

We Worship, We Grow, We Serve,  
We reach out in love sharing God's  
message of hope through Jesus Christ.

December 2020  
Volume 8, Issue 10

## Inside this Issue

- 1 Pastor's Message
- 2 Christmas Proclamation  
Chairperson
- 3 COVID-19 Task Force
- 4 Advent Reflection  
Bits & Pieces  
Sunday School
- 5 Online Worship  
Zoom Coffee Time  
Christmas Worship
- 6 Padang Relief Society

**During the COVID-19 pandemic we are following provincial health orders. All in-person worship services and gatherings are cancelled.**

**E-mail:** [mzoffice@shaw.ca](mailto:mzoffice@shaw.ca) or  
[prmarlys@shaw.ca](mailto:prmarlys@shaw.ca)

**Phone:** (604) 521-0120 (office)  
(604) 521-0525 (fax)

Mount Zion Lutheran Church  
930 Cumberland Street  
New Westminster BC V3L 3H4  
Canada

**Website:** [www.mtzionlutheran.ca](http://www.mtzionlutheran.ca)

We recognize and acknowledge the Qayqayt First Nation, as well as all Coast Salish peoples, on whose traditional and unceded territories we gather.



# mount zion **Message**

L U T H E R A N

2020 Advent/Christmas Newsletter

## Pastor's Musings:

Traditionally, during the late Christmas Eve service, while candles are lit before singing "Silent Night," I read the Proclamation of Christmas which provides an historic context to the birth of Christ, citing creation, the flood, events in Israel's history, down through the ages to the time of Rome. It ends like this:



In the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;  
the seven hundred and fifty-second year from the foundation of Rome.

The forty-second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus;  
the whole world being at peace,  
Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal father,  
desiring to sanctify the world by his most merciful coming,  
being conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
and nine months having passed since his conception,  
was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary.

Today is the nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh."

Photo by [Arni Svanur Danielsson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I won't be reading that proclamation this year, just as we won't be gathering together, surrounded by candlelight and singing "Silent Night." There are many things we may lament as we readjust our plans for Christmas celebrations this year. However, one thing never changes. God comes to us to remind us that God loves us – in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves. God comes to us as a gift all wrapped up in the Christ Child.

I know that this Christmas will be difficult, as well as different, for so many. God knows what it is to be fully human, from beginning with depending on others for food, clothing and shelter to being misunderstood by almost everyone around him, to enduring suffering and death. So whatever you are feeling and going through, please know that God understands. And if you are struggling with being "merry" this Christmas - that's okay.

I think of how afraid and uncertain it must have been for Mary and Joseph on that first Christmas. They were surrounded by animals, not family. They were in an unfamiliar place, visited by strange and smelly shepherds...nothing was like what they were used to either. So as we enter into Christmas in strange and unfamiliar ways, may we be able to experience the joy and relief that Christ is come.

***A blessed Christmas to all and continued awareness of God's presence and grace throughout 2021!***

Instead of the traditional Proclamation of Christmas I invite you to read this special Proclamation written particularly for Christmas during a pandemic. I am grateful to Mary Beth Smith-Gunn who has written this proclamation and freely provided it to be shared with others. (see page 2)

## A Christmas Proclamation during a Pandemic

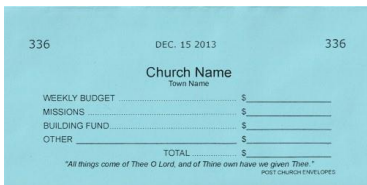
Centuries ago God's chosen people hunkered down, afraid of powers and influences beyond their control. While isolated they told stories of God's continuing faithfulness, promises made and kept to ancestors of long ago. They had seen glimpses of hope that times were changing and circumstances would soon avail release and renewal. Prophets' words spoke of restoration. Worship of God in the sacred space of home and hearth held fast to the one who promised to be enfleshed to redeem all of creation.

