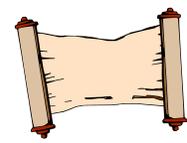


Parish Parchment



The Mountain Grove Lutheran Parish
The Reverend Christine Kirchner, Pastor
1558 Rock Glen Road
Bloomsburg, PA 17815-9207
December 2018

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 2018

Phone: 570-384-4125

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MISSION STATEMENT OF MOUNTAIN GROVE LUTHERAN PARISH

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



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.

PASTORS PAGE

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is hard to believe but another Holiday season is upon us. The Christmas rush has begun! I already have the to do lists going, divided up between the “have to get done” and the “want to get done.” Part of me loves the frenzied feeling around Christmas, but another part wonders if we have reduced this time to a series of to do lists and wish lists.

We learn this early-on as we write our wish list letters to Santa. It continues into adulthood with: where do we want to celebrate Christmas? Who is going to cook what? How do we keep your in-laws' Christmas traditions, and my parents', and establish our own? How will we keep Christmas when our loved one is no longer with us? The “Wish List” questions seem infinite and we do a remarkable job fulfilling them. The problem is, fulfilling wish lists is not always satisfying and at times can seem like obligations and duties.

So what are we, the people of God, to do in this frenzy?

When left without any clear answers, I like to go back to Biblical stories. What struck me as I reread them again this year is that when God visits Mary, God does not ask her what she would like for Christmas - her wish list, if you will. Instead God gives her a vision of what her life will be as she gives birth to God's love in this world, at this time, and in this place. On the first Christmas, Mary was given a vision from God of what her life would be like with the love of God present in the form of Jesus. God's vision became the center of her life.

In the midst of this year's Christmas frenzy, pause for a moment and ask yourself, what is my vision for my life. I think you will find that God has given you a vision for your life, just as Mary was given one so many years ago. And it is the same vision - that we are chosen to give birth to the love of God, in this world, and at this time, and in this place. As this vision becomes the center of our lives, we will still go about fulfilling our wish lists in a Christmas frenzy. Yet, during the frenzy we will experience something more. We will touch the love of God that is eternal. We will know the hope that God continues to come to us and dwells in our midst. We will know the joy of God's presence not only in our happiness but also in our sorrow. We will experience the peace that comes from knowing God's word is ours, and nothing on earth or heaven or under the earth, will stop God from fulfilling God's promise.

When we keep that vision at the center of our lives, then, even if our Christmas wish list does not come to completion, we will know the love, hope, joy, and peace of the Christmas season.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Christine



Also: *Walter Gottstein, Jim Bankes, Janet Matyas, Alea Munn* (Susie Spudes niece), *Shirley Ackley* (David Bankes sister), *Emery Tweehues* (Susie Spudes), *Annette Hoffman* (Nancy Chulock's cousin), *Beverly J Michael, Jimmy Denoia* (Ray & Nancy Chulock's brother-in-law), *Olivia, Bill* (Kathy Brior), *Patsy Millard, Doris Schell, Dennis Crouse, Judy Boody* (Janet Kelchners sister), *Robert Hunsinger Sr* (Sharon Hartzell's Dad), *Robyn & Dick Baker, Carol & Debbie Chyko, 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-----

UPcoming EVENTS

Adult Bible Study



We will be taking a break starting in December.
We will start up again in the Spring.

Emanuel's Ladies Aide Party will be held at Perkins on December 5th at 5:30pm.

Christmas Eve Worship Schedule

This year, Joint Council decided to have a joint Christmas Eve worship service. There will be one service at Emanuel at 7 pm. The plan is to rotate the service yearly between the different churches.

Joint UCC Christmas Eve Worship
Will be held at 9:00pm at St Peter

Trinity will do **Christmas decorating** on Friday, Dec 7th starting with pizza at 6pm. Let Pam know if you'll be eating so she has an accurate count.

St Peter's **Hanging of the Greens** is on Saturday, December 15th starting at 5pm with a potluck.



