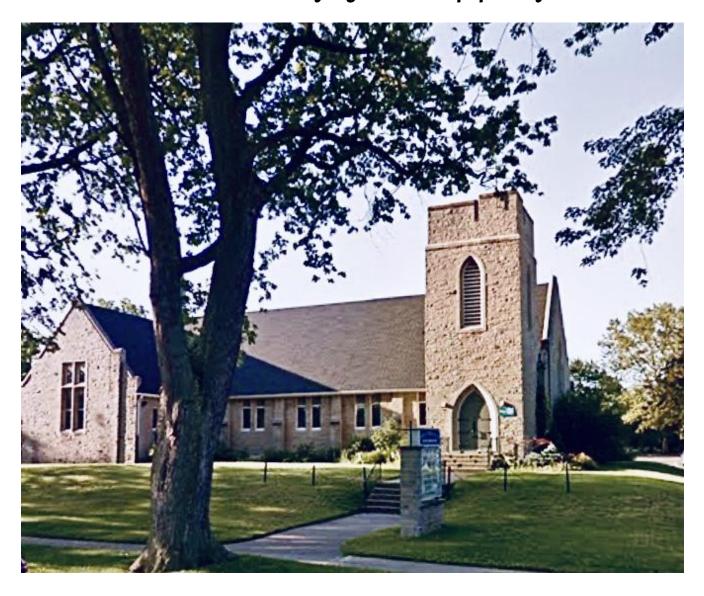
CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

January 24th, 2021—10 a.m.

The Third Sunday After the Epiphany



140 Russell Avenue St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1 Church: 905-685-8294 Fax 905-685-7661

www.christlutheransc.ca

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Church Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon Facebook: www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: Judy Mason, chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca
BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.

Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPHIPANY

<u>Prayer:</u> O Lord God Almighty, because You have always supplied Your servants with the several gifts which come from Your Holy Spirit alone, leave also us not destitute of Your manifold gifts nor of grace to use them always to Your honor and glory and the good of others; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Service: 10 a.m. (printed copy of service at back of bulletin)

Musician: Susanne Anderson

Readers: Paul Wachs

Sunday School: Fruit of the Spirit #5 Kindness -- https://youtu.be/RHERm37ynOA

Precious Moments, Jonah -- https://youtu.be/WfHw_7jcJiA

Children's Message: https://youtu.be/OXI3CoVpc5g

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Luke 4: 22-30 Wed.: John 4: 4-14 Friday: Romans 15: 14-21 Tuesday: Eph. 3: 1-12 Thurs: John 4: 27-42 Saturday: Acts 15: 7-12

OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES to Debbie Dueck and Barb Zacharuk & families and friends on the passing of Lillian Dueck on Tuesday, January 20th. "The family plans a memorial at some time in the future, when it is safe to host such in larger numbers outside of lockdown (hopefully in the Spring)". We pray the Lord bless all who knew Lil well with peace and hope in the joys of eternal life with Christ our Lord.



To Read the newest copy of "<u>The Canadian Lutheran</u>", press Ctrl & then click to open and follow link.

Last Sunday Attendance:

<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>
Current:		2,402.00	8,582.17
Missions		290.00	603.50
Property Improvement:		180.00	248.50

A MEMORIAL DONATION has been given to the Refugee Fund from Susan Honey in memory of Doug & Lois Schwenker.

<u>The Lutheran Hour</u>: Hear God's Word at the click of a button on Lutheran Hour webpage or on their super convenient app! (Just hold your "Ctrl" button down and clickbox to www.lll.ca/LHM-Sunday follow the link)

SUPPORTING YOUR CHURCH DURING THE PANDEMIC:

it's important for members to keep in mind that expenses for payroll, utilities, maintenance, etc. continue to accumulate even when in-person services are not available.

1. THROUGH EFT DONATIONS:

Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation continues to facilitate this service for us. To assist you in continuing your financial support to your church, we encourage you to fill out the form that is available for printing at: http://christlutheransc.ca/?page_id=96 and then mail the form along with a voided cheque to:

Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation,

275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3 Attn: Darryll Holland

2. BY MAIL: cheques can still be mailed to:

Christ Lutheran Church, 140 Russell Ave.

St.Catharines, ON L2R 1W1

or dropped in the Church mailbox at the East entrance.

3. ONLINE VIA LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA:

Lutheran Church-Canada has opened a web portal that allows parishioners to donate directly to their home church. Just visit:

https://lutheranchurch-canada.tng-secure.com/?pageId=donation-edit&categoryId=10972 select "St. Catharines-Christ Lutheran-30950" from the drop down menu, enter the amount of your donations and LCC will transfer your donation to Christ. Donation is via VISA or Mastercard. Tax receipts will be issued by LCC (not Christ). This opportunity will be in effect until the COVID-19 emergency is over.

