

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

March 14th , 2021—10 a.m.
THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT



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

March 14th, 2021

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Church: 905-685-8294, Fax 905-685-7661, www.christlutheransc.ca

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com

Parish Assistant: Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579), parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca

Business Manager: Karen McCumber, business.manager@christlutheransc.ca

Secretary: Pat Kimpel, secretary@christlutheransc.ca

SOUL Ministry: Trinda Rensen, Gillian Leaver

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 FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Prayer: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning, and though we have in no way deserved Your goodness, You still abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul. Give us, we pray, Your Holy Spirit that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

9 AM - Contemporary - Communion

Song – When I Survey the Cross

Confession of Sins & Forgiveness

Spoken Kyrie

Prayer of the Day

Scripture Readings

Spoken Gospel Verse

Gospel

The Nicene Creed

Song – God So Loved [Wheelhouse]

Message

Prayers

Communion Liturgy & Lord's Prayer

Communion Song – Let Us Break Bread

Post Communion song & prayer

Benediction

Song—O Christ The Same

11 AM -Traditional - Communion

Hymn – Just as I Am

Confession of Sins & Forgiveness

Sung Kyrie [Lord Jesus Think On Me]

Prayer of the Day

Scripture Readings

Gospel Verse – Return To The Lord

Holy Gospel

The Nicene Creed

Hymn – God Loved The World

Message

Prayers

Communion Liturgy & Lord's Prayer

Communion Hymn—Christ The Life

Post Communion hymn & prayer

Benediction

Hymn –What A Friend We Have

Sunday Musician: Susanne Anderson

Sunday Reader: 9 a.m. – Chris Mason 11 a.m. – Lorraine Kaija

Precious Moments: “Little Brown Donkey” <https://youtu.be/11TSbix9ZcQ>

Children's Message (March 14th): 3 T's of TempTaTion - <https://youtu.be/IHJs6nrsRjU>

Sunday School: Fruit of the Spirit #9 Self-control— <https://youtu.be/vLawbBwCYL4>

COVID 19 – PROTOCOL: Dear Brothers and Sisters of Christ Lutheran Church, let us continue to be mindful of COVID 19, and now variants, by following all of the safety measures and protocols that are currently in place. If you have any of the symptoms outlined by Public Health, please remain at home. . Services are available online. If attending worship, please:

- *Wear a mask covering both your mouth and nose at all times.*
- *Sanitize your hands frequently*
- *Practice social distancing, 2 metres or 6 feet apart*
- *Ensure you have a temperature check before entering*
- *Ensure your attendance is noted at the entrance doors.*

LENTEN MIDWEEK:

1. **Devotional Message** by Pastor - recorded and placed on our website as well as onto his You-tube site featuring "**The Crosses of Lent**". Every Wednesday leading up to Holy Week.
2. **ZOOM Lenten Bible Study** (7 - 8 PM all Wednesdays in Lent leading up to Holy Week) will be offered Wednesday evenings in Lent focusing our eyes on the suffering and death of Jesus as recorded in Mark's Gospel. Contact Pastor Todd at sr.pastor@christlutheransc.ca for the link.

THANK YOU: A sincere thank you to everyone for your comforting words, cards, donations and prayers during this difficult time. Your support is very much appreciated. Sincerely, the Semenchuk, Mazzarella and Laumann Families.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY: Congratulations to Pat & Jack Hernder who celebrate their 60th Wedding Anniversary on April 8, 2021. God bless you both!

We Praise God: for the birth of Madilyn Alice Cioffi, daughter of Jennifer (Martens) and Scott Cioffi, sister for Victoria, on Friday, March 5. Congratulation to grandparents Laurie Regnier and Bob & Donna Martens.

ZOOM WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY: What should Christian life look like? Join us as we study the book of James (by Jesus' brother). Together let's study and journal what it means to live authentically and victoriously through the challenges of life! Join us on **Fridays, bi-monthly at 7:00 p.m.** as we learn with Dr. Lina AbuJamra through our Right Now Media Ministry. For more information or to receive the link contact Louise 905-329-8579.

MARY MARTHA/LWML-C Meeting—Tuesday, March 16, 7 p.m. The highlight of this meeting will be Pastor Hoefts leading us in our Bible Study. We are very pleased and grateful to be able to meet again in person and in accordance with strict Public Health guidelines. If you are able to attend, please call Lorraine at 905-371-3972, so we can confirm numbers. This month, we will also try to offer it at the same time on Zoom for those unable to attend in person. We look forward to seeing you there or virtually!



