

The Pipe Line

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December 4, 2020



I'm sorry that some of the traditions we are used to will be different this year. I've always understood why people get a sense of comfort and joy out of sitting in the same pew year after year. Habits of faith are important, and bring us a sense of peace in a world that

roils all around us.

Our White Christmas celebration will be different this year, and it's a tradition that has meant a lot to people over the years.

During this Covid-19 pandemic, the service will be recorded to be presented on video for worship at 11 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 20 via Facebook and YouTube.

People are working on musical selections. They'll sing or play and make a recording, some from home and some in church, and we'll edit those together into a service. I haven't seen any of the videos yet, but am confident people will share their talent as a way they can minister to others and praise God.

Someone did share with me the creative way she's planning to present the Christmas story for the program, and I thought it was brilliant and moving. Just hearing about it touched me, because of the depth of meaning and the beauty of the presentation. I think it's one of those things that when people see it, they'll think we may have found something worth repeating, the birth of a new tradition.

The church will still collect White Christmas gifts to help alleviate hunger. The gifts of money in white envelopes or cans of food wrapped in white paper may be dropped off at the church office during regular hours this coming week. We plan to put the gifts at the altar as part of the program we'll be recording. We plan to record that part of the program on Wednesday, Dec. 16.

While I regret we won't be together in person on Sunday morning for White Christmas, I hope that the recording produced by members of the church will be one of those things that people treasure. Perhaps a future generation will look back with appreciation in how people coped and lived out their faith during a pandemic of historic proportions.

The New York Times had a fascinating article about why traditions are so important to us. Journalist and author Kate Murphy used the example of a Thanksgiving dinner she'd been at a few years back when the hostess, without telling anyone ahead of time, substituted salmon for turkey, roasted potatoes instead of mashed, and raspberry coulis instead of cranberry sauce. It was an outstanding meal, but people were upset, because it wasn't what they'd expected.

"When there are discrepancies between expectations and reality, all kinds of distress signals go off in the brain," she wrote. "It doesn't matter if it's a holiday ritual or more mundane habit like how you tie your shoes; if you can't do it the way you normally do it, you're biologically engineered to get upset."

Karl Friston, a professor of neuroscience at University College London explained that our brains try to make sense and predict what will happen next.

"This makes sense because, in prehistoric times,

faulty predictions could lead to some very unpleasant surprises – like a tiger eating you or sinking in quicksand," Ms. Murphy wrote. "So-called prediction errors (like finding salmon instead of turkey on your plate on Thanksgiving) send us into a tizzy because our brains interpret them as a potential threat. Routines, rituals and habits arise from the primitive part of our brains telling us, 'Keep doing what you've been doing, because you did it before, and you didn't die.'"

As the theory goes, the way you get ready in the morning, the regularity of sitting in the same pew at church, the holiday you look forward to, are parts of a subconscious effort to make our world seem more predictable, orderly and safe, and speak to our need to minimize surprise and feel like we have control.

These routines help us free up our decision-making for other tasks. During the uncertainty of the pandemic we're being presented with all sorts of other decisions, like whether stopping for gas and going in to use the bathroom when no one in the store is wearing a mask will cause us to get sick and die. They said it helps to develop new, pandemic-proof routines, like talking on the phone more often to our loved ones or filling a birdfeeder.

I believe that as followers of Jesus our faith is one of those pandemic-proof things. We are assured that God is with us no matter what, that Jesus prays for us, and that we are called to help others and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Reading the comments to Ms. Murphy's article made me think that being followers of Jesus has given us a head start in coping.

One reader wrote: "If anyone wants to learn how to cope with unpredictable frightening circumstances that the pandemic has caused, just reflect on the lives of chronically or terminally ill patients, and their families. I am a nurse in a chronic neurological disorders clinic. Our patients are living with diseases that manifest with symptoms that may be variable in acuity patient-to-patient, but the disease courses are progressive, debilitating and often terminal. These patients bravely live in the moment."

Someone replied to her: "Thank you for your service to those among us who are especially vulnerable. May you also bravely live in the moment and find joy in your day."

Said someone else: "Yes. A friend and fellow cancer patient commented to me early in the pandemic, all of a sudden people understand how I've felt for the past few years."

As followers of Jesus, we have a belief in compassion and altruism that we've lived with so long that it is a foundation of our lives, because it is our tradition to weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn, to comfort the weak, uplift the weary and help the downtrodden, to walk with our brothers and sisters through the dark valley.

May this time strengthen our faith. Take to heart that in our time of waiting during Advent we light candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, and then we light the Christ candle and pass the light one to another.

