# December 2020 "So, while there is much that is different this Christmas season...the true meaning of Jesus' birth never changes." -Christine Eid

# The Same... At a Time When Everything is Different

by Christine Eid, Director of Children's Ministry

October was cold, and so as the month of November has gone by, people are putting up their Christmas lights without the bitter cold. Some are waiting to light them, but many people have said they need the cheer of Christmas, so they're lighting up their houses early. Quite a few people I know put their trees up at home early in November, just to have something cheerful and bright during the upswing of COVID cases.

This morning I looked out the window of my

office and the nativity stable and scene were being set up in the church courtyard. That's not uncommon to happen in November, before snow covers the ground and the busy Christmas season starts. This year, as I look at it, there's a sense of peace that comes seeing the familiar.

Things are the same this holiday season... putting up decorations, going Christmas shopping, wrapping presents and getting cards with messages ready to mail out.

...And yet they are different. Putting up decorations, but early to bring some joy and normalcy to the life around us. Going Christmas shopping mainly online because you don't want to have too much interaction with people. Wrapping presents so they are ready to go in the mail because you won't be with loved ones this year. And, what will that Christmas letter look like this year?

It's different...and yet we can rejoice that it's the same. It's the same Christmas message that God has sent His one and only Son, Jesus. Jesus, born in a stable and laid in manger — a small child that is innocent. But we also know He's so much more! He's the Savior of the world! And that will never change! In Hebrews 13:8 it reads, "Jesus Christ is

the same yesterday, today, and forever."

So, while there is much that is different this Christmas season, and that is hard, remember that the message and true meaning of Jesus' birth never changes. Find hope in the message of the angels, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, is born for you in the city of David." Luke 2:10-11a.

Rejoice! The Savior is born! It is a message heard through the ages, never changing. It is a message we can look to now at Christmas, and as we enter the new year. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus never changes.



# **COVID-19 Congregational Update**

#### By Pastor Steve Wheeler

Can you believe that nine months have passed since the COVID-19 pandemic was first announced? During that time, we have all made so many adjustments. We have all been forced to make so many sacrifices. We have all endured shutdowns, social distancing, mandatory use of facemasks, and more. We have faced separation from family members, loved ones, and close friends who are in higher risk categories. Home life, the workplace, the educational system, and everyday social interactions that we used to take for granted have been radically impacted.

But amidst the many changes in our world and in our lives, one thing remains stable and unchanging — our Savior's love for the world and His love that binds us to Him and to one another. Hebrews 13:8 reminds us: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Romans 8:37-39 further reminds us that: "Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ." Not even a worldwide pandemic can separate us from His love.

I want to encourage our congregation for the wonderful way that we all are caring for one another and for the community around us. So many people have stepped up in these past months in beautiful ways – when, where, and as they were able, making a difference in the lives of others. While these past several months have been very challenging, God has done remarkable things in our midst and will continue to do more than we can ask or imagine.

As we look toward the future, and what things might look like in our church and in our ministries in the coming months, it's important that we keep upbeat and realistic about how the pandemic will most likely affect our ministries. Pat Kullmann, our church council Vice President, has been closely monitoring the progress of the pharmaceutical industry that are working on vaccines and medical therapies for COVID-19. Here are some insights that he has shared with our leaders as this dynamic situation unfolds:

• The Covid-19 shut down in March of 2020 was like flipping a light switch, the transition back toward a more normal schedule will be more gradual like a light dimmer switch back to a more normal life.

