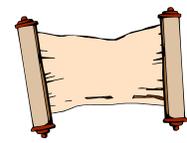


Parish Parchment



The Mountain Grove Lutheran Parish
The Reverend Christine Kirchner, Pastor
1558 Rock Glen Road
Bloomsburg, PA 17815-9207
December 2017

Return Service Requested



This newsletter is sent with a prayer for...

The Mountain Grove Lutheran Parish Newsletter

News and Information About Emanuel, Saint Peter's,
and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Churches

Rev. Christine Kirchner, Pastor

December 2017

Phone: 570-384-4125

E-mail: mglp@frontier.com or pastorkirchner@gmail.com

MISSION STATEMENT OF MOUNTAIN GROVE LUTHERAN PARISH

"To spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through a ministry of worship and outreach"

THE Wonder OF
CHRISTMAS

O Lord, we pray that the visitation of your grace may so cleanse our thoughts and minds that your Son Jesus, when he shall come, may find in us a fit dwelling place; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

I hope all of you had a blessed and happy Thanksgiving full of good food, loved ones, and gratitude. Thank you to all who invited me to share the holiday with you. Being far away from my nuclear family, it is heartwarming to be remembered by my church family. I spent a wonderful Thanksgiving with one of my friends from seminary and her family in Pittsburgh.

But now all the turkey has been consumed and the manic-like rush to Christmas begins.

While I was on internship, serving a large suburban congregation outside of D.C., my supervisor went on maternity leave. For eight weeks I was the acting minister of the congregation. To say I was nervous would have been an understatement! The first Sunday of her maternity leave I arrived at church extra early. I went through the sanctuary making sure everything was in its proper place and ready. I checked in with the organist and the ushers; made sure we had an acolyte and crucifer, saw that the greeters were at their posts. Soon the church was filled with the sounds of faithful people gathering for worship.

As I sat in the sanctuary going over the final check-list in my head, I realized that I had forgotten to put a glass of water by my chair. I checked my watch and realized I didn't have much time, but my throat was already feeling particularly scratchy. And so, I quickly rushed to the kitchen to grab some water.

On my way to the kitchen I glanced down to see Elijah, one of the preschoolers. He was standing there, cookie crumbs all around his face, holding a snack bag with three Oreo cookies inside. Without saying a word, he lifted up the open bag, offering me a cookie. Afraid of being late to my first solo worship, I simply smiled and said, "No thank you."

As I listened to the sound of the water filling the glass, I began to realize how foolish I had been. Here was a child of God with open arms offering me everything he had and I, in my rush, had declined. I set the water down, knelt by Elijah and asked if I could still share a cookie with him. The largest smile spread across his face as he once again opened his bag of treasure and for a moment we consumed an Oreo cookie together.

Of the eight services I led, that first one was the best. Not because everything worked out perfectly. To be honest, I don't remember if the glass of water ever made it to the sanctuary. It was the best because in the midst of it all, there was an openness to the gifts God so freely offers.

As we move into the manic-like pace that begins with the countdown to Christmas, I invite you to glance down. You will see God in the form of a young child with open arms reaching out to you, offering you everything he has – love forgiveness, promise, and hope.

In our needs, agendas and weakness we might politely smile and simply say, "No thank you," so as to go on with our lives. Or we can reach into the depth of the bag of riches he offers.

When Christmas is over I pray you can say it was one of the best ever, not because everything worked out perfectly or because you received everything you wanted – but because in the midst of it all you were open to your God in the arms of a young boy offering you everything he has.

**In Christ's love,
Pastor Christine**

PRAYER LIST UPDATE:



The families and friends of Richard Spoide (Susie Spudes), Joyce Fisher (Mark Hartzell's aunt), Marilyn Broadt (Janet Kelchner's sister).

