

# *Linden Letter*

*Linden Heights United Methodist Church*

*December 2020*

## *A Note from the Pastor*

**Scripture: Isaiah 40: 1-5 (NRSV)** *Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

This is one of my favorite passages from the book of Isaiah. It is a message to the Jewish people living in exile telling them that God will soon be working to bring them home. This passage reminds us that our lives include times that are unpleasant, and times that are downright challenging or even brutal. Through those times, however, God is present in our lives. God guides us, God helps us, and God brings us comfort.

I wish that we could all be together, packed tightly into our sanctuary for Advent and Christmas Eve services. I wish we could all hear the voices of our children speaking their truth during children's moments and the voices of the choir praising God in song. I wish that we could shake hands as we pass the peace and that we could squeeze together in the pew to make room for more people. I wish that the handbell choir was ringing, that we were singing in harmony in the sanctuary, that we were all huddled around fires outside for our Living Nativity, and that the fellowship hall was filled with excitement as children greeted Santa. I wish that everything about this season was how it used to be. Nothing is the same, and it hurts. In many ways we are like the Jewish people living in exile. We may not be forced from our homes nor have we been carried off to a foreign country. However, we are not at home in our sanctuary; we are living in wilderness times.

The good news is, God is here. God will bring us home eventually. God gives us comfort. Advent worship will not be the same, but it can still be a time filled with joy as we worship God and prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus. Christmas Eve worship will not be the same, but it can still be a holy service as we worship our newborn king and give thanks to God for our many, many blessings. Comfort, O comfort God's people! God is preparing the way! Let us prepare our hearts for God. I hope that you will join me in worship, in praise, and in giving thanks. May this season, as different as it is, be one filled with hope, faith, joy, peace, and love.

Pastor Alicia

In this newsletter you will find information on:

1. Worship information for Advent
2. Advent events and activities
3. Mission & Outreach projects
4. Worship for Christmas Eve
5. Children & Youth activities
6. Trustee Report & Finance Report

## **Worship & Sunday School on Sundays in Advent**

For Advent we are engaging in a worship series entitled #angelsamongus, donotbeafraid.

Each week will have a different theme, and they are

Week 1: #morehope

Week 2: #morefaith

Week 3: #morejoy

Week 4: #morepeace

Christmas Eve: #morelove

**There are a lot of ways that you can participate in worship, even if you are worshipping at home!**

\* Our children are asked to bring an item for Show and Tell that relates to the theme of the week.

\* Everyone is invited to send me a word that relates to the theme of the week. I will create a word design (called a wordal) that will be shown during our 10 am worship service.

\* Participate in our #angelsamongus project. Each week we encourage you to do something nice for a specific group of people who are helping us so much these days. You can send a card, say a prayer, make a sign, give a gift, offer a kind word, or whatever you come up with! Here is a list of those whom we are focusing on each week in advent.

Week 1: 1<sup>st</sup> Responders (Medical personnel, police officers, fire fighters, paramedics)

Week 2: Hospitality & Service workers (check-out clerks, wait staff, shelf stockers, etc.)

Week 3: School Staff (teachers, administrators, custodians, guidance counselors, board of ed staff etc.)

I hope that you will participate in these activities and that they will enhance your experience of Advent!

On December 20<sup>th</sup> at the 10 am zoom service we will have our children's Christmas Pageant. Details for children and their families are in the Children/Youth section of this newsletter.

## New Worship Format starting Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>

### 10 am combined Zoom and in person worship

*The sanctuary will be open for up to 15 people* during the 10 am service. If you wish to attend, you will need to register by using the sign up genius link sent every week, calling the pastor at 410-206-4826, or sending an email to the pastor at [alicialhumc@verizon.net](mailto:alicialhumc@verizon.net). Please do not attend if you have been exposed to someone who is being tested for Covid-19 or if you are not feeling well. Those attending will need to wear a mask at all times. Hand sanitizer will be available and we ask that you sit where the ushers seat you. Please do not linger to talk with one another in the breezeway or narthex.

