

Shepherd's Staff



The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

December 2021



Josh Brecht
Lead Pastor

Advent is one of my favorite seasons of year. When the world gets dark, when the weather turns cold, when the end of another year draws near holding all our regrets and unfinished dreams, there is a light. There is a light in that darkness. There is a warmth in that cold numbness. There is a hope that wards off despair, a hope in something new on the horizon.

The beauty of the all-reaching salvation of an almighty God coming in the cry of a newborn baby.

The fragility of our messiah entering this realm through a first-time mother.

The humility of a universal king born to a poor, powerless family of lowly estate.

The risk of becoming flesh and blood in an era and nation under occupation by a violently oppressive foreign power.

Advent reminds us of these truths that never cease to amaze us. In Easter, we are amazed by the cross and resurrection. In Christmas, we are amazed by the *incarnation*, where light enters darkness, risking being extinguished and life enters mortality risking death. Every year I wonder, “why would God take such risk?”

The answer is infinitely simple and infinitely incomprehensible.

The answer is love.

In this incarnational birth we are reminded of God’s truest character.

God is love.

God is gentleness.

God is beauty and wonder and joy.

God is so passionately obsessed with our redemption and salvation that God would risk everything for the chance to reach and redeem even the worst of us. This unrelenting love is the ultimate source of our hope.

We are in dire need of hope in this season, aren’t we? We are in dire need of light and love. Not just a fleeting love, or a feeling of love, but an incarnational love. An

embodied love. A love that would risk everything, that would dive right into the middle of the darkness to transform it with a holy light. This is what comes to us in the birth of Jesus. A shocking twist in the story of salvation that breaks through our hearts of stone and transforms us into something new.

You are a bearer of this hope. You are a bearer of this light.

This advent, I challenge us all to step into the darkness and illumine it. Take risks to share hope. Walk bravely with joy and kindness, beauty and humility, letting the light of Christ that lives in you shine through the fog of despair and division.

Over two thousand years ago, God entered this world with a love that is infinitely simple and infinitely incomprehensible. The incarnation forever changed the world and will forever continue changing this world. Perhaps most astounding of all is that God calls us to be a part of this change. May we be brave enough to receive this light. May we be brave enough to be this light.

In peace,
Pastor Josh



Dear Good Shepherd Family:

The time has arrived for me to send a farewell note to you. I have mentioned, to many of you, that my retirement is bittersweet in many ways. Yes, I look forward to “unscheduled time” with my husband, our children, family, and friends. However, in that note, it feels odd to think of NOT being here – with you. One of my favorite quotes is from the Dalai Lama in “The Book of Joy”, “Wherever you have friends, that’s your country, and wherever you receive love, that’s your home!” Good Shepherd has been both my country and my home for years. I’ve been a member of Good Shepherd since 1984, and started working at Good Shepherd in June, 1997. Wow, yes, you’re right – I’m old!

I started Seminary in January of 1998 because I saw a need for Pastoral Care at GSLC. After graduating from Seminary, I added one year of CPE (clinical pastoral education for chaplaincy) at two area hospitals. Honestly, in the beginning, I fought a bit with God that I could possibly be the one that was called to this ministry. Now, looking back tears come to my eyes to think of each of you -- talking with me, opening your homes, hospital rooms, and hearts to me as I brought prayers and communion to you. God knew the variety of my job – as a Chaplain, working with Feed My Starving Children, Service team - our many outreach opportunities, and Welcome team matched well with my God-given gifts. I remember when my path was directed to Word and Service ministry (at that time called Diaconal Ministry)– I felt like yes, this feels like a perfect fit for my heart.

The book “Let Your Life Speak”, notes, “Latin for “voice,” the word “vocation” does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.”

One thing I know to my depth about Good Shepherd is that you are brave, open to listening to God’s calling, open to making changes, and resilient in the processes. There is NOTHING easy about any of that work, but prayerfully leaning on each other, with God’s grace and love, GSLC perseveres. I was the first rostered person that was

called to this congregation that wasn't a pastor. I believe that there is someone new who will be the perfect fit for Good Shepherd, and I look forward to meeting that person - in time. I will be gone from worship and team meetings for a year (as I respect that praxis in the ELCA). I will continue to work with Feed My Starving Children as a volunteer. I will be at worship each Sunday, until my last Sunday, December 12.

In my home, I'm surrounded by "sayings" that I have picked up over the years. Some, I keep front and center because I need the daily reminder like, "Don't stumble over something behind you." Others, I keep up high, as in a secret message to find like, "Remember, be aware that everyone thinks we're a perfectly normal family." (That one always makes me laugh).

I have read that "Joy is the Echo of God's Life in Us." I pray you not only take in that joy – but quickly share it with others.

Joyfully in Christ -
Chaplain Suzie



Request for Call Committee Nominees from the Congregation

In December, Chaplain Suzie Everingham will retire after 24 years of faithful service to God's mission and God's people at Good Shepherd! We give thanks to God for her wonderful ministry over these many years!