We too live, hunkered down, afraid of powers beyond our control. We lean into the promises spoken through an ancient story that God continues to work powerfully to renew and restore. Hope is born through the tenacity of healthcare workers and essential service providers. With faces masked, and separated physically, we look for and long for God to be revealed in our midst. Our worship has become a practice of family around a common table, within safe confines of home, sacred space and holy inhabitants, because God's promise cannot be confined to a place or a time or controlled by circumstances which challenge mere mortals. And now, we rejoice that God has been faithful in keeping a divine promise.

Born humbly, adored by peasant and prestigious, worshiped in repentant humility by people from the ends of the earth, Jesus comes. Jesus comes because God keeps the divine promise. Jesus comes because the world, in times of pandemic, needs a powerful promise not confined by chronology or circumstance. Jesus comes...may we rejoice and bear witness to that most precious gift of this Holy Season, here and every day hereafter. May it truly be so. And all God's people together say, "Amen."

-Mary Beth Smith-Gunn

### Offering Envelopes 2021



Offering envelopes are ready for 2021. Your envelope number will remain the same as 2020.

**Please continue using your remaining old envelopes until we can get your new box to you.** Any date will be fine as deposits are made at mid and end of each month. Post-dated cheques will be in safe keeping until the date on each cheque.

If you have used all your envelopes just submit your offering in a plain envelope giving your name. I will add your number.

Thank you for your generous support of Mount Zion. Best wishes to you and your families for a happy, healthy year to come.

Margaret Leech  
Financial Secretary



(past & present)

In our December 2017 Newsletter the Chair of Council, Norma Houde, wrote:

*"For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16).*

*Advent: the season of waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas. The Term advent is a version of the Latin word meaning "coming". It directs us to prepare for the commemoration of the birth of Jesus. What will that look like for Mount Zion in the year ahead? We celebrate with gladness the great promise in the advent as we accept the challenge to "Love our neighbours as ourselves." (Thank you, Norma)*

Regardless of what lies ahead there is comfort in knowing God is with us every moment of every day, even as we wander through this pandemic.

On behalf of council, I would like to thank those who attended our November Budget Meeting. The proposed budget for 2021 was adopted. My thanks to our Treasurer, Len Imrie, and our bookkeeper, Sinta Nurianti, for preparing and presenting the budget. Finally, I would like to thank the congregation for continuing to be faithful to Mount Zion and supporting Pastor Marlys in this particularly challenging pandemic.

On behalf of church council, God bless and stay safe.

Lyna Kiviste  
Chair of Council



# COVID-19 Task Force

## OUR DUTY TO CARE

Ever wondered what the Mount Zion COVID-19 Task Force does on your behalf?



This is sort of a cute little picture depicting Covid-19. However, in reality, the Task Force

deals with some of the most serious questions that are being asked and has, what feels like, the enormous responsibility to keep our staff and all those who enter our church safe.

For most of us, initially, when we were asked to be on the Task Force, we were thinking it would be helping out with things needed to go into offering a one-time, outdoor event, for members of Mount Zion (possibly a parking lot coffee time?) A one-time event. Ha! Little did we know what being on this Task Force would mean!

Soon after starting we found, to allow staff to enter the building, we were required to provide a WorkSafe BC Employee Staff Safety Plan. As it turns out we had to build a detailed 22-page document. On the plus side, I think we all understood that our primary role was to protect our staff. They were the ones who were in the building. This is referred to as 'Duty to Care'- our responsibility to those who must be in the church.

It is hard to express the energy it takes, working together, to ensure we are following constantly-changing BC Health Orders and Protocols. We are a church and, therefore, different from a company that can assign paid people to do all that is required. We are volunteers who often are involved in other aspects of volunteer church work. Currently the members of the team are Pastor Marlys, Norma Houde, Lyna Kiviste, Monica Deng, Deng Bair, Vivienne Welters and Shirles Burton.