SERVICE OF THE WORD AND PRAYER

The 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany January 24, 2021

GATHERING SONG

"Just As I Am"

Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, Thy love unknown, has broken every barrier down; Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Words: Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871, public domain; Music: William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868 WOODWORTH,

INVOCATION:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

In the beginning was the Word,

And the Word was with God, and the Word was God!

In Him, the Word, was life--

And the life was the light of all people.

The Word became flesh and dwelled among us,

And we have seen His glory, full of grace and truth.

(John 1)

PSALM 62:6-14

"New Life Translation"

God alone is my rock and the One Who saves me.

He is my strong place. I will not be shaken.

My being safe and my honor rest with God.

My safe place is in God, the rock of my strength.

Trust in Him at all times, O people.

Pour out your heart before Him. God is a safe place for us.

Those who are not important come to nothing. All who are important are a lie.

When weighed they go up. Together they weigh less than a breath.

Do not get money in a wrong way or be proud in stolen things.

If you get more riches, do not set your heart on them.

God has spoken once. I have heard this twice: Power belongs to God.

And loving-kindness belongs to You, O Lord. For You pay every man by the work he has done.

Come and praise the Lord our King, Alleluia— Raise your voice, in worship sing, Alleluia!

He will cleanse us from our sin, Alleluia— As we live by faith in Him, Alleluia!

We will live with Him one day, Alleluia— And forever with Him stay, Alleluia!

GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you:

And also with you.

Let us pray: Almighty God, Heavenly Father, look mercifully on our weakness, and stretch out Your mighty hand to help and defend us as we hear the Word of Your dear Son, turn from our sin and follow Him always; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

The Old Testament: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10

The Word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, 'Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.....When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Epistle: *1 Corinthians 7: 29-31, 35*

[St. Paul writes:] I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have spouses be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away...I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



The Holy Gospel: St. Mark 1: 14-20

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Mark, the 1st chapter:

Glory to You, O Lord.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.' As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

SONG RESPONSE TO THE WORD "Who Am I?"

Who am I that the highest King Would welcome me? I was lost but He brought me in Oh, His love for me Oh, His love for me Who the Son sets free
Oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God
Yes, I am
In my Father's house
There's a place for me
I'm a child of God
Yes, I am

Free at last, He has ransomed me
His grace runs deep
While I was a slave to sin
Jesus died for me
Yes, He died for me
Who the Son sets free
Oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God

Yes, I am
In my Father's house
There's a place for me
I'm a child of God
Yes, I am

Yes, I am
I am chosen
Not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me
Not against me
I am who You say I am
I am who You say I am
Who the Son sets free
Oh, is free indeed

I'm a child of God Yes, I am In my Father's house There's a place for me I'm a child of God Yes, I am

Yes, I am
In my Father's house
There's a place for me

I'm a child of God
Yes, I am
Yes I am who You say I am
Who the Son sets free
Oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God
Yes, I am
In my Father's house
There's a place for me
I'm a child of God
Yes, I am

MESSAGE: Jonah 3:1,5-10 + "Times We Wish God's Word Wasn't So Powerful"

THE APOSTLES' CREED:

God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess the faith.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the + life everlasting. Amen.

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith -

praying in the Holy Spirit.

(Jude 20)

Keep yourselves in the love of God,

waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that leads to eternal life.

(Jude 21)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation.

The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!

(2 Cor. 5:17)

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and of one another:

(Brief silence for reflection and self-examination)

Most Gracious Father, we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in our thoughts, words and deeds. We have committed sins against our neighbour and against You, O Father. Have mercy upon us. In Your compassion forgive us our sins. Those sins which are known to us, and those which are unknown. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that by faith we may be sorry for our sins, repent of them and serve You in newness of life to the honour and glory of Your Holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The peace of the Lord be with you always:

And also with you.

PRAISE RESPONSE

"Come and Praise"

[Michael Rowed tune]

Christ grew up in Bethlehem, Alleluia— Son of God and Son of man, Alleluia!

Jesus died on Calvary, Alleluia— Rose again triumphantly, Alleluia!

THE PRAYERS

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your generosity in the wonders of your creation, giving us life and supplying all we truly need day by day. Touch the hearts of all who have been blessed with many gifts to give thanks every day and to avoid faithless hoarding and worry about the future. *Hear us O God* –

Your mercy is great.

Thank you, dear Father, for the gifts of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thank you for his faithfulness to you, and for telling us of him in the scriptures. Help us to study, believe and trust the Scriptures, and to entrust our whole lives to what you reveal in its saving message. Touch the hearts of all who have been blessed with the riches of your grace to tell of your forgiveness and redemption. *Hear us O God* –

Your mercy is great.