Our Covid-19 task force team has decided that if the Baltimore County positivity rate reaches 10% or above we will cancel all in person gatherings, including worship. We sincerely hope that we do not have to do this but wanted you to know our criteria for closing any form of indoor worship or activities.

### Zoom information for the 10 am service

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83148539664?pwd=ZHhtNGpzNVZ6QjVBb08zeHBONW9EUT09>

Meeting ID: 831 4853 9664

Passcode: 599815

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,83148539664#,,,,,0#,,599815# US (Washington D.C)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

### 11 am Sunday School Service

This is a hybrid of Sunday School for the children and informal worship. The children have a lesson, participate in some distanced activities, and we all have communion and prayer time. Families are invited to bring chairs and dress warmly! We ask that you sing up ahead of time using the link sent out each week.

## Advent Information

**Advent began on Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup>. We have a lot of wonderful opportunities for study, worship, and mission service.**

**Advent Bible Study:** We will take a closer look at the scripture read and talked about on Sunday. Some of our conversation will be guided by the book “Light of the World” by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine. Here is the zoom information:

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87282294299?pwd=ckFKaTdLNVZPVnJYeTZleVgrWWlpUT09>

Meeting ID: 872 8229 4299  
Passcode: 817377

Dial by your location  
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)  
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

**Advent Devotional:** If you would like an advent devotional, please let us know. This year we are using a devotional from “A Sanctified Art.” We can send it to you electronically, you can pick one up at the church outside on Sunday morning, or we can mail one to you.

**Advent Art Installation:** We will be having a new art installation going up on the front lawn at the start of Advent. Each week a new station will appear. Part of the art will be a chalk board where you, and members of the community, will be invited to list or draw things that bring you joy, peace, hope, etc. The installation will reflect our Advent Worship Series, so check it out each week and add to it!

**Journey to Bethlehem** is an art-based journey through the scriptures that tell the story of Jesus’ birth and will take place on Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>-23 11 am-1 pm and 6 pm- 8 pm. Modeled after the traditional Stations of the Cross, this experience allows people to stop at 9 different stations, read a passage of scripture, meditate with some art, and engage in an activity and prayer. Journey to Bethlehem has been modified in light of Covid-19. We ask that no more than 4 people be in the sanctuary at any given time and that there be one station between individuals. Please sign in for contact tracing purposes. An electronic version will be sent out for those who would like to participate but do not want to come into the building

## Living Nativity:

Our Living Nativity will be on December 19<sup>th</sup> from 5 – 6 pm. Because of Covid-19, the Living Nativity will be a drive through experience. There will be 4 stations, each of which depicts a portion of the story of the birth of Christ. It will take a lot of people helping to make this a wonderful experience for all who attend. Below is a list of the help that we need. Please let Pastor Alicia know if you can help, or sign up through sign up genius. Here is the link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0C4EACA62E5-living>

We ask that family groups (however you define that!) to sign up for each station. Station two has both shepherds and angels. We will keep the two groups apart, so two groups of people can be at this station. Here are the specific needs:

Station One: Mary, Joseph, Sign holder

Station Two: Shepherds (2 or more), Angels (2 or more), sign holder

Station Three: Wise men (3), Sign holder

Station Four: Mary, Joseph, Shepherd, Angel, Wiseman, sign holder

Set up (we will meet at 3:30)

Clean up

Advertising

Greeters (2 to greet the people in their cars as they enter and hand them materials)

Parking Lot directors (keep traffic moving and direct people to the next station)- 3 needed

Goodie Bag distribution- 2 people

Direct exiting traffic- 1-2 people

You can sign up through the link below or contact the church office at 410-668-6181 and leave a message.

## Mission & Outreach

Thank you for your donations to the **Eastern Family Resource Center** intake kits. They will be much appreciated by the homeless families seeking shelter and care!!