With continued COVID restrictions, we ask that you start making plans for you and your family if you wish to join us for:

EASTER SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday, April 4, 9:00 am & 11:00 am

Kindly confirm your attendance by registering with the Church office at 905-685-8294 or via email to secretary@christlutheransc.ca as soon as possible

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: John 6: 22-29

Wed.: Mark 12: 28-34

Friday: John 12: 20-26

Tuesday: 1 Kings 19: 1-8

Thurs: John 6: 47-59

Saturday: John 8: 21-30

Last Sunday Attendance: March 7th, 2021 9 a.m. – 35; 11 a.m.-23 Total: 58

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or - (--)</u>
Current:	271,175.00	5,214.90	6,215.	27,220.01	(19,714.12)
Missions	20,000.00	384.62	395.00	2,515.00	(946.54)
Property Improvement:			50.00	675.50	

FLOWERS FOR ALTAR: If you would like to place flowers on the altar would you please sign your name at the back of the church or let Pat know (secretary@christlutheransc.ca). The cost of the flowers is \$25.00 per bouquet.

Attention Donors to Mary Martha: the National LWMLC Triennium of 2018 - 2021 is almost done so all are encouraged to submit your mites to Ivy ASAP by mail or drop off at the church. We are hoping to fulfill all the Mission Projects before March 31. Thanks to all who continue to support the Lord's command. Fran Porteous, Zone Pres.

COLLECTION NOTE: At this point we are not 'collecting' any materials for the church. This means no milk bags for making mats; no SOUL bingo prizes; no Christmas cards for Sunday School or Soul; no puzzles for exchange, etc. Thank you!

Syrian Refugee Sponsorship Program Update:

Dear brothers and Sisters, I just want to give you a brief update. Even though things have been quiet with the lockdown I have been in continual contact with Kareem. It has been so uplifting to see little Asser grow from just a baby a year ago to an active little toddler who soon won't let his older brother Ameer have it his own way with the toys. It is so great the Lord answered our prayers for them to be in Athens so they are close when they need to go for their interview. One of Kareem's friends is in a camp 7 hours from Athens and he came to the city bringing his family for his interview and it was cancelled so they had to travel back to the camp.

A financial update for you: to date we have raised \$9,415 and after paying for the translations needed for the family documents the balance is \$9,048.48. I am confident we will reach our goal. It is difficult to say when they will get through the process with Covid, but I firmly believe God will answer our prayers. So I ask you to keep pressing forward to the throne of our heavenly Father that He move our government process to bring these 2 little boys and their parents to experience God's love as I know you my friends here at Christ can express it and reach out with it. As always if you have any questions please ask. God Bless, Pastor John Makey

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/?pagelId=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.

REV. TODD HOEFFS

Lent 4

Scripture: John 3:14-18

March 14, 2021

Working as an art instructor at a camp near NY City 25 plus years ago, for grades 1 – 8, can still hear the camp director lecturing campers about behaviour, especially curfew, Reminding them that “nothing GOOD happens after dark.”

I’m sure we all can guess what he had in mind. Human nature being what it is, Safety & security must be guarded at all times, but especially after dark.

Darkness and light are woven through John’s Gospel account

Under the cover of darkness, a religious man seeks the company of Jesus.

Is this a fact-finding mission for information to pass on to the other religious leaders, or the Roman authorities? Is truth being sought here?

Nicodemus. A highly intelligent, respected religious man.

His own name means “victory of the people”. His religiousness isn’t his victory, but faith in God, and even more so, his belief and understanding of WHO Jesus is

And WHAT He is on earth to do are the VICTORY of the people. Nicodemus is a

Pharisee. Often, they’re depicted as bad guys and enemies of real faith in God. The

Pharisees are highly respected religious leaders. They worked diligently in their efforts

to keep God’s law. After generation of wandering and slavery to foreign powers,

Pharisees feared the faith and culture of Israel was slipping away. They grew very strong under the Greek and then Roman rule. They held sway over all that was taught and

believed about God. Not only what Scripture passages got spoken but how it would be interpreted. Godly rules fixed everyone’s place in religious society.

Most often, this lifestyle gave Pharisees the false sense of security in their conceived path to God and Heaven. So, when Jesus arrives, the Pharisees feel very threatened.

His signs and sermons and mingling with people challenged their proud adherence to the law and the privilege and prestige they grew into in their roles as religious leaders

to the Israelite Jews. Jesus traveled around and sat at many unsavoury tables.

Pharisees and all of the religious leaders did not travel and teach and live with people and eat at any table. They fixed their place in Jerusalem and YOU came to THEM.