Lord, open our eyes to see poverty and human need, and then to respond as you would have us. Move us and all people to be rich in good works, in response to what we have received from you. Touch the hearts of all who have been blessed with material riches to share them generously. *Hear us O God* –

Your mercy is great.

Remove any injustices perpetrated by the greedy and powerful on the poor and weak. Bring relief to all refugees in war torn regions. Thank you for the financial support given to those in need here in our land, and move all in authority to ensure the best and fairest possible assistance. Touch the hearts of all who have been blessed with supportive community to reach out in love and friendship. *Hear us O God* –

Your mercy is great.

Watch over the sick, the elderly, and those who are struggling in their personal lives. Touch the hearts of all who have been blessed with health and happiness to share the burdens of those who suffer. And support those known to us personally in need and whom we now name in our hearts... (brief silence) Hear us O God –

Your mercy is great.

King of kings and Lord of lords, you dwell in unapproachable light, but you have graciously given us access to your love and mercy through your Son Jesus Christ. Hear the prayers we offer in his name, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hear us O God -

Your mercy is great.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

BLESSING & BENEDICTION

Let us praise the Lord:

Thanks be to God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, + be with you all.

Amen

SENDING HYMN: "Will You Come & Follow Me" The Summons

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
Will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown
In you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
In you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
If I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
And never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
And do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean
In you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide If I but call your name? Will you quell the fear inside

And never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound
In you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
When you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
And never be the same.
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In you and you in me.

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REV. TODD HOEFFS EPIPHANY 3

Scripture: Jonah 3:1, 5-10

Title: "The Times We Wish God's Word Wasn't So Powerful"

January 24, 2021

There's wisdom in the advice

"keep your friends close, and your enemies CLOSER."

Its expected we'll be closely loyal to friends;

but by remaining close to an enemy you can better track their moves,

maybe even influence them so they're no longer an enemy.

Ninevah stand as an enemy city NO ONE ever wished to be close. A large city of 120,000 people, a 3 day's journey to walk through the entire place on foot. A powerful militant place in Assyria, which is present day Iraq. Many viewed them as the ENEMY. Israel viewed Ninevah as a such an enemy. They enslaved many of Israel's people through military conquests. Called great and known as the city of blood. Not great because they were so good, but that they were so cruel. Ninevite armies made their defeated enemies crush the bones of their own fellow soldiers and civilians. Which brings to our minds a sadistic heartlessness, to make enemies cower over their dead long enough to make a desecration of the remains. A place to be feared and avoided. As much as nations hated Ninevah, they even more so FEARED them.

Israel's prophet Jonah has good reason to hate them. And be afraid of them.

So when God appoints Jonah to be the prophetic voice of warning to the Ninevites, he wants none of it. He wants Jonah to tell the entire city to repent or else God's going to wipe them all out.

This is God's second word to Jonah.

The 1st time he hears God's voice, he climbs into a large boat headed for Tarshish, which is modern day Spain.

The opposite direction of Ninevah.

He doesn't want to see the Ninevites repent and be saved.

He wants to see the Ninevites die!

But God takes time to turn Jonah around. A storms brews on the water his ship floats on, with superstitious sailors who know Jonah is a man of God. They throw him over board, calms the storm and a large fish swallows him up.

slimy, stinky, pouting Jonah in the belly of the fish, spewed up out onto the shore on the 3rd day!

Jonah, as good as dead, brought to life on the 3rd day, given another chance at life.

Fish slime is not exactly the sackcloth and ashes of repentance

but it serves a similar purpose in Jonah's story.

We often talk about repentance as turning in a new direction.

Before the fish slime, he was running away to Tarshish.

After the fish slime, he began moving toward Nineveh.

Jonah wanted an eye for an eye.

Why let an enemy people off the hook?

And it's only fair.

They're the enemy, they're evil, cruel, heartless.

They deserve God's punishment.

And there's the problem, you see.

Jonah records this in the next chapter. He knows that God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. Or to paraphrase, Jonah's afraid God's a big softy, and would give HIS AND ISRAEL'S ARCH ENEMY another chance to live. And it's just not fair! You, God, should do what's right and punish them!

As a prophet, spokesman for God and Israel,

Jonah did not expect a change in Ninevah.

A 3 days journey to travel the city, Jonah stops at the end of day 1.

He speaks in minimal words.

Prophets ordinarily know lots of words and quote lots of Scripture.

But here, he proclaims loudly but not in a shout, 8 words:

"Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

That's it. Eight words.

