

January 10 & 17, 2020

# The Weekly Tidings

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Come Together, Grow in Faith, Serve the LORD

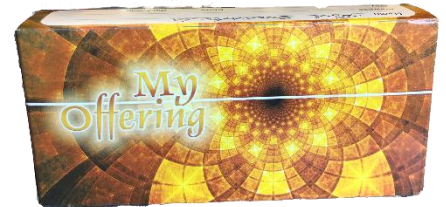
## Annual Meeting

The 2021 Annual Meeting will be held over Zoom on Sunday, January 24 after worship. Our Congregational budget Meeting will be held over Zoom on Wednesday, January 20 at 7:00 PM. Zoom links are available on our webpage at [www.htelc.com](http://www.htelc.com)



## Offering Envelopes for 2021

Offering Envelopes for 2021 are available to be picked up in our Gathering Area. Please contact the Church Office if you cannot pick it up in person.



## Mitten Tree

We are officially in the season of winter, with its bone-chilling temperatures. So, HTELC will now begin collecting for the Mitten Tree. The Social Ministry team will gladly accept offerings of hats, scarves, gloves, mittens and socks. These items may be left in the Narthex anytime during January and February.



## A Celebration of Life for Anna-Lisa Gotschlich

A Celebration of Life for Anna-Lisa Gotschlich will be held over Vimeo on January 30, 2021 at 11:00 AM, on the Trinity Lutheran Church page in Worcester, MA. Please visit this webpage on January 30:

<https://vimeo.com/trinityworcester>

We believe the video of the service will be available to watch anytime, after it is streamed live.



## Pastor's Article: January 4, 2021

I am not a big fan of New Year's Resolutions. I have made many over the years and have never kept one. I have said I am going to lose weight. Gained it. I am going to stop drinking soda. Ordered a coke. I am going to watch less TV. Found "The Good Place" on Netflix. I am going to read more. But I just found "Schitt's Creek" on Netflix to watch now that I finished "The Good Place"! I am going to...(fill in the blank).

Have you done something similar? In fact, this year, I am doing it again. I want to wake up early, during the week, and exercise. Today, I am one-for-one. I got up at 6am, ran three miles and did some push-ups, sit-ups, squats and a plank afterwards. If felt good and I liked it and I hope to do it again tomorrow.

But I know at some point, I will most likely fail. There will be a morning in which I don't feel well, it will be too cold (or too hot, or too something!) and I will stay in bed and not get up. It is just inevitable. My past experience has taught me that. I know, I could be better and focus more and say to myself, "Other people do this, so can I!" But I would rather approach it a different way.



There is a trend going on in which instead of making a resolution people choose a word as a theme for the year. They look for a guiding principle that will lead them each day which they can focus on and helps to direct them. I have seen words like "Focus," "Compassion," "Cultivate" or "Purpose."

I like this idea. Too often, we set ourselves up with unrealistic expectations in which failure is inevitable and then we look at ourselves through that lens. Failure. We become disappointed or disapprove of ourselves and continually think we lack something or wonder what is wrong with us. Do we really need another reason to feel bad about ourselves? Most of us are pretty good at that already.

So, I am going to jump on the bandwagon and suggest you do the same. What is a word or theme that can direct or guide you this year? What is something that will encourage

and inspire you to be better and pick you up when you falter as opposed to causing you to falter?

For me, the word that I am picking for this year is, "Try." I want to try things. I want to experiment. I want to explore. I want to be curious. I want to be adventurous. I want to "try" new things. Not be afraid of what the outcome may or may not be, but rather to take the first step and see where it leads.

I think our faith encourages us to try. To step into the unknown. To risk without the assurance of a guaranteed outcome. Remember, who we are is not based in our successes and failures. Our value and worth is already set. We get to use that value and worth to try and live a life of value and worth.

I am going to "try" to live into this word for this new year. What are you going to choose?

