

# LIFELINES

of

## LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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### Good riddance 2020!



2020 is over and many are celebrating its passing as shown in the memes above. By all accounts it was a difficult year: there was the worldwide pandemic resulting in the deaths of millions of people. What's more, some believe that the cure—with the loss of freedoms and the crashing of the economy, the closing of businesses, the prohibition and hesitancy of so many social activities—has been far worse than the disease itself. We also had widespread rioting this year in many of our cities resulting in untold losses of property and capital. Then there was a very contentious election that left many questioning if the results should be trusted. Needless to say, many of us are ready to say good riddance to 2020.

I sympathize with this sentiment. It's good to mark time and turn pages and move forward. But I want to address a problem with this especially as it relates to blaming the year 2020 for our problems.

The year 2020 is not responsible for anything. A year has no agency or will. We know this if we stop and think about it, but so often, intentionally or not, people do not think about it and just proceed to assign responsibility to a thing, rather than a person. But, if we are going to reflect seriously on the problems of 2020, we have to take them up with the One who controls and directs all things. The One ultimately responsible. The problem with blaming things on 2020 is it avoids dealing with our Maker and His will in either allowing or causing the things that happen to us in any year and every moment in history.

I don't want to get bogged down in the debate over how much God *causes* versus how much He *allows*. Theologians and philosophers have debated this, but in the end it doesn't matter when you are the one suffering. Just consider the story of Job. If you were in his place and suffering tremendously, I don't think you would care whether God *caused* your problems or *allowed* them to happen! You just know that God is the only one who can do anything about it and so you want to take your concerns to Him. And so, as Christians, we ought to approach the events of 2020 and every year with the certainty that God is in charge. He directs all things. Nothing happens without His consent.

In light of that, it is worth considering: God, what are you trying to teach us? Why are you allowing (or even causing) this to happen? What lesson should I learn from this trouble or difficulty? Do I need to repent of some sin? Am I supposed to learn more gratitude? Have I taken my blessings for granted? Is our country on the wrong track? Are we getting what we deserve? Do you have it in mind to bless us after a time of difficulty? Etc. etc. etc. And here's the thing we also learn from Job: we may never get the answers to these questions. God may not reveal His reasons for doing what He does. What matters is not that we understand why things happen, but how we live in light of them. Thus, after wondering and praying and thinking about the events around us, we shouldn't conclude we have all the reasons for our suffering; rather, we should concern ourselves with being faithful in good times and bad. We need only know that in suffering God does not abandon or forsake us. He is not only with us in good times, but He carries us through the difficult ones as well. [See also how Jesus would not give a simple answer to why certain people suffered in Luke 13:1-5]

Are you troubled by the events of 2020? By what you see happening in your country, to our church, to your job, your school, your future? Then, if you haven't done so already, it is time to take those concerns up with the Lord. To pray and seek His help and counsel. Spend some time considering what the events of this past year mean from a theological perspective (and perhaps a little less time asking: How did this happen and who's to blame?) Consider: What does this mean? Why is God (causing/allowing) this to happen and how am I going to live a faithful life in light of it? You may not find all the answers, but pursuit of faithfulness will lead you to a much better place than lazily blaming the year 2020 ever will.

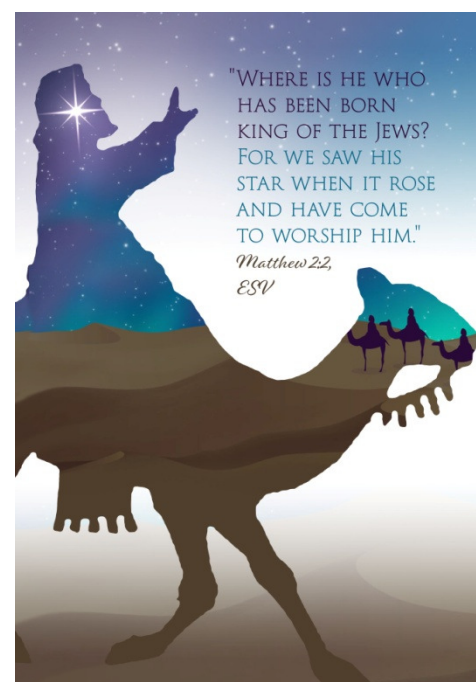
Finally, as Christians, we know that Jesus was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. His suffering on the cross was done in our place so we will not suffer eternally. While this doesn't make our present suffering disappear nor does it alleviate the pain of past trials, it does assure us again that our God is not aloof and unconcerned, but He knows what we are going through. He has also done something to ensure that for all who are faithful and trust in Him, one day all our sorrows will end.

God's blessings to you this year and always. May God grant us all a Happy New Year with renewed faithfulness, trust, thankfulness and joy in our benevolent Father in Heaven.

