

A Word from Your Pastor –

***Teach me to do your will, for you are my God.
Let your good spirit lead me on a level path. (Psalm 143: 10)***

This week is the beginning of the official first week of winter. Merry Christmas everyone! The Christ-child is here and there is peace on earth! Well, there is peace in our lives this week since the light of the world and Christmas has invaded our houses! Even though there are a lot of prayers that need to be prayed for people and places around the world and in our community, I sense there is a Spirit of Christmas in our lives.

As we begin a new season and new year - we also begin a new day, a new season, and new life within the church. Yes, the Spirit of Christmas remains with us through the Epiphany when the wise men show up in Bethlehem. Let the Spirit **lead you** to share your input and **your** gifts this year. Help the church “be” the living presence of Jesus Christ for our community!

During the Advent and Christmas season we read from Luke telling us that God, Emmanuel is always with us in our lives. This is a great promise that God will keep! Matthew 1:23 reads “ ‘the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel’ which means ‘God is with us’.” And this is what God has promised us, eternal life never to be alone!

It is in the winter months that the name Emmanuel is a strong reassuring word. Emmanuel is God with us! As we begin a new year and ask for God’s guidance, many of us struggle through the winter months. We need a loving reminder that regardless of how life feels or looks, God is with us. This Covid life is difficult to live in! However, the church has always promised that God is most reliably present is worship where the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are celebrated. This is where we become refreshed and renewed from the pandemic world in which we live.

In a devotion from an ELCA Devotional Guide for Congregation Councils and Committees discusses the difficulty of winter and the melancholy that can come with it. The devotion reads:

“Deep in December, when the days grow shorter, when sunlight slants at a deep angle, when trees are bare, the landscape looks like

it had been sketched with a pencil, the heart inside can begin to look much the same as the world outside. Psychologists call it 'seasonal affect disorder', and it hits lots of us during the winter months. Problems that once seemed manageable appear bigger now. Hope is harder to come by. And melancholy hangs overhead like clouds with heavy snow or rain."

We may not see much of this "seasonal Affect disorder" in Arizona, but we definitely feel the anxiety of life. With the difficulties of the season upon us, my challenge to you this winter is for you to come and be assured that God is with you. We know that through worship we are fed Spiritually! So, this year begin with a renewed spirit and devote yourself to a committed worship schedule. All people are yearning to hear the good news of life through song, scripture and the sacraments...the Good News that our Savior is with us. It is difficult to hear and feel the Holy Spirit in this way at home or when you have a "private" faith. Come to worship and be Spiritually fed! And let's not forget to wear a mask if you are not vaccinated or feel that you should or need to be wearing it! It's for the safety of each other! Amen!