- With the recent and evolving rise in COVID-19 cases nationally and in the state of Minnesota, it is important that we continue to practice the safety measures to contain the virus into 2021.
- We are highly encouraged that through God's provisions that both vaccines to prevent the virus and pharmaceuticals to include antibodies to treat the virus are being developed, tested in clinical trials and will soon be available to Americans, but it will take time.
- The distribution of both a vaccine and the use of a therapeutic pharmaceutical will be limited at first and administered on a priority basis throughout the first half of 2021.
- Most importantly, we anticipate that going into 2021 that we will continue to practice the current mask wearing, temperature taking, and other safety measures in place in our ministries until a vaccine is widely available and administered.
- Once a vaccine is available, Cross View will continue to follow CDC and Minnesota Department of Health guidelines as they are updated in 2021 for a smooth and safe transition toward more normal ministry activities.
- The latest estimates from experts is that the earliest we might see some returns toward a more normal schedule of activity would be the 2nd or 3rd quarter of 2021.

All of this is to say, that we still have a way to go. We need to continue be careful to continue to practice safety measures to contain the virus moving into 2021. In doing so, we will demonstrate love and care for our neighbors. We will need to be patient even as the vaccine becomes available. Cross View's leadership and staff will continue to thoughtfully evaluate what kinds of ministries we can begin to phase back in and when it makes sense to do so. The situation remains dynamic and we all need to remain flexible.

Of one thing we can be sure. The Lord is with us and will lead us through this challenging season of life and ministry. Thank you for the many ways that you, the members of Cross View are making a difference in the lives of one another and in the lives of our community. We have so much for which we are thankful even in the midst of this pandemic.

# Financial Update - Year-to-Date Results

- PPP loan proceeds are not included in Total Income on these statements.
- October contributions were \$17,000 above budget thanks to a generous \$50,000 donation.
- While we are \$101,116 under budget in income, expenses have been curtailed by \$140,512.
- Expenses include \$11,155 for necessary building repairs such as boiler, sprinkler system, and sewer.
- ECC deficit is due to pandemic expenses and is being offset by PPP and MN state grants

Cross View Lutheran Church			
October 31, 2020	2020 Actual Year to Date	2020 Budget Year to Date	Actual vs. Budget Greater (Less)
Total Income	\$956,227	\$1,057,343	(\$101,116)
Total Expenses	\$980,399	\$1,120,911	(\$140,512)
General Fund Net Surplus (Deficit)	(\$24,172)	(\$63,568)	\$39,396

\$169,412 PPP Loan Forgiveness Expected by 12/31/2020

# **Christian Education**

# CHRISTMAS IS COMING! THE CHILDREN ARE PREPARING!

Sunday School children are excited to share the Christmas Gospel with family and friends on Sunday, December 20th, with virtual choirs and an original play by Mike & Connie Landreville. And, with the help of Lowell Herzberg, it will be an interactive pre-recorded program with a few live characters. Be sure to join the 10:45 AM worship at church or online to see an amazing production of "Christmas at the Movies."

#### **SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE**

Through the fall, families have participated in an online class learning of God's grace and love as written in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Each week there are challenges for families to do together. From creating their own wardrobe, making Turkish delight, and creating a personal game board, it's been a great experience to connect and have fun "in Narnia."

Families with younger kids are studying the life of Jesus, using materials sent home, and videos available online. Special thanks to First Light Puppets for performing puppet skits each week for families to view at home. Videos from past Sundays are still available through Cross View's website. Take a look!

Sunday, December 20th, will be the end of fall programming for children's ministries. New classes and opportunities will start up on Sunday, January 10th. More information will be coming later in December. Parents, please watch your emails and the weekly announcements for details.

# ONE NATION UNDER GOD: HEALING RACIAL DIVIDES IN AMERICA (11/15-12/20)

Bible study attendees are having great conversation and learning from the study "One Nation Under God: Healing Racial Divides in America." A study written by author Rev. B. Keith Haney, an African American LCMS pastor that encourages us to seek answers to racial tensions in the only place where truth



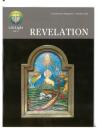
and peace can be found — God's Word. Healing must begin with Jesus. So, jump in and join us during this study, and learn how you can openly communicate and begin the healing process. Let's be a nation united — united under God.