PrS



In addition to everything else that went on this year, it was a difficult one for my family personally. We had some unexpected bills come our way in the form of car accidents and a plumbing emergency. Fortunately, we are doing well covering everything and now with the large Christmas bonus this year, we are in good shape. The Lord provides. Thank you very much for your generosity. Also, to the many who gave gifts to me and the family, and especially the one who anonymously sent a nice package to my house (you know who you are) many, many thanks. It is appreciated. –PrS



# Teen Times

## 2021

As December 31, 2020 approached, it was quite obvious that the contempt for the past 12 months was evident by the way people talked, or by what could be read on any popular news app and social media outlet. It seemed that many people were ready to just put the past year behind them and try to get a fresh start. For others, it was a year of pain and suffering as they had to endure the effects of the global pandemic that has gripped our society for the last 10 months. For those who are struggling with unemployment, sickness, or the death of a loved one, we can only offer words of encouragement, which is exactly what God has already given to us. The words “fear not” or “do not be afraid” or some forms thereof are found in the pages of scripture several hundred times. The most recent passage you may have read or heard was just a few weeks ago when the birth of Jesus was foretold. In the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel the angel says to Mary, “Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God.” The condition that she was told she would be in could have led to a death sentence as becoming pregnant outside of marriage was a serious offense. However, the angel basically said, “God’s got this, Mary, He has a plan.”

Yes, 2020 was a tough year, more for some than others, but hopefully we can look back on it and see just how much we have to be thankful for. Here are a few things for which I am personally grateful. If you think about it, you could probably come up with a few as well.

1. No matter what happens, we have a God who loves.
2. We have the Holy Spirit working in our lives to strengthen our faith.
3. My family is blessed in so many ways, and particularly with the addition of our new granddaughter last March.
4. IMPACT Bible class on Sunday mornings. Yes, we have not had it for many months, but it shows me how much I miss it.
5. Youth nights in person. ZOOM is ok but it’s not quite the same.
6. Higher Things. It was cancelled in 2020, but looking forward to returning in summer 2021.
7. God has a plan, He’s got this!

Let’s start this New Year off reminding ourselves what we read so many times throughout Holy Scripture;

*“The Lord Himself goes before you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8*

As always, you are in my prayers.

Until next time,  
Scott Peters

## Lord of Life Small Groups

### EMPTY NESTERS' CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike and Sandra Paradise at (972) 424-2951 or [itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net](mailto:itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net)
- † Usually meet one Sat. a month at 2:30 PM

### EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth [BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com](mailto:BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com)
- † Usually meet one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

### FRUITS OF THE VINE CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or [speters@planolutheran.com](mailto:speters@planolutheran.com)
- † Usually meet one Sun. a month at 5:30 PM

### GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Chris Oltmann at (972) 727-6330 or Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Usually meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat. of each month at 6:30 PM for Bible study

### MIXED BLESSINGS

- † For info `contact Fred and Ruth Bernhardt at (972) 398-0771
- † Usually meet one Sat. a month at 6:30 PM

### TWENTY SOMETHINGS

- † For couples and singles in their twenties
- † For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at [PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com](mailto:PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com)
- † The group is currently in transition, but has usually met on Sundays after late service



## For Giving

We collected \$720 for the Assistance Center of Collin County during the Thanksgiving and Advent services.

# JANUARY



## BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 Stu & Sandy Ehrett (34)
- 5 Nolan Helms
- 6 Pat Montalbo
- 7 Carter Suarez
- 8 Lauren Chumbley
- 8 Linda Tischler
- 10 Sandra Paradise
- 11 Donovan & Nancy Cawood (13)
- 17 Bonnie Holtzman
- 21 Brian Hahn
- 22 Lora Frinsko
- 22 Kara Prescott
- 23 Noah Reinert
- 23 Luke Sowers
- 24 Kymberly Vess
- 28 Amanda Kunschke
- 30 Karl Olsen



There are still offering boxes remaining outside of the church office. If you haven't picked yours up, please look for them there.



## prepare for worship in january

### Jan. 3: Second Sunday after Christmas

Texts: 1 Kings:3-15; Eph. 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52

Hymn of the Day: "Within the Father's House," 410

### Jan. 10 The Baptism of Our Lord

Texts: Gen. 1:1-5; Rom. 6:1-11; Mark 1:4-11

Hymn of the Day: "To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord," 406 or 407

### Jan. 17 Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: 1 Sam. 3:1-20, 16; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

Hymn of the Day: "The Only Son from Heaven," 402

### Jan. 24: Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: Jon. 3:1-5, 10; 1 Cor. 7:29-35; Mark 1:14-20

Hymn of the Day: "O Christ, Our True and Only Light," 839

### Jan. 31: Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Texts: Deut. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 8; Mark 1:21-28

Hymn of the Day: "Son of God, Eternal Savior," 842



## SUMMARIZED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

### 11 Months Ending November 2020

	Y-T-D Operating Funds	Y-T-D Budget	Variance	Jan-Dec 2020 Budget
<b>Contributions</b>				
<b>Regular Offerings</b>	\$509,416	\$527,922	(\$18,506)	586,549
<b>Other</b>	\$1,381	\$0	\$1,381	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>\$510,797</u>	<u>\$527,922</u>	<u>(\$17,124)</u>	<u>586,549</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Operating Expenses	\$466,433	\$507,508	(\$41,075)	\$552,379
Mortgage Payment (P&I)	\$41,649	\$31,251	\$10,398	\$34,092
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>\$508,082</u>	<u>\$538,759</u>	<u>(\$30,677)</u>	<u>\$586,471</u>
<b>Surplus or (Deficit)</b>	\$2,716	(\$10,838)	\$13,553	\$78
<b>Other Information:</b>				
Operating Fund Balance	\$102,218			
Restricted Funds Balance	\$114,537			
Building Loan Balance	\$193,695			