

## GOOD NEWS February 2021

### Pastor's Letter

<sup>16</sup>On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak.

<sup>17</sup>The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:16-17

Most of us have not spent much time thinking about the books of the Bible at the end of the Old Testament, the prophets, not the major ones like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but the books that go by in a couple turn of pages like Micah and Amos, Hosea and Haggai, Malachi and Zephaniah. All of these prophets and more spoke into the time when God's people were going into exile, in exile or just returning from exile. It was a traumatic time for God's people marked by loss.

They were unable to worship in their holy space, many unable to worship their God. They were separated from their larger family groups and unable to live freely. Their communities were devastated losing their homes, their vocational identity (who they were, what role they had in their community before exile). They felt lost and disconnected. This feels relevant today.

We too are unable to worship in our holy spaces, many feel far from God without a faith community gathering to support them. We too are separated from and missing our larger family groups – far from parents and grandparents, kids and grandkids, siblings, nieces and nephews, friends. Our communities are devastated in record numbers of businesses closing, jobs lost, lives lost. We feel lost and disconnected.

Reread those verses from Zephaniah. Do not fear. God is in our midst. We will come through this. We will be renewed, rejoiced over even. God's going to celebrate with loud singing, and some of us will definitely join in the singing.

Last Sunday (January 24) we met for our Annual Meeting on Zoom. Many of us had some worries about how that would work. It went well!!! We prayed together. We thought about the gifts God has given us. We thought about the good work we were able to do even in difficult circumstances last year. We remembered the ways God strengthened us in our renewed prayers. We celebrated our tech team for bringing us together in new ways in this virtual world. We celebrated shepherds committed to caring and connecting us. We gave thanks for the generosity you all have shown in caring for one another in this difficult time. And we committed to God's mission through this place in the year to come.

We have learned things this past year, ways of being God's people that will grow us in the time to come. As vaccinations grow, and infections slow, we will begin to come together again. It will not look the same as when we began this pandemic. We have learned to be more flexible, more creative as we have maneuvered these days and months. We have strengthened our prayer practices, using devotionals handed out, joining in daily prayer as we have worshipped apart yet together. We have built up our community, as shepherds have cared, as we organized food drives, and made and given out masks. Renewed in the love of God, strengthened by the presence of God in our midst, we will be courageous as we continue

- To pray regularly, speaking our needs and our neighbors, listening for God, and gathering strength for all that lies ahead;
- to creatively seek ways to care for one another and the community;
- to build our virtual presence so that the word of God and community of faith are more widely accessible;

- to heal and strengthen our community and care for one another through living into the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, which Luther explains saying we are to look at everything our neighbor does in the best light.

Poet Amanda Gorman spoke these words at the Inauguration as part of her poem **The Hill We Climb**, "For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, If only we're brave enough to be it." We are called in our baptism to shine with the light of Christ. May we apart and collectively point to the light of Christ in our posting, in our conversations, in our relationships, in our homes, at our work place, at the grocery store, in our lives.

Live into the light.  
Peace+  
Pr. Stephanie

## From the President.....

January 27, 2021

My New Year's Church resolution is to report only positive things in my newsletter ramblings. Less than positive things may need to be shared, but you will find them elsewhere in print. While life in these trying times can be difficult, I encourage you to share my positive attitude. With God on our side, we have nothing to fear.

So....

Thank you to all who attended and participated in the annual meeting. It was different, to say the least, but we were able to accomplish the requirements of our constitution. We (Pastor and the Council) were concerned that we would not be able meet the quorum required by our constitution, but the congregation came through and we had nearly double the attendance we needed for a quorum. Business was handled in an efficient and polite manner. It was a pleasure to see so many faces! Thanks to all for participating.

The results of our annual stewardship drive is encouraging. Forty-four pledges totaling \$126,024.00 have been received. I am sure other pledges will be received in the next few weeks. While the total pledged doesn't support our proposed budget it is a significant increase over last year's pledges. In these trying times, I ask your continued support for the work of our mission here at St. Andrew.

The Clothing Shed is back up and running. Last week St. Pauly picked up 148 bags of clothing. Yes, we will receive a check for our donations, but many needy folks, both here and abroad, will benefit from the generosity of those members and non-members who contribute to the "Shed".