Also: *Paige Thomas, Dennis Baylor, Drew Gearhart, Annabelle Davis, Nancy Lawrence, Lee Rupert, Wade Buehler, Tim Dirk, Shirley Oxenrider, Joy Pursel, Deana & Donna Midway (Susie Spudes), Tim Spudes (Susie Spudes son), Judy Boody (Janet Kelchner's sister), Wilbur Knecht, Laurie Gunther, Wayne Michael, Dan Pitonyak, Butch Mordon, Jeannette Chulock (Ray Chulock's mom), Diane (friend of Kathy Brior), Robert Hunsinger Sr (Sharon Hartzell's Dad), Linda Adler, Don Davis, Rose Casazza & family (Dale Michael), Dakota (Dale Michael), Robyn Baker, Donna Dalesandro (Bill Brior's sister), Joe & Cathy Petruncio (Dale Michael), John Adler, Elaine Stauffer (Dale Michael), Dick Baker, Julia Galatis (Kathy Brior), Denise Zaruta (Michelle Bower's sister), Wayne Spudes Jr., Rita Kenna, Richie, Pastor Jenn & Rob Kopacz, Sandy Ortman (Dale Michael), Carol Ann, Buddy & Wendy Jastremsky Day, Mary Isabel Phillips (Vicki Bolinsky's mom), David Pooley (Dale Michael), Janet Matyas, Karen Baylor, Sandee Knecht, Carol & Debbie Chyko, Lindsay, Jerry Fisher (Susie Spudes brother), Jack Millard, Patsy Millard, Heather Hetherington, Jim Bankes, young people of our congregation. Please pray for all the people of MGLP, especially: those in need of healing; those suffering from chronic health issues; & members who are confined to their homes or long-term care facilities. UPDATES: Sharon Hartzell at 384-4107 or shartzell@epix.net*

-----PLEASE REVIEW PRAYER LIST AND UPDATE AS NECESSARY-----

Thursday Night Adult Bible Study

We will be taking a break over the winter months
We will resume again after Easter.
Any questions, please contact Pastor Christine



A BIG thank you to everyone who helped with the Youth Group's bingo fundraiser. Because of your support and generosity, the youth raised over \$6,300. It is a blessing to be part of a community that values and supports its youth and their faith.
Thank you!

A special thanks to all who participated in our Seafarers Bags Outreach Program. We collected 42 bags in all which was 3 more than last year.



Pastor Christine is hosting a Christmas Open House
Sunday, Dec. 10 from 3:00-5:30 pm.
Everyone is welcome to come to the parsonage for some Christmas cookies and fellowship.



The Youth Group will have a lock-in Dec. 22-23 from 7:00 pm – 9:00 am. All youth grades 7-12 are welcome to attend. There will be gingerbread house decorating, games, and Christmas movies. Youth are asked to bring food to share with the group. Questions, ask Pastor Christine and please let her know if you can attend by Dec. 17.

Emanuel is having a **Yuletide Breakfast**
Saturday, Dec. 2, from 7-11 am.

If you are an early bird, help is needed anywhere from 5:30 til 7:30 am. Please contact Brenda Pitonyak if you can help: bpitonya@bloomu.edu, home phone (570) 387-0190, or text (570) 204-8089.



Prayer Ventures for December 2017

1 Give thanks for the work of Lutheran Disaster Response, through the Sierra Pacific Synod and Luther Social Services of Northern California, helping address the needs of those affected by recent widespread wildfires in California. Pray all those suffering loss and distress find hope and support throughout their recovery, rebuilding and healing.

2 We continue to pray for people and communities recovering from the devastation and loss caused by recent hurricanes – especially in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and other locations in the Caribbean, and Gulf Coast and Southeastern states – that they not lose hope, will receive ongoing support and assistance, and will be strengthened and encouraged by our caring for one another.

3 *First Sunday of Advent* Pray to be alert in faith and life in grateful response for the gift of Jesus Christ breaking into the darkness of the world with love and mercy and for the promised return of our Lord.

4 We remember in our prayers the Rev. Kirsten Fryer, Justin Kolb and Dr. Michael Parker, ELCA missionaries serving in Egypt alongside companion churches proclaiming the gospel, developing future leaders and strengthening parish ministry.