The following are a few of the things the Task Force is charged with:

- Staying up-to-day on constantly changing requirements
- Ensuring compliance by everyone, including monitoring Renters
- Mask training, sign-in requirements, signage
- Employee Communication, including meetings to address updates and any concerns that may arise

- Weekly meetings – minimum of one hour, and often more, in addition to the assigned tasks for each of us from the meeting
- Preparing for all services – deciding what format they will be depending on Health Orders
  - If it is outdoors, or the lower floor is being considered, we need to determine numbers, who could attend based on chair positioning and distance from the Pastor (3 feet currently for anyone leading from the front)
- The weight of making decisions on behalf of all the members of Mount Zion can be exhausting at times
- Making purchasing decisions in a vacuum - having to be okay with our best guesses at the time.
- Developing new Covid-19 Cleaning Protocols with accompanying videos to ensure everyone understands the seriousness of protective eyewear, masks, and protective aprons, etc.

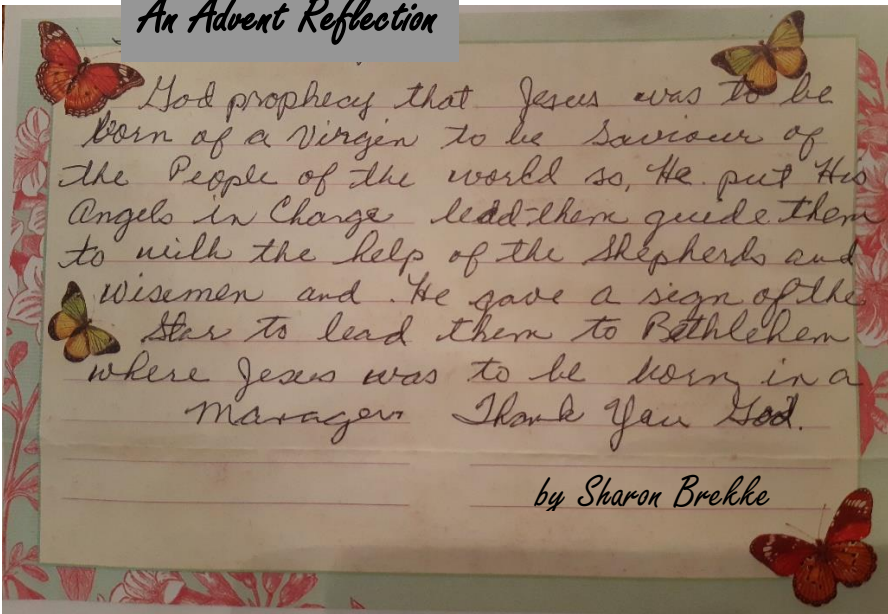
As you can see, what first seemed like a short-term commitment to a possibly one-time event, has grown into requiring considerable time and energy from the members of the Task Force. On a positive note, we feel blessed by God to have the resources we have at Mount Zion with people who bring their various gifts along with their time and energy.

We are also happy to share the work we have done with other congregations who might not have the people and resources to draw on. The WorkSafe BC Employee Safety Plan we developed and continue to monitor is posted on the front page of our website where it is freely available to all who would want to access it, including all the cleaning protocols developed in conjunction with Mount Zion's paid and volunteer cleaning people.

In days which seem never-ending we remind ourselves of Dr. Bonnie Henry's words, ***"This is not forever, but it is for now... We're going to get through this."***

-COVID-19 Task Force

### An Advent Reflection



### 2020 Year in Review

As we look back over 2020, we have experienced and learned things we never could have imagined. Here are some questions to reflect upon:

**What is God up to in your life? In your neighbourhood? What are you learning? What are you struggling with?**

Your experiences and reflections are valuable for supporting one another at this time. Pastor Marlys would appreciate having these in video or writing to share in the December 27 service. Please contact her at [prmarlys@shaw.ca](mailto:prmarlys@shaw.ca) or 604-521-0120. Thank you!

