

The Simeon Spirit

SIMEON UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Pastor Gregory Lindsey

December, 2020

PO Box 478
Gratz, PA 17030

Celebrating Our Faith

Church: (717) 365-3139

Cell: (717) 521-9402

Pastor's Message Making Room for Jesus

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7)

Wally was big for his age--seven years old. Everyone wondered what role the teacher would give him in the annual Christmas play. Especially considering the fact that he was also a slow learner. Perhaps he could pull the curtain. To everyone's surprise the teacher gave Wally the role of the innkeeper. The boy of course was delighted. After all, all he had to learn was one line: "There is no room in the inn." He had that down in no time.

Then came the night for the program. The parents took their places. Every seat in the auditorium was filled. The children entered singing "Oh come all ye faithful." The lights dimmed. A hush moved over the audience. The curtain opened on Scene One. Mary and Joseph entered the stage and walked up to the inn. "Please sir, my wife is not well. Could we have a room for the night?" Wally was ready for his line. He had rehearsed it all night. He began, there is...and he hesitated. He started over again. There is. . .and again his mind went completely blank. Everyone was embarrassed for him, but poor Wally just didn't know what to do. Joseph thought he would improvise and started walking away toward the stable on stage left. Seeing him walking away Wally in desperation called out: "Look, there's plenty of room at my house, just come on home with me."

I can sympathize with Wally's dilemma. For the past nine months government officials have been broadcasting the message that because of the corona virus there is no room in God's house for his people. Retail stores which are deemed essential have remained open. The so called 'peaceful' protests with thousands, many not wearing masks, have been ignored or even admired. While the rights of the mob have been protected, the church it seems has been designated a second-class operation.

There is good reason for caution. The covid-19 virus has proven to be highly contagious and for the elderly or persons with compromised immunity systems, the virus can have dire consequences. Unfortunately, worship without proper precautions creates a ready environment for infection.

As faithful disciples of Christ, we are called to protect the life and well-being of our neighbor. At Simeon, we have adopted measures for worship we feel are appropriate in order to mitigate the risks. In addition, we are streaming our worship services on YouTube to allow those who cannot attend to experience worship at home.

Nevertheless, it is just not the same. Frustration grows as this pandemic drags on month after month into the new year. Our church family has been dispersed out behind closed doors and locked down nursing care facilities. People outside of our faith tradition do not understand the strain this puts upon the church.

This morning I saw a news report about the first covid-19 vaccination given to a British woman. Millions of other vials of the vaccination are being prepared for distribution. First they will go to high-risk persons such as health care workers and persons in other high-risk health categories. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, but we must be patient. It may be into next summer before the greater population in America will be vaccinated.

Yet I am not discouraged. The foundation of faith upon which this church was build 189 years ago is strong. When the new normal comes, I feel confident that our sanctuary will once again be filled with prayer, praise, song, and Christian fellowship. This will come with a new sense of joy and thanksgiving as a family forced into separation is once again reunited!

When this day comes, it is my hope that we will make up for time lost with more singing and more fellowship meals (more food!). Our worship services will have plenty of disruptions from playful children. They are a blessing. The passing of the peace will erupt into a mass conglomeration of smiles, the words of peace, and real handshakes. Our anthems will joyfully move people into a closer feeling of God's presence. After the service, people will stay and share greetings and news with their neighbor. And people will just feel better about themselves for experienced spirit filled worship. This is what church is all about. This is what St Paul means when he said "Rejoice, again I say rejoice!"

Do not forget about Sunday School. We have an opportunity to draw more children and adults into this hour of learning about God and his love. The new normal should be Christians who are educated about their faith, how to strengthen it, and defend it.

My fraternity at Roanoke College, Sigma Chi, had a motto which reflected the feeling of brotherhood we shared with each other. During rushing weekend (when freshmen choose a fraternity to pledge), we put up a large banner which we hung on the front of our house. It read "You Will Find It Here". Perhaps we could do something similar. How about "You Will Find Jesus Here!" And that will be a fact.

Everyone is needed! If just one person is missing, it is as if there were many. When the time is right, God will call us all back to his house so it will once again be filled with our joyful voices and song! Let us encourage one another with this hope. And like our innkeeper Wally from our story above, do whatever it takes to make room for Jesus once again.

May you all have a safe and merry Christmas!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Greg

RADIO MINISTRY SPONSORS FOR DECEMBER, 2020

December 6 – Buffington/Reed Funeral Home

December 13 – Willing Workers

December 20 – Penn Valley Printing

December 27 – Hoffman's Hatchery

We want to thank our faithful sponsors in continuing to help with this important ministry of our church especially during these trying times. God bless you and be safe.

THE 2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES are now in the narthex. Please pick up for you, your family, and anyone else you might see. **Do not use before January, 2021**, because your number could have changed. They will not be mailed, to save money on postage. Thanks for your help.

OFFICIAL NOTICE: The annual congregational meeting of Simeon United Lutheran Church will take place immediately after the worship service on this Sunday, December 13th. All confirmed members are encouraged to be present. The agenda will include: Consideration of the 2021 Budget; Election of Church Council and Cemetery Board members; any other matters to be brought up. There will be some copies of the 2021 budget in the narthex. Pick one up any time.