That is why we hear them question Jesus when it comes to the law –

Scolding His behaviour – Healing people on the Sabbath, breaking bread and touching outcasts and the religious unclean. This is all NEW and received to Pharisee ears as

BEING AGAINST God. The Pharisees are God-fearing, devout, regularly worshipping

people of God, just like so many of us. Unlike Nicodemus, who must be curious. He’s

drawn to him, but clearly not ready to be publicly associated with Jesus. He knows of the signs Jesus has been performing.

He opens up the Scriptures and talks with divine authority.

“How can these things be?” he finally asks Jesus from the deep shadows of the darkness.

It must be disappointing and frustrating to hear Jesus suggest that Nicodemus of all people must be “born anew.” (3:3) Literally this means “born from above.”

Nicodemus misses the funny play on words and takes Jesus quite literally as "born a second time." "Can someone crawl into their mother's womb and be born again?" (3:4b) Perhaps the problem is that Nicodemus thinks he's got God all figured out. He wants Jesus to enable him in his rigid religious beliefs as if he's on the right path to God. But it's problematic and downright impossible to define or control God. Nicodemus can't even determine his own journey to God.

Being BORN FROM ABOVE is something that happens to us Not something we can make ourselves. God can only birth people from Heaven. That birthing from above is faith. A daily dying and a daily being born.

We too may find ourselves as Nicodemus does here – so firmly footed in what we've always understood to be right and true in our religious identities. In those times we may really struggle to open that identity up – let it be expanded, challenged, maybe even changed as we grow in our study of scriptures and time spent listening for God's voice. Nicodemus must have been wondering in part, how can it possibly be this simple? How it is that God can do this without having to DO anything? The Pharisee's had inherited mountains of legal interpretation, guidelines, and examples on how to keep God's law perfectly. The temple sacrifices, the offerings, the chanted psalms, all given by God in the Scriptures as preparation. Those were not an end in and of themselves, but a path toward getting one's own heart ready to receive the Saviour. And now He's here and there's a million reasons why so many reject Him. Jesus is saying we can inherit the kingdom of God through some new and unusual birth in water and the Spirit?

Nicodemus knows about ritual washing and the Spirit promised but yet to be. So overwhelming. But Jesus doesn't let him off the hook. He's a prominent religious teacher and leader. Known and respected HE SHOULD know these things.

The promise of faith in the coming Saviour is woven into the entire old Testament. It's just that the administration of the interpretation of God's Law and the policing of Israel's religious behaviour took precedence over the Word and Promises of God. We can see that Jesus is talking about our baptisms here. And even when it doesn't seem to make sense – seems too good to be true – Jesus asks that we trust what he is saying. "Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes." (3:7-8)

We certainly know that wind is still there, Like the rushing Pentecost wind and fire of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, just as we know the mark of our baptism is always there and the flame of faith deep inside our hearts. It takes Nicodemus time to step out of the dark and make sense of Jesus' Light. Later on, as John records in Chapter 7, Nicodemus begins to speak out, begins to come out of the shadows. When his colleagues, the Pharisees, push forward aggressively to have Jesus arrested and shut up once and for all, Nicodemus speaks up. "'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?'

They replied, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.'" (7:50-52)

It's as if Nicodemus mustered just enough courage. It's as if his belief grew to ensure the True Light shines into the world. He is simultaneously questioning the conduct of the Pharisees **AND** whether or not this could really be true – these things he's hearing and starting to believe about Jesus. Nicodemus could actually be one who can do something as simple and powerful as furthering Jesus' message rather than building mountains of law. For God so loved the WHOLE WORLD Jesus tells him

And this Jesus comes into this WHOLE world NOT for condemnation

But that the WHOLE WORLD can be saved through HIS LIFE.

He dies and we live. We daily die and live in Him. That's being born from above.

In Nicodemus we can see who we really are. Our journey during Lent, and throughout life, means trust, surrender, letting go of being in charge, and letting God's Spirit wash over us again. Faith is not having all the right answers, or keeping all the law and rules perfectly, but asking questions opening us to new directions and insights about our God. Kind of like Nicodemus asking Jesus, "How can these things be?"

The Spirit is at work moving and guiding that we remain in our relationship with God As those who are born from above. Faith leads us to trust as we walk; faith helps us to ask important questions. Faith is the openness to new insights, new relationships.

Faith is the journey where the Spirit takes the lead, and takes us where He chooses.

We cannot help ourselves be worthy of forgiveness.

Nor can we earn eternal life, which, by the way, begins in the here and now as we follow Jesus, sharing his unconditional love, and it then continues beyond this life.

These gifts are the result of God's astounding, unconditional love for humanity.