5 When we grow weary, discouraged or compelled to give up, we pray as the psalmist prayed, “Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.”

6 For the sake of doing God’s work in the world, pray God will shape our words to inspire, comfort, give hope, hold each other accountable and invite our neighbor to know God’s mercy and love; enlighten our actions through the word of God, conversations, relationships and encounters with people rather than acting on what we believe is best for them.

7 During this season of sharing gifts, pray we are mindful of and generous with our neighbors, especially those who live in poverty and hunger, immigrants and refugees, people who feel isolated and long for relationships and community, and families without homes or safe shelter.

8 Pray daily for God’s mercy and patience, asking forgiveness for our shortcomings and failures, that through God’s renewing love and the cleansing of our baptism we are set back on paths of righteousness and compassion.

9 In the face of heartbreaking, daunting gun violence, we pray God’s Spirit will stir in us a sense of self-sacrifice and humility that we might reconsider how we exercise our freedoms and live together for the well-being and safety of all people and that we will be wise and courageous in conceiving and embracing effective changes in our lives and laws, even when met with uneasiness or resistance.

10 Give thanks daily for our baptism into the body of Christ that prepares, renews and moves us to be faithful, compelling messengers of the good news.

11 Ask God to bless the continuing work and impact of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, and give thanks for the many ways in which the campaign is helping cultivate and strengthen relationships, leaders and ministries locally and globally.

12 Pray for a spirit of peace to fill us and inspire our lives through knowing God is patient and forgiving with us and our salvation is certain through faith in Jesus Christ.

13 The mesmerizing light of Advent candles reminds us of the welcome, unfaltering light God shines into the world and our lives through Jesus Christ. Pray our lives are guided by the gospel and reflect the light of Jesus Christ in all we do and say.

14 Remember in prayer men and women living in prisons, jails and correctional facilities across our country, that the Spirit of God will fill their lives with faith and hope and that we are moved to show them – as Jesus has shown us – sincere mercy, love, respect and support.

- 15** Praise God for dwelling in our world – in us – and causing peace, mercy, goodness and hope to spring up where we might be inclined to give up in the face of darkness, despair and overwhelming difficulties.
- 16** God knows the quirks, insecurities and needs of our human nature and being. Lift up prayers of thanks and praise to God for meeting us where we are in the human form of Jesus Christ and for giving us something living, real, tangible and engaging to capture our attention and faith.
- 17** Just as John the Baptist was tireless in testifying to the one true light of Jesus, pray we too will be bold witnesses in today's world busied with sharing the good news and inviting people to believe and be baptized into the body of Christ for lives of faith, service and witness.
- 18** We remember in our prayers people who labor and serve throughout the holidays, giving thanks and recognition for their work and long hours. Pray they find time for rest, renewal, connecting with family and friends, and reflecting on the meaning of the holidays.
- 19** Stirred by the ever-present Spirit of God, give thanks and rejoice always in prayer, worship and moments of reflection.
- 20** *Katharina von Bora Luther, died 1552* Give thanks to God for women of faith throughout history who have witnessed to the good news, pursued justice and peace in the world, helped form the faith of others and served as examples and mentors for us.
- 21** The ELCA and The Episcopal Church are committed to prayer, fasting and advocacy addressing cuts to public programs that are vital to hungry people who are living in poverty. Remember to pray for these concerns, our leaders and people in need on the 21st of each month through December 2018.
- 22** With child-like anticipation and excitement, we tell and hear the Christmas story over and over again, sharing the news of the life-changing gift and impact of Jesus' birth; we pray we are always open to this good news inspiring and reshaping our traditions, celebrations and consumer habits.
- 23** Laugh, rejoice and shout for joy for God has done great things and restores our spirits.
- 24** As we remember and retell the story of the world anticipating the promised birth of Jesus, the true Messiah, pray we not take for granted the gifts we long for and have received in the son of God, our savior – forgiveness, hope and redemption.
- 25** *Christmas Day* On this great day, we give glory to God for the birth of Jesus, the incarnation of God among us, an undeserved gift bringing light to the darkness and life for all people.
- 26** With joyful hearts we give praise for what God has done for us and for revealing to us daily God's continuing activity in the world and – through our baptism – the diverse ways in which we are called to join with one another in serving our neighbor and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.
- 27** Pray for students, teachers and school staff on break during the holidays that they are renewed and strengthened through spending time with family, friends and their communities.
- 28** We remember in our prayers parents grieving the loss of infants or children, and pray we learn to be attentive, supportive, patient and caring, especially when we struggle awkwardly to find words and actions that are appropriate and helpful throughout their grieving and healing.
- 29** Lift up humble prayers of gratitude for God's undeserved, awesome and surprising saving grace.
- 30** We continue to pray for refugees and immigrants, especially in the Middle East and Europe, asking God to grant them hope, safety, welcoming communities in which to rebuild their lives and resilience; pray we never lose empathy and active concern for their struggles, suffering and losses.
- 31** Everywhere we turn and look we see the wondrous, amazing creative hand of God. Praise the Lord, and give thanks!