The **Jubilate Choir** will again be presenting their Free Christmas Concerts. The theme this year is "Christmas Around the World". The concerts will be held at St Matthew Lutheran Church, Bloomsburg, on Saturday, Dec 8 at 7PM and Sunday, Dec 9 at 3PM. Plan now to attend this annual concert.

Mark your calendars:

Family Night is being held at Emanuel on Sunday, Dec 16th and this fun evening is open to everyone in our parish. It begins with a covered dish at 5 pm and the Christmas Program follows right afterward. There will be recitations, instrumentals, humor, and singing carols. If you are interested in participating in the program, contact Brenda Pitonyak (570) 387-0190, email: bpitonya@bloomu.edu or text (570) 204-8089. Brenda has all the material necessary, but if you have your own, let her know that as well.

Prayer Ventures for December 2018

1 *World AIDS Day* Today we remember and pray for people who have died from AIDS-related illnesses and people who are living with HIV; we give thanks for the progress made in prevention, treatment & care, and ask for an awareness of what still needs to be done; and we ask God to help our church continue in its work with partners & organizations around the world to eradicate AIDS & support people who live with HIV.

2 *First Sunday of Advent* Give thanks and praise for God's promises fulfilled in the gift of Jesus Christ, a gift for all humanity that changed everything and continues to stir faith, newness of spirit, peace, compassion and justice in the world.

3 Pray for the recovery & well-being of those affected by hurricanes, flooding, wildfires & other natural disasters, especially for families, people living in poverty, older adults & communities with scarce resources.

4 Ask for help in knowing and following God's ways and paths – paths that are mercy, love and faithfulness.

5 Give thanks for the generous support of ELCA members and congregations in response to *The Campaign for the ELCA* and its priorities: congregations, leadership, hunger and poverty, and the global church. Pray our commitments and generosity continue for supporting and investing in the future of this church, deepening our relationships, and expanding existing and new ministries that serve our neighbors and communities here and around the world.

6 Give thanks for Lutheran Services in America, an alliance of the ELCA and over 300 health and human services organizations serving the complex, diverse needs of more than 6 million people each year in the United States and the Caribbean.

7 Lighting and reflecting on the glow of candles in Advent wreaths is an enduring tradition for many people around the world that marks our remembrance of Jesus' birth and the gift of eternal life. Give thanks to God for sending the true light and hope of Christ into the world and into our lives.

8 Thank God for the joy, encouragement and strength of faith we receive from one another gathered in our congregations – communities of faith that send us into the world equipped to care for our neighbor and to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

9 Praise God for the good news of Jesus Christ, our savior who comes to us in the wilderness and darkness of the world to bring light, truth and salvation for all.

10 Over 68 million people around the world have been displaced from their homes by war, violence, disasters and persecution. Pray for the safety, care and well-being of people who have fled or been forced from their homes and countries, that they have resources to meet their daily needs and find welcoming, supportive communities and congregations to help them find stability and pursue their hopes and dreams.

11 Remember in prayer ELCA missionaries accompanying our companions in Estonia, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland; pray the Holy Spirit will inspire and sustain their faith and work of sharing the gospel, growing the church and serving our neighbor.

12 In this season of buying and sharing gifts, pray God will help us rethink – for the sake of the world – our traditions, habits and generosity through the influence, opportunities and far-reaching impacts of ELCA World Hunger and ELCA Good Gifts.

13 Pray for neighboring congregations & ministries, pastors, synod staff, ecumenical partners and leaders who work together with us to share the gospel, serve our neighbors and communities and grow the church.

14 Ask God to help us shape & renew our congregations to be life-giving & imaginative places for people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds & circumstances to gather around God's word and the sacraments, practice hospitality, build relationships and care for the needs of our neighbor – friend or stranger, member or not.

