passed away in June 2017. She has two kids and five grandkids.

After much prayer we have reached the difficult decision that I will be leaving Astoria in April and moving up to Washington where Cathe has been living and near where her daughter and two of her grandkids live. It will be very hard to leave, but I feel it is God's leading. I look forward to having the privilege of being a husband and stepping into the role of a grandfather.

I have had the privilege of serving as pastor of Bethany for over 21 years. The congregation has been so very gracious to me. You have been forgiving of my failures and patient with my shortcomings. You have been encouraging, supportive and kind far beyond what I deserve.

This congregation is God's church. The Lord always has and always will provide for His church. Bethany has a great future because of the promises of God.

Christmas is about God blessing us with a gracious and surprising gift. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). I am very pleasantly surprised that God has given me a wife and family, but it is far more surprising that God would be so gracious to us that He would give His Son to come here to be our Savior. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16).

Some gifts are given at Christmas that are more expensive and valuable than the recipient of the gift expected. Christmas is all about celebrating the gift that is more costly and valuable than any other. The gift cost Jesus His life. It is of such great value that it brings us salvation and life abundant and eternal.

Because of the surprising and wonderful gift of Jesus, we are not overwhelmed by or fearful of surprises that may be unpleasant. This year has had some of those types of surprises. But we continue to rejoice in the gracious gift of Jesus. We have been surprised by the joy and peace and love of Christ, and so we are able to overcome whatever trial comes our way.

May God surprise you with His grace in a fresh way this Christmas season.

—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 also 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.

Men's breakfast will be Sat., Dec. 5 at 8:00 a.m. If you'd like to help prepare the breakfast, please contact Pastor Craig.



Advent Services

We'll be having Advent services on Wed. Dec. 9 and 16 at 7:00 p.m. These are times to worship, sing Christmas carols, pray together and think about Jesus' coming and His promise to come again. The services will also be live streamed on our Facebook page.

WMF Christmas Meeting



Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) will celebrate the Christmas season downstairs on Thur. Dec. 10 at 11:00 a.m. Everyone is asked to bring a sack lunch. All ladies are invited.

Sunday School Christmas Program

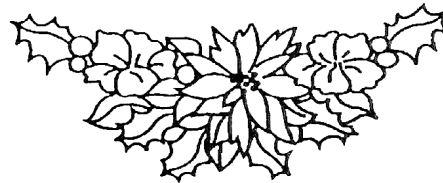
The Sunday school Christmas program is being filmed and will be shown at the church on Sunday, Dec. 13 at 6:00 p.m. After this showing, the video will be posted online. See our website for details.

Live Christmas Nativity

A living nativity scene will take place Sat. Dec 19 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the overflow parking lot. There will be people in costumes, animals and a sharing of the Christmas story. If you'd like to be in the scene or help out in some way talk with Nancy Magathan or Angie Cereghino

Christmas Caroling

Meet us at church at 4:00 p.m. on Sun. Dec. 20 for Christmas caroling to local senior care centers. Come and share in song the good news of Christ's coming. Because of the Covid pandemic we will be unable to enter care centers, but plan to sing outside of the buildings.



Christmas Celebrations

Join us for our special Christmas services as we worship the Lord and celebrate His coming. Bring along a friend.

Christmas Eve candlelight service 10:00 p.m.
 Christmas Day worship service 10:00 a.m.

FLY Convention 2021

The Free Lutheran Youth (FLY) National Convention is being planned for Estes Park, Colorado July 5-10. Please be in prayer for those doing the planning. Youth and their families are encouraged to start thinking about going and fundraising for the trip expenses.

Coming This Month...

- December 5 Men's Breakfast*
- December 8 Deacons & Trustees Meeting*
- December 10 WMF*
- December 9 & 16 Advent Services*
- December 19 Live Nativity*
- December 20 Christmas Caroling*
- December 24 Christmas Eve Service*
- December 25 Christmas Day Service*