Thanks to Dan and Dawn Stitham for donating the cost of plowing the entire parking lot after a 14-inch snowstorm in December. They wanted the lot clear so that those attending the Christmas Eve evening candle/Holy Communion service would be able to navigate the parking lot. As the season progresses, Dan will plow only parts of the parking lot, in an effort to cut expenses.

Because we have no sexton at the present time, we were in need of someone to shovel the sidewalks should we have a snowstorm. Roy Ouellette has volunteered to take that responsibility and already did so yesterday morning. Thank you, Roy! I hope we don't need your services too often.

Pastor is already deep into planning Lenten worship. We are meeting next Tuesday to tape parts of the Ash Wednesday service. She has already used the terms "Holy Week" and "Easter". Wasn't Christmas just yesterday? Thank you, Pastor, for keeping us all on our toes!

In February, we celebrate Valentine's Day. Why not go overboard this year and send a few valentine greetings to other church members. I'm sure those greetings would be appreciated.

Stay Safe! God loves us!

*Bob*

## Worship with us in Epiphany/Lent Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

We continue in the season of Epiphany, exploring the ways we begin to see Jesus as more than a man, but as the one sent by God to love and save the world. In the season of Epiphany, Jesus is revealed as the one through whom God's glory shines, the chosen one – the Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the kingdom of God come near. If you are “not feeling” or “missing” God's presence in your life, these are good weeks to come and see, like the disciples.

**Worship Sundays at 9:30 a.m.** This remains our primary worship service, and we will be offering service of Holy Communion. We will be virtual only as long as Bristol remains in red. Join us on Facebook or YouTube: <https://www.facebook.com/Standrewct/>  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLSSna5Ti\\_WSwRJ\\_ySbMA3Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLSSna5Ti_WSwRJ_ySbMA3Q)

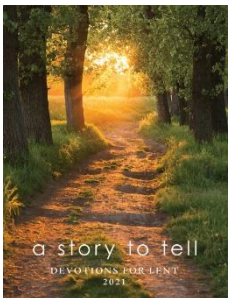
**\*Tech Team** welcomes Kyle Galvin to help produce our virtual worship service. If you would like to serve on the tech team, or learn more about streaming please speak with Abigail Griffin.

**Mid-Week Opportunities: Compline/Night Prayers** is intended to be prayers before bed, a letting go of the day that has been so that we might rest well and rise in morning ready to serve. It is a short service of confession, psalm, song, and prayer. We intend to continue offering Compline **Mondays and Thursdays around 8:30 p.m.** through Facebook Live (<https://www.facebook.com/Standrewct/>). **Evening Prayer** is intended as an early evening service that celebrates light in the oncoming darkness. Weekly on **Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m., Camp Calumet's** Knute Ogren hosts Holden Evening Prayer, which is shared on our Facebook page.

**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Sunday February 7,** Our text this day celebrates the hope God brings to the people in exile, and the ways Jesus calls us from our sickness and brokenness into service and prays along the way.

**Transfiguration of our Lord, Sunday, February 14,** we close the season of Epiphany with Transfiguration of our Lord. Jesus stands on the mountaintop in dazzling white robes and chats with important figures in our faith from the past Moses and Elijah. When the disciples want to stay in this place of awe-struck magnificence with glory shining all around, Jesus says, “Let's get to work,” and leads them back down the mountain.

**Drive Through Communion/Lenten Packet/Palms! Sunday, February 14 11 a.m.,** we will have a team manning our half circle drive way. You have the opportunity should you wish to receive communion first from Pr. Stephanie & a lay asst. We will also have a packet of Lenten Resources ready that will include bulletins for Ash Wednesday, First Sunday in Lent and our Midweek Lenten Service: Washed in the Promises; as well as a Lenten Devotional; home altar suggestions for your observance of Lent etc. **Palms!** We begin Lent by burning our Palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday to use as our ash for Ash Wednesday. If you saved your palms in your home, please bring them in this morning and we will have basket to collect them.



**A Story to Tell.** This beautiful, full-color Lenten devotional highlights readings from the gospel of Mark with 46 entries, one for each day from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Each reading is accompanied by a photo, a quote to ponder, a reflection, and a prayer. This accessible and colorful format makes it easy to incorporate a simple Christian observance into your Lenten journey.