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Tim

### **Prayer Shawls**

Happy New Year Everyone! Looking for a project to work on while inside this winter?! What about knitting or crocheting prayer shawls? Just a reminder CaringConnections is and does, throughout the year, accept prayer shawls. For me personally, crocheting has been such a great focus this past year! It is something I have always loved doing but always found other things to do rather than crocheting, until last year! It gives me a sense of focus, calm and peace! Shawls can be made and dropped off with Mark at the church office. If you have questions please let me know. Thank you in advance!

*Cheryl*



## Pastor Tim's article: January 7, 2021

Well, here goes. My thoughts on yesterday, from my faith-based perspective. I share them with humility knowing I don't know everything. In fact, the more I learn the less I know.

I don't know if there is a "greatest" or "worst" sin. Is it murder? Rape? Theft? When we look at sin as a specific action in which harm is done from one person to another, we are left wondering which is worst. We then come up with a set of rules of what we can't do and enforce those rules and dole out punishments based on the severity of the sin. The object or purpose is to try and manage or control our sin. We want to do less of it, with the hope of not doing it at all. Essentially, our lives become one of avoidance. We simply need to "stay away" from the "bad" and tell other people to do the same. Everything is about "Sin Management." Hence, the church is known way too much by making people feel guilty for all the things they have done and by telling them they shouldn't have done those things. (Please note, this isn't *entirely* wrong about sin, but an extremely inadequate view of sin.)



But, as I watch events unfold around me, I have begun to think the answer to that question is different than what we might normally think. The answer to what is the "greatest" or "worst" sin is, in a word, idolatry. Idolatry is a word that is thrown around in faith settings, but often times the definitions given are vague and simplified so it is stripped of its actual meaning or substance. Briefly and in that vague and simplified way, idolatry, in the Christian sense that I have come to understand it, is having a god before God. Think of the first commandment, "You shall have no other God's before me." What does this mean? (A very Lutheran question!). Some of us like to think that idols or idolatry are essentially things that we deem more important than God or that we give more time and attention to than God. Therefore, it is easy to name things like movie stars or sports as idols. We care more about what they are doing and who they are dating. We know stats from 50 years ago and who is breaking that record today much more than knowing scripture, who wrote it and why it was written. But if we really want to get at the heart of idolatry, placing other god's before God, we have to go deeper and

be ready to be truly offended. Idolatry is not about specific actions of one person against another, rather it is the cause of our actions toward others.

The storming of the United States Capitol Building yesterday by domestic terrorists occurred because of the culmination of the idolatry so many of us place on our country and on power. You don't need to have been walking the halls of the Capitol with a confederate flag to have played a role in all of this. As a follower of Christ, I should be concerned about one thing and one thing only, how is the love of God revealed and expressed to my neighbor, and most specifically to my neighbor that is oppressed and marginalized. That neighbor could be my literal next-door neighbor who looks like me or it could be my black, brown, or gay neighbor. It could be my fellow American neighbor or my Russian, Hispanic or Norwegian neighbor. It could be my Christian neighbor or my Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist neighbor. The truth is, as long as my neighbor is being treated with the respect, love and dignity they deserve, because of their inherent value and worth given to them by the creator of the universe, I should not care about who is or is not in power...as long as the ones in power are advocating for ways to treat those neighbors with that same respect, love and dignity. I should not care about what party is in control. As long as that party is advocating for ways to treat those neighbors with that same respect, love and dignity.

I should not care about what country I live in and whether or not it is "the greatest nation in the history of the world" as long as that country is advocating for ways to treat those neighbors with that same respect, love and dignity. What led to the actions of a small, fringe and radical group yesterday did not stem solely from ideas that occurred the last 4 years (although certain people absolutely stoked the flames that led to it by what they said or how they kept silent). It stemmed from all of us getting our worth and value from things are not God and instead it coming from power and a perceived loss of power. What we saw was a culmination of it and one example of it, but we all do it in other ways. Once our worth comes from something besides God, we are concerned with losing it because we know it won't last. We need to cling to it as much as possible because we won't know who we are unless we keep it. This is why we have racism, and toxic-masculinity, and white privilege and homophobia. This is why we have violence, chaos, anger, and resentment. This is a not new to us in our time and place but has been