I wanted to update you on the call process to address the staff realignment that is recommended by Council and your pastors upon the retirement of Suzie Everingham this December. As Pr. Josh and I noted in a November 4th message to the congregation, it is the recommendation of Church Council and your pastors to add a rostered pastor to our staffing upon Suzie's retirement. The position would focus on pastoral care with primary responsibilities for member engagement and service ministries, while also providing some added support for leading worship services.

I want to add a few milestone dates for clarification to this current Call process.

- The primary reason I am writing you today is that the Congregational Council is soliciting names from the congregation to form a call committee, which consist of six members, including Pastor Josh. We are asking you to provide suggested nominees using the following link [Call Committee Nominee Link](#) or by simply sending your suggestions to the church office via mail prior to December 12, 2021.
- Council will then work quickly to select the final Call Committee in December 2021.
- Due to the great work of the previous Transition Team and recent efforts by the Council to update the Ministry Site Profile (MSP) for this specific position, the MSP should be ready for Council approval at the December Council meeting.
- Once the MSP is approved by the Central States Synod, the Call Committee can begin receiving candidates to interview. The timetable for making a recommendation to Council depends solely on the candidate's alignment with the MSP and job description.
- When a candidate is recommended to Council by the Call Committee, a congregational meeting will be called to vote to call our new pastor.

We will provide updates at appropriate intervals as this process moves along, but in the meantime, you can help through making your nominations either through the link provided or notifying the church office prior to December 12, 2021.

Thank you for your continued prayers during this call process.

Pumpkin Patch Thank You!

In 2007 the Pumpkin Patch was conceived as fundraiser for a specific mission. What was begun grew into something much more than a simple fundraiser, but became a community-building event that brought our congregation together and provided a means to share welcome and love with those in the community beyond Good Shepherd.



Over the years thousands of pumpkins have been unloaded, passed along the line, and sold to joyful homes! Thousands of dollars have been raised to support various missions and ministries near and far. Millions of smiles have been shared as people of all ages gather on the hill and bask in the beauty of creation as summer turns to fall. Many of the wisest and most clever jokes ever created by human minds have graced the Pumpkin Patch to make kids laugh.

The love of Christ was made known through this annual event. All of this was made possible by the countless hours of volunteers, people with servant hearts giving of their time and their gifts of welcome and pumpkin lifting! While many people have given to this ministry, we want to give a special thanks to the Kallansrud family, whose passion and commitment have made this possible over the past decade and a half. Gary and Karen have rallied and inspired us, and we give thanks to God for their many years of leadership! In recent years, Dawn and Scott Schwab have co-led this effort sharing a joy and passion for the Pumpkin Patch and the color orange! Both the Kallansruds and the Schwabs have been an invaluable gift to the community, and they have shared that this will be their last year leading the Pumpkin Patch. Thank you for your incredible gift over the years that has blessed so many!

This might be the last year for the Pumpkin Patch at Good Shepherd. We do not know for certain what the future holds. It may be time for a season to end and a new tradition to begin. Perhaps some of you are passionate about this project and ready to step in and create a Pumpkin Patch team to continue this ministry. (If so please let us know!) Whatever comes in the fall of 2022, we trust that God will be leading us, and that this church will continue to share the love and light of Christ with those around us!

Thank you Kallansruds and Schwabs, and all who have given their time and talents to the Pumpkin Patch!

**A "Wink from the Welcome Ministry Team
By Elliott Haugen**

Merry Christmas! Tis the season that this expression will be shared



often and in many different contexts. The word “merry” refers to an occasion or season characterized by festivity and rejoicing and it is certainly the right word to associate with Christmas and the celebration of Jesus’ birth. It may be a stretch to link “merry” to the Nativity story, but imagine the feelings experienced by the angels, shepherds and magi as they gathered and rejoiced with each other on the birth of Jesus. There was anticipation, joy and hope – all elements of being merry.

I like the sermons at Good Shepherd because they are relevant in today’s world. Therefore, I’ll try to relate this merry message to the Welcome Ministry that we are all part of at this church. The Welcome Team members regularly serve as greeters and it has been wonderful observing and interacting with people arriving for Sunday worship services. We see a variety of people – little and big angels, animal caretakers and gardeners, and definitely smart and wise individuals. We love seeing the smiles that suggest anticipation, joy and hope as we seek, experience and celebrate Christ. There is reason to be merry every week at Good Shepherd because of Jesus and the message of Christmas. So, thank you for continually sharing your love, caring, kindness, friendliness, and spirit as we follow Christ, grow in faith and share God’s love.

(As a footnote, you may also hear the phrase “happy holidays”. This is another way to share merry wishes with others who may be observing one of the other eleven major religious holidays celebrated from November through January.)

On behalf of the Welcome Team, have a healthy, safe, blessed and MERRY Christmas. See you soon or in the new year – whether in person, virtually, or in our thoughts.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13

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