15 Pray for the new Lutheran Men in Mission Disaster Relief Effort, which organizes men to share their skills, experiences and resources to work alongside Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran social services, local agencies, communities, individuals and families to repair and rebuild homes damaged by natural disasters.

16 Pray the Holy Spirit will strengthen and embolden us to invite others to have faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and to be compelling witnesses to God's ways, truth, justice and mercy in the world.

17 Remember during the holidays people who are in prisons, jails, correctional facilities and detention centers; pray we are active in connecting them with caring communities of faith, their families and children, and resources for rebuilding their hope and lives; pray our compassion is stirred by the Spirit that we freely share with those who are imprisoned the good news of forgiveness, hope and new life we have in Jesus Christ – the gift of God's love for all people.

18 Ask that the Holy Spirit guide us in being attentive and supportive of pastors, leaders and church staff during Advent and Christmas, that their faith will be strengthened, their needs cared for, and that they will find time to reflect on the light and joy of Jesus Christ in their own lives.

19 Pray for the safety and protection of all who are traveling during the holidays.

20 Remember in prayer first responders, firefighters, doctors and nurses, military, law enforcement and care providers working the holidays for our safety and well-being; pray for people who serve the public in retail stores, restaurants, and the hospitality and travel industries; and pray they all find opportunities for renewal and time with the family, friends and communities that enrich their lives and faith.

21 During the past year, the ELCA and the Episcopal Church have been committed to prayer, fasting and advocacy addressing cuts to public programs that are vital to hungry people who are living in poverty. Remember to continue praying for these concerns, our leaders and people in need.

22 Pray that during our congregational activities, worship, gift sharing & community meals we reach out & involve individuals & families confined to home/care facilities, without family/friends, homeless or forgotten.

23 God's presence and the ways in which the Holy Spirit works in our lives can catch us by surprise and unprepared just as it did pregnant Elizabeth and Mary. Ask God to open our hearts, minds and senses to the amazing, subtle and life-changing things that God is accomplishing in the world, often through us.

24 *Christmas Eve* Pray we are childlike in our faith and excitement for the birth of Christ – a gift of light that no darkness can overcome, a gift for us that is full of life, grace and truth.

25 *Christmas Day* Glory to God in the highest! Give thanks and praise to God for the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of God, who lived among us full of grace and truth, that God's love for humankind might be clear, tangible and revealed in ways that speak to our human needs and senses – then and now.

26 Pray we exercise daily unbiased generosity with gifts, resources & abilities God entrusted to our care & use.

27 Talk to students who are on break, recognize their presence and affirm the gifts they share with the body of Christ; pray they are renewed during their break and J-term experiences, and assure them they are not forgotten and are remembered in our personal prayers as well as those of the congregation.

28 Just as Mary and Elizabeth gave testimony to what God was doing in their lives for the sake of the world, pray that we, too, are articulate about what we trust God is doing in our lives and the world – during the ups, downs and times that puzzle us.

29 Ask that the Holy Spirit guide & inspire our church as it reflects on & makes plans for the present & future, seeking to be ever faithful, centered in the gospel, wise & nimble in doing God's work in the world as it shifts & changes.

30 We gather in congregations to worship God, learn, grow in faith and care for and equip one another for living as followers of Christ in the world. Pray we each contribute to the vitality of our faith community, strive for unity, and help each other move beyond the walls of our buildings and into our communities and world with a fervor to serve our neighbor and share the gospel.

31 A new year is at hand! Pray we are not swept into it with anger, vindictiveness, division, apathy or fear, but rather with hearts open to the word of Christ dwelling in us and lives that shine brightly with compassion, kindness, humility, forgiveness, patience and an eagerness to work together for unity.



December Babies

12/02 Evyn 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 9th & 23rd

10:45 on December 2nd, 16th & 30th

7:00 on December 24th ~ **Christmas Eve** ~ Joint

Loose Change will be collected for EOS.

on December 9th & 23rd

There will be no **Coffee Klatch** during the winter.

We will resume in May.

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 & Janet