POINSETTIAS: A limit of 24 poinsettias have been ordered from the school. If you want one, a sign-up sheet is in the narthex. If you can't come to church have someone sign the sheet or call the office at 717 365-3139 to place your order. Cost is \$11.50 this year. First come, first served. Deadline is this Sunday, December 13.

PRAYER LIST UPDATE

We are continuing to update the Prayer List with your help. If there is someone on the list that does not need to be on anymore, please let the office. Also, please let us know when someone needs to be added.

Prayers for: Rosie Fetterolf, Hilda Peters, Randy Rebeck, Dennis Smeltz, Tom & Sally Hepler, Shirley Byle, Sara Jury, Jim Neiswender, Tiffany Wilkinson, Clair & Vivian Engle, Kenneth & Ellen Mace, Hunter Herb, Judy Shomper, Cindy Paul, Donald Michael, Raymond & Marie Lahr.

Polk Apartments: Marie Koppenhaver, Hannah Maurer, and John Kissinger

Mt. Carmel Nursing & Rehab: Ruby Leitzel

Nottingham Village Skilled Care Nursing Center: Lila Welker

Premier at Susquehanna Village: Boneita Miller

Thanks for your help in this important ministry of our church and the prayers that go with it.

2021 CALENDARS ARE AVAILABLE

The 2021 calendars have also been placed in the narthex. Again, ask someone to see that you get them, if you feel unsafe to come to church. God is with you, wherever you are, and He will see us through this pandemic. Have faith!!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

We continue to thank **all** of our church members who keep sending their offering envelopes through the postal system as well as coming to church in person to worship and donate that way. If you still belong as a member of our church and go elsewhere to services, we still appreciate your offerings, as well as missing your fellowship and presence with us. God be with you.

THE FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE recently participated in a blanket and sock drive with donations going to the Salvation Army to give to the needy. I am truly flabbergasted that our small congregation (with a friend or two) was able to donate an **AMAZING 43 blankets** and **27 packages of socks**. Actually, I shouldn't be surprised, because whenever we have a need we try to help. Keeping the Spirit Blazing! Susan Krause/Fellowship Committee.

Music Notes



JOSEPH MOHR STILLE NACHT FRANZ GRÜBER

1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, All is calm, all is bright
2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Dark-ness flies, all is light;
3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Guid - ing Star, lend thy light;
4. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Wondrous Star, lend thy light;

Round you Vir - gin Moth - er and Child, Ho - ly In - fant so ten - der and mild,
Shep - herds hear the an - gels sing, "Al - le - lu - ial hail the King!
See the east - ern wise men bring Gifts and hom - age to our King!
With the an - gels let us sing Al - le - lu - ia to our King!

Sleep in heav - en - ly peace, Sleep in heav - en - ly peace,
Christ the Sav - iour is born, Christ the Sav - iour is born."
Christ the Sav - iour is born, Christ the Sav - iour is born.
Christ the Sav - iour is born, Christ the Sav - iour is born.

Silent Night

1818

It was Christmas Eve in the Austrian Alps. At the newly constructed Church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf, a Tyrol village near Salzburg, Father Joseph Mohr prepared for the midnight service. He was distraught because the church organ was broken, ruining prospects for that evening's carefully planned music. But Father Joseph was about to learn that our problems are God's opportunities, that the Lord causes all things to work together for the good to those who love Him. It came to Father Joseph's mind to write a new song, one that could be sung organless. Hastily, he wrote the words, "Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright..." Taking the text to the organist, Franz Gruber, he explained the situation and asked Franz to compose a simple tune.

That night, December 24, 1818, "Silent Night" was sung for the first time as a duet accompanied by a guitar at the aptly named church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf.

Shortly afterward, as Karl Mauracher came to repair the organ, he heard about the near-disaster on Christmas Eve. Acquiring a copy of the text and tune, he spread it throughout the Alpine region of Austria, referring to it as "Tiroler Volkslied."

The song came to the attention of the Strasser Family, makers of fine chamois skin gloves. To drum up business at various fairs

and festivals, the four Strasser children would sing in front of their parent's booth. Like the Von Trapp children a century later, they became popular folk singers throughout the Alps.

When the children-Caroline, Joseph, Andreas, and Amalie-began singing "Tiroler Volkslied" at their performances, audiences were charmed. It seemed perfect for the snow-clad region, and perfect for the Christian heart. "Silent Night" even came to the attention of the king and queen, and the Strasser children were asked to give a royal performance, assuring the carol's fame.

"Silent Night" was the first published for congregational singing in 1838 in the German hymnbook, *Katholisches Gesang- und Gebetbuch für den öffentlichen und hauslichen Gottesdienst zunächst zum Gebrauche der katholischen Gereinden im Königreiche Sachsen*. It was used in America by German-speaking congregations, then appeared in its current English form in a book of Sunday school songs in 1863.

Were it not for a broken organ, there would never have been a "Silent Night."

Taken from the book "Then Sings My Soul" By Robert J. Morgan

Color Me Please



Luke 2:11 - "To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."