Much to Jonah's chagrin, the people of Nineveh did actually repent -

from the King on down to little kids, women, babies,

even farm animals sits in ashes and rough sackcloth. Common outward signs of sorrow.

It's a strong immediate acceptance that the God of Israel, the true God, will destroy them unless they change their ways. Incredible!

God has a heart for Nineveh.

He has compassion for them,

as He Himself says they're just ignorant of right and wrong.

God's mercy can reach anyone.

And if God wishes to be generous with a people,

even an evil people, isn't that His business?!

Jonah greatly resents Him for this.

God can't be limited by anyone on what He's able to accomplish with a minimum of faithfulness. Jonah barely co-operated, his eight-word speech to the Ninevites contained no words of hope or good news.

Keeping people as an enemy in a sense is easy. It's a clear boundary, providing a direct method of dealing with them. They are always removed from us and we can predict their behaviour.

We see our current culture

and people of our world in so many places

wanting to make people enemies.

As if we keep our enemies not closer but farther away,

believe lies about them, demonize them and anyone different than us.

Human attention spans have gotten smaller, a lack of interest in other people, a growing distrust, and new found passions of hatred replacing acceptance. It goes on in the workplace. Its in the neighbourhoods. It even bleeds into the church. Doctrines have been written around the misbelief that some people are worthy of God's love and others are not.

God could've wiped out Nineveh with one blow BUT instead saves them because they change.

God would like Jonah to be pleased that his enemy repented; God would like Jonah to change.

But he's angry instead.

We can relate.

It doesn't seem fair.

The evil should get punished. Retribution. You reap what you sow.

Its almost amusing, because Jonah's frustration is all for naught.

Laughing at Jonah's antics gives us a chance to laugh at ourselves.

How far would we go to NOT be a part of God's love and compassion for those who, at best, we deem undeserving or, at worst, we deem worthy of destruction?

Because truth be told, if God is going to wipe out evil, we'd be gone too. As would Jonah.

His great story of anger and hope casts a light on Jesus' challenge to us to love our enemies, to love and pray for them.

This is our call as our Lord's disciples. This is the kingdom we proclaim as fishers of people.

This is the kingdom revealed to replace the present form of the world that is passing away.

A world in which we battle each other over land and resources and power and money and influence like Nineveh and Jonah's people.

Instead, God's kingdom announces a different world.

A world in which God's move toward the Ninevites convicts them through Jonah's half-hearted or even empty-hearted eight prophetic words.

Now for us as Jesus people, we might say that the world announced by Jesus is cross-centered.

The cross that proclaims powerlessness as the first move and the new life that becomes possible out of that powerlessness.

Jesus' kingdom means the first move is mercy

which interrupts cycles of violence and blame and becomes our hope.

Thankfully, the waters of baptism are the daily call into repentance and Jesus' kingdom of now – no fish slime or sackcloth or ashes required.

Repentance now comes not as a judgement of doom but of acceptance through grace. We are part of God's family.

We belong to the same God as prophet Jonah, who through His example has calmed all troubled waters too.

We are loved, wanted, valued, forgiven...

And with this comes the transformative change through the Holy Spirit.

For God in Christ has already destroyed any power evil could possess.

At the cross Jesus gave up His own life to cure sin's fever, which at the same times crushes Satan and cancels the eternal death sentence looming over our heads.

It is finished in Jesus.

Who was also spewed out of the grave on the 3rd day, just like Jonah out of the fish.

There's always new life whenever Christ is present.

This is good news for all who are lost, angry or troubled.

Its not that Nineveh got rewarded for being evil,

but rather God chose to go to great lengths to ensure they could be turned toward Him and away from their violent path.

And it worked for a time. Eventually they went too far and met their doom.

Sad, but that happens, to our enemies, even to our friends.

Yet God allows time on earth to pass, more time for people to seek His face, trust in His Son, renew their hope and bask in the forgiveness only Jesus can give.

It may not seem fair, but God's mercy, love and grace is not fair. It is just. It is right, for God is always lavish with His gifts.

And in our lives in the church we have gifts to enjoy and gifts to give.

Repentance comes to us by our active faith which

Confesses our sins and trust ever so fervently in our Lord's mercy.

Repentance isn't an outward sign of sorrow as it had before,

But is a blessed realization that we belong to God and He will move us by His Word to reconcile and set things right when things are wrong.

Our baptism anchors us into this place with God,

giving us an identify as redeemed in the saving blood of Christ Who embraces all.

All saved means all are saved.

We need not be angry at that.

God desires ALL to be saved in His own time and purpose.

Sometimes just to change them, sometimes to change us.

May we need not bother keeping our enemies closer,

But that all enemies becomes our friend through our witness to Christ

And His love for all.

And all is all.

Amen.