*A Story to Tell* focuses on texts from the Gospel of Mark that show Jesus' journey from baptism to the cross. The gospel writer has a story to tell, moving quickly from one scene to the next. The urgent tone of the story grabs us and pulls us in, but all the action comes to a halt when those who see the empty tomb tell no one about this. Is this the end of the

story?

**Ash Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>.** Today we are reminded that we are dust. On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-days of Lent. We begin on this day by reminding ourselves that we are dust, and that, at the beginning of everything, God breathed life into the dust. We began as dust, we will return to the dust. God makes marvelous things with the dust. The season of Lent invites us, or calls us, to remember who God is,

what God has promised, whose we are, and how God loves us (and our neighbor). We do this examining and drawing near by engaging in Lenten disciplines: prayer and fasting, self-examination and repentance, and sacrificial giving and works of love. Our Ash Wednesday worship is the collaborative effort of four parishes. We are joined by Prince of Peace (Kensington), Grace (Plainville), and Good Shepherd (Rutland, VT). Our pre-recorded worship service will post on our Facebook page and our YouTube Channel no later than 11 a.m. Additionally, Pr. Stephanie will be available from Noon until 1 p.m. and 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. for Prayer and/or the Imposition of Ashes.

**First Sunday in Lent, Sunday, February 21**, This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. God saved Noah's family in the flood just as God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

**Midweek Lenten Devotions on Zoom: Washed in the Promises!** Join us Wednesdays in Lent at 7 p.m. for a brief devotional service on Zoom. Focusing on the Old Testament readings for this year's Lenten Sunday readings, we hear about the many life giving covenants that God has made with us through Noah, Abraham, those liberated from slavery, those wandering in the wilderness, and those in exile. These promises are our promises, and we will listen again to these words and reflect on how they shape our lives.

Topic: Midweek Lenten Devotion

Time: Feb 24, 2021 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every week on Wed, 5 occurrence(s)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83543738996?pwd=Q1gxcGU2WlUxbCtPZmM3aCt4ckNDUT09>

Meeting ID: 835 4373 8996/ Passcode: 242520

**Second Sunday in Lent, Sunday, February 28**, Jesus turns the our eyes with the disciples away from the expectation of riches and power and fame towards the ways we live and sometime suffer for one another. God makes an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life.

### COMMUNING AT HOME

Our virtual gatherings are the only church we know right now. We are the assembled people of God coming together on line to pray and hear the Word and greet God. We trust God's presence is in the midst of us, even across miles, across screens.

You will need to prepare your sacred space to include bread and wine or grape juice. Choose dishes that are nice or meaningful for you to honor the holy sacrament simple bread and wine become, and only put out as much bread and wine/grape juice as you are prepared to eat and drink. The bread may be unleavened or leavened. You can make your own communion bread, or use bread you have in the house. Pita bread is often used. The wine/grape juice may be red or white. You should totally consume what you have set out (or put it to the earth – put it on the ground rather than in the trash). These are holy things for holy people. Treat them as such.

If you live and worship with others, it is meaningful to serve one another, or if you live or worship alone, commune as I say the words in worship. When you are giving the bread say the words: The body of Christ given for you. When you are giving the wine say: The blood of Christ shed for you.

**Bristol Commemoration of World Interfaith Harmony Week.** Bristol Interfaith Coalition will commemorate World Interfaith Harmony Week with seven online activities during the first week of February through their Facebook page ([facebook.com/bristolinterfaithcoalition](https://www.facebook.com/bristolinterfaithcoalition)). This United Nations-endorsed effort serves to promote harmony between peoples of different faiths.

The Coalition will begin its observance on February 1 with a video explaining the week's activities and posted links for further information about multiple faiths. On each evening at 7:30 p.m. from February 2<sup>nd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup>, representatives of different faiths will present a brief overview of the basic tenets of that faith on Facebook live, and answer questions posted in the chat: Judaism/February 2 , Protestantism/February 3, Spiritualism/February 4, Islam/February 5, Catholicism/February 6 and the Baha'i/February 7. Pr. Stephanie is hosting Wednesday's presentation on Protestantism.

