



How To Have A New Beginning

A new year brings about a chance for a new beginning. People generally appreciate the chance to start again. We like to make resolutions about things that we should have been doing already. The weight that you needed to lose didn't magically appear when the calendar changed. A date on a calendar is essentially an imaginary thing. Nothing really changed from New Year's Eve to New Year's Day. Yet, we're attracted to the idea that we can start over and start again. We want to be made new and clean.

The Christian life is all about new beginnings. Since the first beginning, man has been given rest and restoration. Created on the sixth day, man's first full day on the earth was the Sabbath, the day of rest. Does the concept of Sabbath make you nervous? We were not supposed to do any work at all on the Sabbath, the seventh day. This was later given again as the Third Commandment. One whole day of the week was given for us to rest. The Lord Himself even rests on the Sabbath! I'm convinced that the Sabbath was given to convince us that things are going to be okay even if we can't do our work. It is difficult for us to rest for an entire day, so imagine what the Sabbath year would have been like (Leviticus 25).

Of course, we are no longer required to observe the Sabbath on the seventh day, Saturday. Since the time of the Apostles, Christians gather for the Divine Service on Sunday, as this is the day that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. We find our true rest in hearing the Word of God, which is why we hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it. This, the eighth day, is also the first day of the week. It is the end and the beginning. You are created and recreated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You find out who you really are, in the hearing of the Word of God. You are a sinner, yes, and a sinner who is redeemed. You have been put to death and raised again with Christ in Holy Baptism. The Lord has given you a new beginning, whether you wanted it or not! Find your rest in Christ, and thus, a new beginning. Your eighth day is your first day. You do not have to wait for 2022 for a new beginning. You are new and clean today. This is given to you, even today. Don't wait.

+Pastor Kyle Mietzner

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CHURCH NOTES

Christian Education Opportunities

Our schedules are changing constantly due to Covid. Check for updates in the bulletin, during announcements and in weekly emails.

Children's Sunday School—Sundays @ 11am

Adult Bible Study—Sundays @ 11am
—Wednesdays @ 7pm via Zoom

Youth Catechesis—Wednesdays @ 4pm via Zoom

Helping Hands Meal Prep

Our outreach program to help feed residents at Brother Francis Shelter and Clare House has resumed at a reduced level. Due to social distancing guidelines, Helping Hands are recruited as needed.

Offerings

You are welcome to mail your offerings to the church to be presented during the next Sunday worship service. This can also be done through your financial institution's BillPay service.

Birthdays

Evangeline Mietzner	1/1
Bridget van Bavel	1/3
Luke Rolfe	1/6
Richard Murphy	1/8
Caitlin van Bavel	1/14
Leah Rawlins	1/15
Mia Anderson	1/29
Ayla Dickey	1/31



Anniversaries

Steve & Christina Lanz 1/6



Church Contacts

Church Office: 338-3838
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Pastor's cell phone: (336)944-2394
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Confirmation



Congratulations to Guinevere Hopkins on being confirmed on Sunday, January 3rd. A reception will be planned once we are able to gather again.

January 31st Special Voters Meeting

There will be a special voters meeting held on January 31st immediately following the worship service (approximately 10:45am). The purpose of this meeting will be to vote on whether or not to postpone the Synod Convention to 2023. Find info online at www.lcms.org/delay-vote-letter, or find copies in the narthex. Please review the info prior to the meeting to expedite the vote.

Pastor Lance Jennings

One of Zion's former pastors, Rev. Lance Jennings, passed away Dec. 17, 2020 in Nevada after contracting COVID-19. Funeral arrangements there are pending. A memorial service may also take place in Alaska this summer.

STEWARDSHIP

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. It's a time when we sit down to plan and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year.

Often, we find this difficult and daunting and even joyless, but it doesn't have to be. In fact, it is really quite simple and full of joy. So, here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions:

- Who are you?
- To whom do I give?
- And how much?

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in the *Luther's Small Catechism* informs us. Are you a hearer of God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family? Stewardship covers these three estates: church, society, and family. We don't particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties, and our questions arise in giving to the Church.

So, what is our duty as members of the Church with regard to giving? Again, the Table of Duties, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer – a member of the Church who receives instruction – St. Paul taught: “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches” (Gal. 6:6). This means the local congregation is primary.

Your pastor is the one called to preach the Gospel to you and administer the Lord's blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the Church, He has the local congregation in mind. For “the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14).