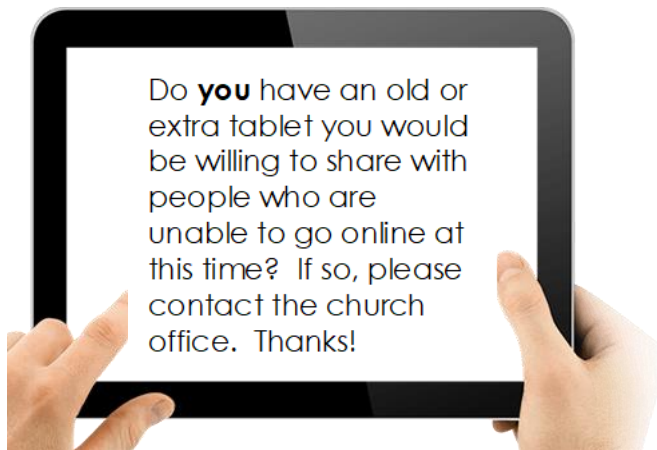


**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada**  
In Mission for Others



Mount Zion Lutheran is joining with others from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in participating in the Bible Book Club. We are reading the book of **Psalms** throughout December and looking forward to the book of **Ecclesiastes** in January. Check out resources at this website:

<https://elcic.ca/livingourfaith/biblebookclub.cfm> or contact the church office for copies to be mailed to you if you do not have access to a computer. You may also enjoy these videos: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/psalms> and <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/ecclesiastes>.



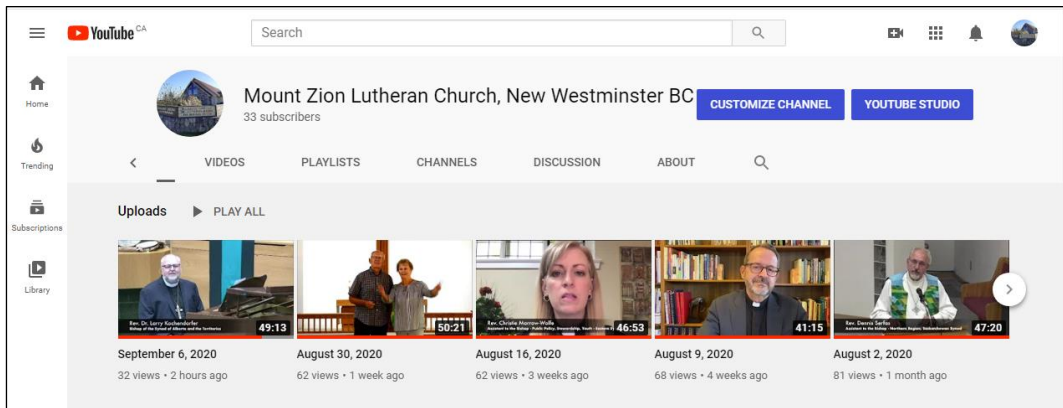
The **Special Christmas Offering** goes to support the ministry of the BC Synod. If you wish to support another Mount Zion ministry, please designate this on your offering envelope. Thank you for your generous support this past year:

# Mount Zion's Online Presence

## Worship at Mount Zion Still Looks Like This!



- People struggling with isolation during this season of Advent and Christmas
- For our healthcare workers
- For people in nursing homes who have limited visitation
- Thank God for many answered prayers.



Online worship services continue on our YouTube channel, Mount Zion Lutheran Church, New Westminster BC. We are always looking for people to video the Bible readings at home or at the church. Please contact Pastor Marlys at 604-521-0120.