# MUSIC NOTES from Gwynne

**MUSIC NOTES** Thank you for submitting your HYMN favorites. Because they are so numerous, we started singing them on Sundays this past month. In January we sang Here I Am, Lord, Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult and We Are Marching in the Light of God. Looking ahead in February we will be singing:

**January 31**-There Is a Balm in Gilead

**Feb. 14**-Beautiful Savior

**Feb. 21**-A Mighty Fortress and Lord Let My Heart Be Good Soil

**Feb. 28**-Day by Day

The month of February has been designated as Black History Month so that we may celebrate the contributions in our American culture. During this month you will hear preludes based on Spirituals; also a solo sung by Leana Gleicher, "Oh, Didn't It Rain", you might guess comes from the story of Noah, arranged by Harry T. Burleigh.

Mr. Burleigh is well-known to us today as a singer/composer/arranger. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1866; his grandfather, a former slave, used to sing spirituals to him. After graduation from High School he became a well established singer in the Episcopal church and through scholarships and donations attended the National Conservatory of Music in New York City.

He also played in the college orchestra under the direction of Anton Dvorak, who was moved to include melodies in his symphony that Harry had sung for him. After a lifetime of performing and later on, composing, he coached many famous singers including Caruso, Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson. names you surely recognize. He died in Stamford, CT at the age of 82 years.

His compositions fell into three categories: secular, religious and spirituals.

**Mid-Week Opportunities: Compline/Night Prayers** is intended to be prayers before bed, a letting go of the day that has been so that we might rest well and rise in morning ready to serve. It is a short service of confession, psalm, song, and prayer (You'll find a reusable bulletin in this packet). We intend to continue offering Compline **Mondays and Thursdays around 8:30 p.m.** through Facebook Live (<https://www.facebook.com/Standrewct/>). **Evening**

**Prayer** is intended as an early evening service that celebrates light in the oncoming darkness. Weekly on **Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m., Camp Calumet's** Knute Ogren hosts Holden Evening Prayer, which is shared on our Facebook page.

**Clean out those closets!** Spring is around the corner (not soon enough), but now that the St. Pauly shed is reopened and our winter clothes will be changed out for spring ones, please remember to donate items to the shed in our parking lot. Remember blankets and towels too. Tell your friends and family! Not only do the donations go to places in need around the world, some directly benefit our Bristol community and we receive a few cents per pound.

## STEWARDSHIP

The Stewardship Committee reports with praise and thanksgiving to you, siblings in Christ, that the 42 financial commitments for 2021 received to date indicate total pledges of \$120,724, or approximately 54% of our 2021 proposed budget.

We pray for and anticipate exceeding our commitment number for last year, (51 commitment cards received in 2020), so if you have not yet been able to return yours, please send it in to the office at this time.

The spiritual discipline of **giving what God has first given us** is alive at St. Andrew! Thanks be to God!

Did you know?.....

.....If you compare the 42 financial commitments from 2021 to the 42 financial commitments for last year, there is an increase of about \$20,000?

.....People that submit commitment cards with their financial pledges often exceed their commitments? Of the 51 pledges received in 2020, 35 represented increased commitment, some significantly?

.....Churches understand that giving proportionately is what Jesus calls us to do? Giving as a percentage of income ensures two things: your family's needs are met first, and you commit to regular, planned giving to the church. One pledge is not more important than another, equal in God's eyes as we practice proportional giving.

.....overhead at virtual church - a youth watching TV church at home saw the link for giving that is posted each week by the tech team. Discussion ensues about the spiritual discipline of giving and electronic offering. The youth asks "Can I do that too?". (will try) Out of the mouths of babes.....

....according to Forbes.com, money is mentioned more than 800 times in the Bible?

**Remember in your prayers...**

**Those in need of healing:**

Chris, Jennifer, Patti, the Creswell family, Cathy Demers, Denise Holyst, Kimberly Loycano, Michael Mancini, Bill Murtha, Ted Neumann, Marge Pearson, Dominic Pope, Jim Prior, Callum Rescsanski, Paul Rescsanski, Arlene & Charles Schissler, Steven Siecienski, Scott Simpson, Dawn Stitham, Joan Strecker, Scott and Joni Tassinari, Cindy Tessman, Joan Usala, Herb Wedler, and Anna Zurel

**Those in nursing homes and the homebound:**

Ellie O'Regan, Marie Ouellette, and Jean Wentland

**We re-set the prayer list monthly. If you wish to add someone to the list, contact the office at (860) 583-5809 or via email [churchoffice@standrewct.org](mailto:churchoffice@standrewct.org)**