How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are to give:

- Regularly (1 Cor. 6:1–2);
- Proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12);
- Generously (2 Cor. 8:20);
- Of our first fruits (Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30); and
- With a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

In other words, giving to the Church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent.

From those first fruits, we set aside a proportionate and generous amount. Ten percent was the standard for the Israelites. This was a command for the ancient Israelites. We can give as much as we want, but ask yourself: Do we really want to be less generous than was commanded of the Israelites? Is the job of the New Testament Church bigger or smaller than the job given to Israel?

And how are we to give it? We give it with eagerness and earnestness. We give it cheerfully and with love, not out of compulsion. For through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has made us His children, forgiven us all our sins, given us grace upon grace, promised us life everlasting with Him in His kingdom, and filled us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This makes giving a joy, as Jesus said, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

It's that easy. And it is joyful. For in stewardship, our gracious and giving Lord invites us to take part in the work that He accomplishes here on earth, providing for the ongoing preaching of the Gospel, as well as those who are in need. Taking part in that makes all our work holy – work that is done in service to the Lord as priestly members of His kingdom.

Lutheran Social Services of Alaska

Happy New Year! It has been a few months since I have had time to write this article for the church newsletters. Ever since March, we have been incredibly blessed and busy at the same time.

We started in late March offering rental and mortgage assistance to those affected by reduced hours or the loss of their jobs due to Covid-19. We distributed \$413,000 to 450 families with AK Can Do funds which was a collaboration of Rasmuson Foundation, Alaska Community Foundation and the United Way of Anchorage. Beginning June 15th, in partnership with United Way of Anchorage, we have to date distributed over 15 million dollars in Cares Act funds for rental and mortgage assistance to close to 6,500 families. At this writing, the Municipality has also funded us with an additional \$7million, which we will begin distributing January 4th with appointments scheduled through most of February for new families that have not received assistance in 2020.

Thanksgiving Blessing was different this year with all the food pre-boxed and the clients remaining in their vehicles. We served at our site at Central Lutheran Church 1,116 in 2019; we planned on 1,350 for 2020 and ran out of food at 6pm. We had to divert our overflow to the old Sam's Club at Tikahtnu Commons. Citywide, 8,786 dinners were distributed in Anchorage and another 2,373 in the MatSu Valley.

A great big thank you to everyone who supplied Christmas stockings that we distributed to the children of clients in the Food Pantry. These stockings are so well received from the parents, and it helps us bring the Christmas message to over 825 children.

Thank you to the organizers of the Lutheran Women Advent Brunch for remembering LSSA. Even though the event was cancelled this year, the offering of diapers, wipes and baby formula was much appreciated. What a blessing this program is to our ministry.

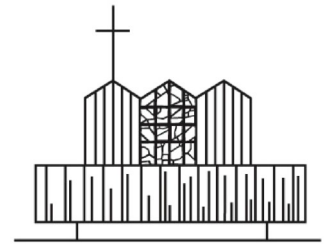
Beginning January 1st, you will again have the opportunity to contribute to our ministry through Pick.Click.Give. when you apply for your Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend. When applying on-line, you will have an option called "the Gift of Giving." Simply follow the instructions to make a donation. In 2020, LSSA received \$11,975 in donations through this program from 178 donors. The on-line Permanent Fund Dividend application for 2021 will be available beginning January 1st, at 9:00am.

Together caring for others,

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JANUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27 9:30am Divine Service 11am Bible Study	28	29	30	31	1-Jan	2
3 9:30am Divine Service 11am Bible Study	4	5 7pm Elders' Meeting	6 4pm Youth Catechesis via Zoom 7pm The Epiphany of Our Lord Service	7	8	9
10 9:30am Divine Service 11am Bible Study & Sunday School	11	12 7pm Council Meeting	13 4pm Youth Catechesis via Zoom 7pm Bible Study via Zoom	14	15	16
17 9:30am Divine Service 11am Bible Study & Sunday School	18	19	20 4pm Youth Catechesis via Zoom 7pm Bible Study via Zoom	21	22	23
24 9:30am Divine Service 11am Bible Study & Sunday School	25	26	27 4pm Youth Catechesis via Zoom 7pm Bible Study via Zoom	28	29	30
31 9:30am Divine Service 10:45am Special Voters Meeting 11am Bible Study & Sunday School	1-Feb	2 7pm Elders' Meeting	3 4pm Youth Catechesis via Zoom 7pm Bible Study via Zoom	4	5	6