

The Church Mouse/Vashon Lutheran Church
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DECEMBER 2023



The Church Mouse

From the Bishop:

We were in a car heading to the Sahara Desert. The weather was changing. I looked out the window and, seeing a dark mass in the distance, said to the driver, "Do you know what a tornado is?" He didn't respond. But in a few short moments, we skidded to a stop on the side of the road. There was no visibility, wind was swirling around us. Rain and sand and rocks were pelting the car. And then the car windows broke from the pressure of the storm. We were suddenly being blown around and all of us in the car were showered with rain and sand and rocks and glass. We huddled in our seats, shocked by the ferociousness of the weather around us and fearful of what was happening.



When I look at our world right now, I confess I feel much the same as I did on that day - like I'm huddling in my seat, shocked by the ferociousness of the wind and fearful of what is happening.

In our world, the climate continues to change and people and the very earth are suffering. We continue to harm this planet that God created for us and for all creatures and plants.

In our Holy Land, as I write this in the middle of November, we hear of Palestinian Christian families fleeing, children crying, hunger and desperation, churches being bombed and hospitals being attacked. In our Holy Land, we hear of violence against the Jewish people, kidnapping of children and old people, and the threat of death.

In our country, there are those who are conflating Christianity with patriotism, those who are moving against Democracy and towards authoritarianism, gun violence continues unabated, legislators refuse to do their work and instead look after their own best interests. There is continued racism in our institutions, polarization, refusal to listen to each other, and more.

In the ELCA, we forget that we are gathering for the sake of Jesus and for those desperate to hear God's Word of forgiveness, love, and grace. We try to prop up institutional ideas rather than living into the Spirit of Christ. We would rather live in the "what once was" rather than the advent of something beyond our imaginations (but not God's).

Truly, the storms seem strong and fierce.

And yet ... and yet ...

In this time, when we not only are living in these swirling squalls, we are called, as people of faith, to remember and trust how God has worked, and continues to work, in this world. We are called to tell the stories of God's faithfulness again. For in the beginning, through God's Word, chaos became the heavens and the earth. Later, Moses saw God in fire. In the story of Job, when Job questioned God's faithfulness, God replied, referring to the stars, 'Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion?' When Abraham fought the storm of sacrificing his son, God brought through the darkness a ram. When a country was occupied by Rome, power was held by a few, voices were silenced, and hope seemed fleeting, a young girl became pregnant and sang. A young couple sought shelter far from home.

In a night of storms, one star shone bright. In a world of desolation, a baby's cry was heard.

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In this stormy time, in this time of deep shadows and unknowns, in this time of memory and hope, in this Advent and Christmas time, together we lift our voices in and sing:

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.
O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

Dear Beloveds of God, I wish you Advent and Christmas blessings and hope.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee / bishop@lutheransnw.org



Letter from Dean Lena (former pastor of our sister church in Moscow) to Eva Mader:

Dear Eva,

I am sorry I haven't written for a long time. It has been a very intensive time, and at present it is even more intensive, because we are moving to the pastor's apartment in the coming time. We are bringing step by step our belongings there, but stay still in the village, where we have lived all this time. Greetings to Vashon congregation! It is very moving that they have our pictures there! Thank you very much that you build bridges further on in spite of the evil times of separation and alienation!

We have lived a full year in Germany now. It is unbelievable! It is unbelievable that I saw Moscow all the time in my dreams, but here in Germany I do see Germany! Perhaps, it is because I work and communicate with people more.

Advent time is coming, it is great here, people try to create the Christmas spirit. This year there will be Christmas market also in our town, we look forward to it.
How are you, dear Eva? How is it going and how do you feel?
May God bless and protect you!
Greetings from Artis!

Blessed Christ-The-King Sunday and great Advent time!
Lena

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Poinsettia donations: There are forms for Poinsettia Donations on the banister in the sanctuary. Please pick one up if you are interested in purchasing a poinsettia to help decorate the sanctuary for Advent/Christmas. Thank you! Marita Ericksen, VLC Secretary

Contact Gail Larson (206/567-4779) with your prayer requests.

IFCH Dinner Program: VLC provides hand out meals at Vashon Presbyterian Church at 5:00 PM the fourth Thurs. of the month. Contact Patte Wagner: pattewags@aol.com to help.

The Care Closet, Medical Equipment/Supplies – 206-473-8715. Vashon Care Network – 206-604-3253. Email: contact@vashoncarenetwork.org; website: www.vashoncarenetwork.org

Prayer & Healing Service – Rev. Jeff Larson PhD is offering a prayer & healing service on the first Weds. of the month at 6:30 PM, in the sanctuary. All are welcome!

VCN FAMILY CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP - Vashon Care Network invites you to join other family caregivers in a safe, supportive space to share the experience of caregiving. Support circles are Thursdays, 6:30–7:30 PM at Vashon Lutheran. ?? Contact Kathy Shafel, kshafel@comcast.net, cell: 206.718-1458 or Tory Hayes, victoriansmith@comcast.net, 206.304-4544

Vashon Island Chorale's 66 singers, pianist Linda Lee & director Dr. Gary D. Cannon present “A Pacific Northwest Christmas” at the Kay White Theater Sat., Dec. 9, 7:30pm & Sun., Dec. 10, 3pm. The program is by Pacific Northwest composers with choral pieces about winter & Christmas. McMurray Middle School choir will sing *Remembering Decembers* by Pinkzebra. There are sing-along opportunities for all!

VYFS Giving Tree - The Giving Tree was set up in the fellowship hall on Dec. 2. Please take a gift tag, buy the gift for the child on the tag, return the tag & gift by Dec. 17 to put under the Giving Tree. Thank you!



“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord“
1 Corinthians

OUR FAITH IN ACTION

SUNDAY

1st, Food Bank Sunday

10:30 AM Worship

6:30 – 8:30 PM AA Group

Dec. 24th, 10:30 AM & 4:00 PM Christmas Eve Services at VLC

Dec. 31st, 10:00 AM New Year’s Eve Service at COHS

MONDAY

10:00 AM Intercessory Prayer Group

4th, 6:00 – 8:00 PM VCN Board Meeting

TUESDAY

2nd, 9:00 – 1:00 PM Quilt Sewers Group

3rd, 10:00 – noon Vashon Quilting Group

WEDNESDAY

1st, 9:00 AM – noon Lutheran Quilters Group

Dec. 6, 6:30 PM Prayer and Healing Service

Dec. 20, 7:00 PM VLC Council Meeting

THURSDAY

6:30-7:30 PM VCN Family Caregivers Support Group at VLC

4th, 5:00 PM IFCH Dinner prepared by VLC, served at VPC



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