On December 6th & 20th a special guest will join the conversation. Sena Dagaga from LINC-TC will come and add her experience and wisdom to our conversation about how to be about God's healing the racial divides in America.

Classes are Sundays onsite/online from 9:30–10:30 AM, through December 20th. Get the ZOOM link when you register online for the <u>onsite class</u> or the <u>online class</u>. Masks are worn and physical distancing is observed onsite. Contact Pastor Toby (<u>toby@crossview.net</u>) with questions.

#### **REVELATION (WEDNESDAYS, 12/2-2/10)**

Join us this winter on Wednesday evenings from 6:30–8:00 PM, onsite and online, as we dig into this often confusing book. We will see together how John clearly reveals how Jesus, our risen Lord and Savior, now reigns in eternal splendor, and how John moves us from vision to vision describing



heaven's brilliance and the devil's darkness. Classes are Wednesdays from 6:30-8:00 PM, December 2nd and go through February 10th. Register online for the onsite or online class here. There is a \$10 fee for the book necessary for this class.



# CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES – ADVENT-CHRISTMAS SERIES

This Advent we will learn about Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Jesus from God's Word and a variety of classic Christmas Movies.

We know that watching Christmas movies is a tradition that helps bring us back to the joy and hope and laughter we long for. Advent traditions (candles, wreaths, carols, and trees, etc.) are the same but better. They help us remember the greatest story ever told. This Advent and Christmas we explore the beauty and importance of God's incarnate love and the Greatest Gift of Christmas through the lenses of classic Christmas movies.

In order to extend the conversation into your homes and lives, Cross View is excited to offer six discussion guides for families or groups for each of the classic Christmas movies featured in our Advent-Christmas series. (You can pick one up at the Welcome Center or email the office if you want digital copy.)

Don't just sit there! Invite the family. Invite some friends. Watch a Christmas Classic. Then talk about the similarities and differences between the characters and themes in these classics with our everyday lives. Don't just see the unexpected truth in these movies. See the real Christmas story of God working in unexpected ways in the pursuit of His people, bringing us Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, Emmanuel, the Savior for All.

#### **RIGHTNOW MEDIA'S NEW GROUPS FEATURE**

# rightnow MEDIA...

Staying connected to friends, family, and small groups has never been easier. Watch content together on RightNow Media with

the new groups feature. Watch Bible studies together at the same time. Ask questions and discuss the video through the built-in video chat. It's similar to Zoom, but you can all stream/watch the same video together from the internet/cloud. That means there's no unnecessary screen sharing or lag time in the video watching. In addition, you can see everybody in your group who's on and watching, and you can use the video chat function to go through the study and discuss any questions there are. Learn more about RightNow Media groups feature here.

# Youth Ministries

#### **RAKE AND RUN**

THANK YOU to everyone who helped us successfully carry out our fall Rake & Run fundraiser. It was a gorgeous day to rake and serve those in the community and from Cross View. Over the course of the day four teams of seven youth and adults went to 16 different houses and proceeded to rake over 600 bags of leaves. Not only did they rake that much, they also raised over \$3,000 towards upcoming events and activities here at Cross View. God provides and is continuing to bless Cross View's youth ministry even during COVID.





# **Early Childhood Center**

#### THE BEGINNERS BIBLE

In November, as is tradition, every child in the 3–4 year old class received The Beginners Bible. This is an outreach opportunity for the center, making sure each child has a Bible at home. This way the children can share the Bible stories with their family at home.







#### **ECC CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS**

On December 14th and 15th, the Early Childhood Center preschool classes will share their Christmas programs. The circumstances this year have certainly caused the ECC staff to be especially creative and so each preschool class is doing their own Christmas program instead of a combined program.

We look forward to the opportunity to celebrate Christ's birth.



Our congregation's Stephen Ministry equips laypeople to provide one-to-one Christian care to people in our congregation and community who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Stephen Ministry is a confidential ministry. The identity of those receiving care and everything they discuss with a Stephen Minister remain private.