Join us for  
Zoom Bible  
Study on  
Wednesdays at  
7:00pm.  
Contact  
Vivienne



Bible Study  
Church Council  
COVID-19 Task Force  
Coffee Time

### ZOOM Coffee Time - Sunday mornings at 11:00am

Bring your own beverage and treats. Relax in the comfort of your own home (pj's & recliners most welcome☺)



ZOOM  
COFFEE  
TIME

Join us on Sunday mornings (except when there's a church council meeting) for virtual refreshments and visiting. You need a computer, tablet or smartphone for the audiovisual connection. (You may also be able to connect by telephone only, technology permitting.) Please contact Vivienne Welters at [mountzion930@gmail.com](mailto:mountzion930@gmail.com) to assist you with Zoom Coffee Time. You can also check in with her by telephone about a phone-only connection. Hope to "see" you soon!



### On-line Christmas Worship: Candles! Carols! Christmas Story!

Check out Mount Zion's website at [www.mtzionlutheran.ca](http://www.mtzionlutheran.ca) for links to Christmas Worship. Yes, it will be different from our traditional gatherings, but there will still be Carols and the Christmas Story. However, you will need to provide your own Candles this year☺





**PADANG RELIEF SOCIETY**

## December Update

Dear Friends in Christ,

I hope this newsletter will find you well and safe. As you are aware, 2020 has been a hard year for everyone including charities around the world. Padang Relief Society is currently sponsoring 35 orphans and abandoned children in SOS Children’s Village in Malakal town within South Sudan. Padang Relief Society is the only organization supporting orphans and abandoned children in Malakal town. Due to the devastating coronavirus pandemic, 80% of our donations have evaporated. We urgently need your help in supporting these vulnerable children during this time of uncertainty.

Our goal is to raise **\$3,500** to feed orphans in South Sudan. \$1,200 has been raised so far but we still need to raise another \$2,300 before December 31. If you would like to help these vulnerable children during this time of crisis with financial support, you may do so by donating online at: [www.plcr.org](http://www.plcr.org). Otherwise, please make a cheque payable to Padang Relief Society and mail it at your earliest convenience to 10-1025 Queens Avenue, New Westminster, BC V3M 1M4 Canada. Thank you for your support and your prayers for disadvantaged communities and orphans in South Sudan and elsewhere.

May God bless you and keep you by His grace.

With gratitude,  
*Chagai C. Lual*

Director (Volunteer)  
Padang Relief Society  
Tel: +1 604 369-0924  
Website: [www.plcr.org](http://www.plcr.org)



### A Prayer for the New Year

Lord, You make all things new  
You bring hope alive in our hearts  
And cause our Spirits to be born again.  
Thank you for this new year!  
Amen.



### An Unprecedented Year

Since the middle of March when the COVID-19 virus began to hit the whole world, we have heard this time of global pandemic described as “unprecedented times.” The year 2020 has certainly been a year of laments and surprises.

I am grateful to so many people for how they have responded and reached out in creative and inspiring ways to share love for God and love for neighbour.

As I lament and regret not being to stay in touch personally with many people, I am grateful for so many who have picked up their phones or sent emails to stay in touch with so many in the congregation. If you do not receive regular phone calls and would appreciate such a call, please let us know at [prmarlys@shaw.ca](mailto:prmarlys@shaw.ca) or 604-521-0120.

As I lament some unexpected health concerns and mobility issues, I am grateful for so many who pray and enable me to do what needs to be done, without expecting more.

As I lament that we have not been able to worship together in the building since mid-March and have had only one outdoor service in October, I am grateful for the wonders of technology and providing worship services online. I am grateful especially to Don Leech and his faithful camera who show up every Friday afternoon to record the service. I am grateful for how many participate and have also learned to use technology! An unexpected gift has been reaching people who normally are unable to attend services at the church. We hope to continue providing online worship even when we are able to return to the building.

Most of all, I am grateful to God for how God has inspired and loved us in new and inspiring ways – just as God did that first Christmas. In these unprecedented times may we join in singing with the angels: “Glory to God!”

*-Pastor Marlys*