Merry Christmas!

God bless you!

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02	Morgan Bridi	18	Charlie Chandler
03	Nancy Keatley	19	Roger Reed
03	Colette Meadows	20	Brenda Meadows
09	Alice Yurick	22	Nick Yurick
10	Jack Schroder	23	Peggy Debnam
11	Ann Worley	23	Howard Mollohan
13	Betty Klingensmith	23	William Haslam
16	John Beaver	24	Scott VanMeter
16	Sandi Schroder	25	Diane Bridi

LECTIONARY READINGS

December 6

Isa. 40:1-11; Ps. 85:1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

December 13

Isa. 61:1-4, 8-11; Ps. 126 or
Luke 1:46b-55;
1 Thess. 5:16-24;
John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 20

2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16; Luke
1:46b-55 or
Ps. 89:1-4, 19-26;
Rom. 16:25-27;
Luke 1:26-38

December 24

Christmas Eve
Isa. 9:2-7; Ps. 96; Titus 2:11-
14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

December 25

Christmas Day
Dawn; Isa. 62:6-12; Ps. 97;
Titus 3:4-7;
Luke 2(1-7) 8-10
Day: Isa. 52:7-10; Ps. 98:
Heb. 1:1-4 (5-12);
John 1:1-14

December 27

Isa. 61:10-62:3; Ps. 148;
Gal. 4:4-7;
Luke 2:22-40



MEMORIAL GIFT FUND

We are grateful for the following Memorial Gifts:

--In Memory of **Leslie Cox**: by Mr. & Mrs. Roger Reed, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Gray

--In Memory of **Cheryl McGill**: by Mr. & Mrs. Roger Reed

--In Memory of **Barbro Caperton**: by Mr. James Songer

--In Memory of **Lannie Gillenwater**: by Mr. & Mrs. Roger Reed

--In Memory of **Nancy Smith**: by Mr. & Mrs. Roger Reed, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Gray

--In Memory of **Mary Songer**: by Mr. & Mrs. Roger Reed

--In Memory of **Buzzy Ragland**: by Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Gray

--In Memory of **Allen & Norma Diggs and Lewis & Grace Gravely**: by Mr. & Mrs. Lewis Gravely



The Session met last week and voted to continue our online worship through January. Please continue to participate in our worship on Facebook live at 11 a.m. Sundays. You can also hear it on the radio at 7 p.m. Sundays on WJLS 99.5 FM.

NURTURING FAITH IDEAS

December 6: Read Mark 1:1-8 Unlike the other synoptic gospels, Mark has no account of Jesus' birth. Instead, he begins with a revealing title and introduction, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"(1:1). Then, Mark moves to introduce us to the one who will introduce us to Jesus. This may seem an odd passage to read for the second Sunday of Advent – after all, there is no mention of angels, shepherds or a young couple looking for a place to spend the night – and yet, Advent signifies the coming of Jesus into human history, and Mark 1:1-8 is clearly an announcement about the coming of the Lord.

December 13: Read John 1:6-8, 19-28 The first verse of John's prologue echoes the language of Genesis 1:1. But instead of simply repeating the opening words of the Old Testament book, John identifies God's creative associate as "the Word," a rich term that can also be translated as "reason" and "wisdom." The author of John also points out that "life" and "light" are found in the Word (vv. 4-5) and that "a man sent from God, whose name was John" testified on behalf of the one who was "the light, so that all might believe through him" (vv. 6-7). According to the Gospel of John, these words introduce the pur-



pose of Jesus – to be light. Reflect quietly on how Jesus gives light to you, and perhaps write, draw or journal your thoughts.

December 20: Read Luke 1:26-38, 46b-55 This passage, commonly referred to as "The Annunciation," prepares the reader for the birth of Jesus and the message of salvation that will weave throughout Luke-Acts. It is a passage that reveals a glimpse of what God is doing to manifest God's kingdom. Somehow, Mary understands what the reader of Luke's gospel should know by now: God is at work. Her song reveals her faith that God has chosen the lowly in order to manifest God's glory, power and salvation, especially verses 46-49. What song would you sing to proclaim your faith?

December 27: Read Luke 2:22-40 Jesus comes to us as a small vulnerable baby, the Child of God. In response to Jesus Christ, who comes to the world as a baby, a child, consider the renewed commitment you can make today to serving all children. Love is born at Christmastime in the infant Jesus Christ. Consider dedicating some of your time and presence to playing with, reading with, creating with or serving a child today in some special, meaningful way. What child needs the care of your presence today to experience the real love of God?