Right at the moment of our baptisms, we're promised this eternal life with God through Christ here and now. Doing us the good it needs ensuring we are always born anew.

Even though we cannot fully live up to the law and we never will.

We hear this all the time in the scriptures and in our churches, and yet ... we wonder...

Are my sins really forgiven? Am I really good enough? Do I really deserve this?

And then we're tempted to retreat like Nicodemus back into the presumed safety of the shadows, forgetting that this doesn't have anything to do with "deserve," – only Grace.

We don't deserve the goodness and mercy we receive. That's the point. No one deserves it. This is why God loved the WHOLE WORLD enough to make Jesus Pay the debt of

such deserved punishment. Punishment received in full at Calvary's cross. Even

Nicodemus, Still stepped in Pharisaical culture, Viewed the dead corpse of Jesus on the cross and assisted Joseph of Arimathea in taking the body down from the cross

And buried in the garden tomb. Nicodemus provided the myrrh and aloes.

A costly duty, as he risked his entire reputation on this loving act.

Nicodemus is boldly proclaiming with his very presence:

Jesus is worthy of burial because HE is the Saviour of the World.

Jesus IS God come to earth to walk among us, teach us, open the scriptures fully and to lay down His life in exchange for ours. The mountains of legal rules, the cultural dos and don'ts, melt away in the hope our crucified and risen Saviour gives. Nicodemus teaches us well. That we who are in the dark can only come into the light by God's

mighty act of saving us in Jesus and He understands how many of us come into our relationship with Him gradually, with questions and doubts and that's OK. A Scriptural theme and a pattern in our own lives. Nicodemus, like so many of us, is a person of faith,

And his full belief gets held back by his own perceived certainty that has come out of his religious community.

But the Holy Spirit is working hard here – calling and moving all people that all might come to faith and trust in Christ for all things.

Where do we hold tightly to traditions only for the sake of those traditions?

We know better. We've been born from above.

We've had faithful teachers showing and telling us the Gospel.

We have the courageous faith moving us into God's light exposing our sin and failings– and we need never, ever be worried about shunning or ridicule from our God.

It's true, there may be risk and pain in exposing our whole selves to this light.

But when we do ... when we dare to let the light fall on places where we need to forgive or be forgiven, places that are too heavy for us to bear on our own, we find, actually, that we are quite safe and freed. We are released of all that works against us

And given over into the comfort of Christ. And we are then in positions of service

To help others be released from their failings Not to condemn, but to soothe with the same saving Gospel. Because the ever-living truth is that nothing can ever keep us away from God's promises. While it may still be true nothing good happens in the dark,

It is through the dark Jesus took Nicodemus into light

And because of that Jesus's love for the WHOLE WORLD,

Like Nikodemus, we are people of the victory in Christ!

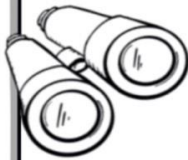
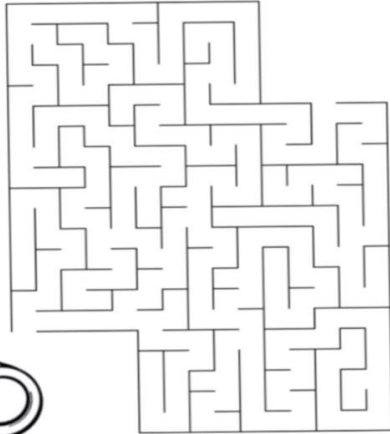
Amen.



Kids Lectionary Learning
3rd Sunday in Lent



Exodus 20:1-17
 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
 John 2:13-22 (23-25)



TODAY WE HEAR GOD'S
 COMMANDMENTS, JESUS
 CLEANSING THE TEMPLE,
 AND ABOUT WISDOM AND
 THE GOSPEL.

WORD SEARCH

PASSOVER
 SHEEP
 JESUS
 SELLING
 TABLES
 DAYS
 TEMPLE
 THREE
 COINS
 RAISE

J	H	D	K	A	N	T	H	R	E	E	T	M	V	T
E	T	A	P	H	P	R	I	B	X	N	X	D	N	A
S	W	Y	J	T	P	P	A	S	S	O	V	E	R	B
U	T	S	L	E	F	X	N	M	L	T	B	L	Z	L
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Q	S	R	G	J	K	G	C	I	R	L	N	H	A	I
F	E	C	O	I	N	S	V	B	Y	E	F	S	G	M
J	U	C	K	G	S	R	A	N	C	P	U	P	X	V



"but we preach
 Christ crucified"



"I am the Lord your God,"

- Exodus 20:2 (ESV)