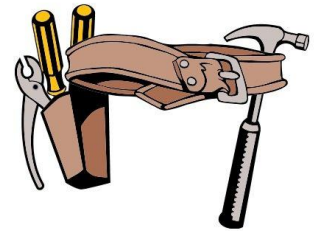
going on throughout history. We are only seeing it fleshed out in unique ways before our eyes. God has never been, nor ever will be American, or Republican, or White, or Straight. God is not a foreigner, Democrat, a minority or gay. God is not what we create God to be (although we do a really good job of trying to do that). God is love and goodness and beauty and humility and kindness, that as a Christian, I believe is most fully revealed in the life, death and resurrection of a human named Jesus. (Also, this does not mean that God cannot be revealed through other faith traditions rather, I believe the fullest revelation of God is in Jesus. But that is another conversation for another day.) Hence, we should want leaders who are rooted in love and goodness and beauty and humility and kindness who will advocate for the love and respect and dignity of our neighbors.

As you process the world around you and your place in it, pray for help to see it only through the eyes of God. Ask for help to view it as one who is loved unconditionally, not because of party affiliation or country of origin, but because the creator of the universe has chosen to love you. Remember, there is nothing you can do to make God love you more and there is nothing you can do to make God love you less. God loves you. May you live from that place of love.

## Property Team

As the great modern day philosopher, Yogi Berra, once said, “It's deja vu all over again.” The literal French translation of “deja vu” is “already seen”. I sometimes feel as I try to write these regular reports that I have already written it. As I hinted at, perhaps we are doing them too often. In these strange times when activities around the building and grounds are so limited, the property situation is not particularly dynamic. A quarterly report might serve just fine. I can dream! In any case here we go again. Please excuse any old news.

We are into the Sundays of Epiphany. The decorations for the Christmas season have been taken down and stored. We are moving on to the next topic. It all seems nearly surreal given we have not been in the building to experience the season up close and personal. Streaming, Zoom, Facebook ... whatever ... just does not do it for me compared to the actual sensations of being there in the building with our Holy Trinity family. Alas ... this is not our current reality, so we can only do our best to do what needs to be done to have our facility ready for normalcy when it returns.



Over the past year or more the Property Team has been working to resolve some fire code issues identified in routine inspections by the Newington Fire Department and also as a result of the lightning strike damage earlier this year that destroyed portions of the fire alarm system. Most of the routine inspection issues are very straight-forward and have been resolved. Others involving fire door operation have been more of a challenge, but we continue to work to resolve them. Of course, replacement of the fire alarm system is a major task for our fire alarm system contractor. This work is in progress and will continue for several weeks or more. I assume that the Town of Newington will not allow us to return the building to normal use until the new fire alarm system is completed and tested. To the extent that we can control the completion time frame, the objective is to keep the fire alarm system work from becoming the critical path to getting back to normal building use. A simple explanation of “critical path” is in this example. If we knew for certain that we could open the building for normal use eight weeks from today (purely hypothetical for purposes of illustration), a fire alarm system completion time of eight weeks or more would put this work on the critical path to



normal building use. Hopefully, this can be avoided, and we will have schedule flexibility to get things done without delaying return to normalcy.

As always, I wish to thank all of the property team volunteers who have continued to do the various tasks, large and small, needed to keep our property safe and ready for use.

David Mercer, Property Team Leader

### Pop-Up Pantry

Happy New Year! We wanted to give you a recap of how we were all able to come together and help local families in need of food this past year.

Pastor's idea of a POP in June resulted in our packing of our first bags on July 8th. Not sure any of us had any idea at that point where this was going or how! However, between that date and Dec 30, we have had 460 bags of food taken by local families. This does not include the fresh produce donated first from Heron Pond Farm and then from Seacoast Eat Local's Mobile Market. Additionally, each week we set out coolers with various items like milk, cheese, eggs and bread.

Yes, it does take a village and you are ours and we are so grateful for all your donations of money and food items. We could not have done it without you, so many thanks.

In the next week or two, we will make some specific recommendations of items we need in line with what we are giving out over the following 2 weeks. Just a reminder that we are unable to hand out items in glass jars or bottles.