Thank you for signing so many **Christmas cards for veterans in the VA hospital**. If you did not get a chance to sign a card or drop off a card, you can do so on Sunday, Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>. Stop by the church before 1 pm and either leave a card that you have signed at home or sign one of our cards.

**Christus Victor Food Pantry:** The need for food in our area is increasing. If you are able, please consider donating food to the food pantry. You can drop off donations on Mondays or Wednesdays during the church's office hours. Contact the church for more specific details.

## Adopt a Family for Christmas

This year we are helping a family in our community. This is a large family and several of the children are foster children. We have provided you with some basic information here. Please let Pastor Alicia know if you will be purchasing a gift for this family so that we do not get duplicates. You can also use the link below to sign up using sign up genius. (You can copy and paste the link if you are receiving the Linden Letter electronically)

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0C4EACA62E5-christmas>

**Donations should be wrapped and brought to the church no later than December 19<sup>th</sup>. Please put the Letter of your child on the gift.**

Child "A" 3 yr old girl - Size 2T. Clothing needs: one piece PJ's, sweatshirt, coat, hat, socks, boots (size 7),

Toy/gift items: Sensory toy, learning toy that says letters, weighted toddler blanket. toddler crafts. (Child A has some developmental issues)

Child" B" 4 yr old girl - Size 4T or 5T. Clothing needs: sweatshirt, sweater, socks, gloves, boots (size 9),

Toy/gift items: she loves dolls, unicorns, books you press a button for reading. toddler crafts

Child "C" 5 yr old boy - Size 5 or 6. Clothing needs: Warm PJ's , sweatshirt/pants, socks, gloves, coat, boots (size 11)

Toy/Gift ideas: He likes Spiderman or wrestling. Books for learning to read (just starting K - sight words but struggles with sounds & letters. Listens to level 1 readers, but more of an early 4 yr. old learner. toddler crafts. (Child C has some limited sight)

Child "D" 2 yr old girl - 3T Clothing needs: pj's, fleece top and pants, socks, gloves,

Toy/Gift ideas: she loves dolls with hair, a sleeping buddy that shines light, toddler crafts

Child "E" 11 yr old boy - Size men's medium. Clothing needs: flannel PJ's

Gift ideas: axe deodorant, book set "Trapped in a Video Game" by Dustin Brady

Christmas food needs: Lactaid Milk, cereals, oatmeal, soups, snacks.

### Ways your donations have supported our community in November & December

\$300 to Eastern Family Resource Center for Thanksgiving Meal.

\$500 in supplies for Manna House

\$200 to a family of 7 where the parents are unemployed due to Covid-19 so they could have Thanksgiving dinner and some other pantry supplies.

\$400 to Henderson Settlement in Appalachia

\$400 to Habitat for Humanity

\$400 to the Student Support Network in Parkville

\$400 to Huree University in Mongolia for hot meals. This is a United Methodist supported university that provides education to many poor and orphaned students who could otherwise not get an education. Our donation will feed two students one hot meal a day for the academic year.

We continued to support our child through World Vision Child

We completed boxes for Operation Christmas Child

## Christmas Eve Worship

We will have 3 different options for worship on Christmas Eve. You are welcome to attend any or all of them!

### 1 pm Traditional service on the front lawn

This service is designed to celebrate the birth of Christ as we worship our God in the midst of our local community. Our worship will bear witness to the importance of Christ in our lives. Hopefully, some of our neighbors will see our service and will join us!

- \* Please bring a chair with you if you can. If not, one will be provided for you.
- \* We invite you (and your family) to sit in the designated areas to help with social distancing. Field paint will mark the spots.
- \* You are invited to bring your own communion elements, or you can have one of the prepackaged kits that we provide.
- \* We ask that people wear masks when moving around. When sitting in your chair you are welcome to take your mask off.
- \* We will be playing music but ask that people refrain from singing. You are welcome to bring bells or drums (even handmade ones!) to use during the service.
- \* If you want to bring a candle to light, you are welcome to do so. We haven't figured out candle lighting yet, but we will do something!
- \*\* Please sign up to attend this service through the signup genius link or by calling the church office. All are welcome, we just need to prepare enough space for everyone!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0C4EACA62E5-childrens>

### 3 pm Children's Service on the parking lot

Children and their families will celebrate the birth of Jesus together in this very informal service.