A Stephen Minister is...

- •A child of God who walks beside someone who is hurting.
- •A congregation member who is carefully selected to serve in this role because of his or her caregiving gifts.
- •A layperson with 50 hours of training in providing high-quality, distinctively Christian care.
- •A caring Christian friend who listens, cares, prays, supports, and encourages.
- Someone who meets faithfully each week with his or her care receiver for as long as there's a need.

If you need a Stephen Minister, or are interested in becoming a Stephen Minister, please contact one of the Pastors.

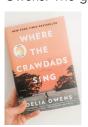
"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

-Galatians 6:2

# Women's Ministries

#### **WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB**

The book selection for December is Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens. The group will meet via Zoom



at 1:00 PM on Monday, December 21, 2020. Please contact Marcy at mpnordhus@gmail.com with questions or if you are interested in joining.

# 4.0-Building for Generations Update



Can you believe we are almost to the end of our 3-year Capital Campaign fund-raising that ends December 31, 2020? The first part of the campaign started in 2017, for which we received pledges of \$3,801,181. We did a second

campaign which allowed people to extend their pledge for an additional 4th year. If you extended your pledge for the 4th year, that will end in December 2021. To date we have collected \$3,398,531.

We also understand that you may have good intentions to pay but, due to circumstances, you are not able to complete your pledge or need additional time. If this is the case, please contact Renee Kirchner at the church office (ext. 204). This will help us with our planning so that we can successfully complete Cross View's 4.0-Building for Generations Capital Campaign.

We are grateful for your support of the build and the great commission and thank God for His blessings upon Cross View and His people.

# **Outreach & Missions**

#### **VETERANS CHRISTMAS**

Looking for a way to serve? One way you can serve is by bringing joy to veterans this Christmas. Cross View has adopted approximately 10 American veterans at the



Minneapolis Veterans Home. This opportunity is one for you, your family, or your small group. Those of you who have adopted a veteran will purchase a gift(s) with a suggested spending minimum of \$35. And, there is still an opportunity to purchase a \$10 gift card for Target, Walmart, or Amazon which will be given to the Veteran's Home and used for resident social programs and games. Or donate handmade Christmas cards for the veterans. Here's what to do:

- Sign up online at Cross View Vets 2020.
- Bring your gifts, gift cards or Christmas cards to the Church office by Sunday, December 13th.

#### LOTS OF WAYS TO SERVE RIGHT NOW!

You know that COVID has been very hard on many people. The rise in cases and deaths, along with Governor's recent dial back, have been and will continue to put a strain on people. Add to all of that loss, the cold and darkness of winter, it is getting even tougher for people.

But God is good. A number of Cross View servants have contacted the church office about ways to serve or ways to be generous with what God has abundantly entrusted to them. Brothers and sisters in Christ, here is a highlight of a few of Cross View's ministry partners and ways to help, along with some other good agencies doing work in God's name:

Make and send Christmas cards to the Minneapolis
 Veteran Home or drop them off at the church office
 by December 13th. (See the article in this issue of the
 Clarion for a link to those veterans we're adopting this
 year or consider sending cards to any one of the vets
 at the Minneapolis home.)

- Help at our POBLO International Friendship Center with your time, talents, and treasure. Contact Nader and Georgette Alaraj. (See the article on POBLO for more information.)
- Select something from Trinity First Lutheran School's
   "Wish List" found here. There is always more to give
   or do at Trinity First. (Two small groups have already
   worked together to take care of a few items on this list.
   You could do something similar.)
- Donate your time or money at the Salvation Army.
   Because of the pandemic, giving is down severely and need is way up. Consider helping and ring a bell for a while, put something in a red kettle, or go online for other ways help the Salvation Army.
- VEAP is always looking for help. You can serve in a variety of ways with your time, talents and treasure. Go to the <u>VEAP website</u> for more information.