December Babies

12/02 Eryn Henry
Michael Bradley
12/04 Victoria Yurick
12/06 Brian Tretter
12/09 Darlene Modlesky
12/10 Kathy Brior
12/11 Lisa McGinty
Pat Ferry
12/12 Terri Mock
12/13 Tracy Trexler
12/14 Kenneth Davis
12/15 Dave Bankes
Shirley Breech
12/19 Jane Whiteside
12/20 Dave Ruckle
12/26 Brenda Pitonyak
12/28 Patricia Davis

Emanuel Worship Service Schedule for December

10:15 on December 10th

10:45 on December 3rd & 17th & 31st

9:30am on December 24th Joint Worship @ Trinity

Loose Change will be collected for Veterans of Orangeville Manor on December 3rd & 17th

Coffee Klatch will not be held during winter months

Pastor contact info:

The Rev. Christine Kirchner

Contact info: pastorkirchner@gmail.com

808-652-6740 or 570-384-4125



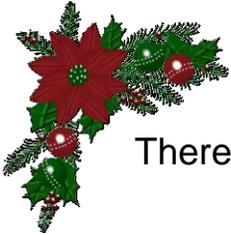
December Anniversaries

12/17 Kathryn & Charles Thomas
12/20 Domenic & Kathy Giorgio
12/27 Bill & Debbie Barton

Emanuel's volunteer for Heat/AC
& Communion for December is
Shirley Bodman
Ushers are Don and Brenda

Ladies Aid of Emanuel will hold their annual Christmas party Tues. 12/12/17 @ 5:30 pm @ the Morris Restaurant on Columbia Blvd.

Mark the date! Emanuel's annual Family Night/Christmas Program will be held on Sunday, Dec. 17th beginning at 5 pm with a covered dish meal and program afterward. We will provide the meat, beverage & place setting. Please consider taking part in the program-- recitation, skit, musical instrument, choir, etc. Material can be provided or you can provide your own part, so please let Brenda Pitonyak know if interested!



Hanging of the Greens

Trinity will be decorating for the holiday on Friday, December 8th at 7pm. There will be a meal of pizza beforehand at 6pm so anyone interested could let Pam Starr (788-2961) know by Wednesday, December 6th.

St. Peters will be decorating for the holidays on Saturday Dec. 16th. at 5pm. We will be having an UGLY SWEATER CONTEST. Decorate that sweater in the Christmas spirit and we surely will have some fun.

Please bring a finger food to share and we will provide the soup, sandwich, beverage and place setting. We also will be collecting for the PIN fund.



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Joint Worship ~ 9:30am ~ Trinity

5:00pm ~ Trinity

7:00pm ~ St Peter

9:00pm ~ Emanuel