- \* Please bring a chair with you if you can. If not, one will be provided for you.
- \* We invite you (and your family) to sit in the designated areas to help with social distancing. An usher will help you park and find a place to sit.
- \* You are invited to bring your own communion elements, or you can have one of the prepackaged kits that we provide.
- \* We ask that people wear masks when moving around. When sitting in your chair you are welcome to take your mask off.
- \* We will be playing music but ask that people refrain from singing. You are welcome to bring bells or drums (even handmade ones!) to use during the service.
- \* Children are invited to bring an item for Show and Tell that reminds them of God's love.
- \*\* Please sign up to attend this service through the signup genius link or by calling the church office. All are welcome, we just need to prepare enough space for everyone!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0C4EACA62E5-childrens1>

## 7 pm Zoom Traditional Service

We will have music that you can sing along with from the comfort of your home! This traditional service will include candle lighting, scripture reading, familiar carols, some special musical offerings, and the lighting of our candles. Please join us on this holy night as we worship our God and give thanks for the miracle of Jesus' birth!

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89679969457?pwd=aHJuYkhxOW9WaXorQk9KQnN3UXVqUT09>

Meeting ID: 896 7996 9457

Passcode: 965852

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,89679969457#,,,,,0#,,965852# US (Washington D.C)

+19292056099,,89679969457#,,,,,0#,,965852# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

## Getting Ready for Christmas Eve Worship

We want to make our Christmas Eve services as special and joy filled as possible. With that in mind we are asking you for two things.

1. Take a picture or make a video of you lighting a candle. We will show these during the candle lighting part of our 7 pm zoom service.
2. Pastor Alicia is taking a class to learn Silent Night in American Sign Language and will be teaching pieces of the carol during our advent worship services. We will sign it together on Christmas Eve at all three services.
3. Since we will not have bulletins or the greeting card exchange this year, we are inviting people to send Pastor Alicia any Christmas greeting that you want to have included in the Christmas Eve power point or the Christmas Eve special edition of the Linden Letter. Greetings need to be to Pastor Alicia by December 20<sup>th</sup>. You can mail them to the church or send them to [alicialhumc@verizon.net](mailto:alicialhumc@verizon.net)

## **Children & Youth**

**Our Children's Christmas Pageant will be on December 20<sup>th</sup> during our 10 am zoom service.**

(We will still have Sunday school at 11 ish- we will leave time for you to get to the church and get parked!) All children are invited to participate. Children will read their parts from home. We do ask that an adult help them so that they know when to mute and unmute, when to speak, etc. Children are invited to get dressed up for the occasion! If your child would like to participate but you do not want your child's picture on social media (we post our worship services to our website), please let us know. We have the editing technology to allow the child's voice to be heard but to cover their image with a different slide. We may attempt to have a practice session the week before.

We need to send out the parts, so please let the pastor know as soon as possible if your child will participate!!

Youth Group continues to meet on Sunday evenings from 6:30-7:30. Because covid-19 rates are rising again, we have moved back to a virtual format. Zoom information is sent out on Saturday or Sunday to youth and their parents.

## **Trustee Report**

The trustees have been very busy this fall!

- \* We continued to maintain the lawn of our church
- \* We had a successful clean up day! The leaves got raked and picked up and the grounds readied for winter.
- \* We replaced the roof on the parsonage and the breezeway.
- \* The breezeway walls and ceiling have been repaired and repainted.
- \* We continue to maintain the systems of our facility.

## **Finance Report**

We thank you for your continued financial support of our church and our ministries. Because of your contributions we continue to be the church during this difficult time. You can contribute by mailing your offering to the church. We have a locked mailbox, so your contributions are secure.