These are just a few of the ways you can get involved, as you are able, with all that God has entrusted to you. Talk about this with your family, small group, or friends, and adopt a ministry or agency to help over the holidays. Maybe that means a group activity, using gift money to help others, or something else. The sky is the limit. Who knows? This might become an adoption for all of 2021.

#### **ADVENT IN A BOX**

This Advent, families who registered received a box full of crafts and activities to help them observe (and celebrate) Advent. The boxes included devotions for each week, one related to that week's candle (Hope, Peace, Joy, Love), and one related to a classic Christmas movie highlighted in our sermon series for Advent and Christmas.

Our hope and prayers are for families to not only learn about Advent, but to grow closer together, grow in their faith, and grow closer to Jesus who not only came that first Christmas, but is coming again.

Cross View has given away over 175 of these Advent boxes to families at Cross View, the ECC (preschool), Trinity

















First Lutheran School, POBLO Twin Cities (People of the Book Lutheran Outreach), and to families who registered on line through our Facebook page and website!

Join us as we praise God for this, and for the over 45 Cross View servants who helped put these together. Give thanks with us and pray with us that these boxes bless families and bring praise to the Christ Child.

#### TRINITY FIRST TURKEY-TAKEOUT - THANK YOU!

A big thank you, and thank God, for the 45+ Cross View servants who helped put together 69 Trinity First Thanksgiving Turkey-Takeout bags! Families at Trinity First Lutheran School received a bag with dry and canned goods and a \$20 gift card for the turkey and the dessert.

In order to make this happen we needed approximately \$1,400 to cover the cost of those gift cards. But God had other plans! God poured His generosity through you! *Over \$2,300 came in* to help provide for those gift cards. Because of this abundance, we were also able to give gift cards to the staff of Trinity First to help them during the holiday season as well.

But God wasn't done! Even though the event was turned off in CV Connect, God continued to show His abundance through you! Over \$3,000 has now been donated. What were we going to do with this? After tossing around some ideas, God provided the need. POBLO Twin Cities reached out and asked for help to do something like Trinity Turkey-Takeout for their students! These "extra" funds have now been used to

bless POBLO and our ministry with and through them! What a blessing! God is so good!

Join us as we give thanks and praise for God's generosity, for His abundance, and for using Cross View and its many servants to care and love others during this holiday time in the midst of COVID!

#### A NEW AND EXCITING WAY TO SAY WELCOME!

Cross View has been blessed over the years with many volunteers who have been part of the church's welcome ministry as greeters and welcome center workers. We are so very thankful for those who have served. With the completion of our new building and remodeled space, along with the unplanned arrival of COVID-19, we have had to make adjustments in the way we greet people. Yet one thing that has not changed is our desire to welcome everyone who comes through our doors and make them feel a part of Cross View. We hope that all of you will be excited about the newly formed extension of our welcome ministry, called the Welcome MAT.

The new ministry's design team, consisting of Tonya Bushey, Sue Harrison, Barb Martenson, Gregg Poppe, Phil Johnson and Pastor Steve Wheeler, has been meeting almost weekly over the past months to form a vision of what this new welcome team will consist of and what it will look like once implemented. Getting people connected is at the heart of our planned relaunching of the welcome ministry. We not only want to say "welcome" as visitors come through the door, but we also

want them to know that there is something for them at Cross View. We want to assist visitors in answering any questions they may have and let them know that Cross View is a place where they belong and can be themselves. Our goal is to not only make their first visitor experience a great one, but to help them find a point of connection that will make them want to come back again.

The Welcome MAT design team is very excited with the progress we have made in developing this newly enhanced ministry. The team is still working on the complete design and fine-tuning details, but some of the changes you will see include new names for some of the roles currently in place. Instead of "Greeters", we will have new names such as "Hosts" and "Connectors". The current Welcome Center kiosk will become the focal point for welcoming visitors, giving church information and small gifts, and collecting

personal information. These are just a few of the changes to occur as we move forward with the vision of the Welcome MAT. As COVID-19 restrictions begin to lift, we will schedule a time to gather all volunteers for visioning and training. Currently, we are looking at some time in the first quarter of 2021 for implementation of this ministry.

As you can imagine, we will need an active, coordinated response from the congregation to make this a success. We are reaching out to both existing and new volunteers to prayerfully consider being a part of this exciting new ministry. If you would like to volunteer, please reach out to any of the design team members listed below. We need you and look forward to growing Christ's Kingdom with you!

Sue Harrison, kharrison1111@gmail.com (713) 269-9657 Tonya Bushey, tonyabushey@gmail.com (612) 716-5583 Barb Martenson, blynnmart@gmail.com (952) 240-3597

# **POBLO Close-up: Andrea**

The worsening coronavirus pandemic brings challenges, especially with lower attendance inside the three International Friendship Centers in Bloomington (Mt. Hope Lutheran), Burnsville (Ascension Lutheran), and Prior Lake (Holy Cross Lutheran). With many unknowns, we trust God for giving us quality time to have straight talk and Bible study with immigrants, especially Muslims.

One particular family was born and raised Muslim, until one day the mother, let's call her Andrea, was fed-up with the mistreatment of women in that specific region she lived in.

The Islam-dominated culture favors men over women. Andrea became a lawyer, and she ran for office during the general elections in her country. The radical Islamic groups defied her ambitions and helped her fail by voting in record numbers against her. Her disappointment was profound. One day, the Imam was performing the 'Azan', the Muslim call-to-prayer through the mosque's speakers, which is the norm in predominantly Muslim cities. Her soul refused to hear this call to prayer while, simultaneously, experiencing extreme suppression of basic rights because she

is a woman. It was the last push to make her reconsider Islam as a faith and a way of life.

Andrea always noticed how the minority Palestinian Christians were positively different; respectful in their treatment, and do not discriminate against women. After she asked an older Christian friend of hers about Jesus, she was equipped with Christian resources.

As the Lord softened Andrea's heart and she read the New Testament, He appeared to her in several dreams! He did not identify Himself by name, but every time she saw this gleaming Man in the dream, He hugs her, comforts her, and holds her neck, and calls her 'sister.' Andrea was tearful recounting her testimony to us, realizing how personal and friendly God can be. We shared this passage: "Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." (Hebrews 2:11)

Andrea believed, was baptized, and still needs discipleship. Nowadays, she is living with her husband and two kids in Minnesota. We periodically visit with them to strengthen the ties as no

one but Andrea trusts Jesus. As you read this, we are studying the Bible three times a week at the Burnsville IFC. Andrea's daughter is thirsty to know God's love and how Jesus wants her to be with Him. Our family would have never imagined meeting with this family and others, ironically a blessing outcome of COVID-19. Other immigrants, also, tell us "you are our only family here."

This ministry is yours. Please share POBLO Twin Cities with your church staff and members.

We certainly need your prayers. We have urgent need for financial support. Please consider being an individual donor. Not only you will sustain our living needs, but also make us available in the lives of believers and nonbelievers alike, which leads to experience the love of Christ and for salvation of souls, on your behalf. Please talk to your pastor about it, or you can contact us directly: nader@poblo.org, or call me (402) 968-6486.

Please follow us on Facebook. Request to be added to the Facebook page (as it is private).

—Your Missionaries, Nader & Georgette Alaraj & kids









Developing fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ along life's journey

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# **GROW WITH CROSS VIEW**

#### **SUNDAY WORSHIP**

8:15 AM Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary

10:45 AM Contemporary Worship in the Great **Commission Room** 

Both services are also available via live stream.

## **SUNDAY EDUCATION**

9:30 AM Onsite & Online

#### **OFFICE HOURS**

Mon.-Fri., 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

### **CALENDAR**

Cross View's most current calendar is always available on our website at

www.crossview.net/calendar

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